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Towards a Pluriverse of Systemic Alternatives

Decolonial feminist perspectives

Marta Musić

April 2023

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Ph.D. Programme in Environmental Science and Technology

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Abstract

Against the backdrop of the current Western civilizational crisis, the struggles for the defense of life and territories have been giving rise to an increasing amount of alternatives to different forms and structures of oppression (i.e. patriarchy, racism, anthropocentrism, state-ism, capitalism amongst others) that contribute to various forms of discrimination, marginalization and exploitation. Taking a critical approach against reformist solutions that are part of sustainable development agendas, this thesis focuses on radical systemic alternatives that strive to move beyond the system responsible for the current crisis. Concerned with the siloed nature of such radical alternatives, this thesis contributes to the debates on transitions towards the Zapatista political horizon of a "world in which many worlds fit". This is more commonly known as the pluriverse, and discussed here as one of the pathways to move beyond the civilizational crisis. The main research question is how to strive towards a praxis of pluriversality that could support the weaving of alternatives. This thesis demonstrates that through decolonial feminisms we can strive towards a praxis of pluriversality that can support such weaving by addressing and repairing the harms caused by the current system, by abolishing existing interrelated structures of oppressions, and building autonomous alternatives. This thesis embraces a decolonial feminist approach to explore pluriversal pathways due to an understanding of oppressions as intermeshed, the importance of relationality, the embodied/incarnated nature of knowledges, a focus on plurality, and a political commitment to make research and academia more humane. Through decolonial feminisms, this thesis builds bridges and dialogues between different geographies of resistance, critical strands of literature, my liminal positionality and engagement in grassroots political organizing and transnational processes of articulation of alternatives. Firstly, it examines the existing literature on the pluriverse in the field of post-development through a decolonial

feminist lens, to unearth its neo-colonial continuities and offer learning possibilities for the scholarship to approach the pluriverse in more politically coherent ways. Secondly, this thesis reflects with and learns from the experience of a global process of articulation of alternatives, namely the World Social Forum of Transformative Economies (WSFTE) as a potential practical embodiment of the pluriverse. Through decolonial feminist action research methods, it provides a critical analysis of the WSFTE and the modern/colonial practices that led to its demise, before putting forward feminist experiences within the process that could have nurtured confluences of alternatives in more pluriversal ways. Thirdly, this thesis brings into dialogue Black radical thought, decolonial feminisms and Zapatismo to reflect on the alternatives emerging from these different onto-epistemic, body-political and geographical locations - such as reparations, abolition and autonomy - and the pluriversal pathways that can emerge from them. This political research project has been carried out with the hope that it can shed more light on the conditions to help foster the imagination, recognition and articulations of peoples and worlds within a pluriverse.

Key words: pluriverse, decolonial feminisms, Black radical thought, Zapatismo, post-development, World Social Forum.

Resumen

Frente a la actual crisis de la civilización occidental, las luchas por la defensa de la vida y los territorios han propiciado a una cantidad cada vez mayor de alternativas a las diferentes formas y estructuras de opresión (como el patriarcado, el racismo, el antropocentrismo, el estatismo, el capitalismo entre otras) que contribuyen a diversas formas de discriminación, marginación y explotación. Adoptando un enfoque crítico frente a las soluciones reformistas que forman parte

de las agendas de desarrollo sostenible, esta tesis se centra en las alternativas sistémicas radicales que buscan ir más allá del sistema responsable de la crisis actual. Preocupada por la naturaleza aislada de tales alternativas radicales, esta tesis contribuye a los debates sobre las transiciones hacia el horizonte político Zapatista de un "mundo donde quepan muchos mundos". Esto se conoce más comúnmente como el pluriverso, y se analiza aquí como uno de los caminos para superar la crisis civilizatoria. La pregunta central de la investigación es cómo tender hacia una praxis de pluriversalidad que pueda sustentar tejidos de alternativas. Esta tesis demuestra que a través de los feminismos decoloniales podemos avanzar hacia una praxis de pluriversalidad que pueda sustentar dichos tejidos abordando y reparando los daños causados por el sistema actual, aboliendo las estructuras de opresión interrelacionadas existentes y construyendo alternativas autónomas. Esta tesis adopta un enfoque feminista decolonial para explorar caminos pluriversales debido a una comprensión de las opresiones como entrelazadas, la importancia de la relacionalidad, la naturaleza encarnada/encarnada de los conocimientos, un enfoque en la pluralidad y un compromiso político para humanizar la investigación y la academia. A través de los feminismos decoloniales, esta tesis construye puentes y diálogos entre diferentes geografías de resistencia, líneas críticas de literatura, mi posicionamiento liminal y mi trabajo en organizaciones políticas de base y procesos transnacionales de articulación de alternativas. En primer lugar, examina la literatura existente sobre el pluriverso en el campo del posdesarrollo a través de una lente feminista decolonial, para desenterrar sus continuidades neocoloniales y ofrecer posibilidades de aprendizaje para que los estudios se acerquen al pluriverso de formas políticamente más coherentes. En segundo lugar, esta tesis reflexiona y aprende de la experiencia de un proceso global de articulación de alternativas, a saber, el Foro Social Mundial de Economías Transformadoras (FSMET) como potencial encarnación práctica del pluriverso. A

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través de métodos de investigación-acción feminista decoloniales, proporciona un análisis crítico del FSMET y las prácticas modernas/coloniales que llevaron a su fracaso, antes de presentar experiencias feministas dentro del proceso que podrían haber fomentado confluencias de alternativas de formas más pluriversales. En tercer lugar, esta tesis pone en diálogo el pensamiento radical negro, los feminismos decoloniales y el Zapatismo para reflexionar sobre las alternativas que emergen de estas diferentes localizaciones onto-epistémicas, corporales-políticas y geográficas - como las reparaciones, la abolición y la autonomía - y los caminos pluriversales que pueden emerger de ellos. Este proyecto de investigación política se ha realizado con la esperanza de que pueda arrojar más luz sobre las condiciones para ayudar a fomentar la imaginación, el reconocimiento y las articulaciones de los pueblos y mundos dentro de un pluriverso.

Palabras clave: pluriverso, feminismos decoloniales, pensamiento radical negro, zapatismo, posdesarrollo, Foro Social Mundial.

Resum

Davant l'actual crisi de la civilització occidental, les lluites per la defensa de la vida i els territoris han propiciat una quantitat cada cop més gran d'alternatives a les diferents formes i estructures d'opressió (com el patriarcat, el racisme, l'antropocentrisme, l'estatisme, el capitalisme entre d'altres) que contribueixen a diverses formes de discriminació, marginació i explotació. Adoptant un enfocament crític davant de les solucions reformistes que formen part de les agendes de desenvolupament sostenible, aquesta tesi se centra en les alternatives sistèmiques radicals que busquen anar més enllà del sistema responsable de la crisi actual. Preocupada per la naturalesa aïllada d'aquestes alternatives radicals, aquesta tesi contribueix als debats sobre les transicions

cap a l'horitzó polític Zapatista d'un "món on hi càpiguen molts mons". Això es coneix més comunament com el plurivers, i aquí s'analitza com un dels camins per superar la crisi civilitzatòria. La pregunta central de la investigació és com estendre cap a una praxi de pluriversalitat que pugui sustentar teixits d'alternatives. Aquesta tesi demostra que a través dels feminismes decolonials podem avançar cap a una praxi de pluriversalitat que pugui sustentar aquests teixits abordant i reparant els danys causats pel sistema actual, abolint les estructures d'opressió interrelacionades existents i construint alternatives autònomes. Aquesta tesi adopta un enfocament feminista decolonial per explorar camins pluriversals a causa d'una comprensió de les opressions com a entrellaçades, la importància de la relacionalitat, la naturalesa encarnada/encarnada dels coneixements, un enfocament en la pluralitat i un compromís polític per humanitzar la investigació i l'acadèmia. A través dels feminismes decolonials, aquesta tesi construeix ponts i diàlegs entre diferents geografies de resistència, línies crítiques de literatura, posicionament liminal i treball en organitzacions polítiques de base i processos transnacionals d'articulació d'alternatives. En primer lloc, examina la literatura existent sobre el plurivers al camp del postdesenvolupament a través d'una lent feminista decolonial, per desenterrar-ne les continuïtats neocolonials i oferir possibilitats d'aprenentatge perquè els estudis s'acostin al plurivers de formes políticament més coherents. En segon lloc, aquesta tesi reflexiona i aprèn de l'experiència d'un procés global d'articulació d'alternatives, és a dir, el Fòrum Social Mundial d'Economies Transformadores (FSMET) com a encarnació potencial potencial del plurivers. A través de mètodes de recerca-acció feminista decolonials, proporciona una anàlisi crítica de l'FSMET i les pràctiques modernes/colonials que van portar al seu fracàs, abans de presentar experiències feministes dins del procés que podrien haver fomentat confluències d'alternatives de formes més pluriversals. En tercer lloc, aquesta tesi posa en diàleg el pensament radical negre,

els feminismes decolonials i el Zapatisme per reflexionar sobre les alternatives que emergeixen d'aquestes diferents localitzacions ontoepistèmiques, corporals-polítiques i geogràfiques - com les reparacions, l'abolició i l'autonomia - i els camins pluriversals que en poden emergir. Aquest projecte de recerca política s'ha realitzat amb l'esperança que pugui donar més llum sobre les condicions per ajudar a fomentar la imaginació, el reconeixement i les articulacions dels pobles i els mons dins d'un plurivers.

Paraules clau: plurivers, feminismes descolonials, pensament radical negre, zapatisme, postdesenvolupament, Fòrum Social Mundial.

Preface

There are two myths in my family. The first one is that nobody remembers a time when I could not speak (implied here is "speak my mind"), and that the first words I ever managed to put together were "it is not fair". Perhaps, then, I was always destined to dedicate my life to fight against injustices and oppressions, to speak truth to power and support the building of alternative worlds. Perhaps I am also following the political lineages of my ancestors, such as Radmila Mokranjac and Muhamed Mule Musić.

Radmila (or as we called her "Baka Rada") was born in 1923 in Belgrade. When the Second World War broke out, Radmila joined the communists in the anti-fascist resistance movement against the Axis forces. Betrayed by someone in the movement, she was arrested and taken to a concentration camp in Banjica. There, she shared a cell with and learned from Jelena Ćetković, a fierce advocate for women's rights and integrant of the National Liberation Front, (who was executed in 1943). After the war, she joined a publishing institute where she worked as a proofreader. I often thought about her and her proofreading skills, especially in the latest stage of my Ph.D. journey, which I could have really used! Radmila was described by the writer Sinan Gudžević not only as a revolutionary, but also as the "main pillar of the house and family" (Sinan Gudžević, 2022a). She was also infamously known for her stubbornness, a trait that was passed onto me (quite fortunately I would say, but some might disagree). Her question "*na koga li je toliko drčna?*"[1] when referring to me in the late 1990s makes my family members laugh to this day. This stubbornness (*tvrdoglavost*), or its more pig-headed/obstinate version called *inat*

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[1] translated literally as "on who is she this stubborn" meaning in this case "Who did she inherit this stubbornness from?"

(which is more of a cultural trait amongst Balkan people), is certainly one of the main driving forces behind this thesis.

Radmila married my grandfather Muhamed Mule Musić (or as we called him "Deda Musa") in 1946, and they were together until he died in 2004. Deda Musa was born in 1915 in the Montenegrin village of Godijevo. His path to the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, which he joined in 1938, was described as an unusual one. He first studied to become a *hodža* (a Muslim priest) in the Great Madrasa of Skopje, in Macedonia, while simultaneously developing an interest for leftist politics. Gudžević Sinan (2022b) writes with a pinch of humor that "Muhamed Musić was not expelled from the madrasa, because he was lucky that his interest in Marxism was not noticed". After Musa graduated, he decided to pursue a law degree in Belgrade, where he joined the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, and became a leader in both the student and resistance movements at the onset of the Second World War. The Communist Party gave him the task of organizing the resistance against fascism in the Bielopolska region of Montenegro and forming a partisan unit to fight for the liberation of Pljevlja. He was captured at the end of January 1942 and transferred from prison to prison until he was brought to the Dachau concentration camp on October 13th 1943. He would stay there for 22 months, where he would become subject to *in vivo* experiments until the end of the war, which would leave him blind in the years that followed.

Both Deda Musa and Baka Rada were firm and vocal critics of the contradictions within the Party. This led to Deda Musa's unfair trial and expulsion from the Party, the removal of the medal obtained for his service during the Second World War, constant surveillance and spying by the security agency of Yugoslavia (OZNA), death threats (many of which fuelled by

Islamophobic sentiments), pressured (but unsuccessful) requests to Radmila to divorce her husband, the family being cut off from benefits of the socialist federal republic and having to make do with very little. They endured these hardships with dignity, and without losing sight of their political ideals. As journalist Edin Smailović (2022) wrote about Deda Musa: "*Even though he went to hell and back, those humane ideals about the equality of people, social justice, brotherhood of people did not die out in him. Muhamed Musić, I am firmly convinced of this, despite everything he experienced, believed that a better world than this was possible and necessary. Why then should <u>we</u> doubt it?*"

Whether in their stubborness, their leftist politics and their desire to address internal contradictions within the Left and the external issues of the current capitalist system, this thesis is a continuation of Baka Rada and Deda Musa's political thinking and struggles, as well as their ideals, visions and dedication to build more just societies. I did not have the opportunity and the honor of getting to know them as an adult, but they have been present in my life and their guidance and wisdom contributed to guide me to where I am now.

Deda Musa (on the left) and Baka Rada (on the right) after their wedding in 1946

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How to possibly account for, acknowledge and offer my gratitude to all the people, living beings, ancestors and other entities that made all of this work possible? While writing this part, I often found myself engaging in meditative exercises, not only as remembrance but as offerings of gratitude to all those involved, for giving me the boldness to embark on such a project as well as the courage, perseverance and passion to carry it through.

The first person I want to express my deepest and most profound gratitude to is my supervisor, mentor, *comadre*, and dear friend Profesor Rosalba Icaza. I remember the first time I heard her speak during a keynote opening speech for the 2019 Development Days Conference in Helsinki, and how dumbstruck it left me. At that moment, I instantly knew she was the one. I remember how terrified I was to approach her, ready to beg for her to take me on as her student (luckily it did not get to that point). I could never have grown (personally-politically) as I did these past four years without her. Recently going back to my earliest drafts, I was able to fully appreciate the extent of the un-learning, relearning and growing I have been doing under her guidance and supervision. It was far from easy, but she incessantly reminded me to write *desde la tripa*, to explore, acknowledge and center the underlying, deeply personal motivations behind this research project, and to speak from where I stood. Albeit some initial (internal) kicking and screaming, I was finally able to reckon with my wounds, to explore and understand better who I was/am, to find the courage to step into my power and to embrace my vulnerability and infuse my work with it. And in many ways, in doing so, I was able to heal.

Few are the people who actually "walk the walk" (especially in academia). Rosalba is one of them. She is the embodiment of decolonial feminist politics. The way she uses her power and

privilege to help others, especially women of color from the Global South working in a profoundly racist, gendered, eurocentric (academic) world. The *active* solidarity she extends to communities and groups involved in other-than-modern political projects. The visibility, resources, connections, love and friendship she invests in supporting those working to build better worlds are only a few examples of her radical politics.

Another thing I am immensely grateful for is her ability to keep an academic fire going. Against all odds and all dehumanizing logics of eurocentric neoliberal academia that swallows and depletes Ph.D. students (emotionally, physically and intellectually), Rosalba supported me in safeguarding my passion for my research and academia. She helped me keep the fire going for the past four years, nurturing it, re-kindling it when it was out, sheltering it through storms and heavy rains, and throwing some wood on that fire when need be.

There are not enough words in this world to express the depth of my love and gratitude for her, for who she is, for everything she does, for the way she shows up in the world and for others. I am not one to call myself proud of many things, but I certainly am proud to have been her student. I want to thank her for her love, care, dedication, radicality and friendship, as well as the time, energy, wisdom, guidance and support she invested in me and in my Ph.D. I am excited to see what life has in store for us next, and I look forward to continuing walking by her side on the many roads leading to more decolonial feminist horizons.

I also want to extend my gratitude to Dr. Federico Demaria, my other co-supervisor, without whom I would never have been able to do this Ph.D. to begin with. I want to thank him for accepting me as his student in 2018 and for seeing the importance and relevance of this work, when so many others could not. He was amongst the first people whose name I saw when

researching Ph.D. programs that could host research on the pluriverse. He not only accepted me as his student, but he stuck his neck out for me so I could join the Ph.D. program at the Institute of Environmental Science and Technology (ICTA). Whether facilitating much of the administrative and bureaucratic immigration work when I first joined, helping me get access to funding to undertake this research, providing a much-needed structure and up-close supervision in my first year, supporting me to flesh out my research proposal, helping me get a desk at the research institute flagging the conferences I should attend, inputting in my drafts and suggesting the journals I should submit my articles to, providing me with opportunities to teach at various occasions (which made me discover my love for teaching), Federico has always been dedicated to supporting me in various ways throughout my Ph.D. journey to ensure I would make it.

I admit that I have not been the easiest (or most compliant) student to supervise, and that this thesis took a turn neither of us expected. In that sense, I want to thank him for trusting me to take this thesis where it needed to go. I hope it was not too hard or frustrating to do so. And I hope that us working together has been as insightful for him as it was for me. After all, while it might be easier to be supervised by someone whom you always agree with, it leaves little space for generative theories emerging from creative tensions and other valuable learning opportunities. I am therefore very grateful to Federico for the times he played (to quote his own words) "the devil's advocate". I also want to thank him for his tremendous support in this last stretch of my Ph.D., which was incredibly challenging, and for making sure I could hand in my thesis when I did. I hope this is not the end of our journey, and that our paths will continue to cross in the future. I also want to thank Dr. Giorgos Kallis for agreeing to be my tutor, for supporting me to get funding and for keeping a close eye on this thesis and its development..

I also want to thank Cristina Duran, the incredible administrator of the doctoral program and, in my humble opinion, one of the main pillars of ICTA, without whom I would neither have been able to join nor complete this Ph.D. programme. Cristina has always been there every step of the doctoral way, not only for me, but for *generations* of massive doctoral cohorts. The care, administrative support and invisibilized labor she invests in every single student and their wellbeing makes a tremendous difference in students' lives, and I want to thank her for that. I also want to take a moment to acknowledge and extend my gratitude *to all the women working at ICTA* in (gendered) positions of administration, maintenance, communications and hospitality. They are often taken for granted, working in the shadows while the professoriate gets most of the visibility and credit. As the pillars of this institute, these women deserve more recognition (and better working conditions and salaries if I may say so). I have not had the pleasure of getting to know all of them, but I would like to name them in these acknowledgments: Cristina Durán, Àngels Peláez, Loli García Lucena, Maite Jiménez Batista, Cristina Martín, Montse Puigdomènech, Laura Sans, Gemma Suades, Vanessa Del Pino, Laura Jiménez, Encarna Poncela, Marta Viana, Gloria Gutiérrez, Veronica Colombo, Sílvia Martínez Sinibaldi, Marta Borrós, Isabel Lopera, Maica Nogales and Gloria Gutierrez. I want to thank them for all the work that they do. The ICTA institute and its research projects would not be able to exist without them.

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I also wish to extend my deepest solidarity (and empathy) to Silvia Binenti, Margot Borelli, Simona Getova, Evelise Pereira Barboza, Julia Muntanya Lòpez and Alice Thibaud, who are undertaking their doctoral theses at the moment. If I can cross this finish line, they certainly can too. I also want to tell them how much I appreciate our mutual support (deep from within our respective doctoral caves), and that I am grateful to have friends who *know* what it is like to undertake such a difficult endeavor. I wish them all the best for the rest of their Ph.D. journeys and the trailblazing (academic or not) careers that I am certain will follow from there.

I also want to thank Julia Muntanya Lòpez for playing an important eye-opening role in my life, for teaching me (often the hard way) that there are other forms of existing and relating in this world, and for inviting me into her life in and, unknowingly, setting up the conditions leading to my discovery of ICTA as the place where I would undertake my Ph.D.

Another person I want to extend my profound gratitude to is Dr. Brototi Roy, who has been part of this Ph.D. journey before it even began. I remember our never-ending conversations when we first met while I was attending the 2018 Summer School of Environmental Justice and Degrowth she was organizing. Brototi not only inspired me to join ICTA, but has also been part of my support system ever since. Similarly, I want to thank Dr. Ksenija Hanaček, whom I also met during that Summer School and played a key role in me considering ICTA. Furthermore, she was the first Balkan person I met in Barcelona, and always made me feel a little bit closer to home. I want to thank both of them for holding me throughout this program, helping me navigate its intricacies, and for being part of both my professional and personal life.

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incredibly proactive energy, and more importantly, her profound care for the people in her life have always been a tremendous source of inspiration. I also want to thank her for being the kind of person who I can embrace my most authentic self with and for continuously pushing me to take better care of myself.

Another order of gratitude is related to all the people and comrades in different activist groups, political circles and processes of articulation of alternatives. My entry point into this work came from my engagement with the international mobilization group of the *Association pour la Taxation des Transactions financières et pour l'Action Citoyenne*[2] (the Association for the Taxation of financial Transactions and Citizen's Action, ATTAC France) and the Systemic Alternatives[3] initiative in 2017. I want to extend my deepest gratitude to the following eye-opening and door-opening comrades without whom I would not be where I am today: Geneviève Azam, Isabel Bourboulon, Huayra Llanque, Christophe Aguiton and Jacqueline Balvet. I still feel humbled by their openness and their trust and I want to thank them for welcoming me into international leftist political circles I never dreamed I could access at such a young age and with so little experience. They clearly saw something in me that I did not at the time, and invested their time, energy and resources into my political growth (knowingly or unknowingly). I will always be grateful for their trust and support, and I hope I have been able to do them justice so far.

I also wish to thank my comrades of the Global Tapestry of Alternatives[4] (GTA), a process officially co-founded in 2019, which has always been one of the main political inspirations of

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this thesis (which interestingly started in parallel that same year, with the hopes it could strengthen such processes of articulation of alternatives). I want to thank the following people whom I am especially grateful to have met through the GTA: Dr. Vasna Ramasar, Shrishtee Bajpai, Valiana Aguilar, Patricia Botero, Ana Cecilia Dinerstein, Urvi Shah, Profesor Arturo Escobar, Ashish Kothari, Gustavo Esteva and Franco Augusto.

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There is a special group of radical feminists who are extremely dear to my heart, and without whom I would neither have been able to finish this Ph.D nor be the person I am today. I care

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[5] www.intervencionesdecoloniales.org

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Fully acknowledging the extent of my family's support would probably take another entire Ph.D. (so I will try my best to summarize). I first and foremost want to thank my mother, Zorica (Seka) Jelić. I would not be the person I am today without her. My mother made sure my brother and I both had access to quality higher education and that we could live a middle-class life (and all the privileges it entails). Her hard work (both productive and reproductive labor), her deep care for other people's wellbeing, her dedication to see her children thrive and her profound, unconditional love have shaped my own politics of care, love and friendship. I carry those ethics with me and live up to them every day, in everything that I do and everyone whom I am in relationship with. My mother is a true hero, and I will never be able to properly thank her for everything she has done for me and my family, but I will spend the rest of my life living up to what I learned from her, with the hope it will continue to make her proud.

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I hope you enjoy it.

Table of content

Chapter 1: Introduction: the pluriverse as a pathway beyond the civilizational crisis

"We are facing modern problems for which there are no longer modern solutions"

(Escobar, 2016: 15)

This thesis contributes to the debates on transitions towards the pluriverse (or as the Zapatista termed a "world in which many worlds fit"), as one of the pathways to move beyond the civilizational crisis the world has been experiencing. It departs from multiple points of concern, such as the siloed nature of the systemic alternatives (re-)emerging as a response to the multiple and differentiated consequences of this crisis, the lack of articulations between such alternatives in order to build interconnected alternative systems from below, and the way bridges are currently being built to connect them, which reproduce the system's oppressive logics in both theory and practice.

This thesis therefore seeks to explore how to strive towards a praxis of pluriversality that could support the weaving of systemic alternatives. Embracing a decolonial feminist approach, my liminal positionality and engagement in various political processes of articulation of alternatives and grassroots organizing, this thesis steps outside epistemic boundaries in what will consist of a pluriversal exercise of bridge-building across different geographies of resistance and dialogues with critical strands of literature absent from the debates on transitions to the pluriverse (Escobar 2020; Kothari et al. 2019; Beling et al., 2018; Demaria and Kothari, 2017; Escobar, 2015; Escobar, 2017a; Kothari et al., 2014; Lang et al., 2018; Mignolo, 2018; Paulson, 2018; Ziai, 2017). This political research project has been carried out with the hope it can shed more light on

the conditions that can help foster the imagination, recognition and articulations of peoples and worlds within a pluriverse. This first chapter sets the civilizational crisis as the context of the alternative pathways explored by this thesis, before introducing key terms such as systemic alternatives and putting forward some of the debates on transitions to the pluriverse in order to situate the thesis. It then provides an overview of the main research questions tackled by this thesis, before guiding the readers throughout the journey of this research project through a story-telling methodology that narrates the contextual, parallel developments, iterative thought processes and evolving political engagements underlying different chapters.

1.1. We are in the same storm, but we are not in the same boat: the context of the civilizational crisis

The world is currently experiencing a conjuncture of inter-connected economic, socio-environmental, health, (geo-)political and institutional crises happening at local, regional and global levels (Esteva and Escobar, 2017). The current context has been described in more ways than can be encompassed by this thesis. One example is "late-stage capitalism", first introduced by German economist Werner Sombart in the early 20th century, subsequently borrowed by Belgian Marxist economist Ernest Mandel in 1975, and coming back in fashion in mainstream leftist circles as a way of highlighting the crisis, contradictions, inequalities generated by the capitalist economic system. Such mainstream leftist conceptualizations of capitalism have been criticized for their failure to mention the nature of the system as *inherently racist* and the role of racism at the root of the current systemic crisis - leading Black radical thinkers such as Cedric Robinson and others to use the term "racial capitalism" to describe the current context (Robinson, 1983: xv; Johnson and Lubin, 2018; Davis, 2016; Wilson Gilmore, 2018). Others prefer to refer to the "Anthropocene", a term coined by the Dutch chemist and

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Nobel prize winner Paul Krutzen in the 2000s, to demonstrate the devastating impacts of human activities on the planet's ecosystems (Svampa, 2015). The Anthropocene, as the human dominance of Earth, has been criticized on the basis of its apolitical, ahistorical nature (as it implies all humans are involved in generating the climate crisis without differentiating the responsibility on the basis of race, class and gender or taking into account power relations), leading others to use the term "racial capitalocene" to describe the current period and account for the interrelatedness of racism and environmental degradation as well as the relations between colonialism, imperial dispossession and the imposition of a global capitalist order exploiting nature and people (Vergès, 2017; Gonzalez, 2020; Pulido, 2016). Decolonial thinkers prefer to talk in terms of "modernity/coloniality" a term that emerged in Latin America, to capture the historical and current silencing and genocidal practices that exclude, erase and kill other-than-Western knowledges, practices and people, and legitimize such practices by projecting a Western totalizing narrative that defines what should be considered a valid, legitimate reality (Kancler, 2020: 22; Icaza and Vázquez, 2017: 52; Verges, 2020; Espinosa Miñoso, 2022).

To capture the diversity of these different diagnoses, but also address some of their shortcomings (for instance in terms of presentism or universalism), this thesis will refer to the current context as a "civilizational crisis", to highlight that this is a crisis of a *Western civilizational model designed and imposed by the West*[6] *on the rest of the world for centuries since colonialism* (Escobar, 2016; Lang et. al, 2018; Gudynas, 2017; Lander, 2015; Escobar 2020). The reference to a civilizational crisis is also made to acknowledge that the current contemporary moment – often presented as unprecedented – does not differ from the much longer historical experiences

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[6] The "West" is considered as a plural (rather than monolithic) entity, inhabited by a multiplicity of dissenting voices and non-dominant Wests (Esteva and Escobar, 2017)

of indigenous people, women, people of color and/or queer people, whom have been living in a state of crisis for more than 500 years (at least) since colonialism (Lang et al., 2018: 263). This civilizational crisis is the result of a global societal and economic project based on interwoven structures of oppression such as:

- Cis-hetero-patriarchy: the dominance of men over women, the imposition of a binary system of gender erasing trans*[7] folks with heterosexuality as the norm (Lugones, 2008);

- Racism: the classification of bodies between superior and inferior based on racializing markers - with whiteness being privileged over non-whiteness (Gržinić, Kancler, and Rexhepi, 2020);

- Western Anthropocentrism: the centering of humans as the most important entities in the world, thereby justifying their dominance over and exploitation of nature (Vázquez, 2017);

- State-ism: states as the predominant political organizational form in society (with citizenship, borders, and nationhood as tools of control) (Boatcă and Roth, 2015);

- Able-ism: the discrimination and disposability of people with disabilities and the centering of able-bodied people in society (Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2022: 28);

- Capitalism as the dominant economic system (further explained below);

- Many other forms of discrimination, marginalization and exploitation based on religion, caste, tribe and age (Esteva and Escobar, 2017; Kothari et al., 2019: xxxii).

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[7] As Kancler explains: "The term "trans*" with an asterisk is being used recently as an umbrella concept to include many different gender expressions and identities, such as trans, transsexual, transgender, gender queer, etc. The asterisk emphasizes the heterogeneity of bodies, identities and experiences, which goes beyond the imposed gender binary social norms. Trans* is a concept introduced by its protagonists out of rejection of the terms coming from the pathologizing medical discourse. Asterisk as well points out that while our struggle is common we recognize that there is not just one interpretation of what does it mean to be trans, transsexual or transgender. Both terms, queer and trans* has to be re-thought from decolonial positionality." (Kancler, 2020: 17)

There are many debates not only about the definitions of these terms, but also about the ways in which these elements are interrelated and how that interrelatedness manifests itself in all spheres of life. This thesis does not seek to develop definitions or choose which definitions amongst the already existing ones are "more adequate". It acknowledges, recognizes and embraces the plurality of embodied readings and framings problematizing the current/contemporary political moment from specific geographical, body-political, onto-epistemic locations, as will be shown throughout the thesis. In understanding these elements as interrelated and contributing to the problem (the civilizational crisis), this thesis can try to offer multidimensional propositional solutions and alternatives to that problem (the pluriverse). While Black feminists highlight the intersectionality of different structures of oppressions (Hill Collins, 1997; Davis, 1981; Crenshaw, 1989), decolonial feminists prefer to talk about them as intermeshed (Lugones, 2003; Mendoza, 2010; Carastathis, 2019), while others such as Grosfoguel will prefer to use the notion of heterarchy, or a "entangled articulation of multiple hierarchies" (Grosfoguel, 2007: 218) . The commonalities and differences between intersectionality, intermeshings and heterarchy is further explained in the subsequent chapter on the theoretical framework. For now, this introduction acknowledges that the aforementioned structures of oppression are all interrelated in complex ways, and that using these elements together is consistent with a decolonial feminist approach taken throughout this thesis (as will also be explained in the theoretical framework).

Central to the civilizational crisis is the role of capitalism, an economic system based on the exploitation of Nature[8] and people along the lines of the aforementioned structures of oppression, for the purpose of capital accumulation and the benefits of a small elite. Despite the laundry-list

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[8] The N in nature is capitalized deliberately to move away from more utilitarian, instrumental meanings that view Nature as a natural resource to be exploited. Instead, Nature is understood as a living totality.

of different conceptualizations of capitalism, the term remains an extremely contested and complex notion to define (Cahill and Saad-Filho, 2017). This is partly due to the fact that the current system is co-constitutive and mutually interdependent with the crises it contributes to create, and it is constantly evolving through them (Moore, 2011). This is done not only by a supporting malleable ideology that reinforces the system's resilience in the face of the crises it generates, but also through the material basis and political forms fostering capitalism and allowing it to adapt over time (Marois and Pradella, 2014: 5).

Indeed, the civilizational crisis (as a crisis of racial, cis-hetero-patriarchal, modern, colonial, Western anthropocentric capitalism, amongst other things) has been accompanied by new forms of extreme violence in the social, economic, environmental and political spheres, and these aspects should remain central to the definition and analysis of the current system and its alternatives (Ziai, 2017). Materially, contemporary patterns of (re)production point to a significant increase in the commodification, marketization and exploitation of things hitherto not commodified. This process of "accumulation by dispossession" has been defined by Harvey as a way of dealing with the crises triggered by capitalism through the creation of new opportunities for capital accumulation – whether through new markets, investments, resources or labor opportunities (Harvey, 2004: 73). Today, this phenomenon can be illustrated by the expansion of the frontiers of extractivism, amongst other things, leading to increasing land dispossession, the militarization of territories and the destruction of nature as well as the livelihoods of peoples, especially indigenous and rural communities, women, and people of color from the Global South. The "global North" and "global South" are not only understood as geographical entities, but rather as metaphors allowing us to understand the power relations between the dominant segments in a society and the subaltern ones (acknowledging therefore the existence of "Souths"

in "Norths" and "Norths" in "Souths") (Esteva and Escobar, 2017). At this point, it is important to highlight that considering the interdependent and unequal nature of our globalized economies and societies, the consequences of this civilizational crisis are being felt on different scales, with people and ecosystems affected in common yet differentiated ways, along the lines of the aforementioned structures of oppression. To put it in more colloquial terms, *we are in the same storm but we are not in the same boat*. This is extremely important to keep in mind as we are searching for ways out/beyond this crisis.

Socio-environmentally, the civilizational crisis can be exemplified by the climate crisis, the intensification of extractivism, the destruction of ecosystems, lives, livelihoods and cultural heritages, huge biodiversity losses, and growing levels of CO2 emissions, amongst other things. The world has now reached 1.1 degrees celsius of planetary temperature rise which is already triggering unprecedented heat waves, fires, floodings, droughts, sea level rise, pandemics, "un-natural" disasters[9], food insecurity, housing insecurity and waves of environmental refugees across the world. The recently published sixth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reiterates that it is imperative to stay below 1.5 degrees celsius of temperature rise in order to ensure the sustainability of life on the planet (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2023: 35-38). Beyond 1.5 degrees, a point of no return will be hit, with limited chances of reducing rising temperatures due to self-reinforcing cycles leading to exponential surges in greenhouse gasses (provoked for example by the continuous melting of polar ice caps). In what the United Nations described as 'the decade of action', there is a limited window of time to hit the brakes and implement viable, sustainable and just solutions to decrease emissions and stay under 1.5°C , in order to mitigate the worst effects of the climate crisis, and to

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[9] Natural disasters occuring as a consequence of human economic activities

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ensure the long-term sustainability of life on Earth. However, the international community is failing to take timely and politically adequate actions to deal with the climate crisis and its consequences (Jewell and Cherp, 2019; Lamb et al., 2020). Instead, the current targets for 2030 set by policy makers and governments are likely to lead us to a 2.4°C to 2.7°C warming by the end of the century, which represents a death sentence for millions of more people and other species (Musić, 2021). Indeed, local communities from the Global South - especially women, people of color, trans*, youth, people with disabilities and frontline communities (such as indigenous people, land defenders, rural and poor communities) - have already been enduring the biggest brunt of the climate crisis, by either losing their lives, their cultures, their livelihoods and being forcefully displaced due to the climate crisis.

Politically and economically, the current crisis has been accompanied by new forms of extreme racist, patriarchal, transphobic, homophobic and classist violence in the social, economic and political spheres. The current contradictions of capitalism have generated a global recession, widening socio-economic inequalities, as well as the emergence and spreading of neo-fascism and new forms of authoritarianism throughout the world as the result of: 1) the global conjuncture of inter-connected economic, socio-environmental, (geo-)political and institutional crises; 2) the decomposition of neoliberal democracies and; 3) the co-opting of mass discontent by the far right (Saad-Filho, 2018). This current rise of neo-fascism is driven by a small elite exploiting the fractures of the neoliberal order and promoting radicalized forms of globalization and financialization to increase their power through conservative, nationalistic discourses. It is also characterized by an increasing use of surveillance, violence, repression and criminalization by the State, underlied with racist, homophobic, transphobic, sexist, xenophobic and islamophobic logics, required to maintain an unsustainable, crumbling system.

On the one hand, the current global authoritarian drift is further laying bare how the current system is based on destruction of Nature as well as the exploitation and disposability of people of color, women, trans* people, migrants, refugees, indigenous and rural communities, the working class and people living with disabilities. On the other hand, *it is highlighting the weakness of state and corporate power* whereby maintaining this unsustainable model increasingly requires the use of state violence, repression and criminalization of resistance movements (Ziai, 2017).

As such, this civilizational crisis should also be considered as an *opportunity* to undertake much-needed paradigmatic shifts, especially as we are witnessing the emergence, multiplication consolidation and articulation of different forms of resistance, resurgence[10] re-existence[11] and alternatives throughout the world (Esteva, 2014: 53). This is especially the case considering Nature represents a key terrain in the struggle against capitalism and the construction of alternatives. Socio-environmental conflicts are not only bringing about the possibility of building autonomous, self-sufficient, anti-capitalist spaces of resistance and re-existence through the defense of territories and life, they also represent *ontological* struggles in which environmental defenders produce knowledges and practices which have a deeply relational understanding of life as well as a different conceptualization of Nature (Escobar, 2015). The next subsection turns to the importance of making visible and weaving ties between such emancipatory,

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[10] As explained by Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, an indigenous Mississauga Nishnaabeg writer, musician, and academic "Indigenous resurgence, in its most radical form, is nation building, not nation- state building, but nation building, again, in the context of grounded normativity by centring, amplifying, animating, and actualizing the processes of grounded normativity as flight paths or fugitive escapes from the violences of settler colonialism. This resurgence creates profoundly different ways of thinking, organizing, and being because the Indigenous processes that give birth to our collective resurgence are fundamentally non-hierarchical, non-exploitative, non-extractivist, and non-authoritarian" (Simpson, 2016: 22-23)

[11] As a term generated from an epistemic South, re-existence goes beyond – and should be differentiated from – the eurocentric genealogy of resistance to power and domination, as it consists of practices that allow for the redefinition of life in conditions of self-determination and dignity (Albán in Walsh, 2017: 25)

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paradigm-redefining narratives and practices emerging out of the struggles against the capitalist, cis-hetero-patriarchal, racist, anthropocentric, caste-ist, statist, ableist system.

1.2. Introducing systemic alternatives and transitions to the to pluriverse

As explained previously, considering the inherent dialectical relations between capitalism and its contradictions, the current economic system is both co-constitutive and mutually interdependent with the crises it contributes to create (Marois and Pradella, 2014: 5). Put differently, capitalism constantly adapts to the crises it generates by evolving through them (Moore, 2011). In less abstract terms, this can happen when a crisis leads to a marginal restructuring of society that keeps in place most elements of the old system (Nilsen et al., 2013: 80). This can be done for example by a dominant class moderating oppositional forces by incorporating certain elements of the resistance into the state apparatus, while keeping the exploitative relations of production unchanged (Gramsci, 1971: 58-59). Finally, to secure the consent of subaltern classes, the ruling elite can also adopt the discourse of the opposition to present conservative reforms in the language of resistance movements - hence capitalism's malleable ideology.

One example that can be provided to illustrate such co-optation of radical projects is the mainstreaming of the alternative development approach (ADA). ADA emerged in the 1990s as a critique of development as market-based, economic growth, industrialization, westernization and consumerism (Escobar, 1992: 343). This paradigm considered development as empowerment, control and autonomy; with a focus on realizing basic needs, self-reliance, environmental sustainability and gender equality, as well as shifting the locus of change towards the local and interventions based on participation (Rahman, 1993). Despite ADA's contributions, it retained a binary thinking (for example in terms of modern versus traditional or science versus popular

knowledge), romanticized local change and omitted meso and macro level structures. It also used reductionist and monolithic approaches and categories with regards to the notion of community, culture (or "the poor") and lacked clear political agendas, methodologies, theories and epistemologies (Nederveen, 1998). ADA was described by Nederveen (*ibid*: 384) as "fuzzy to the point of hypocrisy because it sustains the overall rhetoric of development while suggesting the ability to generate something really different within its general aura". This points to ADA's main issue: its acceptance of development as a project (and that it should be done slightly differently). This led ADA to be straightjacketed and mainstreamed into development agendas and projects, disguised as more progressive because of their focus on participation and empowerment, all the while remaining liberal, reformist and carrying out business as usual (Escobar, 1992: 343).

Due to such tendencies of the hegemonic system to co-opt and hijack radical projects of resistance movements, it is essential to first explain what this research does *not* consider a systemic alternative. This thesis will not focus on projects which are located within the confines of the same system responsible for the current crisis and which fail to address its fundamental historical and structural roots (colonialism, capitalism, patriarchy, racism, cis-hetero-normativity, etc). These so-called mainstream approaches (or false solutions) include sustainable development, green growth, blue growth, eco-modernist solutions, climate smart agriculture, circular economies, ecosystem service trading, geo-engineering, smart cities and neo-extractivism, amongst many others (for thorough critiques of such false solutions see the numerous essays in the section "Universalizing the Earth: Reformist Solutions" of the Post Development Dictionary by Kothari et al., 2019).

Unsurprisingly, these false solutions are being advocated for by polluting industries (amongst others) which have been pouring millions of dollars on disinformation, propaganda and lobbying to mislead the public about the climate crisis (Laville, 2019). Worse still, the actors most responsible for the climate crisis are being offered a seat at the table to find solutions. Indeed, international policy spaces are increasingly experiencing the unbridled influence of corporate interests, known as corporate capture, with corporate actors pushing for harmful (but profitable) actions deceptively presented as environmentally sustainable (a tactic more commonly known as "greenwashing") (Anumo and Abelenda, 2021). These false solutions show what Vázquez described as "the falseness of novelty" (Vázquez, 2017: 87), and continue to operate under the logics of the current system that further commodify Nature and provide new opportunities for capital accumulation for the interests of a very small elite. Thus, these initiatives not only fail to tackle the root causes of the civilizational crisis; *they are further exacerbating it*.

Before diving into systemic alternatives (or real solutions), it is important to acknowledge the context-specific and contingent nature of the term "alternative". Politically, it would be neither possible nor desirable to set specific criterias to demarcate what is and what is not an alternative, which is why this research embraces a broader holistic framework when referring to systemic alternatives. The drive to create universal typologies and categories are part of a modernist and colonial way of thinking, as are the debates on the universality versus the pluriversality of these alternatives[12], all of which reproduce false binaries that this thesis seeks to go beyond, as will be explained in the theoretical framework. This rejection does not constitute a relativist stance that implies all knowledges are equal. As de Sousa Santos (2008: xlvii-xlviii) would say: "The epistemic diversity of the world is potentially infinite. There is no ignorance or knowledge in

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[12] For a review of these debates, see Gills and Hosseini (2022)

general. All ignorance of a certain knowledge, and all knowledge is the overcoming of a particular ignorance. There are no complete knowledges. [...] The relativity of knowledges is not synonymous with relativism [...]. As an epistemological problem, relativism is less about the criteria of validation than about the criteria of establishing hierarchies of validation or their absence [...] Relativism, as long as it is regarded as an absence of criteria for the hierarchies of validation, is an untenable position, since it makes impossible the very conception of a meaningful relation between knowledge and social change. If everything is equally valid, and equally valid as knowledge, all projects of social change are equally valid or (which is the same) equally lacking in validity."

The stance of this thesis on systemic alternatives is aligned with the Zapatistas' invitation to co-create a world in which many worlds fit, and avoid universalisms, fixed definitions, as well as the replication, idealization and imposition of anyone's revolutionary praxis (EZLN, Comisión Sexta, 2016: 66). Their goal is not to change the world by removing one totality and replacing it with another, but to articulate a multiplicity and heterogeneity of movements, communities and alternatives (Zibechi, 2015: 51). It is for each community to find its own emancipatory pathways, to build diverse, plural, radical, anti-systemic alternatives - and work together with others while respecting our differences, but always questioning through critical thinking (or as the Zapatistas would say "*caminar preguntando*"[13]) (Rodríguez Lascano, 2018: 459, Subcomandante Galeano, 2015: 214). The respect of our differences can be better understood through Audre Lorde's idea of non-dominant differences, as a way of recognizing and embracing differences between equals and, in doing so, to nourish our understandings of the world and strengthen our struggles within it (Lorde, 1980: 6).

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[13] asking as we walk

What will be referred to as alternatives in this thesis are initiatives which are critical of and *strive* to move beyond the inter-related structures of oppression of cis-hetero-patriarchy, capitalism, racism, anthropocentrism, ableism, caste-ism amongst others previously mentioned. The word "strive" is used deliberately as an invitation to avoid purist, essentializing and romanticized conceptions of alternatives. Indeed, rather than perfect monolithic entities, alternatives will be considered as complex, open-ended processes with their inherent paradoxes and contradictions (Icaza, 2017). **Systemic alternatives are based on *people's needs and the sustainability of life (in terms of Nature, our bodies and our communities)*** - as opposed to the incessant pursuit of profit and growth at the expense of Nature and peoples. While all these alternatives are context-specific, place-based and contingent, they often have common values and intentions such as working towards autonomy, the dissolution of hierarchies, practices of care, solidarity, direct or radical democracy, locally rooted communal webs, economies based on self-reliance, social justice as well as equity, cultural and knowledge diversity, ecological wisdom and the respectful co-existence with Nature, amongst many other things[14]. These radical, emancipatory alternatives (in all their plurality and diversity) include but are not limited to: degrowth, the commons (natural, urban, digital), *buen vivir*, (eco-)feminisms, agro-ecology, food sovereignty, energy sovereignty, radical ecological democracy, social and solidarity economies, cooperatives and worker-controlled workplaces, gift economies, environmental justice movements, eco-villages, intentional communities and transition towns (Kothari et al., 2019: ix). These alternatives are not abstract utopias but *concrete embodied realities which emerge within, yet are outside of the dominant system*, or as Black feminist scholar bell hooks would say "part of the whole but outside the main body" (bell hooks, 1984: xvii).

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[14] For a longer list of common values and practices, see the "Definition of Common Criteria for the Weaving of Alternatives" of the Global Tapestry of Alternatives: https://globaltapestryofalternatives.org/weavers:criteria.

While a wide range of scholarship has been increasingly bringing these alternatives to the forefront in order to offer viable solutions to the current crisis, it was claimed that these initiatives are often articulated in isolation and that very little efforts have been directed towards building bridges between them (Beling et al., 2018; Kothari, Demaria and Acosta, 2014). Such concerns have also been exacerbated in recent years by a growing dissolution of social fabric and the impacts of the global pandemic of COVID-19. Concerned with the seemingly isolated nature of these alternative projects, many scholars and activists have been advocating for transitions towards what the Zapatistas called "a world in which many worlds fit" (Paulson, 2018; Kothari et al., 2019: xxviii; Escobar, 2017a: xvi). This world in which many worlds fit has come to be known and presented in academic and activist circles as "the pluriverse". While having a long genealogy in the West, the topic of transitions has been more prominent in the past decade in both the Global South and Global North whether in academia, activist circles, International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) or grassroots communities. This has been the case so much so that Escobar (2015a) emphasized the phenomenon of an emergence of transition studies as a scholarly political domain, cutting across different fields (post-development, design studies, political ecology, ecological economics), economic sectors and spheres of life (agriculture, environment, energy, technology, culture, education, to name a few). Transitions, as he understands, emerge out of deep concerns for the perennity of life as well as the lack of timely politically adequate actions from existing institutions, and seek radical cultural, institutional, social, economic, political transformations (Escobar 2015b). They can also be equated to "paradigmatic shifts" (Shiva, 2008), a term this thesis employs interchangeably with transitions to avoid material-ideational binary thinking. Escobar does a thorough mapping of the most prominent "transition discourses" in the North (such as transitions initiatives, the commons,

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degrowth, great transformative initiatives, transition towns, etc.) which focus on post-growth, post-capitalism or post-materialism, and in the South (alternatives to development, *buen vivir*, the rights of nature) which focus on post-development, post-extractivism, relationality, re-communilization of social and ecological life (Escobar, 2015a; Escobar, 2015b; Escobar, 2017).

As will be explained in chapter 4 that engages more deeply with the debates on transitions to the pluriverse, this thesis posits that such transitions are not only discourses, but embodied alternatives and lived realities. It is also important to note that while this thesis touches upon topics connected to and relevant for design studies, engaging with design education, theory and professional practice falls outside of the scope of this research (for an overview on critique of design studies in relation to transitions, see Escobar 2017a, Escobar 2017b; Escobar 2020; Fry, 2017; Vazquez, 2017; Tlostanova; 2017).

Going back to the pluriverse, it is important to go beyond the vague, abstract understandings currently present in the literature as "a world in which many worlds fit" (Kothari et. al, 2019). While acknowledging the impossibility of defining the pluriverse (due to its very nature and essence), this introduction puts forward another overarching holistic framework to better understand the pluriverse while making its co-optation more difficult - all the while recognizing that the following approximation also represents one of many ways one can illustrate, sense and/or feel the pluriverse. Therefore, for the purpose of this thesis, the pluriverse will be broadly understood as complex, open-ended, embodied, pluri-cultural political horizons that can weave together alternative knowledges and practices, therefore co-creating a world in which *all* worlds, people and other-than-human beings fit. Breaking it down, the pluriverse represents a radically

different way of thinking about and enacting/embodying systemic change, in that it does not implicate or imply any universalist, mono-cultural, top-down, one-size fits all solutions. The pluriverse breaks away from development agendas and other violent historical and contemporary processes imposed by the West on the rest of the world, based on the linear pursuit of societal progress and economic prosperity, industrialization, market-based economic growth, modernization and consumerism (Shiva, 1994). The pluriverse is not simple, mono-cultural, binary or abstract. And more importantly, it is not something to be reified.

The pluriverse is neither a theory nor a concept, but a *radical, continuous, concrete and embodied political praxis and a horizon to walk towards*. This research follows Sara Motta's understanding of praxis as enfleshed, positioned, reflexive and prefigurative, to distinguish it from abstract, disembodied non-positioned thinking (Motta and Bennett, 2018; Motta 2021a; Motta 2021b). Praxis is understood as inseparable from and an integral part of theory (hence the reference to theoretical praxis and practical theory in this thesis), in line with what Mignolo calls *pensar/hacer* (thinking/doing) and what Escobar termed *senti-pensar* (thinking/feeling) (Mignolo in Palmero, 2014: 7; Escobar, 2016: 14). The reference to "weaving" alternatives together in this understanding of the pluriverse is not only used metaphorically, but methodologically. It demonstrates this thesis's attempt to bring together different strands of critical thinking, embodied knowledges and practices, movement experiences, political processes, conversations, emotions, ontologies, cosmologies and temporalities. As will be explained in the theoretical framework (chapter 2), weaving and bridge-building allow us to move beyond the separating technologies, logics and structures of the current system (which academia is complicit with) that establish fixed categories, false binarisms, onto-epistemic walls and disciplines that incarcerate

research under the pretense of specialization (as opposed to nurturing collective and pluriversal forms of knowledge cultivation) (De Jong et al 2018, xvi).

Pluriversal approaches consider the world as a web of radical interdependence in which systemic alternatives can be weaved together, not with the aim of scaling up, but scaling *out* in a multitude of localized rhizomatic alternative systems from below (Escobar, 2019). In an essay entitled "The Global Doesn't Exist" described by Escober as "bit counterintuitive", he wittily states: "there is no 'scaling up' to be achieved because there is no 'up' to be found" (*ibid*). In other words, pluriversal approaches go beyond the false binaries of local/global or micro/macro, and focus on horizontality and scaling out. This is done by nurturing networks of interconnect alternatives from below (with a focus on strengthening community resilience and relocalizing life) and decentralized forms of social organizing, where similar and simultaneous alternative processes seek to spread horizontally and create linkages between them, which in turn creates opportunities to effect change at broader, structural levels (Lang et al., 2018: 282).

Let us not forget to embrace a more embodied, sensorial approach to a world in which many worlds and people fit. I therefore invite the readers to stop reading and to take a moment to do the following meditative exercise if they wish to do so. To sit or lay down in a comfortable position, close their eyes, focus on their breath, and for a few minutes imagine what a pluriverse would *feel* like. The remainder of this section will be waiting in the following page.

Does the pluriverse convey a feeling of belonging, joy or camaraderie that comes from being part of an interconnected whole? Is it a feeling of safety, rust and acceptance that comes from coexisting within a pluriverse? Or perhaps it is also a feeling of discomfort, unease and tension that stems from such plural coexistence and articulation.

Moving back to the debates on transitions to the pluriverse, whilst the idea of the pluriverse as a political horizon capable of articulating a wide variety of radical alternatives on different, inter-connected scales can seem appealing and easily idealized, it also poses a number of challenging questions. Indeed one could ask: Whose worlds? How do they fit? Who/what makes them fit? Fit into what? This thesis is also based on the premise that the issue might not only be a lack of bridges between seemingly isolated alternative projects, but *the ways bridges are being built*. It therefore seeks to explore what kinds of bridges would be necessary to build and sustain a pluriverse. Simply put, how do we approach these transitions to the pluriverse? And how do we engage with, explore and enact these questions in theoretical praxis and practical theory without reproducing the oppressive logics of the current system we are striving to move beyond? This thesis now turns to the next subsection that introduces and fleshes out the main research question and three underlying sub-questions tackled by this thesis.

1.3. Main research questions

As shown in the previous subsections, this thesis departs from multiple points of concern. These include, but are not limited to: existing alternatives being articulated in silos, a lack of bridges connecting these alternatives, the unsustainable nature of the bridges currently being built, the fragmentation of movements as a consequence of the destruction of social fabric, the lack of political visions and imaginaries that go beyond the current system and the civilizational crisis it

engendered, as well as well the insufficient theoretical and practical attempted embodiments of pluriversal politics within and outside of academia. Considering such gaps in the literature and shortcomings in political processes, this thesis therefore focuses on the following main research question:

How to strive towards a praxis of pluriversality that can support the weaving of systemic alternatives?

This thesis addresses the main research question by exploring three sub-questions. The first-sub question tackles the main research question from a theoretical angle, by critically examining the existing literature on the pluriverse and providing learning possibilities to address its limitations. By focusing on *how decolonial feminisms contribute to the debates on transitions towards the pluriverse* this thesis offers a way forward for future scholarship to embody more pluriversal politis in theoretical practice. The second sub-question tackles the main research question from an empirical angle, and explores *how existing processes of articulations of alternatives are being carried out?* These first two sub-questions will help shed light on important limitations and considerations for both theoretical and practical attempted embodiments of pluriversal politics, while uncovering some missing parts of the debates on pluriversal transitions. One of such gaps is tackled by the third sub-question, which is dedicated to dialoguing on *how to prevent pluriversal political praxis from being co-opted and made devoid of its radicality?*

As claimed by Castoriadas (2013: 71), considering the magnitude and impacts of the current systemic crisis, it has become imperative to reinvent and rebuild other, more just and sustainable ways of living and organizing our societies, economies, and relationships (with ourselves, with each other and with Nature). Doing so requires stepping outside current epistemic boundaries

and recovering the capacity to (re-)imagine and co-create different realities and futures beyond oppressive structures and systems. This research project therefore strives to partake in such an exercise of radical political visioning and embodiment beyond the civilizational crisis. It is based on the premise that the pluriverse is an option amongst a plurality of other-than-modern solutions to the modern problems the world is currently facing in interconnected yet differentiated ways. As such, this thesis is concerned with not letting the pluriverse become yet another empty, fashionable academic term, co-opted by the system and made devoid of its original political meaning and radicality. The next subsection expands on these different research questions, as well as the main motivations behind this research project, the positionality from which it has been written and the journey towards and throughout this research, while introducing the structure of the thesis and preview of the chapters through a story-teling methodology.

1.4. Embarking on a journey leading to the pluriverse: a positioned preview of the chapters

This subsection is an invitation to embark on the journey that led to this research project and its unfolding. Using a story-telling methodology, it narrates the contextual parallel developments, iterative thought processes, political engagements and evolving positionality throughout the research, and especially underlying the chapters subsequent to the theoretical framework (chapter 2) and methodology (chapter 3). The focus on storytelling for this particular subsection is a deliberate one, as a powerful method of historically passing down knowledges in the forms of stories, and breaking away from the false neutrality, objectivity and rationality of mainstream academic research.

This research follows the footsteps of feminist scholars (such as Patricia Hill Collins, Gloria Anzaldúa and Sandra Harding) who highlighted the importance of standpoint and positioned epistemologies and theories that advocate for the recognition of people's location, and implication in colonial divides while cultivating positioned knowledges that are grounded in specific personal, historical, cultural, geographical, body-political, socio-economic and political contexts (Azarmandi, 2018; Harding, 2018: 39-40). Positioned epistemological contributions also constitute pathways to explaining and changing oppressive systems of power, whereby one can participate in systems of power and/or challenge them (Collins, 1977). Indeed, as highlighted by Sheik (2023: 232), positionality is "the basis of our knowledge claims; not merely our identities, but rather our positioning along the colonial difference and groundings in *relation* to others and the life of earth". The importance of relationality as an alternative pathway beyond the modern/colonial system and its relevance for the pluriverse will be explained in the theoretical framework (chapter 2).

While such an approach is bound to be criticized on the grounds of subjectivity and political bias, a decolonial feminist approach – as the one adopted in this thesis – argues that "truth", "objectivity" and "apolitcism" are but mere western, patriarchal, modernist constructions biasing the eurocentric hegemonic academic world. If everything is indeed political, all good scholarship requires the researcher to acknowledge their position with total transparency. This by no means prevents one from being critical of that very same position – on the contrary. If anything, self-criticism is a necessary tool to contribute to the cumulative learning of past, current and future struggles and to build theoretically-infused learning processes of acting within the world.

As everyone works within the intersections of multiple and differentiated forms of privileges and oppressions, it is essential to recognize not only our locations but also *our implications* in different sides of the colonial divides (Icaza and Vázquez, 2016: 69). In this sense, it is important to highlight that I write from a position of a privileged White, middle class, able-bodied person living as a migrant in a colonial Western European metropole (Barcelona, Spain). I am a second generation migrant from the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, a country and political project erased both geographically and epistemologically by Western imperialist forces, now shattered into different countries located in the "Other" invisibilized (Eastern) Europe, who fully embraced the model of liberal democracy and market-economy. I am also a queer person who is reckoning with a gender identity that is not located within the narrow, Western-imposed binary gender system. Following Kancler (2020), I will use the word trans* with an asterisk throughout this thesis as an umbrella term to highlight the multiplicity and fluidity of understandings and embodiments of gender expressions, identities and bodies that do not fit gender binarism.

I consider my position to be located in a liminal space of nowhereness (though always politically grounded), where I inhabit and crisscross multiple borders, insider/outsider spaces and bridge-building roles - all of which inform my life, my relationships, my politics, and my work. My research and activism have always been concerned with nurturing pluriversal political processes that can articulate alternatives, movements and people together. My focus on a world in which all worlds and people fit is certainly driven by a deeper desire to find a sense of belonging in a world in which I currently neither fit nor belong.

Along with my personal and political motivations, this thesis has been inspired by and based on my experiences as a decolonial, feminist activist-researcher and my participation in initiatives

that seek to identify, document and connect alternatives on local, regional and global levels. Therefore, this project also represents a space to reflect with and learn from (rather than 'study') existing theoretical and practical attempted embodiments of pluriversal politics. Following from there, it should be emphasized that this research does not aim to develop a unique totalizing alternative system. Rather, it seeks to step outside the current epistemic boundaries in what will consist of a pluriversal exercise of bridge-building across different geographies of resistance, different strands of critical thinking and my evolving subjectivity throughout this research. In other words, this research does not pretend to invent anything that does not already exist outside the academic world (independently of whether the movements and communities doing such work are identified, named, framed or "legitimated" by academia). Hence, rather than putting forward abstract theories and practices, this research project represents (at best) a demonstration of practical and active solidarity with everyone building systemic alternatives and all the political initiatives that seek to weave them together. It is written with the hope that some of its insights can inform ongoing and future attempts at building and weaving emancipatory struggles, alternatives, movements, communities and knowledges together, in order to generate transformative collective action and move towards much-needed paradigmatic shifts. This thesis is not written for the advancement of my political and/or academic career, but rather is meant to be a vessel to flesh out a broader, longer term pluriversal political vision based on and inspired by existing processes of articulation of alternatives.

The seeds of this research were planted alongside the anti-globalization movements in Argentina and the week of action organized against the 11th meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2017. The People's Summit – occurring in resistance to the WTO's neoliberal agenda and policies – hosted different forums showcasing many of the aforementioned systemic

alternatives as solutions to the current systemic crisis. As a young activist and recent graduate in critical development studies, witnessing first-hand the protagonists of alternatives I had only read about was mesmerizing. However, the powerful symbolism of the *physical concrete walls separating these forums (and therefore these alternatives)* was striking. Only one forum succeeded to organize in a transversal way to articulate these alternatives together: the Feminist Forum against Free Trade[15] - a transnational articulation of feminists, women workers, activists, trade unionists, migrants, indigenous women, afro-descendants, peasants, sex workers and queer people from the global South (Musić, 2018a). This transversal space of mutual exchange, learning and collaboration was also grounded in a critical reflection on the intersections of class, gender, disability, race, caste, age and sexual identity. As a result, it was not only the most radical forum of the People's Summit; *it also conveyed an unforgettable general feeling of inclusiveness and belonging* (one which I had rarely experienced before).

Following that ephemeral event, holding onto that feeling of belonging and keeping in mind both the silos between alternatives and the ways in which feminists from the Global South had broken them, I developed the initial proposal for this research project on synergies between systemic alternatives. This was done in parallel with joining other like-minded activists and intellectuals to envision, build and launch a process which came to be known as the Global Tapestry of Alternatives[16].

While scoping the literature, I came across the term "pluriverse" in the field of post-development and decided to dedicate this research to exploring pathways towards a world in which many

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[15] For more information about the Feminist Forum against Free Trade, see: https://dawnnet.org/publication/declaration-of-the-feminist-forum-against-free-trade-and-the-great-feminist-assembly/.

[16] https://globaltapestryofalternatives.org/index

worlds fit, as perhaps this could be a world in which I and many other human and other-than-human being and entities could fit into too. However, a first overview of the literature on the pluriverse neither conveyed that feeling of inclusiveness and belonging nor was grounded in an understanding of how multiple systems of oppressions are interrelated and co-constitutive – which led me to wonder whether post-development could learn from feminisms from the global South in the context of the debates around the pluriverse in order to foster the conditions to create more horizontal, inclusive and sustainable synergies/bridges between alternatives and movements. Or put more succinctly, I decided to first explore *how decolonial feminisms contribute to the current theoretical debates on transitions to the pluriverse*?

This question is tackled by the chapter 4 of this thesis entitled "Towards a Decolonial Feminist Pluriverse: Building Bridges Beyond Neocolonial Betrayals", which seeks to contribute to the recent debates around transitions to the pluriverse in the field of post-development through the lenses of feminist currents located onto-epistemologically from/in the margins. Departing from a concern that post-development approaches to the pluriverse display certain complicities with the modern/colonial system, the chapter argues that establishing more bridges between post-development and feminist currents from/in the margins can contribute to unearthing and addressing some neo-colonial continuities still present in the literature on the pluriverse. These include: a lack of intersectional approach, the presence of disembodied/abstract thinking as well as some universalistic tendencies – all of which are incompatible with the ethics and political horizons of the pluriverse as they contribute to the modern/colonial mechanisms of onto-epistemological erasure of pluriversality. To address these fallacies, the chapter delves into the learning possibilities offered by the intersectional, embodied and non-monocultural approaches of feminisms from/in the margins. In doing so, it hopes to warn future scholarship

against betraying the ethics of a pluriverse and shed light on the conditions that can help foster the imagination, recognition and articulations of alternative worlds and peoples within a pluriverse.

In parallel to writing chapter 4, I also participated in processes and spaces of articulation of social movements and alternatives, like the World Social Forums, which I considered as potential catalyzers and/or potential practical embodiments of the pluriverse. This was the case of the World Social Forum of Transformative Economies (WSFTE), a thematic World Social Forum and political process that attempted to build long-term, multi-scalar confluences of alternatives around the world to respond to the current civilizational crisis. The possible resonance of the WSFTE with the political horizons of the pluriverse led me to join and participate in the process as an organizer-participant-observer from December 2018 to July 2020. In other words, I sought to explore what a pluriverse in practice could perhaps look and feel like. However, throughout my involvement in the process of organizing this Forum, I could not help but notice similar neo-colonial continuities that were present in the literature on the pluriverse.

This led to the writing of chapter 5 entitled "Decolonial Feminist Tribulations within the World Social Forum of Transformative Economies" as an empirical case study resulting from an experientially grounded, embodied and collective reflection of the WSFTE process, which sought to explore *how existing processes of articulation of alternatives are being carried out?* Chapter 5 aims to reflect with and learn from the process of the WSFTE through the lenses of feminist currents located onto-epistemologically from/in the margins in the context of the debates around transitions to the pluriverse. It examines the cultural, ideological and organizational aspects of the WSFTE and their mis/alignments with the pluriverse, before

delving into the learning possibilities offered by feminisms from/in the margins and the experiences of a Feminist Confluence to help unearth and address these neo-colonial continuities. The lessons learned from this experience aim to support ongoing and future attempts at weaving alternatives and movements together in more sustainable and pluriversal ways.

To recapitulate, chapters 4 and 5 are dedicated to scoping the existing literature on the pluriverse and analyzing a political process that sought to connect alternatives around the world in long-lasting webs of inter-connected confluences. Both chapters unearth the neo-colonial continuities present in theory and in practice and offer possible ways of addressing those tensions through decolonial feminist dialogues. The theoretical and practical misalignment of the literature and WSFTE process with pluriversal politics led me to think that an important part of the debate was missing: *that of the underlying political conditions necessary to build and sustain bridges within a pluriverse (in other words the "how")*. This is tackled by chapter 6 "Embodying Pluriversal Politics against the Whitening and Co-optation of a World in Which Many Worlds Fit".

The reflections underpinning chapter 6 emerged throughout my continuous involvement in and conversations with local anti-racist movements in Barcelona. Both disillusioned by the experience of the WSFTE and geographically confined during the pandemic, I decided to retreat to more geographically rooted, local forms of organizing in 2020 and joined a queer, migrant, transfeminist, anti-racist collective in Barcelona called the Center for Critical, Combative, Transfeminist, Anti-racist Interventions (*Taller de Intervenciones Criticas Transfeministas*

Antiracistas Combativas, t.i.c.t.a.c)[17]. This collective works through border thinking, embodied politics and dissident research to dismantle racist, transphobic, eurocentric, patriarchal systems, structures and practices, while imagining radical transformative horizons and acting towards social change.

The distinctions between the politics of this collective and that of White eurocentric leftist transnational political spaces I had been a part of could not be starker. *Had I been looking for pluriversal pathways in the wrong places?* Throughout my theoretical and practical learnings from and engagements with this collective and anti-racist struggles in Barcelona and Spain, I came to be confronted with the remnants of my own internalized eurocentrism which not only led me to see the pluriverse as something to be reified (as opposed to a concrete political praxis to embrace and a horizon to walk towards); it also made me overlook the *concrete material basis of a world in which many worlds fit*, by falling into the trap of a falsely idealized horizon with purist, linear conceptions of the pluriverse and its construction.

As the engagements in anti-racist struggles continuously push the boundaries of my own Whiteness and eurocentrism, the point of departure of the rest of the research shifted towards the enfleshed experiences of cross-generational violence by White supremacy, coloniality, and other structures of oppression (instead of abstract, disembodied thinking reproducing empty, idealized rhetorics of the pluriverse). This is how chapter 6 comes to engage with Black marxisms and Black feminist marxisms. It also seeks to reclaim the pluriverse from the clutches of White eurocentric academia by acknowledging, honoring and making visible the Zapatista indigenous genealogies behind a world in which many worlds fit (which academia has re-appropriated and

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[17] www.intervencionesdecoloniales.org

termed as "the pluriverse"). Chapter 6 therefore also focuses on Zapatismo, and gives space to the context, analysis and embodied experiences that led the Zapatistas to extend the radical political invitation that the pluriverse is. In doing so, this research hopes to avoid falling into the trap of tokenizing and idealizing phrases such as "a world in which many worlds fit".

Finally, it is also important to note that chapter 6 was also written in parallel with my geographical, body-political, and genealogical re-rooting in the territory and political cultures of former Yugoslavia. This process not only stemmed from my search for belonging, but also from the need to honor my genealogical and politico-cultural positionality. As I journaled before my departure: "*How can I speak from where I stand if I do not know where I am from?*". Therefore, my concrete, personal, political reacquainting in what used to be former Yugoslavia as a second generation migrant can also be mirrored in that chapter's attempts to engage with decolonial feminist thinking from the region.

Chapter 6 explores ***how to prevent pluriversal political praxis from being co-opted and made devoid of its radicality?*** It brings decolonial feminist and antiracist perspectives to argue for the need to embody positioned pluriversal politics - as opposed to abstract, disembodied, universalistic thinking - and to recognize the immeasurable pathways leading towards pluriversal political horizons. This chapter therefore partakes in a pluriversal exercise by bringing together three strands of critical literature: Zapatismo, Black marxisms, Black feminist marxisms, and decolonial feminisms from Eastern Europe. It first explores their differentiated, yet interconnected, embodied readings, experiences and origins of the current systemic crisis, before putting forward the positioned responses, struggles and alternatives against these different manifestations of the systemic crisis - such as autonomy, reparations and abolition - and their

implications for shaping pluriversal political strategies that do not reproduce neo-colonial continuities. In doing so, chapter 6 seeks to prevent further idealization, co-optation and instrumentalization of radical pluriversal politics by White eurocentric academia while exploring some important considerations to take into account in the quest to advance towards more pluriversal politics, pathways and horizons.

1.5. Summarizing the overall structure of the thesis

To summarize, this research is informed by my liminal positionality inhabiting multiple borders, geographies, insider/outsider spaces and bridge-building roles. It is located at the intersection of my decolonial feminist research and activism, both of which are concerned with nurturing more accountable, horizontal, pluriversal political processes that can articulate alternatives, movements and people together, within a world where all worlds and people fit. This stems from the need to nurture radical political projects that can open pathways beyond the current civilizational crisis and a desire to find a sense of belonging. Having set the context and introduced key concepts of this study as well as the journey to and throughout this research, chapter 2 provides the readers with the theoretical foundations underpinning this study. More specifically, it introduces modernity/(de)coloniality and decolonial feminisms as the underlying theoretical and practical foundations of this study, as well as their implications in terms of practicing epistemic disobedience and refusal as research. Finally, it introduces the strands of critical literature this thesis engages with: post-development, social movement studies, feminisms from/in the margins and Black radical thought. Chapter 3 sets methodological intentions rooted in decolonial feminist research methods and anti-oppressive action-research methods, as well as specific methodological considerations for chapter 4, 5 and 6. Chapter 4 examines the existing literature

on the pluriverse and provides insights as to how to approach the pluriverse in theory in more politically coherent ways through the lenses of feminist currents onto-epistemologically located in the margins. Chapter 5 reflects with and learns from the case of a global process of articulation of alternatives, the extent to which it resonated with the political horizons of the pluriverse and how decolonial feminisms can contribute towards addressing potential misalignments. Chapter 6 lays the foundations of an embodied pluriversal political praxis by putting forward some important considerations and implications when advancing towards more pluriversal political horizons. Finally, chapter 7 encompasses a discussion on the findings and contributions of this research, their relevance for academic and activist circles, future areas of action-research to be explored, as well as some closing reflections and offerings.

Before moving on to the next chapter, the readers should be informed about the format of this thesis. This thesis could unfortunately not take the shape of a monograph. Instead, following a tradition of the Ph.D. program hosting this thesis, what follows is a hybrid version between a monograph and a compilation of yet-to-be published articles. While this regrettably implies some degree of repetition and overlap throughout this thesis, chapters 4, 5 and 6 are meant to be read as academic articles (even if they have been renamed as chapters for the purpose of this thesis), while chapters 1, 2, 3 and 7 have been written to contextualize, ground, and weave these three articles together.

Chapter 2: Laying the decolonial feminist theoretical and practical foundations of this study

"Feminist and decolonial engagement also share an uneasy and ambivalent relation to the institutional context of the university. Neither part of established disciplines, they have recognized the way in which disciplines can discipline, exclude, and constrain thought by adhering to a monolithic and monocultural disciplinary canon and strict regimes of scholarly recognition" *(De Jong and Icaza, 2019: xiv)*

This section aims to equip the readers with the theoretical "toolkit" informing this thesis. It first introduces modernity/(de)coloniality and decolonial feminisms as the underlying theoretical and practical foundations of this study. It then turns to the implications of such foundations in terms of epistemic disobedience and refusal. Finally, it puts forward the strands of critical literature this thesis engages with: post-development, social movement studies, feminisms from/in the margins and Black radical thought.

2.1. Modernity/(de)coloniality

The theoretical framework of this research is based on the premise that European and North-American thinking maintains a hegemonic position in the academic world which is actively silencing popular knowledges and experiences from the Global South. The current position of a dominant West as the hegemonic producer of knowledge was established during colonialism and the manufacturing of inferiority based on gender, race and tradition

(Castro-Gómez and Grosfoguel, 2007: 20-21). This duality between inferior and superior beings, irrationality and rationality, nature and culture, primitive and civilized, men and women, modern and traditional was used to normalize and legitimize certain forms of viewing the world (i.e. that of the West) whilst silencing, destroying or subordinating the worldviews, knowledges and practices of colonized peoples – considered "irrational", "traditional" and "savage" (Cox et al., 2017; De Sousa Santos et al., 2008: xvix). The position of the West as the sole and most legitimate producer of universal knowledge was consolidated throughout the centuries and illustrates the continuation of colonialism as a social relationship associated with specific forms of knowledge and power, as process defined by Peruvian sociologist and decolonial thinker Anibal Quijano as *colonialidad del poder* (the coloniality of power). Coloniality represents the historical and current concrete practices that exclude, silence, erase and kill other-than-Western knowledges, practices and people (Quijano, 2007: 94). Coloniality operate on multiple different levels and spheres of our lives, whether "in the spheres of the economy (appropriation of space, exploitation of labor, control of natural resources), the control of authority (institutions, army), the control of gender and sexuality (family, education), the control of subjectivity and knowledge (epistemology, education, formation of subjectivity) as well as the control of Nature" (Kancler, 2020: 22).

One of the repercussions of this coloniality of power, amongst many others, is the production of eurocentric, hegemonic knowledge structures. Eurocentrism is not the exclusive cognitive perspective of Europeans; it is the cognitive perspective of all those living under its hegemony. Eurocentrism was produced throughout the centuries by the euro-centered world of colonial and modern capitalism as a way of consolidating Western supremacy by normalizing certain forms of knowledge – such as science, modernity and rationality – whilst suppressing other forms of

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knowledges and the groups associated to these knowledges (Icaza and Vázquez, 2017: 52). For example, as claimed by De Sousa Santos: "scientific knowledge however supposedly universal is almost entirely produced in the North and however neural, promotes the interests of these countries" (De Sousa Santos, 2004: 13). Eurocentrism emerges out of the intellectual imperialism and hegemony of modernity, positing Eurocentrism as universal instead of a modality located historically and ethnocentrically, and imposed on others through colonialism (Fry, 2017: 18-19). Through colonial violence, conquest and genocide, modernity became imposed as the universal reality and modus operandi since 1492. Vázquez explains how in doing so, modernity is necessarily sustained by a double negation, one that erases/excludes/destroys other-than-Western knowledges, practices and worlds, before concealing that erasure in order to strengthen the legitimacy of modernity's universalism, which in turn feeds into coloniality (Vázquez, 2012: 241). This negation is established through processes of classification, to legitimize the extraction, consumption and exploitation of the people and nature constructed as inferior, underdeveloped and/or disposable, leading to what Vázquez calls "worldlessness" and "earthlessness" and the obliteration of everything and everyone that the modern/colonial order views as alterities or commodities (Vázquez, 2017: 78). Meanwhile, the discourses of modernity, positing the West as civilized and superior justifies its interventionism as seemingly benevolent and salvatory throughout the centuries, as shown by the infamous poem "The White Man's Burden" written by Rudyard Kipling in 1897 to morally justify White imperialism and supremacy. Such discourses are still very much upheld by corporations, governments, research institutions and other actors in the name of progress, futurity, and scientific innovation, all the while actively denying that modernity rests on the foundations of genocidal violence, mass death, destruction, colonialism and imperial expansion (Mignolo and Vázquez, 2019: 2, Vázquez, 2017: 83). This is perfectly

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exemplified by the rise of false solutions, techno-fixes and scientific utopias mentioned in the previous chapter, to respond to the civilizational crisis generated by modernity/coloniality which, while disguised as solutions, only further aggravate the destruction of ecosystems, communities and other-than Western heritages and ways of inhabiting the world, thereby actually contributing to worldlessness and earthlessness (Vázquez, 2017: 87).

Simply put, modernity was able to posit itself as a totality through the erasure, negation of erasure, practices of coloniality (Vázquez, 2012: 241). This sheds light on how coloniality is sustained within a dual matrix of power by the control mechanisms of modernity – the totalizing narrative projected by the Western civilizational project – which defines what should be considered a valid, legitimate reality – thereby legitimizing the exclusionary, silencing and genocidal practices of coloniality (Icaza and Vázquez, 2017: 52). Modernity and coloniality therefore constitute two sides of the same coin with both mechanisms being interrelated and feeding into each other (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018: 23). The mechanisms coloniality and modernity are twofold: they promote one particular form of knowledge (that of the West) and silence other counter-hegemonic narratives and practices – which in turn, feeds the TINA (there is no alternative) narrative and further legitimizes the current system.

The pluriverse, because of its acceptance, respect and weaving of a plurality of other-than-modern worldviews, knowledges and practices, can constitute a response to the processes of erasure of the modern/colonial system (Escobar, 2016a). This is especially the case as today's civilizational crisis and the incapacity of the Western universalist model to offer viable solutions to the current crisis has led to the emergence of decolonial currents of thinking and the increasing recognition that we need responses based on epistemological and ontological plurality

instead of monocultural, universalizing, one-size-fits all responses such as the ones promoted and imposed by Western modernity (Icaza and Vázquez, 2017: 49). As Escobar puts it succinctly: "We are facing modern problems for which there are no longer modern solutions" (Escobar, 2016: 15). This study is based on the premise, intuition and hope that the pluriverse could be an other-than-modern, other-than-Western solution (amongst many other solutions) that could catalyze a plurality of onto-epistemic responses to go beyond the civilizational crisis and the systems that generated it.

While modernity and coloniality are two sides of the same coin or two "moments" (Vázquez, 2012: 243), decoloniality represents a third moment, and "appears in between modernity/coloniality as an opening, as a possibility of overcoming their completeness" - hence the use of modernity/(de)coloniality (MDC) as a single concept (Mignolo and Vazquez, 2019: 2). The modernity/(de)coloniality project was created in 1998 in South America by activists and scholars drawing from centuries of struggles against colonialism and its continuities[18] to articulate a decolonial critic to unveil the false universalism of modernity and the violence of coloniality. Decoloniality stems, thinks and acts from "the locations of those whom are excluded and marked by the colonial scar" (Palmero et al., 2014: 17). It seeks to identify and undo the hierarchical structures of race, gender, cis-hetero-patriarchy, caste, disability and class intertwined with(in) and constitutive of global capitalism and Western modernity (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018: 15). It is considered *an option amongst a plurality of options* – rather than a paradigm or grand theory – in order to avoid becoming another hegemonic project (Icaza and Vázquez, 2017: 49).

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[18] A thorough, well-document trajectory of the MDC project can be found here: https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/document/obo-9780199766581/obo-9780199766581-0017.xml.

The task of decoloniality is to unveil the destructive mechanisms of modernity/coloniality as well as to unearth, retrieve and make visible the radical, interrelated multiplicity of worlds that have been/are being erased. As Vazquez (2017: 86) explains, the decolonial option seeks to retrieve/rebuild the relations that hold alternative trajectories of hope in their other-than-Western ways of inhabiting the world, in relation to the Earth, community, bodies, human and other-than-human beings and entities: "There is no possibility of an ethical life, of intercultural justice without a radical questioning of modernity's monopoly over the real and coloniality's erasure of relational worlds. Time and again, the decolonial comes under the sign of the return, of healing, of remembrance and liberation. It is a radical challenge to the metaphysics of presence, to the artifice of modernity. It is radical because it takes its root in the voices, the modes of being in the world, the worlds of meaning that have been denied the right to exist, that have been erased, that have been denigrated".

Decoloniality not only aims to challenge Western rationality as the only possible totalizing framework of existence, analysis and thought by making visible other-than-Western perspectives, worldviews, knowledges and practices actively produced as invisible. Decoloniality also promotes *dialogue as an epistemic option* and seeks to build bridges with alternatives from the 'Global North' through horizontal, open intercultural dialogues (Mignolo, 2018) - hence the interest in approaching the political horizons of the pluriverse through a decolonial perspective. However, it is important to also outline the shortcomings of decoloniality and how these can be addressed, as will be explained in the next subsection on decolonial feminisms.

2.2. Decolonial feminisms as epistemic disobedience

Decolonial feminist philosopher Maria Lugones articulates a critique of Quijano's concept of coloniality and how his conceptions of gender and sexuality are eurocentric and fall into the traps of reproducing binaries, with the idea of sex and gender as natural (as opposed to being socially constructed) and heterosexuality as the norm (Lugones 2008). Instead, she introduced the concept of "the modern/colonial gender system" as a way of explaining that, the coloniality of power is co-constitutive of the modern/colonial system of gender which led to the colonial imposition of gender as a category and heterosexuality as the norm – both of which are deeply entwined with race – which was used to establish a system of societal hierarchy (Kancler, 2020). Therefore, a decolonial *feminist* perspective must consider race, gender and sexuality in its understandings of the mechanisms of modernity/coloniality, and highlight how different structures of oppressions manifest themselves as intermeshed and co-constitutive of the current system. Oppressions are considered intermeshed (as opposed to "intersecting" or "interlocking") to avoid reproducing socio-ontological logics of purity, separation and unitary, monolithic categories (race, gender, class) that erases what Lugones defines as "curdled, impure, category-transgressive, border- dwelling, mestiza subjects" (Lugones in Carastathis, 2019: 85).

Furthermore, decolonial feminist currents offer to shift the perspective of knowledge produced from abstract, disembodied positions to historical, embodied/incarnated experiences situated in our everyday lives, bodies and territories (Álvarez and Coolsaet, 2020). Reflecting on the similar but differentiated impacts of modernity/coloniality, they especially highlight the importance of knowledges produced by women, women of color, indigenous communities, trans* and queer

people, all the while aiming to undo practices and discourses reproducing the processes of modernity/coloniality (Millán, 2014: 9).

Referring to decolonial *feminisms* in the plural rather than the singular is done deliberately to acknowledge and embrace the plurality and richness of epistemologies and ontologies emerging from the everyday lives, experiences, bodies and territories of people in the margins who resist multidimensional forms of oppressions. It is also an intentional critique of the universalism and essentialism of the currently hegemonic eurocentric, White, bourgeois feminism which fails to acknowledge (let alone tackle) the modern/colonial gender system and the intermeshing of different forms of oppression within it (Espinosa Miñoso, 2022: 155). Espinosa Miñoso defines this phenomenon as "*racismo de genero*" (gendered racism) upheld by White bourgeois feminisms: "the impossibility of recognizing their place of privileged enunciation within the modern-colonial matrix of gender, an impossibility that follows from their refusal to question and abandon this place at the cost of 'sacrificing', diligently making invisible, the point of view of 'women' on a lesser scale of privilege, that is, the impoverished racialized within a heterosexual order" (*ibid*: 159). Decolonial feminisms position themselves against what Black decolonial feminist Françoise Vergès termed "femoimperialism", a phenomenon which weaponizes women's rights in the service of the neoliberal capitalist, racist, misogynistic, homophobic, ableist, transphobic and anthropocentric system and its processes of accumulation (Vergès, 2021: 17).

Decolonial feminisms therefore represent a profound epistemic disobedience against a system generating social classifications and categories of oppression imposed through an imperialist colonial project (Espinosa Miñoso, 2022: 152). Indeed, they recognize the *plurality* of

epistemologies emerging out of the interconnection and co-constitution of different struggles within the current matrix of oppressions, by making visible, problematizing and inter-relating different situations based on gender, class, race, caste, age, ability, religion and sexual orientation (Lopez Najera, 2014: 112). They embrace a multidimensional approach that does not generate division or place a particular struggle above another, but rather account for "a totality of social relationships" (Vergès, 2021: 20) - hence the interest of approaching the pluriverse from a decolonial feminist perspective. Indeed, decolonial feminisms respect the particularities of different contexts whilst finding points of convergence between them in transversal, inter-relational ways and can articulating together alternatives based on care and the sustainability of life with the aim of dismantling all structures of oppression (Espinosa Miñoso et al., 2014: 32). This could allow to weave together a plurality of alternatives and movements in just, sustainable and politically coherent ways that do not reproduce the anti-pluriversal logics of the modern/colonial system.

Decolonial feminisms are an essential inspiration to this project because their positioned, transversal and inter-relational approaches offer ways of fostering constellations of knowledges and practices that are grounded in the concrete everyday lives, experiences, bodies and territories of subaltern movements and communities. They can therefore guide us whilst navigating the complex journeys towards more pluriversal horizons filled with uncertainty, diversity, contradictions, dynamism and tensions. Decolonial feminisms allow us to imagine new ways of theorizing and generating transformative collective action that can ensure the sustainability of life whilst decolonizing knowledge and power, while offering powerful, contingent ways to respond to modernity/coloniality. This is because of the centrality of positionality, their understanding of oppressions as intermeshed, the importance of care and affection, the

recognition and articulation of knowledges and practices hitherto silenced (especially those of women, women of color, indigenous women and queer people from the Global South), the proposals of alternatives based on care and the sustainability of life in order to ensure a viable future for all living beings - all of which allows for the imagination, recognition and articulation of other worlds within a pluriverse (Escobar, 2017a: 65).

Such feminist perspectives are also necessary because they highlight the nexus between the exploitation of Nature and the domination of women – especially women of color and indigenous people – and do not dissociate the socio-environmental crisis from processes of colonial, racist, patriarchal and anthropocentric domination. By considering the interdependence between all living beings and Nature, they place care and the sustainability of life at the center of their alternative narratives and practices. This is especially important because many systemic alternatives emerge out of socio-environmental conflicts, thus making Nature a key terrain in the struggle against capitalism and development. Indeed, socio-environmental conflicts not only bring about the possibility of building autonomous, self-sufficient, anti-capitalist spaces of resistance and re-existence through the defense of territories and life; they also represent *ontological* struggles in which environmental defenders produce knowledges and practices which have a deeply relational understanding of life as well as a different conceptualization of Nature (Escobar, 2015).

Considering feminist decoloniality embraces dialogue as an epistemic option, this study seeks to build bridges throughout the research between different strands of critical thinking and other non-Eurocentric feminisms committed to dismantling the matrix of multiple oppression, to better understand how to pave the way(s) towards more pluriversal political horizons. The questions as

to whom this study enters in dialogue with or not is addressed in the next subsection on boundaries and research as refusal.

2.3. Exercising boundaries: a note on research as refusal

This thesis follows the footsteps of trailblazing indigenous, Black and queer scholars such as Smith (1999), Campt (2019), Tuck and Yang (2014a, 2014b), Sheik (2023), Moten and Harney (2014), amongst many others, who problematized research as it is currently being carried out because of its complicities with and reinforcements of modern/colonial oppressive systems and who, by refusing to engage with modern/colonial forms of doing research, developed other-than-modern approaches. Their refusal began with: "a recognition that some communities - particularly Indigenous, ghettoized, and Orientalized communities - are over-coded, that is, simultaneously hyper-surveilled and invisibilized/made invisible by the state, by police, and by social science research" (Tuck and Yang, 2014b: 811), and departs from the premise that currently "social science research cannot be ethical, meaningful or useful for the individual or community being researched" (*ibid*: 812). Refusal was also introduced in the context of Black visuality, as a rejection of the racist status quo tailored for the White supremacist gaze (Campt, 2019). It is a refusal to engage along the unjust terms dictated and imposed by the oppressive system that silences, erases and kills those in the margins because of who they are. As Campt claimed it is: "a refusal to explain, a refusal to capitulate, a refusal to be anything else than who we are, even at the cost of death" (*ibid*: 86). Other examples of refusal involve: refusing to make claims when "claiming is an act of possessing, of making property, of enclosure", refusing to disclose "some forms of knowledge that the academy doesn't deserve" (*ibid: 813*) or recognizing

that research might not actually lead to the changes and improvements we wish to see in the world (Tuck and Yang, 2014b: 813-814).

Refusal is neither a negative nor a passive force, it is generative of other possibilities, or as Campt (2019: 83) would say, it is a "creative source of disorderly power to embrace the possibility of living otherwise". By refusing to do research in the ways dictated by White eurocentric capitalist academia, that refusal generates dissonance that allows us to unlock the creative potentialities of other ways of being, thinking and feeling with/through research. As Tuck and Yang explained, refusal is not a passive disengagement and rejection research, but an attempt to make research less violent, whereby refusing and questioning leads one to generate more ethical, human ways of doing research (Tuck and Yang, 2014a: 289).

As outlined in Harney and Moten's work on the undercommons (2014: 6:), when we refuse, we do not know what lies ahead: "We cannot say what new structures will replace the ones we live with yet, because once we have torn shit down, we will inevitably see more and see differently and feel a new sense of wanting and being and becoming". Sheik (2023: 229) outlines that by practicing refusal and "using our complicity in the university as an entry point, we start to open up space not only to challenge the extreme inequalities, logics of extractivism and accumulation within research practice, the university and society; but to also create the possibilities for radical alternatives".

This thesis exhibits two refusals as points of departure. The first refusal is concerned with not engaging with eurocentric epistemologies and ontologies. While the intention is clear cut, the practice of it is less so. In this sense, my first refusal is perhaps a good illustration of the multidimensionality and complexities of refusal. The limits of my first refusal can be found in

the compromises and negotiations (figuratively and literally) that marked this Ph.D. journey, which sometimes managed to push and break the boundaries, and at other times had to reluctantly give in. The remnants of these tensions and the contradictions between my words and my actions can be found throughout this thesis, if the readers pay close enough attention.

Chapter 4 and 5 are critical interventions from decolonial feminisms in post-development and social movement studies, which exhibit signs of neo-colonial continuities that are antithetical to pluriversal politics as they contribute to ontological and epistemological erasure. The only reason this thesis engages with such strands is to articulate decolonial feminist critiques to eurocentric leftist progressive thinking. These critiques are made not in punitive, destructive ways but rather, as Motta (2016) described, in a way that is caring (but nonetheless critical) and that is part of an affirmative, prefigurative decolonial epistemological praxis. Decolonial feminisms offer learning *possibilities* to these eurocentric strands. Whether eurocentric leftist scholarship decides to embrace them is up to its integrants. The refusal underlying chapter 4 and 5 is difficult, not only because it implies not giving into the pressures of neoliberal academia, but also because (I reluctantly acknowledge this) a part of me *wanted* to engage with these fields, as I believed (quiet naively and eurocentrically myself at the beginning of this journey) that they could contribute to advance towards more pluriversal political horizons. I am therefore simultaneously resisting a White savior's urge to "fix" or "improve" these fields. It is my hope that, as I engage with different academic and activist circles throughout this research, the readers understand better the dilemmas underpinning this thesis when witnessing some of its tensions. Refusal then, also represents *a continuous exercise of setting boundaries*, which takes time and practice to cement. The fruits of my boundary-setting efforts can perhaps best be exhibited in chapter 6,

where a deeper dialogue takes place only between epistemologies and ontologies located outside the colonial matrix of power.

I am unapologetic about the complex stances of refusal in this thesis. After all, scientific knowledge as settler colonial knowledge has been refusing, constraining, delegitimizing and erasing other forms of knowledge for centuries while presenting itself as universal and objective to be one of the vehicle modern/colonial (Tuck and Yang, 2014a: 301). In light of this, it seems only right if, as Harney and Moten (2014: 24) eloquently said in the context of genocidal settler colonial violence in the United States that, "the only possible relationship to the university today is a criminal one".

The second refusal of this thesis is concerned with not locating it in a particular field of study or academic discipline, on both the principle and the practicality of it. After all, how could one field or discipline possibly encompass the pluriverse and its complexities within its narrow confines? Would that not defeat the entire purpose of exploring pluriversal horizons? Isolating this research within the narrow confines of a discipline as dictated by academia would render this study vain. Hence this thesis's attempt to break away from eurocentric academic logics that force research into literal disciplines that discipline critical thinking. It therefore adopts what will be called an "un-"disciplinary approach, underpinned decolonial feminist praxis as epistemic disobedience and research as refusal. Since the political struggles that decolonial feminist emerge from cannot be fixed in disciplinary boxes, they have both embraced trans- and interdisciplinary modes of engagement. As Trinh Minh-ha states, interdisciplinarity is not a simple adding of different disciplines together, but instead "it is to create in sharing a field, that belongs to no one, not even to those who create it" and, in so doing, it questions the notions of specialization, expertise,

professionalism, and discipline (Trinh Minh-ha in De Jong and Icaza, 2019: xiv-xv). As such, while this thesis critically intervenes in fields such as post-development or social movement studies through the lenses of decolonial feminisms, this thesis is neither located in the fields of development and the social movement studies. Nor is it located in the fields of Black radical thought or feminisms from/in the margins that it dialogues with.
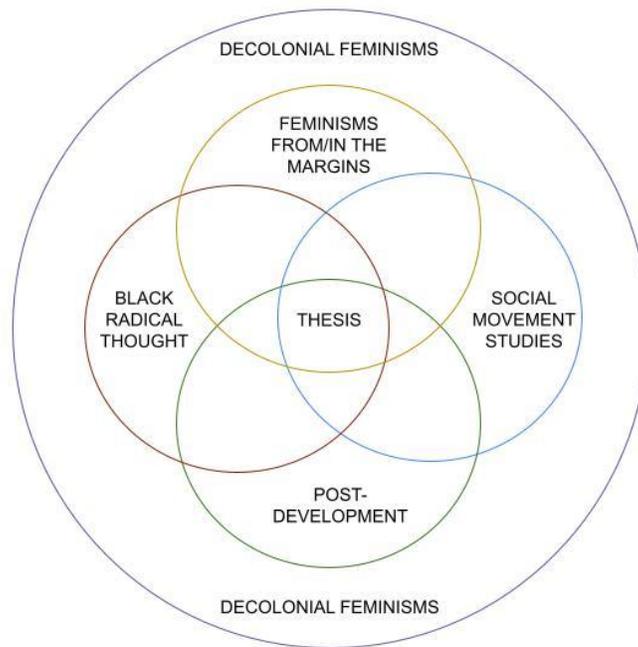
Figure 1: Ontological and epistemic location of the thesis (own elaboration)

In what comes next, this chapter briefly introduces other fields of study and strands of critical thinking that this thesis attempts to critically intervene in and/or dialogue with, namely feminisms from/in the margins, post-development, social movement studies and Black radical thought.

2.4. Introducing feminisms from/in the margins, post-development, social movement studies and Black radical thought

While this study is overarchingly framed around decolonial feminisms, it also embraces and is indebted to what will be termed as feminisms from/in the margins, understood as knowledges, struggles and experiences that have emerged within, yet are outside of, the dominant modern/colonial system. These feminist currents (such as decolonial, Black and Abya Yala[19] feminisms amongst others) all distance themselves from White, urban, middle-class, Western/eurocentric feminist ones and demonstrate the possibility of existing beyond the dominant frameworks of gender, womanhood, sexuality etc. by challenging the modern/colonial system and its processes of epistemicide (especially the silencing of knowledges embedded and embodied in the practices, struggles and everyday lives of women, women of color, indigenous women and queer people from the global South) (Lugones, 2008). As explained by Vergès, decolonial feminisms are the continuation of a long, historical process of decolonization and "rest on the long history of the struggles of their elders: Indigenous women during colonization, enslaved women, Black women, women involved in the struggles for national liberation, the feminist subaltern internationalism of the 50s-70s, and racialized women struggle daily even today" (Vergès, 2021: 11). Decolonial feminisms are therefore related to the theoretical traditions of Black feminism, women of color feminisms and Third World feminism in the United States (in terms of its considerations of the inter-relatedness between class, race, gender, sexuality), while also recovering the critical legacies of Afro-descendant and indigenous women and feminists from Abya Yala and their role and importance in the resistance of their communities (Espinosa Miñoso, 2022: 153).

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[19] Decolonial nomination of what is commonly known as "Latin America"

Chapter 4 attempts to create a decolonial feminist dialogue between feminisms from/in the margins and post-development in the context of the debates on transitions to the pluriverse. Post-development, as will be explained later on, emerged in the late 1980s as disillusionment of the alternative development approach, and as a complete rejection of development after 40 years of devastating economic, environmental, cultural and political policies in the global South (Escobar, 1992). Indeed, after critically engaging with development as a term, an ideology, a political project and state policies that actively produced the "Third World" (economically, socially, politically and culturally), post-development scholars boldly declared development as dead (Escobar, 2015; Sachs, 1992: 1). Post-development thinkers consider development as an apparatus producing forms of knowledges about the global South to map and control its societies, primarily through top-down, one-size-fits-all interventionist development programs promoting growth, progress and instrumental rationality imposed by international financial institutions and Western states on the rest of the world since World War II (Rist, 1997; Escobar, 1992). Today, the post-development scholarship is at the forefront of an essential body of literature criticizing the "false solutions" (mentioned earlier) that remain based on a growth imperative, capital accumulation and the exploitation of nature and people, while promoting post-development alternatives (Kothari, Demaria and Acosta, 2014). These post-development alternatives (buen vivir, kametsa asaike, kyosei, kawsak sacha), emerge from grassroots movements and communities, and represent a powerful shift of the locus of knowledge and "expertise" in the search for alternative models beyond the destructive development project (Kothari et al., 2019).

Post-development, while a field of its own, is also part of political ecology, a multidisciplinary approach based on Marxist political economy, peasant studies, feminist development studies,

critical environmental history, postcolonial studies and post-development, amongst others (Ulloa, 2015: 320). Political ecology is concerned with the study of the unequal appropriation of ecological resources for economic activities, the uneven distribution of the costs of environmental change, the emergence of socio-environmental conflicts and the power relations they involve as well as the role of social movements in achieving more just and sustainable socio-ecological conditions (Tetreault, 2017). As a body of theory which emerged in England in the 1970s, the Anglo-Saxon branch of political ecology focuses more on technical aspects of ecological crises and climate change (Delgado Ramos, 2013). With environmental problems mostly being understood in purely biophysical perspectives and apolitical ways prior to the 1970s, political ecology was born as a way of bridging politics, economics, social studies and environmental studies together to better understand relations between society and environment, environmental justice struggles, struggles over access,preservation and extraction of natural resources. Political ecology analyzes the causes and outcomes (including the distribution of costs and benefits) of environmental changes in relation to power relations within the existing political economy (Leff, 2015: 65-66). A central feature of political ecology is the politicization of environmental problems, against apolitical explanations that attribute environmental changes to geographical and biophysical factors (Ulloa, 2015: 324).

However, political ecology has been criticized for promoting a predominantly masculine and White historical canon, and its location and implication in modern/colonial processes of knowledge production and consumption within eurocentric academia (Sultana, 2021). For instance, while it supposedly looks at power relations it does not consider an intersectional or intermeshed perspective of oppressions, within environmental struggles and movements. Drawing from different strands of feminist movements, feminist political ecology emerged in

the 1990s, and puts at the forefront: the importance of positionality, of intersectional perspective of oppressions, the importance of affection and care, the relevance of the voices of women from the Global South and the proposals of alternatives based on environmental principles, taking as a central axis the care and the sustainability of life in order to guarantee a viable future for all living beings (Escobar, 2017a: 65). To summarize, using Sultana's (2021: 162) words: "feminist political ecology is about the everyday, emotional, embodied understandings of nature-society dialectics and politics. It interrogates power assemblages, undertakes multi scalar analyses from the body to the planet, investigates counter-topographies of connections across spaces, scales, places, and species, and is explicit about its praxis in deconstructing the theory-practice binary and the responsibilities of academics".

However, decolonial scholars raised the concern of Western-centric feminisms embedded in feminist political ecology, and the lingering of a Whiteness complicit with colonialism and eurocentrism in feminist political ecology (Ekowati, 2023). To respond to the challenges posed by the eurocentrism and coloniality of mainstream political ecology, a decolonial turn occurred in political ecological approaches in Latin America which legitimize and make visible the historical-cultural plurality of Latin America as a space where other-than-Western alternative knowledges, practices and other worlds coexist (Parra-Romero, 2016). By understanding coloniality as a "scientification" device that objectifies and commodifies nature and by recognizing that colonial legacies continue to exercise forms of dominating nature and bodies in the Global South, decolonial political ecology allows for the emergence and visibility of what is marginalized and suppressed, that is, other ways of living, of relating, other forms of knowledge production and other possible worlds (Sultana, 2022b). From a decolonial feminist perspective, feminist political ecology's stance on gender remains an essentialized, binary one, that does not

consider gender as a category and hetero-sexuality as the norm, both of which are social constructs intermeshed with race, invented by the West and imposed during colonization (Lugones, 2008). Still relegated to the margins, there is an evolution of more decolonial feminist political ecology currents, which is more attentive to the coloniality of gender and how it is intermeshed with race, and strives to decolonize not only political ecology, but overall climate justice activism (Sultana, 2021).

This thesis is aware of and inspired by the literature of decolonial feminist political ecology that is inquiring more about the role of decoloniality in its understanding of ecology. It is especially indebted to feminist political ecology's contributions in relation to radical care (Agostino et al., 2023: 9). As this thesis evolves, the importance of radical care will become more salient, and will figure more prominently in the final part of the dissertation. While acknowledging the important contributions made by feminist political ecology over the years, this thesis will not engage deeply with the field throughout the thesis. This is because this thesis takes the civilizational crisis, the role of racial capitalism and the role of the modernity/coloniality system of gender as departing points, hence the focus on existing debates within Black radical thought and decolonial feminisms. Political ecology, while having a focus on relationality, does not engage with transitions to the pluriverse (which figure more prominently in the debates within the field of post-development - hence the preference to focus on post-development as well). This in no way relegates environmental issues, the ecology and sustainability to the backstage of this study. On the contrary, such topics are touched upon in transversal manner throughout the thesis at different times (whether through post-development alternatives, through reparations and abolition, the question of land and autonomy in the context of the Zapatistas, the inter-relationality of decolonial feminisms, as well as the (un-)sustainable bridges being built

between alternatives, the importance of radical care within alternatives and processes attempting to weave together alternatives based on care and the sustainability of life).

Chapter 5 critically intervenes from a decolonial feminist perspective in the field of social movement studies within the context of this empirical chapter on the process of the World Social Forum of Transformative Economies (WSFTE). It seeks to reflect with and learn from the experiences of the WSFTE and its aims to foster confluences of alternatives around the world. The agents driving systemic alternatives are often referred to as "social movements" in elusive, all-encompassing ways. This is partly because, as Barker claimed: "defining social movements is a theoretical nightmare" (Barker, 2013: 47). Mainstream, Western-dominant theories of social movements – such as the theory of resource mobilization or political opportunities – analyze the organizational forms of collective action, the tactics and strategies determining the "success" or "failure" of social movements to challenge a specific issue or policy (Tarrow, 1994; Melucci, 1996). In other words, social movements are considered as collective enterprises seeking to gather resources and choosing the most effective strategies to ensure that their interests and objectives are introduced, maintained and extended in the political agenda (Tilly, 2004). However, the currently hegemonic field of social movement studies only allows for a partial understanding of social movements and mobilizations worldwide. It has also provided very limited studies on global processes of articulations of movements and alternatives such as the World Social Fora in a way that is sensitive to power relations (Mac Lorin, 2020).

The theoretical matrix of European and North American studies about social movements implies that there is one society in which a determined social class or specific sector is oppressed or disadvantaged and calls for the State to attend to its demands (Zibechi and Hardt, 2013: 38).

Such theories fail to understand that the purpose of many historical and contemporary movements is actually to question the centrality of State and institutional policies (Pleyers, 2018: 93). As a body of theory which emerged in the academic spheres of the Global North, the social movement studies also produce categories of analysis which do not correspond to the realities of peoples in the Global South. Rather than having only one society, previously colonized countries have different systems and societies which co-exist and are organized through social relations that are neither capitalist nor institutionalized and which are only visible when they turn into a movement and act in a different mode than what is established (Zibechi and Hardt, 2013: 40). In other words, social mobilizations occur not as a way to ask for the State for rights and solutions, but as a way for the State to recognize, visualize and respect these different societies – like in the case of struggles for plurinationalism. Furthermore, utilitarian perspectives on social movements do not account for fundamental aspects that cannot be measured, counted or explained with words – such as emotions, affects, subjective experiences and ties between people. Finally, by only instrumentalizing social movements we fail to understand them as alternatives in and of themselves. This critique can be applied to the entire category of "movement" for its transitory, fluid aspects which can obfuscate concrete projects in communities implementing alternative ways of living in peoples' everyday lives (Garza and Sánchez, 2017).

Based on all of the above, this study seeks to simultaneously distance itself from the Anglo-Saxon and European concept of social movements whilst encompassing other agents such as communities and activists – which often participate both autonomously from and transversally to other social movements. Communities and alter-activists also share a focus on prefigurative action, described as a "process of creative experimentation in which the values of 'another world' are put into practice" (Pleyers, 2013: 38). In other words, these agents do not only protest

against and oppose the current system; they strive to embody different worlds in their daily practices as coherently as possible with their values and political projects – whilst navigating the contradictions of still being part of the system they are trying to change.

However, a movement-epistemology (or an epistemology of movement) should also occur between movements, as explained by the Colombian Minga phrase "*caminar la palabra*" (walking the word) which points to "the need to come into visibility, make demands on society, and collectively weave knowledges, resistances, and strategies with other movements" (Escobar, 2017: 181). That is why this research on a pluriverse of systemic alternatives is carried out within a framework that can both make visible the subjugated, silenced experiences and epistemologies of the Global South whilst creating an open, intercultural dialogue with alternatives from the Global North.

Finally, chapter 6 enters into dialogue with Black radical thought to explore the alternative projects emerging from its onto-epistemic, body-political and geographical location and the pluriversal pathways that can emerge from them (such as reparations and abolition). The history of Black Radical thought can be traced back to the resistance to the Atlantic slave trade (for a thorough genealogy see Herb, 1998). The movement to abolish slavery, the civil rights movement of the 1950s, the anti-apartheid campaign of the 1980s, to more contemporary movements such as Black Lives Matter and the Movement for Black Lives all contributed to what Cedric Robinson denominated as the "Black Radical Tradition" or "a tradition of resistance honed by the history of racialized, permanent, hereditary, and chattel slavery that formed the contours of civic and social life in the Americas, Europe, and Africa. Grounded in more than five centuries of Black resistance, the Black Radical Tradition seeks to abolish all forms of

oppression (Johnson and Lubin, 2017: 18). The Black Radical Tradition neither seeks improvement nor integration into the Western societal model; it constitutes a prefigurative and generative rejection of a system based on and thriving on racism (Robinson, 1983: 317). In other words, it is the prefiguration of a liberatory politics. Within the Black Radical Tradition, this thesis specifically engages with Black marxisms and Black feminisms. Against the White eurocentric critique of capitalism centering economic relations over others, Black marxists demonstrate that the nature of the capitalist system is *inherently racist* and the role of racism at the root of the logics of capital accumulation, capitalist relations and the role of the state - something Cedric Robinson described as "racial capitalism" (Robinson, 1983: xv). Indeed, Robinson advanced a concept of racial regimes that deepens our understanding of the historically contingent character of racism, and how through racial capitalism we can understand the history of modern capitalism, not as emerging from a negation of feudalism but rather emerging *with* the feudal order, in a Western civilization already thoroughly infused with racialism and evolved into a modern world system of "racial capitalism" dependent on slavery, violence, imperialism and genocide (Kelley, 2017). The racial character of capitalism is fundamental in shaping the history of and the current neoliberal system. To borrow Wilson Gilmore's words, capitalism was and is "never *not* racial" (Wilson Gilmore, 2017: 1).

Black feminist thinkers from the United States such as Angela Davis, bell hooks, Audre Lorde, Sojourner Truth and Patricia Hill Collins, also showed that capitalism is not only inherently racist and classist, it is also cis-hetero-patriarchal. In her famous book, "Women, Race and Class", Marxist philosopher and former Black Panther Angela Davis put together a Black feminist marxist analysis of the history of Black women since slavery and abolitionism to the Black women liberation movements of the 1960s, which is how the political tool and analytical

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framework of intersectionality emerged (although intersectionality existed prior to its naming). Kimberlé Crenwshaw's article "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence against Women of color" (1991) first coined the term "intersectionality" by arguing that Black feminist intersectional inquiry and praxis are both needed to address the social problem of violence against black women. Another pioneer of intersectionality was the Third World Women's Alliance which published the newspaper "Triple Jeopardy" which addressed the triple oppressions of racism, sexism and imperialism (Davis, 2016: 19) The political tool and and analytical framework of intersectionality was further developed by black feminists (Combahee River Collective, Kimberly Crenshaw, Audre Lorde, Patricia Hill Collins among others) and other feminists of color (Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherie Moraga) who examined power relations occurring at the intersections of race, class, gender, age, sexuality, ability, caste, age, and ethnicity (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2020: 73).

Having briefly introduced the different strands of literature that this thesis engages with through a decolonial feminist perspective, the next subsection closes this chapter with a summary of the theoretical and practical foundations underpinning this study.

2.5. Summary

Decolonial feminisms emerge genealogically from the margins, and honor the legacies of centuries of struggle of women and gender non-conforming people of the Global South. They bring together historical, current and future knowledges and practices that are anti-racist, trans-inclusive, anti-patriarchal, anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, anti-colonial and anti-homophobic. Decolonial feminisms can allow us to imagine new ways of theorizing and generating transformative collective action that can ensure the sustainability of life whilst

decolonizing knowledge and power. They offer powerful, contingent ways to respond to the processes of coloniality of power by recognizing and embracing knowledges and practices from the margins hitherto silenced, thereby allowing for the imagination, recognition and articulation of a plurality of worlds. Through their epistemic disobedience and plural un-disciplinary approach, they pave the way for articulating research as refusal, for setting boundaries and for articulating critical interventions from a place of care. By promoting dialogue as an epistemic option, decolonial feminisms allow this study to bring together different strands of literature, such as post-development, social movement studies, Black radical thought and feminisms from/in the margins. By making visible knowledges and practices silenced and erased by eurocentric neoliberal academia, decolonial feminisms also represent an intrinsic political commitment to tackle the contradictions of academia and strengthen engaged academic spaces actively participating in the changing of social reality. This collective, intellectual and political work not only implies rethinking/redoing/re-feeling the way research can and should be carried out; accepting the limits of one's knowledge and positionality in the social reality we are trying to change; it also means nurturing stronger synergies between academic and activist circles and increasingly dissolving the barriers separating the two – as the next chapter on methodology will explain.

Chapter 3: Setting methodological intentions

"Tanteando en la obscuridad [fumbling in the dark] is a concrete way of working as an academic-activist in unknown social terrains when looking to identify new geographies of resistance and emancipation" (Icaza and Vázquez, 2016: 7)

3.1. Decolonial feminist research methods

Exploring transitions to the pluriverse from a decolonial feminist perspective implies a constant process of unlearning and relearning other ways of knowing and doing research (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018: 9; Palmero et al., 2014: 12). Indeed, decolonial feminisms are not theoretical currents to 'apply'; they represent the embodiment, the process itself of unlearning and actively abandoning colonial and patriarchal ways of inhabiting the world. In other words, this research does not seek to "write about" decolonial feminisms, but rather strives to embody decolonial feminism in practice – embodying it in the feeling/thinking/doing of this research and not in the study of something.

Unlike the abstract, disembodied, male, western-centered paradigms of mainstream academia, decolonial feminist research is primarily based on and makes space for the historically embodied knowledges located in people's personal experiences, or what Sara Motta called the "enfleshment" of reason when she advocated for critical intimacy in research (as opposed to critical distance) (Motta, 2021a). Decolonial feminist perspectives teach us about the importance of speaking from our incarnated knowledges and to recognize, as Icaza explained, how our normative thinking is produced, reproduced and shaped by colonial differences and our differentiated political, epistemic, gender, racial, ethnical, class privileges (Icaza, 2019: 28).

This, in turn, can inspire processes of unlearning our biases and privileges. It can also help us carry out research in a more respectful, ethical, accountable and useful way, as opposed to reproducing racist practices and attitudes, ethnocentric assumptions and exploitative research methods (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999: 9-10).

Considering that the modern/colonial system often tricks academics into (un/willingly or un/consciously) falling into its traps and being complicit of its logics, this thesis calls for a more humble approach to research – one which acknowledges our positionality and biases, the limitations of our knowledges and an openness to other forms of viewing the world. This thesis itself is not devoid of such tensions, considering the biases of a privileged middle-class, White, European researcher carrying out a decolonial, feminist research project within eurocentric knowledge structures – a politically and epistemologically problematic stance, especially due to the constraints preventing truly collective authorship and inter-cultural knowledge cultivation within academia. However, it is precisely by identifying, acknowledging and navigating through these tensions that new ways of thinking, doing and feeling research can emerge.

As such, decolonial approaches to research are essential to prevent the violence of extractivism, othering, representation, appropriation and erasure of other-than-modern ways of knowing and being. The research methods of this thesis therefore strive to nurture collective forms of knowledge cultivation that do not reproduce such violence. This study seeks to break away from the logics of mainstream productivist, neoliberal, eurocentric academia, and embrace a slower, more participatory approach based on feedback loops, consent, care, active listening, mutual respect, trust and accountability. It embraces feminist participatory action-research methods involving auto-ethnography, literature reviews, in-depth interviews, discourse analysis,

participative, collective and cross-cultural reflective processes as well as politically engaged participation and active solidarity with some alternatives projects it reflects with and learns from.

It is also essential to acknowledge that this research project is somewhat limited in its radicalism and its capacity to contribute to the paradigmatic shifts it advocates for – *precisely because it is conducted within the same hegemonic structures that it seeks to challenge*. However, the position adopted in this research is distinct from that of De Sousa Santos for example who writes about the "impossibility of radicalism" (De Sousa Santos, 2014: 5). In his writings, he mentions two sides of the line: the side of the line where peoples are rallying for better worlds and the other side of the line where his book about these struggles is situated – hence the impossible radicalism of such a book (*ibid*: 3). This approach is problematic for a number of reasons. First, talking about the impossibility of being radical not only implies that the reactionary institutions in which knowledge is being produced are almighty; it also diminishes the potentially subversive and transformative practices occurring within the margins of the academic sphere and pockets of resistance. Secondly, the line that De Sousa Santos mentions is not clear-cut and the so-called sides are not separate monolithic, static entities. Finally, if we consider it impossible to write somewhat radically from within Western academic spheres, we are dismissing the constant interactions occurring between these two sides, the fact that many people have a foot in each side and, more importantly, it means denying the revolutionary potential of writing.

Nevertheless, acknowledging the constraints that come from writing within eurocentric knowledge structures is essential because processes of Western-based knowledge production often trick academics into producing "revolutionary" ideas in reactionary institutions (Cox et al., 2017). Recognizing these constraints is fundamental in order to adopt a more humble approach

to thinking/doing/feeling research based on the acceptance of one's positionality, the limits of one's knowledge and the openness to other forms of viewing the world in order to establish intercultural exchanges and dialogues between movements and alternatives that are context-specific, place-based, contingent and originating from different political and cultural traditions. This collective, cross-cultural exercise must also be carried out with extreme caution in order to respect the historical, geopolitical and epistemic specificities of these alternatives, communities and movements, while engaging in a pluriversal exercise of bridge-building and weaving.

Carrying out this research project within eurocentric knowledge structures can be perceived as an apparent contradiction. For example, the hierarchical, institutional logics of academia clearly contradict the horizontal logics associated with some of the aforementioned alternatives in chapter 1 (Juris, 2007: 164). Other examples include but are not limited to: the impossibility of truly collective authorship, the productivist logics associated with publishing and the dismissal of knowledges considered as 'academically illegitimate/invalid' (such as emotions, feelings etc.). Yet, it is precisely by navigating these contradictions that new ways of thinking, doing, feeling research and politics emerge as well as opportunities to further bridge the gap between academia and activism. As such, it is important to recognize that while not all aspects of this research project can be fully aligned with the political vision, values and practices of the initiatives that it is reflecting with, learning from and is in solidarity with (especially in terms of funding or institutional requirements) some elements – such as research methods, writing processes, knowledge cultivation and dissemination as well as political participation – can strive for such alignment.

As mentioned previously, exploring transitions to the pluriverse from a decolonial feminist perspective implies a constant process of unlearning and relearning - all of which affect research methods (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018: 9; Palmero et al., 2014: 12). As Icaza claimed, the shift from doing *research about* to *research with* is not only a textual one; it is an epistemic/political/ethical one (Icaza, 2017: 1). It implies being aware of extractivist forms of knowledge production, embracing the principles of collaborative/activist/engaged research and reflecting about the dilemmas these principles carry with them when conducting research (*ibid*). A fundamental contribution from decolonial feminist practices that can help us engage in pluriversal, intercultural, collective forms of knowledge cultivation is the importance of *listening*:

"Listening to each other implies going beyond what we have in common and the will to see, read and understand the other from our own perceptions. It involves an effort to think from other peoples' positions and worldviews. Based on this active listening, dialogue and collective construction, we can generate the necessary articulations and coalitions that can dismantle the dominating system which constructed each of us" (Espinosa Miñoso et al., 2014: 37)[20].

The ability to think and feel from other people's positions and worldviews mentioned by Espinosa Miñoso et al., deeply resonates with María Lugones' methodological points on "World-Traveling", an ability of outsiders who have required to be flexible in order to survive in and resist against the current oppressive system, by transitioning from worlds where one feels more at home to other worlds where one is perceived as the outsider: "The reason I think that traveling to someone's world is a way of identifying with them is that by traveling to their world

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[20] Listening also implies other ways of cultivating knowledge that is not written and calls for an epistemic sensitivity that can lead to new forms of knowing based on everyday life.

we can understand *what it is to be them and what it is to be ourselves in their eyes*. Only when we have traveled to each other's worlds are we fully subjects to each other" (Lugones, 2003: 101). This traveling not only entails shifting from one person to being a different person as we travel to different worlds, it also means one can inhabit a multiplicity of these worlds simultaneously (*ibid:* 113). This methodological approach therefore seems more than fitting for a research project exploring pluriversal transitions.

Another important point in this exercise of pluriversal world-making is that of weaving (or bridge building), which are used throughout the thesis not only metaphorically, but methodologically to bring together different strands of critical thinking, embodied knowledges and practices, movement experiences, political processes, conversations, emotions, ontologies, cosmologies and temporalities. Weaving and bridge-building allow us to move beyond the separating technologies, logics and structures of neoliberal academia: fixed categories, false binarisms, onto-epistemic walls and disciplining "disciplines" that are incarcerating research into boxes under the pretense of specialization (as opposed to nurturing collective and plural forms of knowledge cultivation) (De Jong et al 2018, xvi).

On a more personal note, the reference to bridge-building is a tribute to the feminist anthology "This Bridge Called my Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color" by Cherríe Moraga and Gloria E. Anzaldúa, one of the first eye-opening books I read at the beginning of this journey, and a reminder of my own positionality as a bridge-builder and transnational movement organizer. The reference to weaving is meant as a friendly nod and wink, as well as a recognition of the important work of the Global Tapestry of Alternatives, a process which seeks to identify,

document and connect radical alternatives on different scales. The next subsection dives deeper into more specific methodological consideration for the remaining chapters of the thesis.

3.2. Specific methodological considerations for each chapter

Dialoguing, world-traveling, bridge-building/weaving, and listening form an intrinsic part of the decolonial feminist methodologically used throughout this research, but are especially embraced in chapters 4 and 6. Indeed, drawing from decolonial feminisms, chapter 4 builds bridges between post-development and feminisms from/in the margins in the context of the debates on transitions to the pluriverse. In doing so, it helps unearth certain neo-colonial continuities still present in the literature on the pluriverse. These include: a lack of intersectional approach, the presence of disembodied/abstract thinking as well as some universalistic tendencies – all of which are incompatible with the ethics and political horizons of the pluriverse as they contribute to the modern/colonial mechanisms of onto-epistemological erasure of pluriversality. By weaving together the intersectional, intermeshed, embodied and non-monocultural approaches of feminisms from/in the margins, it offers learning possibilities to the scholarship and warnings against betraying the ethics of a pluriverse.

Chapter 6 disengages with critical leftist but still eurocentric approaches complicit with modernity/coloniality, to engage in a dialogue with epistemologies and ontologies located outside the colonial matrix of power, such as Black feminisms, Black Marxisms, Zapatismo and decolonial feminisms. Because it argues for the need to *embody positioned pluriversal politics*, it methodologically partakes in such a pluriversal exercise by bringing into dialogue these different strands of critical literature, my liminal positionality as well as my experiences of working with and being in conversations with transfeminist, anti-racist collectives in Barcelona (one of the

places where I am based). In doing so, chapter 6 explores connected yet differentiated embodied readings and framings of the current civilizational crisis (racial capitalism and intersecting oppressions, the capitalist hydra as well as modernity/coloniality and intermeshed oppressions), as well as the alternatives emerging from these different onto-epistemic, body-political and geographical locations (reparations, abolition and autonomy) - and the pluriversal pathways that can emerge from them.

Chapter 5, on the other hand, constitutes an attempt to reflect with and learn from a particular political process that attempted to create confluences of alternatives across regions, sectors and spheres of life: the World Social Forum of Transformative Economies. This particular experience was meant to co-exist and dialogue with another - more explicitly feminist - process I was engaged in as a co-organizer: the 14th International AWID Forum (a global feminist forum bringing two thousands of feminists from the Global South every 4 years) planned for 2020. However, due to the outbreak of the global pandemic of COVID-19, the latter forum was canceled while the former was moved to an online format, thereby severely disrupting the methodology intended for chapter 5, this overall research and my life. Observing how the system (including academia) adapted itself to the global health crisis it generated and tried to carry-out "business as usual" by using such a crisis as an opportunity to enact faster and more violent types of intellectual capital accumulation (Sheik, 2023), the making of chapter 5 was deliberately and intentionally slower, as an act of political resistance. The other reasons for embracing slowness are twofold. Firstly, because the co-creation of chapter 5 involved being actively involved as an organizer-participant-observe in a two year long, complex, glocal, labor intensive political process and my participation in various coordinating commissions, committees and groups (which will be outlined in chapter 5) from December 2018 to July 2020. Secondly, because of the

participatory nature of the research design, which involved: an auto-ethnography carried out during the WSFTE process from late 2018 to July 2020, discourse and data analysis from meeting notes, press releases, internal documents and news articles from 2018 to 2020, twenty-three in-depth open-ended interviews carried out in 2021 with both local and international organizers most actively involved in the WSFTE process, one focus group with those in charge of the day-to-day logistical work, due to their unique, behind the scene perspective on the process, two consensus-based feedback loops before the completion of the chapter in 2022. The focus on the process of the Forum rather than the event itself is also a deliberate one, not only due to the disruption of the pandemic and moving the physical event to an online one, but also to be aligned with the political intentions of the WSFTE which was meant to be a long-term political process with a longevity that surpassed the ephemerality of a global gathering and event, and which could hopefully provide valuable insights for ongoing and future processes of articulations of alternatives and pluriversal transitions.

As we are still searching for the pluriverse, methodologically we are also, as Lugones said "*tateando en la oscuridad*" or putting our hands in front of ourselves as we are walking in the dark, carefully feeling our way (Lugones, 2003:1). I therefore invite the readers to join me in this uncharted territory of collective reflection and together, to help one another sense, feel and think our ways through the many roads towards more pluriversal horizons, following the famous Zapatista saying: *caminamos preguntando* (we ask questions as we walk).

Chapter 4: Towards a decolonial feminist pluriverse: building bridges beyond neo-colonial betrayals[21]

> *"The pluriverse makes us see that the world – unlike what modernity led us to believe – is composed of many worlds, many galaxies as the zapatistas claim. 'A world in which many worlds fit' is not a mere slogan"* (Leyva Solano, 2019)

This chapter seeks to contribute to the recent debates around transitions to the pluriverse in the field of post-development through the lenses of feminist currents located onto-epistemologically from/in the margins (such as black feminisms, decolonial feminisms and Abya Yala feminisms). Departing from a concern that post-development approaches to the pluriverse display certain complicities with the modern/colonial system, this chapter argues that establishing more bridges between post-development and feminist currents from/in the margins can contribute to unearthing and addressing some neo-colonial continuities still present in the literature on the pluriverse. These include: a lack of intersectional approach, the presence of disembodied/abstract thinking as well as some universalistic tendencies – all of which are incompatible with the ethics and political horizons of the pluriverse as they contribute to the modern/colonial mechanisms of onto-epistemological erasure of pluriversality. To address these fallacies, this chapter delves into the learning possibilities offered by the intersectional, embodied and non-monocultural approaches of feminisms from/in the margins. By doing so, it hopes to warn future scholarship against betraying the ethics of a pluriverse and shed light on the conditions that can help foster

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[21] This chapter has been submitted as an article to the Journal Geoforum and is currently under review

the imagination, recognition and articulations of alternative worlds and peoples within a pluriverse.

4.1. Introduction

Against the backdrop of the current civilizational crisis – generated by a global societal project based on coloniality, modernity, cis-hetero-patriarchy, capitalism, racism, anthropocentrism, state-ism and caste-ism – the struggles for the defense of territories and life are giving rise to the increasing visibility and emergence of different forms of resistance, re-existence[1] and the articulation of radical alternatives throughout the world (Esteva and Escobar, 2017; Escobar, 2015). Taking a critical stance towards the mainstream or "false solutions" located within the confines of the system responsible for the current crisis (such as sustainable development or green capitalism) (Kothari, Demaria and Acosta, 2014; Escobar; 1992) – this chapter focuses on initiatives which are critical of and *strive[22]* to move beyond the aforementioned interrelated systems of oppression by addressing their fundamental, historical and structural roots. These alternatives include, but are not limited to, degrowth, the commons, *buen vivir*, feminisms, radical ecological democracy, social and solidarity economies, Zapatista autonomy, environmental justice movements, eco-villages, transition towns and *Ubuntu* (Kothari et al., 2019). While a wide range of critical scholarship in development studies contributed to bringing these alternatives to the academic forefront, post-development scholars maintain that still very few bridges are built between these seemingly isolated initiatives (Beling et al., 2018: 4; Kothari, Demaria and Acosta, 2014). However, the issue might not only be related to a lack of bridges

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[22] The word 'strive' is used deliberately as its implied intentionality can help avoid purist, essentializing conceptions of alternatives. Indeed, rather than perfect, monolithic entities, alternatives are considered *paradoxical, contradictory, open-ended processes* (Icaza, 2017).

between alternatives but also to *the ways bridges are being built*. In recent years, post-development scholars have been issuing calls for transitions towards what the Zapatistas called the pluriverse (or a world in which many worlds fit) and are increasingly exploring synergies between alternatives emerging out of different contexts (Escobar, 2015; Demaria and Kothari, 2017).

However, whilst the idea of the pluriverse as a political horizon capable of articulating a wide variety of radical post-development alternatives on different, inter-connected scales can seem appealing and easily idealized, it also poses a number of challenging questions: Whose worlds? How do they fit? Who and what makes them fit? Fit into what? And more importantly: what kinds of bridges would be necessary to build and politically sustain a pluriverse?

Following the long tradition of feminist thinkers who stressed the importance of standpoint methodologies producing positioned knowledges that are grounded into specific personal historical, cultural, geographical, socio-economic and political contexts (Harding, 2018: 39-40; Anzaldúa, 1987;) – I invite the readers to follow me on the journey that lead to my personal encounter with the pluriverse. This story begins with the dismantling of Yugoslavia by Western imperialist forces and its subsequent erasure from the map. As a second-generation migrant raised in Western Europe, far from family roots and now-nonexistent country, establishing ties with people – and especially other migrants – helped me nurture a primordial sense of belonging in a space of nowhere-ness. Later on, this rootlessness and ability to connect with people enabled my work as a transnational movement organizer (or bridge builder), which started alongside the anti-globalization movements in Argentina during the week of action against the 11th meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2017[1]. The People's Summit – occurring in parallel to

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the WTO meeting – showcased all the aforementioned alternatives in ten different forums spread across the University of Buenos Aires to offer solutions to the current systemic crisis.

As a young activist and recent graduate in development studies, witnessing first-hand the protagonists of alternatives I had only read about was mesmerizing. However, the powerful symbolism of the *physical concrete walls separating these forums (and therefore these alternatives)* was striking. One forum, however, managed to organize in a transversal way and articulate these alternatives together: the Foro Feminista Frente al Libre Comercio (FFLC) - the Feminist Forum against Free Trade - a transnational articulation of feminists, women workers, activists, trade unionists, migrants, indigenous women, afro-descendants, peasants, sex workers and queer people from the global South. This transversal space of mutual exchange, learning and collaboration was also grounded in a critical reflection on the intersections of class, gender, disability, race, caste, age and sexual identity, and as a result, was not only the most diverse forum of the People's Summit; *it also conveyed an unforgettable general feeling of inclusiveness and belonging.*

Following that ephemeral event, I participated in processes and spaces of articulation of alternatives from the global South and the global North, attempting to recreate those politics. On one hand, many processes and spaces such as the World Social Forums were attempting to bring a plurality of alternatives and people together, but were often prone to hetero-patriarchal, eurocentric, racist dynamics that not only excluded many key constituencies but also generated divisions between people and alternatives *within* these spaces and processes (Mac Lorin, 2020; Freudenschuss, 2007; Smith, 2004). On the other hand, these discrepancies tended to be less present in processes and spaces involving feminists from the global South (Musić, 2018b).

Driven by a concern to develop a deeper analysis on these political tensions and how to overcome them in order to nurture safer and more inclusive, pluriversal political processes, I turned to academia and, more specifically, to post-development because of its essential contributions to the debates around transitions to the pluriverse. However, a first overview of the literature seemed to mirror similar tensions than in the aforementioned processes of articulation of alternatives – which led me to wonder: *can post-development learn from feminisms from the global South in the context of the debates around the pluriverse in order to foster the conditions to create more horizontal, inclusive and sustainable synergies/bridges between alternatives and movements*?

Recognizing the importance of the contributions of post-development, this chapter seeks to build on the existent body of theory on the pluriverse by unveiling certain complicities of post-development with the modern/colonial system through the lenses of feminisms from the global South (also referred to as feminisms from/in the margins). It argues that establishing more bridges between post-development and feminisms from/in the margins in the context of the debates about the pluriverse can contribute to unearthing and addressing some neo-colonial continuities, such as categorical/non-intersectional, disembodied, universalistic thinking, still present in the post-development literature. This chapter explores how these fallacies prevent more inclusive understandings of the pluriverse by reproducing mechanisms of erasure of onto-epistemological pluriversality, before delving into the learning possibilities offered by the intersectional, embodied and non-monocultural approaches of feminisms from/in the margins. The arguments of this chapter will be progressively built throughout a constructive, critical literary review of the post-development scholarship on the pluriverse. This chapter does not pretend to hold the answers to all the questions it poses, but rather hopes to *warn future*

scholarship against betraying the ethics of a pluriverse and to nurture a preliminary envisioning/reflection of what a decolonial, feminist pluriverse could look like – by suggesting possibilities that can help foster the imagination, recognition and articulation of all alternative worlds and peoples within a pluriverse.

Having situated the ideas of this chapter and guided the reader through the journey that led to it, the next section will provide the main theoretical foundations of this chapter. More specifically, it will outline key frameworks of decoloniality and feminisms from/in the margins and will review some decolonial feminist critiques of post-development alternatives. Building on these critiques, this third section will scale out the analysis to the recent debates about the pluriverse in order to critically assess, from the lenses of feminist currents from/in the margins, whether the post-development literature reproduces similar neo-colonial continuities and offer possible ways of addressing them. The last section will provide a summary of the discussion and outline research areas to be further explored.

4.2. Theoretical foundations: decoloniality, feminisms from/in the margins and critiques of post-development alternatives

4.2.a. Decoloniality

This thesis is based on the premise that European and North-American thinking maintain a hegemonic position in academic and activist spheres which are silencing and erasing popular knowledges and experiences from the global South (De Sousa Santos, 2004: 13). The current position of a dominant West[1] as the hegemonic producer of knowledge was established during colonialism through the manufacturing of inferiority based on gender, race and sexual orientation – which normalized and legitimized Western forms of viewing the world (based on rationality,

science and modernity), whilst silencing the worldviews, knowledges and practices of colonized peoples considered "irrational", "traditional" and "savage" (Cox et al., 2017; Castro-Gómez and Grosfoguel, 2007: 20-21). The position of the West as the sole and most legitimate producer of universal knowledge was consolidated throughout the centuries and illustrates the continuation of colonialism as a social relationship associated with specific forms of knowledge and power – a process defined by Quijano as *colonialidad del poder* (the coloniality of power) (Quijano, 2007a: 94).

Coloniality represents the historically concrete practices exercised by the modern/colonial project that excluded, silenced and erased other-than-modern, non-Western knowledges and practices – a process also defined by De Sousa Santos et al. as 'epistemicide' (De Sousa Santos et al., 2008: 33). Coloniality is sustained within a dual matrix of power by the control mechanisms of modernity – the totalizing narrative projected by the Western civilizational project – which defines what should be considered a valid, legitimate reality (Icaza and Vázquez, 2017: 52). The pluriverse, because of its acceptance, respect and weaving of a plurality of worldviews, knowledges and practices, can constitute the response to the processes of erasure of the modern/colonial system. This is especially the case as today's civilizational crisis and the incapacity of the Western universalist model to offer viable solutions to the current crisis has led to the emergence of decolonial currents of thinking and the increasing recognition that we need responses based on epistemological and ontological plurality, which can be catalyzed by the pluriverse (Escobar, 2016b).

The decolonial option seeks to identify and undo the hierarchical structures of race, gender, hetero-patriarchy, caste, disability and class intertwined with(in) and constitutive of global

capitalism and Western modernity (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018: 15). It stems, thinks and acts from "the locations of those whom are excluded and marked by the colonial scar" (Palmero, 2014: 17). It is considered an option amongst a plurality of options – rather than a paradigm or grand theory – in order to avoid becoming another hegemonic project (Icaza and Vázquez, 2017: 49). It seeks to challenge Western rationality as the only possible, unique totalizing framework of existence, analysis and thought by making visible perspectives that are outside or beyond modernity/coloniality, and promoting *dialogue as an epistemic option* by seeking to build bridges with perspectives from the global North through horizontal, open, inter-cultural dialogues (De Sousa Santos, 2004: 14) – much like the political horizons of the pluriverse.

4.2.b. Feminisms from/in the margins

In this chapter, feminisms from/in the margins are understood as knowledges, struggles and experiences that have emerged within, yet are outside of, the dominant modern/colonial system, or as bell hooks would say "part of the whole but outside the main body" (hooks, 1984: viii). These feminist currents (such as decolonial, black and Abya Yala feminisms) distance themselves from white, urban, middle-class, Western/eurocentric feminist ones and demonstrate the possibility of existing beyond the dominant frameworks of gender, womanhood, sexuality etc. (Lugones, 2008). They also seek to challenge processes of epistemicide, and especially the silencing of knowledges embodied in the practices, struggles and everyday lives of women, women of color, indigenous women and queer people from the global South – all the whilst aiming to dismantle practices that reproduce the modern/colonial system, even in the most progressive circles (Millán, 2014: 9). One example of such non-Western alternatives to mainstream feminism is Maria Lugones's understanding of the *coloniality of gender* – which aims to address the shortcomings of Quijano's model of coloniality of power, criticized for

accepting the capitalist, eurocentric, patriarchal concepts of gender and sexuality (Lugones, 2008). According to Lugones, the coloniality of power is co-constitutive of the modern/colonial system of gender which led to the colonial imposition of gender as a category and heterosexuality as the norm – both of which are deeply entwined with race – which was used to establish a system of societal hierarchy (*ibid*). A decolonial feminist perspective thus considers race, gender and sexuality in its understandings of the mechanisms of modernity/coloniality, and sheds light on how different structures of oppressions manifest themselves and are intertwined and co-constitutive of the current system. By doing so, decolonial feminists recognise the diversity of epistemologies emerging out of the struggles within the plural contexts of the current matrix of oppressions, respect their particularities whilst finding points of convergence, without renouncing to the political horizon of dismantling all structures of oppression (Lopez, Najera, 2014: 112) – hence the interest of approaching the pluriverse from a decolonial feminist perspective.

4.2.c. Decolonial feminist critiques of post-development

Before diving into an analysis of the post-development literature on the pluriverse, this subsection briefly reviews some of the essential works of decolonial feminists criticizing post-development and addressing neo-colonial tensions present in some post-development alternatives. Post-development emerged in the late 1980s as a complete rejection of development as a term, an ideology, a political project and state policies after 40 years of devastating economic, environmental, cultural and political policies in the global South – leading post-development scholars to declare development as dead (Sachs, 1992:1). Post-development thinkers consider development as an apparatus producing forms of knowledges about the global

South to map and control its societies, primarily through top-down, one-size-fits-all interventionist development programs promoting growth, progress and instrumental rationality imposed by international financial institutions and Western states on the rest of the world since World War II (Rist, 1997; Escobar, 1992). Today, post-development scholarship is at the forefront of the essential body of literature criticizing the "false solutions" located within the confines of the system responsible for the current crisis (such as sustainable development or green capitalism) which remain based on a growth imperative, capital accumulation and the exploitation of nature and people (Kothari, Demaria and Acosta, 2014).

While it is essential to criticize these false solutions, highlight their contradictions and put forward viable systemic alternatives, (post-)development feminists have argued that there is still too little reflexion on and consideration of the differentiated impacts of these developmental reformist initiatives according to class, gender and race backgrounds (Saunders, 2000; Rutazibwa, 2018: 158-180). For example, processes of de-territorialisation, land dispossession and destruction of resources inherent to the green economy impact women's livelihoods more – especially women of color and indigenous women – hence their position at the forefront of struggles against extractive industries (Ulloa, 2016; Moncada and Pineda; 2018) – a fact that remains widely unmentioned in the post-development literature. Through the defense of territories, these environmental defenders articulate a deeply relational understanding of life and produce alternative knowledges and practices such as *buen vivir*, *kametsa asaike* or *kawsak sacha*, amongst others, which are often cited in the post-development literature (Escobar, 2015; Kothari et al. 2019). It thus seems paradoxical for post-development scholars to mention environmental justice movements and these alternatives without articulating an intersectional critique of (sustainable) development, the green economy and other market-based, false solutions

or acknowledging the critical role of women environmental defenders. Furthermore, alternatives emerging from indigenous worldviews and struggles against extractivism have often been criticized for reproducing patriarchal logics, which the post-development literature has turned a blind eye to. Indeed, currents of *feminismos comunitarios* (communitarian feminisms) have questioned the ethnical essentialization (often present in the field of post-development) of indigenous communities as being non-patriarchal by demonstrating the existence of power relations, patriarchy and hetero-normativity in these communities (Cabnal, 2010). By unveiling the entanglements between anthropocentrism and androcentrism, indigenous feminists affirmed that harmonious relations with nature cannot be achieved without the simultaneous de-patriarchalization of indigenous societies (Moore Torres, 2018; Cabnal, 2013). In a similar vein, environmental justice (figuring very prominently in the post-development literature), has been criticized for its poor engagement with decolonial theory and for using/imposing western-centric concepts that do not fit the experiences of the global South, thereby reproducing a "coloniality of justice" that is "too geographically and conceptually bound to a hegemonic-Western idea of modernity and Western-inspired political ideals" (Álvarez and Coolsaet, 2018: 6). Similar critiques were articulated against degrowth, as a concept emerging from the global North and imposed as a global solution – therefore leading Dengler and Seebacher (2019: 151), amongst others[23], to call for an inclusion of an 'inherently feminist and decolonial meta-theoretical foundation' within degrowth and a reflection on its coloniality in order to establish alliances with environmental justice movements on equal footing.

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[23] For an extensive feminist critique of the economy in the context of the debates about the sustainability of life, see Pérez Orosco (2014).

Building on the aforementioned critiques of the patriarchal and eurocentric logics of post-development and some of the alternatives it promotes, this chapter seeks to scale out the analysis to the recent debates about the pluriverse (as a world in which many post-development alternatives would fit) in order to critically assess, from the lenses of feminist currents from/in the margins, whether the current understandings of the pluriverse reproduce similar neo-colonial continuities – which the next section explores. Considering the increasing popularity of the pluriverse, it is essential to provide such early warnings of modern/colonial logics present in the literature in order to prevent the pluriverse from becoming co-opted by the current system and making it devoid of its political meaning, as the next subsection will show.

4.3. The post-development literature on the pluriverse: early warnings of neo-colonial continuities?

4.3.a. Black feminist intersectionality and the pluriverse

The term intersectionality was coined by the Black feminist legal scholar Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw in the context of the struggles of black feminist movements in the United States in the 1980s and the responses to the liberal, dominant, white, bourgeois feminism who ignored issues of class and race in their search for equality (Collins, 2000: 18)[24]. Since then, black feminist intersectionality has become a widespread political tool to reclaim an exclusionary feminist project as well as a fundamental analytical perspective that helps us understand how multiple and differentiated social oppressions related to class, gender, race/ethnicities, age and sexuality are inter-related and co-constitutive (Icaza, 2019). This chapter specifically understands intersectionality as *black feminist intersectionality* in order to distance itself from the

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[24] However, the history of the concept of intersectionality dates back as early as the 19th century with 'notions of "double jeopardy" (Beal) or "multiple jeopardy" (King), and "interlocking oppressions" (Combahee River Collective) (Carastathis, 2014: 305).

depoliticised intersectional approach to gender appropriated over time by feminist researchers for their own class/gender/sexuality individual interests. Intersectionality reveals *what is not seen* when categories such as gender and race are conceptualized as separate from each other. Indeed, Black feminists and other women of color have argued that the homogenous categories established as "woman" and "man" point respectively to heterosexual, white, bourgeois women and men whilst "Black" implies Black, heterosexual men – hence making invisible people who exist at the intersection of these categories such as queer black women, neither represented by the term "woman" nor "Black" or "heterosexual" (Lugones, 2008). In her article on the coloniality of gender, Lugones claims: "the intersection shows us a void. Therefore, once intersectionality shows us what is lost, we have the task of re-conceptualizing the logic of the intersection in order to avoid separation of the given categories and categorical thinking" (*ibid*: 81). A lack of intersectional perspective – one that does not explicitly mention how capitalism, patriarchy, racism, hetero-normativity, anthropocentrism and caste-ism are inter-related and co-constitutive – displays complicity with the modern/colonial system and contributes to the aforementioned processes of epistemicide by actively silencing the experiences, knowledges and practices of queer, Black, indigenous, people and women of color. As such, it is important to assess whether post-development is at risk of reproducing such categorical thinking in its understandings of the pluriverse.

The post-development literature on the pluriverse makes the role of women in challenging development increasingly visible – which is something to be celebrated (Kothari et al., 2019; Escobar, 2017a). For example, the "post-development dictionary" acknowledges the importance of women and provides several entries on alternatives such as Latin American and Caribbean feminisms, PeaceWomen, matriarchies, wages for housework and body politics (Kothari et al.,

2019). However, the post-development dictionary does not specifically mention the fundamental role of women, women of color or indigenous women *in other alternatives present in its repertoire* – which is problematic as it makes their presence in these other alternatives invisible. Kothari et al. (2019: xxx) wonder: "So where are women – 'the other half' of humanity' in all this? How to ensure that a post-development pluriverse does not dissolve 'coloniality' while keeping women in their place as the material bearers of everyday life activities?". A decolonial feminist perspective would argue that such a statement is also problematic because referring to women as the "other half of humanity" reproduces the colonial false binary between categories of "men" and "women", thereby contributing to the exclusion of trans* people from any reflexions on and embodiments of the pluriverse. Coloniality cannot be overcome without a simultaneous process of de-patriarchalization and a critique of the universalistic category of women, as both these aspects are co-constitutive of coloniality (Lugones, 2008). In this sense, the post-development literature could benefit from rethinking the category of "women" in order to foster more inclusive understandings of the pluriverse.

The post-development dictionary introduces the pluriverse as a solution to capitalism, patriarchy, racism, caste-ism and anthropocentrism[25], but it fails to address "the how" in a transversal/intersectional way throughout the book. Indeed, very few individual essays on transformative alternatives such as eco-feminism, Latin-American and Caribbean feminisms and Jain Ecology (i.e. all associated with feminisms) mention how to tackle these different structures of oppression whilst the rest of essays do not. For example, *buen vivir*, life projects, *Kametsa Asaike*, degrowth and radical ecological democracy strive to move beyond anthropocentrism and establish more harmonious relations with Nature, but fail to mention issues related to patriarchy

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[25] Although it fails to mention hetero-normativity, cis-genderism and ableism as a structure of oppression

and racism and how to tackle them (Kothari et al. 2019). Such categorical thinking is also prominent in the post-development literature concerned with creating synergies between different alternatives. For example, it was claimed that *buen vivir*, degrowth and radical ecological democracy emerge from "non-capitalist communities and therefore break with the anthropocentric and androcentric logics of capitalism" (Kothari et al., 2014: 366). However, it is not clear in what ways these three alternatives break with these androcentric logics. In the specific case of degrowth, not only does it emerges out of Western academia (which is certainly *not* a non-capitalist community), it also does not explain how it tackles structural issues of hetero-patriarchy and racism, how care would be organized in a degrowth society and how gender and racial injustices and colonial continuities would be addressed (despite the claims made by degrowth scholars like D'Alisa et al. (2015) about supposed connections between degrowth, feminism and decolonization) (Dengler and Seebacher, 2019; Pérez Orosco, 2014: 239-240). This highlights the issue of degrowth – and other non-explicitly feminist alternatives – employing "feminism" and "decolonization" as mere add-ons, rather than integral parts of their theory, *and not addressing the unequal power dynamics involved in their articulation with other alternatives from the global South* (Dengler and Seebacher, 2019). As Tuck and Yang (2012: 3) would say: "[D]ecolonization is not a metaphor. When metaphor invades decolonization, it kills the very possibility of decolonization; it re-centers whiteness, it resettles theory, it extends innocence to the settler, it entertains a settler future. Decolonize (a verb) and decolonization (a noun) cannot easily be grafted onto pre-existing discourses/frameworks, even if they are critical, even if they are anti-racist, even if they are justice frameworks".

If there are no connecting points between these separated categories of class, gender, race, caste, sexual/gender identity in the post-development literature, how can synergies and bridges be

created towards a pluriverse *free from hierarchies and oppressions*? Perhaps the points of convergence between these isolated alternatives could precisely be based on a reflection on how cis-hetero-patriarchy, racism, caste-ism, anthropocentrism and all other existing structures of oppression are produced, reproduced and addressed in all these initiatives. Failing to ground our understandings of the pluriverse in a decolonial, feminist meta-theory and onto-epistemic foundations will unfortunately only result in the usual laundry lists of different forms of oppressions – with no understanding of their interconnectedness and differentiated manifestations – which will prevent us from seeing and listening to those who are oppressed and made invisible, ultimately impeding more inclusive understandings of the pluriverse, as a world in which *all* people should fit.

4.3.b. Incarnated, embodied, positioned knowledges and the pluriverse

Post-development articulates an essential critique of the rational, objective, scientific, western forms of viewing the world and the imposition of that world-view on others, whilst emphasizing the importance of local cultures, knowledges and practices of grassroots movements and communities (Escobar, 1992). A decolonial feminist approach would also offer to shift the abstract, disembodied, male, western-centered paradigms of knowledge to ones that are historically embodied in peoples' personal experiences (Álvarez and Coolsaet, 2018; Anzaldúa, 1987). Speaking from our incarnated knowledges means recognizing how our normative thinking is produced, reproduced and shaped by colonial differences and our differentiated political, epistemic, gender, racial, ethnical, class privileges (Icaza, 2019: 28). As the modern/colonial system often tricks academics into falling into its traps and becoming complicit with its logics, it is essential for us researchers to acknowledge our location and implication in the colonial divide, our positionality, biases and the limitations of our knowledge (Cox et al., 2017). Recognising

these constraints is fundamental in order to adopt a more humble approach to doing research and embrace other forms of viewing the world in order to establish intercultural dialogues between alternatives that are context-specific, place-based, contingent and originating from different cultural traditions – all of which are essential parts of the theorizations towards the pluriverse.

This chapter itself, for example, is not devoid of such neo-colonial tensions considering the biases of a privileged, white, European researcher carrying out a decolonial, feminist research project within eurocentric knowledge structures. However, it is precisely by striving to identify these tensions, acknowledging them and navigating through them that new ways of thinking, doing and feeling research can emerge. Speaking from where we stand not only prevents us from speaking for others and falling into the traps of reproducing the extractivist logics of the modern/colonial academic structures; it also helps us highlight and address essential questions of *who is doing the theorizing on the pluriverse, how is the theorizing done, who is missing from the debates and why, how pluriversal is the literature and what are the consequences of that pluriversality (or lack thereof)?* Finally, disembodied, abstract thinking also prevents us from seeing, understanding and feeling the plurality of alternatives being articulated within the pluriverse and the complexities of such processes. Therefore, it is essential to reflect on the extent to which the literature on the pluriverse manages to go beyond abstract, disembodied thinking.

The current post-development literature on the pluriverse rarely acknowledges the importance of research positionality or transparently conveys the privileges of its authors. This is a regrettable finding as it prevents the scholarship from recognizing its biases from the start and subsequently reflecting on their influence and how to overcome them. It also impedes enriching conversations

to occur *based on the essence of what drives us to search for a pluriverse*. Surely, this exercise of transparency requires a deep introspection of the self and a vulnerable exposure to others, which many would unfortunately dismiss as "too personal" – especially in academic circles. However, as feminists would say: *the personal is political*. In this sense, the post-development scholarship could learn by following the example of decolonial thinkers such as Walter Mignolo who in the preface of the book "Constructing the Pluriverse: the Geopolitics of Knowledge" mentions: "it was my awareness of inhabiting the border that prompted the book [about the pluriverse]" (Mignolo, 2018: xi). Such an acknowledgement helps the readers understand that inhabiting that border space enabled Mignolo to witness the existence of a plurality of knowledges and practices on both sides of the colonial divide and to bring them together. In the case of this chapter, reflecting on my own positionality in a space of nowhere-ness made me understand the bitterness of my initial academic writings, heavily influenced by feelings of betrayal/disenchantment I experienced after realizing the political incoherence of the current theorizations and embodiments of the pluriverse (which I hoped would provide the sense of belonging I longed for) – all of which helped me write from a more constructive place.

Post-development scholarship also tends to focus on narratives/theories of the pluriverse rather than its practical embodiments and "writes about" the topic rather than embodying it in its theorizations. For example, Beling et al. consider *buen vivir*, the rights of mother Earth and *eco-swaraj* as "situated discourses" (Beling et al., 2018: 309). However, these are *concrete practices* which are embodied by people and communities. These authors focus on 'advocating a strategic dialogue among transition discourses' and claim too little efforts are directed at building bridges between alternatives (*ibid*: 309). Yet, they ultimately fall into the same trap by remaining in a purely theoretical discussion. The calls for transitions to the pluriverse articulated so far are

problematic because *they contribute to reinforcing the assumption that embodiments of the pluriverse do not already exist* – which is a consequence of abstract, disembodied thinking. Unfortunately, this prevents the field of post-development from expanding its research horizons and considering, for example, the concrete practices of processes attempting to foster spaces of mutual exchange, learning and collaboration between movements and alternatives, such as the Global Tapestry of Alternatives, Vikalp Sangam, Crianza Mutua, the gatherings of Zapatista Womxn etc. (Kothari et al., 2019: 339; Leyva Solano, 2019). Furthermore, considering the tendency of the hegemonic system to co-opt and hijack radical alternatives to adapt to the crises it generates, a distancing from the concrete embodiments of pluriversal politics is dangerous as it can easily lead to the neocolonial re-appropriations of the increasingly popular concept of pluriverse – therefore making it devoid of its political meaning. Hence the importance of decolonial feminisms in highlighting the relevance of incarnated knowledges that stem from our experiences of the pluriverse.

However, the issue might not only be a lack of visibility of the embodiments of the pluriverse "on the ground"; but also the actual *theoretical embodiments of the pluriverse*. Indeed, the current constraints of format, content and language imposed by the modern/colonial academic system (which determines what consists of "academically acceptable scholarship") impede pluriversal theorizations, truly collective authorship, non-extractivist knowledge cultivation as well as inter-cultural dialogues that can weave a plurality of knowledges together (Palmero et al., 2014: 28-30). How then, can post-development scholarship provide accurate, coherent accounts of the pluriverse and the articulations of alternatives? By engaging and establishing more bridges with decolonial theory, post-development could rally behind the calls to decolonize academia and research methods in order to address the complicities of the neoliberal university with the

erasing mechanisms of modernity/coloniality - and strive to integrate pluriversal ways of writing, thinking and feeling in its scholarship. By embracing onto-epistemological decolonization and being more politically and ethically coherent between the visions of the pluriverse and its theorizations, post-development could both "write about" the pluriverse and be the written/theoretical embodiment of it. There is no one way to do so, as Mignolo would say: "The pathways [towards unlearning] are varied, and each of us has to build it according to their personal history. Taking pluriversality seriously, and not only talking about it, means knowing, being able to think, living and doing things in other ways" (Mignolo in Palmero et al., 2014: 12).

Embracing the different positions from where we speak may not only prevent us from reproducing the epistemic coloniality that leads to the reproduction of universal, monocultural, extractivist perspectives that erase the pluriversal knowledges and practices of the global South; it also enables the collective theorizing and construction of plural transitions to the pluriverse (Mignolo, 2018: x-xi) – as the next part will demonstrate.

4.3.c. Non-monoculturality and the pluriverse

The pluriverse is based on an understanding that the world is pluriversally constructed and therefore can be conceived as an alternative to Western universalism and its totalizing, monocultural framework. However, if we believe that the world is made of multiple worlds (ontological pluriversality), how can we produce knowledges that reflects this way of seeing the world (epistemological pluriversality)? A decolonial (and therefore non-universalistic) feminist perspective would argue that an epistemology of pluriversality should recognise the diversity of epistemologies emerging out of different struggles within the plural contexts of the current matrix of oppressions, respects their particularities whilst finding points of convergence, without

renouncing to the political horizon of dismantling all structures of oppression (Lopez, Najera, 2014: 112). In other words, it implies to view and portray the world as an interconnected diversity rather than a unified totality (Mignolo, 2018: x). A good example of this onto-epistemological pluriversality is shown by the book "Constructing the Pluriverse: the Geopolitics of Knowledge" which embodies the complex, mosaic construction and weaving of a plurality of knowledges around the world (Reither, 2018: 2). Considering the increasing popularity of the pluriverse, it is essential to provide early warnings against considering the pluriverse as a single matrix or a unique totalizing alternative system made out of all post-development alternatives – hence the importance of advocating for a decolonial feminist perspective capable of respecting the diversity of epistemologies of these alternatives and creating horizontal inter-cultural political dialogues between them. If we consider the pluriverse as multidimensional and multi-layered, before examining the universalistic thinking of the post-development literature on the pluriverse, it is important to start by the alternatives composing this pluriverse. Does the post-development literature account for the pluralities of the different alternatives being articulated within the pluriverse and the complexities of such processes?

The post-development literature often presents alternatives as uni-dimensional monolithic entities, rather than plural, open-ended, complex and often paradoxical *processes* (Icaza, 2017). For instance, most alternatives are mentioned in the singular rather than the plural, except for *buen vivir* and feminisms (Kothari and Demaria, 2017; Escobar, 2015; Escobar, 2017a: 138). Indeed, some authors claim that "*buen vivir* does not synthesize a mono-cultural proposal […] it is a plural concept" (Kothari et al., 2014: 367) whilst others talk about *buenos vivires* in the plural (Beling et al., 2018). It is essential to adopt this approach in order to have a more complex

understanding of alternatives in their pluralities and avoid overly-simplifying processes that attempt to articulate them within a pluriverse. As Kothari et al. (2019: xxxv) would say: "transitions [to the pluriverse] can be messy". Approaching the pluriverse without an understanding of the plurality (and messiness) of the alternatives within it is an inherent paradox to the pluriversality of the political horizon put forward by the Zapatistas. It is also problematic as it can lead scholars to make universalistic claims reproducing the logics of modernity/coloniality. This is the case, as mentioned earlier, of the scholarship on the global environmental justice movement – criticized for its coloniality (Alvarez and Coolsaet, 2018). In a similar vein, the reference to a single "anti-globalization movement" is questionable as the ontology of the "global" can be considered as a by-product of universalistic thinking that impedes inter-cultural dialogues and synergies between a plurality of context-specific, multi-scalar alternatives. Indeed, attempting to build synergies between universalizing alternatives and local, place-based, communal struggles seems like a dangerous exercise that can potentially lead to the co-option and absorption of the latter under the umbrella of the former.

The universalism in the post-development literature on the pluriverse is generally quite nuanced and is mostly careful about not falling into the trap of reproducing the totalizing logics of coloniality. However, the post-development dictionary does provide a set of universal criteria as to which alternatives should figure or not in the pluriverse (Kothari et al., 2019: xxxiii) - which is rather problematic. Indeed, a decolonial perspective, whilst extremely critical of modern/coloniality, does not aim to dismiss western forms of viewing the world altogether; but rather establish horizontal intercultural dialogues between western and other-than-western knowledges on equal footing (De Sousa Santos, 2014: 189-190). Controversially, we can ask ourselves *is there no room for mainstream or 'false-solutions' in the pluriverse*? Universalistic

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tendencies are also present in the work of Beling et al. who advocate for the need for a singular "great transformation towards sustainability" (Beling et al., 2018: 309) rather than recognizing the plurality of transformative paths towards sustainability. Escobar thus prefers to use the term "transition discourse*s*" and "transition design*s*" in his attempts at creating synergies between alternatives from the global South and the global North by analyzing the points of tensions and convergence – which he does by respecting the historical, geopolitical, cultural and epistemic specificities of all these alternatives (Escobar, 2015; Escobar, 2017a). Whilst his concepts of transition discourses and designs are context-specific, he suggest paths towards the pluriverse that consider the entire ensemble of transition discourses and the bridges that can be established between Northern and Southern alternatives – whilst rejecting the assumption that there is a single reality to which there correspond multiple cultures or subjective representations (what he calls the "One World World") (Escobar, 2015: 6). In a similar vein, other authors would claim that "[post-development] alternatives cannot be reduced to any single one and therefore do not aspire to be adopted as a common goal by the UN" (Kothari et al., 2014: 366). And whilst they highlight the lack of a "global attempt at trying to consolidate these alternatives into single coherent vision or framework" they carefully pose the question whether this would be even possible or desirable (*ibid*: 370). A decolonial feminist perspective would argue that this is neither possible nor desirable if we are striving towards the pluriverse as a holistically interconnected diversity rather than a unified totality, and that the complex, mosaic construction of a plurality of knowledges and practices around the world can only be achieved by decolonizing and dismantling universalistic, mono-cultural frameworks.

4.4. Conclusion

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This chapter sought to contribute to the debates around transitions to the pluriverse in the field of post-development through the lenses of feminisms from/in the margins. It argued that establishing more bridges between post-development and these feminisms can contribute to unearthing some neo-colonial continuities in the post-development literature on the pluriverse. These include a lack of intersectional approach and the reproduction of the coloniality of gender which impedes more inclusive understandings of the pluriverse, a disembodied approach that ignores the research positionality and privileges of post-development authors and a focus on narratives rather than practical embodiments of the pluriverse, as well as some universalistic tendencies and approach to alternatives as uni-dimensional monolithic entities rather than plural, open-ended and complex processes. To address these modern/colonial mechanisms of onto-epistemological erasure of pluriversality, this chapter suggested drawing from the intersectional, embodied and non-monocultural approaches of feminisms from/in the margins. It contended that doing so can help us avoid betraying the ethics of a pluriverse – as a political horizon and prefigurative forms of politics – by becoming complicit of reproducing the logics of the modern/colonial system, and help us foster the conditions that can allow for the imagination, recognition and articulation of alternative worlds. Considering the increasing popularity of the pluriverse, it is essential to provide such early warnings of the neo-colonial continuities present in the literature in order to prevent the pluriverse from becoming co-opted by the modern/colonial system and making it devoid of its political meaning. Coming to full circle, this chapter – as it is intrinsically tied to my positionality, my activism and my life – stemmed from the desire to foster spaces that are safer, more horizontal, inclusive and inter-cultural, where the 'outsiders within' can find a (political) home where they belong, where silenced alternatives can be heard, and where invisibilized and isolated struggles can be seen and articulated within a

pluriverse – as a world in which *all* worlds fit. I am hoping that, along the way, we are able to collectively nurture *pluriversal political ethics* that can serve as the pillars for all the bridges we are trying to build.

Chapter 5: Decolonial Feminist Tribulations within the World Social Forum of Transformative Economies[26]

> *"How can we learn to come together? [...] How can we come together in a unity that is not simplistic and oppressive, but complex and emancipatory?" (Davis, in Mac Lorin, 2020: 5)*

This chapter reflects with and learns from the World Social Forum of Transformative Economies (WSFTE), a political process that attempted to build and sustain multi-scalar, multi-sectoral confluences of alternatives from 2018 and 2020. Using decolonial feminist participatory action-research methods, this chapter provides a critical analysis of the cultural, ideological and organizational aspects underpinning the WSFTE process. More specifically, it unearths the neocolonial continuities that led to its demise (such as patriarchal logics and a reproduction of coloniality), before delving into some learning possibilities offered by decolonial feminisms and the concrete experiences of feminists organizing throughout the WSFTE process. The lessons learned from this experience aim to support ongoing and future attempts at weaving alternatives and movements together in more sustainable and pluriversal ways.

5.1. Introduction

Against the backdrop of the current systemic crisis, many activist-scholars have been advocating for transitions towards what the Zapatistas called "a world in which many worlds fit" (subsequently phrased as "the pluriverse") - or a political horizon capable of articulating systemic alternatives together (Escobar; 2017; Escobar; 2020; Kothari et al., 2019). However, despite the growing body of literature on the pluriverse, especially in the field of

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[26] This chapter is currently under review as an article in the Journal of Social Movements Study

post-development, the scholarship focuses primarily on disembodied theoretical discussions, as opposed to reflecting with and learning from concrete attempts at bringing movements and alternatives together (as shown in chapter 4).

However, extensive literature can be found in the field of sociology and social movement studies focusing on the World Social Forum (WSF), defined as "world-wide, movement-based, multiscale, and multi-sited cultural processes", which have been organized since 2001 against the neoliberal order under the banner of "another world is possible" (Conway, 2004 : 370). One of the most prominent debates within the scholarship on the WSF is concerned with attempting to define its nature and purpose. Indeed, while some claimed the WSF should be an actor (or a movement of movements) with political agency, representativity and decision-making power, others argued that the WSF should be an open space of mutual learning, exchange and collaboration bringing together social movements from around the world (Whitaker, 2006: 37, Teivainen 2004; Patomäki and Teivainen; 2004). Studies focusing on the social movements within the WSF (Byrd and Jasny, 2010; Scerri, 2013), while offering valuable insights in terms of the functionings and dynamics of World Social Forum, fail to problematize the asymmetrical power relations within it. More than twenty years after its inception this question remains unanswered, with the WSF having lost much of its political momentum, relevance and radicality along the way, as it now finds itself at a crossroads: evolving or dying (De Sousa Santos, 2017; Savio, 2022; Solón and Malig, 2019).

Given this context and the calls for moving towards a new World Social Forum (Savio, 2020), it would be relevant to provide new insights and frameworks to think through the Forum question, as well as its evolution and perennity. Therefore, this chapter moves beyond the space-actor

debates and the limitations of such binarism and seeks to encourage the scholarship on the pluriverse to explore processes such as the WSF, while contributing to the WSF literature in three innovative ways. Firstly, it introduces the framework of pluriverse hoping to provide more radical political inspiration, vision and imagination for processes like the WSF that bring together thousands of movements and alternatives. Secondly, considering the predominance of masculinist scholarship and activism within the WSF, this chapter will be based on a decolonial feminist approach that is both sensitive to asymmetrical power relations and capable of unearthing as well as addressing systems of oppression. In that way, it builds on the inspiring work of Conway (2011) and Mac Lorin (2020) who argued for a deepened praxis of decolonization within WSF spaces. Lastly, this chapter deliberately focuses on a *thematic* World Social Forum. Thematic fora (largely absent in the literature) are more autonomous than the WSF in that they are not overseen, influenced or constrained by the bureaucracy, governance and politics of the International Council (IC) - highlighted as one of the problems currently faced by the WSF (Savio, 2020) - and can provide insights into more creative and innovative ways of organizing forum spaces and processes of articulations of movements and alternatives.

This chapter focuses on the experience of the World Social Forum of Transformative Economies (WSFTE) which took place in Barcelona from 2018 to 2020. It does so because the intention of the WSFTE was to build an action-oriented process concerned with continuity, in order not to become yet another ephemeral and often performative/showcasing event like many other World Social Fora. Furthermore, the aim of the WSFTE to foster multi-scalar, multi-sectoral confluences of alternatives around the world throughout the process represented a great area of interest for research on transitions to the pluriverse. The alternatives that the WSFTE sought to bring together are aligned with the systemic alternatives mentioned in chapter 1, namely: food

sovereignty, agro-ecology, feminist economies, the commons (urban, natural, digital), and other initiatives from the social and solidarity economy.

This chapter stems from my work as an activist-researcher and transnational movement organizer concerned with nurturing more sustainable political processes that can articulate alternatives, movements and people together on different scales. The possible resonance of the WSFTE and its potential conduciveness to more pluriversal political horizons is what led me to participate in the process as an organizer-participant-observer from December 2018 to July 2020 and write an experientially grounded, embodied reflection of the WSFTE process.

Bringing together insights from the pluriverse as a political horizon, decolonial feminism as a theoretical framework and a thematic forum as an understudied case study in the scholarship, *this chapter argues that decolonial feminist theory and praxis can contribute to processes articulating together alternatives and movements, by unearthing and addressing neocolonial continuities present in those processes.* I contend that the lessons drawn from this experience can support ongoing and future attempts at weaving alternatives and movements together in more sustainable ways, and hopefully pave the way to more pluriversal political praxis and ethics. Such reflections are essential not only because of the renewed interest for the WSF that emerged during the global pandemic of COVID-19, but primarily in light of the current systemic crisis and the urgent necessity to build more, and better alliances between alternatives and progressive movements in order to move towards much-needed paradigmatic shifts.

The next section will provide the reader(s) with the theoretical framework and research methods informing this study. The third part will introduce the case study, a timeline of the process and relevant contextual information pertaining to the research. Finally, the fourth part will focus on

the critical analysis of the WSFTE process from a decolonial feminist perspective. More specifically, it unearths some neo-colonial continuities that led to its demise (such as patriarchal structures and dynamics, and more broadly a reproduction of modern/colonial logics), before delving into the learning possibilities offered by decolonial feminisms to address these issues in both theory and praxis.

5.2. Theoretical framework and methodology

This section provides the readers with the theoretical framework and methodology underpinning this study. After outlining the key concept of pluriverse, it gives an overview of decolonial feminism as the approach adopted in this chapter and explains the research methods used to carry out this study.

As this study seeks to introduce the concept of pluriverse as a different way of thinking about systemic change and the articulations of movements and alternatives (with the hopes of expanding the political imagination of processes such as the WSF), it is essential to outline what this chapter broadly understands by the concept pluriverse. The word "broadly" is used deliberately to acknowledge that providing a specific definition of the pluriverse would be neither possible nor desirable, hence the preference of a more holistic framework that can shed light on the meaning of this term. Based on previous research, and for the purpose of this research, the pluriverse will be understood as a complex, open-ended, intersectional, embodied, non-monocultural political horizon that weaves alternatives and people together on multi-scalar levels and strives to co-create a world in which all worlds and people fit.

This research embraces decolonial feminism as an option amongst a plurality of options, which seeks to identify and undo the hierarchical structures of race, gender, cis-hetero-patriarchy, and

class intertwined with(in) and constitutive of global capitalism, coloniality and Western modernity (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018: 15). Here, coloniality is understood as the historical and current concrete practices exercised by the modern/colonial project that excludes, silences, erases and kills other-than-modern, non-Western knowledges, practices and people. Coloniality is sustained by modernity, which can be defined as the totalizing narrative projected by the Western civilizational project – which defines what should be considered a valid, legitimate reality - thereby legitimizing the exclusionary, silencing and genocidal practices of coloniality (Icaza and Vázquez, 2017: 52). As an example, the modern/colonial system of gender is responsible for the colonial imposition of gender as a category and heterosexuality as the norm – both of which are deeply entwined with race – which was used to establish a system of societal hierarchy (Lugones, 2008).

Decolonial feminisms incorporate, make visible and problematize different situations based on gender, class, race and sexual orientation in different contexts, respecting their particularities, finding points of convergence without renouncing the political horizon of dismantling all structures of oppression (Lopez Najera, 2014: 112). This is why the learning possibilities offered by decolonial feminisms can shed light on the conditions to help foster the imagination, recognition and articulations of alternative worlds and peoples within a pluriverse.

Unlike the abstract, disembodied, male, western-centered paradigms of mainstream academia, decolonial feminist research is primarily based on and makes space for the historically embodied knowledges situated in people's personal experiences, or what Sara Motta calls the "enfleshment" of reason when she advocates for critical intimacy as opposed to critical distance (Motta, 2021a). Decolonial feminist perspectives teach us about the importance of speaking from

our incarnated knowledges and to recognize, as Icaza explains, how our normative thinking is produced, reproduced and shaped by colonial differences and our differentiated political, epistemic, gender, racial, ethnical, class privileges (Icaza, 2019: 28). This, in turn, can inspire processes of unlearning our biases and privileges. It can also help us carry out research in a more respectful, ethical, accountable and useful way, as opposed to reproducing racist practices and attitudes, ethnocentric assumptions and exploitative research methods (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999: 9-10).

Considering that the modern/colonial system often tricks academics into (un/willingly or un/consciously) falling into its traps and being complicit of its logics, this thesis calls for a more humble approach to doing research – one which acknowledges our positionality and biases, the limitations of our knowledges and an openness to other forms of viewing the world. As mentioned before, this research is not devoid of such tensions, considering the biases of a privileged white, European researcher carrying out a decolonial, feminist research project within eurocentric knowledge structures – a politically and epistemologically problematic stance, especially due to the constraints preventing truly collective authorship and inter-cultural knowledge cultivation within academia. However, it is precisely by identifying, acknowledging and navigating through these tensions that new ways of thinking, doing and feeling research can emerge.

As such, decolonial approaches to research are essential to prevent the violence of extractivism, othering, representation, appropriation and erasure of different ways of knowing and being. The research methods of this chapter therefore strived to nurture collective forms of knowledge cultivation that do not reproduce such violence. They also sought to break away from the logics

of mainstream productivist, neoliberal, eurocentric academia, and embrace a slower, more participatory approach based on feedback loops, consent, care, active listening, mutual respect, trust and accountability. Finally, as this chapter deals with issues of gendered care work and reproductive labor, it embraces a decolonial feminist approach that brings invisibilized voices to the forefront (Verges, 2020: 81).

This study embraces qualitative, feminist, action-research methods involving auto-ethnography carried out during the WSFTE process from December 2018 to July 2020, and my participation - as part of my fieldwork - in various commissions (content, methodology, mobilization and the mapping), the International Coordination Committee (composed of wider networks of alternative economies) and the Link Group (coordinating the logistics of the overall process and the operational coordination between the different governance spaces). Supplementing this auto-ethnographic approach was the discourse and data analysis from meeting notes, press releases, internal documents and news articles from 2018 to 2020. The study also makes connections, whenever possible, to the very thin body of literature on feminist analyses of WSF processes. Furthermore, twenty-three in-depth open-ended interviews were carried out in 2021 with both local and international organizers most actively involved in the WSFTE process, covering people's personal experiences, internal dynamics, issues of governance and representation as well as political content. One focus group was also organized with those in charge of the day-to-day logistical work, due to their unique, behind the scene perspective on the process. Consensual feedback loops were carried out specifically with members of that group (due to the nature of their participation and their positionality) until the completion of the chapter in 2022. This study is greatly indebted to all the participants who shared their wisdom, time and energy as part of this reflective exercise. To respect the confidentiality and safety of the

participants, and in consideration of existing power dynamics, no names or data that can identify participants will be presented.

5.3. Introducing the World Social Forum of Transformative Economies

This section presents the readers with the history and timeline of the WSFTE process. The idea of a World Social Forum of Transformative Economies was proposed by representatives of alternative economic networks during the World Social Forum of 2016. It emerged out of a desire to make visible, amplify and connect economic alternatives centered around care and the sustainability of life (as opposed to the pursuit of growth, profit and the exploitation of Nature and people). Due to the thriving alternative economic models in the region of Catalonia (as one of the hearts of cooperativism), it was decided that the event would be anchored in Barcelona, where the preparations officially started in 2018. Following the twenty-year tradition of the World Social Forums, the thematic WSFTE had to adhere to the Charter of Principles, that highlights inclusion, openness, plurality, diversity, transparency and the respect of the autonomy of all actors in the space, amongst others things (Léon, 2019). However, the WSFTE also sought to distance itself and overcome some limitations inherent to the World Social Fora. For instance, instead of organizing yet another ephemeral, discontinuous event, the WSFTE placed the main emphasis on the *process* (as opposed to the event) and aimed to build sustainable, multi-scalar confluences of economic alternatives that could endure beyond the event (Uval, 2018; WSFTE, 2021). As explained earlier, the potential resonance and alignment of the goals of the WSFTE with the political horizon of the pluriverse is what led to my engagement in the process. Moreover, the WSFTE sought to distance itself from usual World Social Forums by building an

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action-oriented process concerned with continuity, as opposed to an ephemeral and performative showcasing event.

The WSFTE was a process involving grassroots organizations and movements working towards transformative economies in their local territories. It sought to be a collective, self-organized process emerging from different local confluences (larger groupings of practitioners working on alternative economic models). The WSFTE was organized around four axes of transformative economies: agro-ecology and food sovereignty; urban, digital and virtual commons; feminist economies and the social and solidarity economies). In coordination with a driving group of three prominent networks of alternative economies and an international coordination committee, the process was supported by a local technical team in charge of the overall logistics, coordination, administration and communication. The local thematic confluences of Barcelona worked together to prepare the first international preparatory meeting of April 2019, where hundreds of representatives of transformative economies around the world would be invited to co-create the Forum process and event of 2020. A Feminist Confluence - that this study will pay special attention to - emerged during that time, out of the axis of feminist economies and began organizing autonomously from and transversally to the broader WSFTE process.

A second international meeting was organized with bigger international networks of transformative economies in July 2019, to respond to challenges around diversity of geographies and working areas, legitimacy and momentum. This meeting saw the creation of the International Coordination Committee, which sought to take charge of the governance of the process and the organization of the event through the creation of various different commissions (logistics, content, methodology, communications, care, mapping, international mobilization,

local mobilization, administration and finance etc). It was claimed that this new body of governance should "by no means understate the importance of the self-management working models that are already in place in movements, initiatives and local convergences" and should consider "established criteria such as respect to diversity, transparency and democracy, keeping a structure linked to goals and results, making governance a space for collective construction, promoting participation and contributions of other networks (with organized spaces, structure and resources)" (WSFTE, 2019a; WSFTE, 2019b).
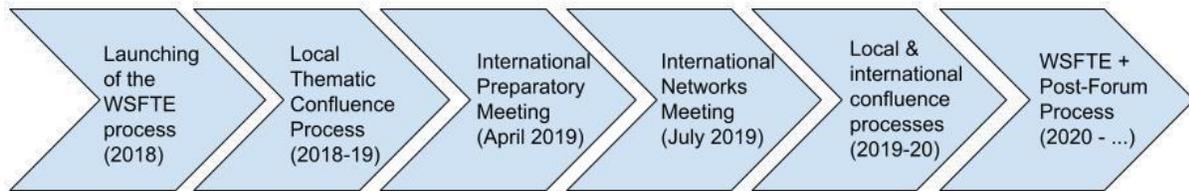
Figure 2: summary of the WSFTE process timeline (own elaboration)

The global outbreak of COVID-19 in March 2020 severely disrupted the Forum process - which was shifted to an online format with haste. Moving the entire forum online proved challenging, especially due to the lack of time and capacity, as more efforts were mobilized towards caregiving responsibilities and local forms of organizing to face the daily impacts of the pandemic in different territories. Nonetheless, the Virtual Forum of June 2020 managed to host 150 online activities, 2000 people and 400 organizations during the course of a week, in an attempt to provide a space to make visible community-based responses to the pandemic and transformative economies initiatives worldwide, to build international solidarity and to denounce state and corporate power in the mismanagement of the global health crisis. However, following

the event in 2020 and due to shifting political priorities during the pandemic as well as the issues that will be touched upon in this study, the process slowly lost momentum and dissolved, with the much anticipated goal of creating lasting multi-scalar, multi-sectoral confluences of alternatives never seeing the light of day. Having provided a summary, timeline and aims of the WSFTE process, the next section dives into a collective reflection about the WSFTE process as an embodied pluriversal experience.

5.4. Decolonial feminist perspectives on and learnings from the experience of the World Social Forum of Transformative Economies

"We talk about transformative economies that put life at the center, but I wonder if we have been able to put life at the center of people doing the invisibilized labor to build and sustain this process? I am referring particularly to the technical team, to the people who left along the way burned out, frustrated, disappointed. I am referring to the criticisms made last year during the first face-to-face meeting about the Forum's eurocentrism, whiteness, the lack of representativeness. [...] If we really want to build systemic alternatives, we have to actively continue working on the internalized eurocentric, racist, patriarchal, anthropocentric logics that are inherent to our spaces and impact our political processes, and decolonize economies so that they can be truly transformative" (Musić, 2020).

This section examines ideological, cultural and organizational aspects of the WSFTE from a decolonial feminist perspective and identifies two issues that impeded the process: patriarchal logics as well as an overall reproduction of modern/colonial logics. It offers insights from decolonial feminist thinkers and examples from the experience of the Feminist Confluence on how to address some of these tensions, in order to nurture more sustainable bridges between movements and alternatives.

5.4.a. Men ruling, women crying: patriarchal logics within the World Social Forum of Transformative Economies

A division of labor between the "technical" and the "political" was established at the beginning of the process, with on the one hand a body of paid technicians (mostly young women) in charge of the logistics, coordination, administration and communication and on the other hand, the members of the driving group, the international coordination committee and the inter-axis assembly making political decisions and working on the political content. This fixed division between invisible and visible labor was problematic for many reasons: 1) it was gendered and ageist; 2) it implied that the technical was not political and; 3) it mimicked the functionings of the capitalist global economy (dependent on reproductive, invisible labor) that the forum was meant to provide alternatives to (Federici, 2004: 14).

Such gendered division of in/visible labor was also present within the 'political' and governance space, which relied on women to willingly get involved in invisibilized tasks required to sustain the space. This showed very little consciousness, appreciation and visibility of the work required to build a Forum. Speaking about the engagement of cis-gender men in the WSFTE and more broadly in the World Social Forum, one feminist described that "it is not just about going to the meetings, giving your opinion on something, doing your alter-globalization speech and how you're going to save the world [...] while your female counterparts at the meeting are making coffee, facilitating and taking notes. This still happens in Forum spaces [...] Everyone wants to speak in the assembly of the Forums but nobody wants to do the invisible labor". It is important to note that the process also greatly relied on a few young women in vulnerable, precarious positions who were providing labor as part of unpaid internships, and being given heavy

workloads and responsibilities (involving translations, logistics, international mobilization) with limited support and supervision.

A majority of women, both within and outside the technical team, not only carried out the invisibilized yet essential ant work required to build and sustain the process, organize the event and oversee the transition after the event, they took on the emotional labor of mediating through conflicts between men. Indeed, one interviewee commented how "the Forum relied on the hard work of women always in the role of moderating, note-taking, or doing the dirty work, and mediating conflicts or the presence of big egos in the space". Many women described themselves serving as "bridges" or "intermediaries" between self-interested men who had difficulties collaborating past their political/personal differences and that "those picking up the pieces, doing the care work, or mediation were always women (not just in the technical team) - many of whom ended up burned out and exhausted and having to leave".

Someone else shared: "it makes me angry to see that the internal struggles impeding political processes are between old, white, cis-gender, hetero men from Western Europe". The dynamics and the relations within the space have been qualified as (hetero-)patriarchal by 92,3% of the women interviewed for this study, which were heightened by the gendered and ageist division of labor and often resulted in blatant infantilization of women (especially young women), condescending attitudes and strong patronizing behaviors from male counterparts. Other issues described by interviewees involved: mansplaining, sexist comments, and seeking external validation from women. One young feminist recalled: "the constant use of 'my dear' was shocking. I remember that during a moment of intense stress, I sent him a message that I'm not feeling well and he replied: 'Welcome to reality, my dear'". There were also recollections of

tensions, mistreatments, toxicity, labor malpractices of some organizers towards the technical team, leading one feminist from the technical team to summarize the overall dynamics as "men ruling, women crying".

It should be noted that between May 2019 and January 2020, all four members of the technical team who quit their jobs were women. Meanwhile, newly hired members of the technical team were greeted with the following words by one of the men in the driving group overseeing the technical team: "there is a river of blood flowing down the street from the office." A feminist from the technical team laughably described how: "The Forum was like cycles of violence [...] there is a period where the conflict escalates and then a honeymoon phase where everything is possible and everything will be resolved magically and then it escalates again… like a toxic relationship!'" It is hard not to draw a comparison with the current capitalist system´s regime of disposability. As outlined in the latest book by decolonial feminist Françoise Vergès (2021, xvi): "even leftist movements have sometimes replayed this capitalist script, at times treating activists or even whole communities as disposable life".

Unlike the projected images of promoting economic alternatives centered around *care and the sustainability of life* - the overall feedback provided by interviewees points to the carelessness within the process. One feminist organizer and member of the Feminist Confluence mentioned "the lack of care in all aspects of the Forum" and how one "could witness hetero-patriarchy in the space like in many social movements and activist circles. There are still people, mostly men, who decide who speaks, who makes decisions, which in virtual spaces might be trickier to detect. The hetero-patriarchal essence endures. We lacked a despatriarchalization of the World Social Forums. And this is a critique we have to keep revising."

The process lacked cohesion and systems of collective accountability which allowed many organizers to advocate for objectives aligned with their own self-interest (for political, economic and/or social reasons). For instance, tensions emerged between the networks impulsing the WSFTE due to differences in visions, objectives and working styles which rapidly spilled over into the realm of the interpersonal. Indeed, as some interviewees pointed out, it was not a struggle between different organizations; but rather a struggle between white, cis-gender, hetero, Western european men, putting their personal interests before that of the collective - which greatly stalled and hindered the process.

When applying a gender perspective, there was a notable difference in who occupied the space and how. Indeed, a male facilitator commented that women in the WSFTE were more conscious of these dynamics, while "[t]he people whom I remember having the most problems in terms of occupying space were white men". Other women organizers described "a lack of listening and a shocking hoarding of the space" by Western white cis-gender men who failed to respect the speaking turns, tried to impose their self-interested ideas and disrespected collective agreements. Indeed, while many interviewees highlighted the need for a cultural and political shift towards more cooperation, better methods of consensus-building and the ability to work across cultures, political trajectories, languages and past differences, I argue that these shifts will not occur without the simultaneous tackling of deeply rooted, pernicious issues of racism, sexism, heteronormativity, ageism, ableism and all other inter-related structures of oppression - as the next section on intersectionality (or lack thereof) will tackle.

In other words, the WSFTE process reproduced the same dynamics and structures it was striving to seek alternatives to: a unequal gendered division of (in-)visible labor and hetero-patriarchal

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capitalist logics which caused harm, disenchantment, exhaustion and burnout to women (especially young women) - which, unlike what the WSFTE stood for, was neither transformative nor centering care and the sustainability of life, and certainly not conducive to a world in which many alternative worlds and people fit, as exemplified by the pluriverse.

While no organization, movement or political process is exempt from falling into patriarchal dynamics and ways of working, there are practices and protocols that can be put in place to avoid such traps. In this sense, much can be learned from the Feminist Confluence, which organized autonomously and transversely to the WSFTE process. Indeed, it developed inclusive strategies to ensure the participation of all people, the visibility and appreciation of all forms of labor (visible and invisible), a setting of horizontality and a carefully planned rotative, equitable division of labor of all the "ant-work" required to sustain the space and the activities of the confluence. It also established protocols of care that ensure respect, trust and safety amongst participants-organizers. For example, the Feminist Confluence facilitated its meetings and activities (one of them being a three hour assembly with more than 80 participants) in ways in which organizers and participants actively listened to each other without interrupting or pushing their own agendas, held space for one another and connected other people's interventions with their own, as opposed to enunciating political opinions in silos.

Due to the care and intentionality of their practices, the Feminist Confluence was able to generate and nurture meaningful ties and connections between its integrants, even within a virtual space. Despite the challenging pandemic context and overall digital fatigue, the spaces built by the Feminist Confluence were qualified as "energizing" and provoking "joy and re-countering" while

successfully sustaining and actually *building* momentum since its inception in 2019 - as opposed to the rest of the WSFTE process.

Interestingly, while the Feminist Confluence functioned as an independent, autonomous space with its own ways of working rooted in feminist ethics and practices while participating transversally in the rest of the Forum process, it did not manage to influence the patriarchal dynamics of the WSFTE. When asked about the relation between the Feminist Confluence and the WSFTE, two integrants of the Feminist Confluence responded that "the de-patriarchalization [of the WSFTE] was not in our agendas, it was not our objective." However, one of the activities organized by two member organizations during the Virtual Forum of June 2020 focused on the ties between feminist economies and the social solidarity economies, and how to make organizations less patriarchal - hoping many participants would bring back those tools and insights to their own organizations and spaces.

5.4.b. Modernity/coloniality within the World Social Forum of Transformative Economies

Looking first at the composition of the WSFTE - whether its participants and/or organizers - there was a notable exclusion of people from the Global South in both the process and event. For example, amongst the 254 participants that came from 40 different countries for the first international preparatory meeting, there were only 3 representatives from Asia and 6 from Africa (with a higher number - twenty five - in the case of Latin America). The word "exclusion" is used deliberately (instead of "absence" for example) to highlight the intentionality of a deliberate political decision to not prioritize the issue of representation.

Some, however, argued this was due to a lack of capacity and contacts, while others suggested that a European-based forum will necessarily have a majority of European participants. The latter

claim, I would counter-argue, highlights the predominance of White, eurocentric thinking that fuelled the very same mechanisms of modern/colonial erasure embedded in the process and political vision of the WSFTE. Indeed, if the issue was merely geographical, one could inquire about the exclusion of people located in the margins of that Europe (such as migrants, refugees, undocumented people, sex workers, people of color, trans* people, and queer people).

While from an external perspective, the WSFTE seemed like a diverse and inclusive process, most interviewees highlighted tokenistic practices that involved "filling quotas", especially during major public events such as opening or closing ceremonies, where historically and presently marginalized constituencies (people of color, migrants, indigenous folks, queer people, people from under-represented regions such as Asia or Africa) would speak for a few minutes in what was described as a "cover-up of Whiteness", without being involved in the broader process, framing, political decision-making and agenda-setting of the WSFTE. A parallel can be drawn to the study by Conway (2010: 5) documenting the extreme marginalization of indigenous peoples in the broader context of the WSF and their minor incorporation into the process as being tokenistic and/or exoticizing.

A few participants from the WSFTE also mentioned practices of "othering" - whereby White Western Europeans would talk *about* and *in the name of* other-than-Western people of color, instead of making space for their meaningful participation and political involvement of these constituencies (as shown by survey results following the first international preparatory meeting, where many pointed out the lack of space to accommodate other-than-Western political cultures and non-colonial languages). Such practices are intrinsically linked to racism, sexism,

heteronormativity, ageism and classism as will be shown below, and contributed to positioning the Forum's political content as a eurocentric one.

One person of color from the Global South described how issues of racism "are always present in World Social Forums". The WSFTE, as a predominantly White space, was no exception, leaving the issue of racism (at the micro and macro levels) entirely unmentioned, let alone addressed. Similarly, in their study on the politics of race and racism of the WSF of Porto Alegre in 2005, Alvarez et al. (2008), found considerable challenges to discuss issues of racism due to the over-representation of whites in the WSF.

Conway (2010: 18-19) also reflects on racist dynamics in her study, and explains this silence within the WSF in the following way: "This refusal to recognize the overwhelming whiteness of the space and of its political culture, coupled with discourses of pluralism and diversity in an 'open space' make it exceedingly difficult to talk about racism, racial exclusion, subalternity or coloniality within the global justice movement". The point on discourses is an interesting one, as it points to the limits of performative allyship based solely on rhetoric, and that naming racism as a characteristic of the global economy (as the principle 11 of the WSF charter does) does very little (if anything) to dismantle this systemic oppression within and beyond WSF processes.

There were also remarks regarding the safeness of the space for queer people to openly talk about their lives because of the embedded cis-heteronormativity of the process. The absence of transgender and gender expansive people was also a noticeable one. As one young feminist organizer mentioned: "Other gender and sexual identities were not taken into account, neither was racism [...] it just did not occur to anyone to read the space in this way." Furthermore, the gender perspective in the WSFTE proved extremely narrow and simplistic, as it was treated as a

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separate "add-on" (through the axis of feminist economies) instead of being transversal to all spaces. As Karides (2013), rightfully points out in her study of the marginalization of gender, feminism and women from the inception of the WSF, all economies are gendered. The transformative economies promoted by the WSFTE are no exception.

Many also noted that the generational gap was also extremely wide in political decision-making spaces (as discussed previously, this was not the case in the technical body of the WSFTE doing the logistical work). The International Coordination Committee (composed of thirty five people) only had one person under 25, and three people under 35. Older organizers occupied the space in a way that made younger people feel illegitimate, unsafe and unfit to participate in decision-making processes - ultimately hindering the meaningful participation of young people, and especially young women and queer people.

Some participants also highlighted the classist aspects of the WSFTE, mostly catheter to professionalized activists' (i.e. those paid to participate or organize), NGO workers or academics, while grassroots movements and/or people from lower socio-economic classes could not participate due to their wage labor and/or reproductive labor, other obligations and lack of resources. As one interviewee mentioned: "who has time and energy to go to 3 hour meetings every other day, if you are struggling to make a living on a daily basis?" Historically, one interviewee noted that those who participate in WSF spaces are generally entities with sufficient economic means and technical structures: "[t]he grassroots don't have time or resources to participate - it's one of the constant failures in the World Social Forum." Hence, many people actually questioned whether the WSFTE actually emerged out of real necessities of grassroots

movements, or whether it came from a smaller elite in bigger networks following their own political agendas.

The aforementioned practices of erasure, silencing and exclusion within the WSFTE consolidated a monocultural, eurocentric political content, agenda and framework reproducing the totalizing logics of coloniality/modernity, along with the erasure of migrant economies, informal economies, indigenous economies, anti-racist movements and other actors working on economic justice (from other-than-eurocentric lenses). In the same way modernity establishes what constitutes a valid, legitimate reality, thereby legitimizing the exclusionary, silencing and genocidal practices of coloniality, one could ask: *who decides which economies are transformative? And whom are these economies transformative for?* In the case of the WSFTE, the economic alternatives put forward were certainly not made by and for historically and presently marginalized communities that bear the biggest brunt of the current systemic crisis.

Perhaps this is where the WSFTE could have benefited from the political framework of the pluriverse, which understands the world as a unified plurality as well as an alternative to Western universalism and its totalising, monocultural framework. However, striving towards a world in which all worlds and people fit requires a simultaneous decolonizing, de-patriarchalization of processes such as the WSF. Merely enunciating the laundry list of oppressions that exist in the world will certainly not pave the way towards more emancipatory horizons. This is why grounding our understandings of the pluriverse in decolonial, feminist ontological and epistemological foundations can help us see how these different forms of oppressions are interconnected, how they manifest but most importantly, to make visible, give space, learn from and work alongside historically and currently marginalized communities to dismantle these

systemic oppressions and build transformative economies not only for privileged sections of society, but for *everyone*. As stated earlier, a decolonial (and therefore non-universalistic) feminist perspective helps uphold a multidimensional analysis of oppression, that views the current matrix of oppressions and the alternatives to it in their interconnected, plural, totality without claiming that one alternative is better than another (Vergès, 2021: 20).

The Feminist Confluence also admittedly struggled with issues of representation (albeit less so than the WSFTE), as outlined in an interview by one of the members who described the challenges of articulating the most represented agendas of the WSFTE (Europe, Spain, Latin America) with those of Africa and Asia and the need to continue expanding and deepening these connections (Atienza de Andrés, 2021). However, it also managed to build virtual connections and meaningful ties across languages, political cultures and geographies through practices of mutual care, active/attentive listening, intercultural dialogues, language plurality (with self-organized translation) (*ibid*).

Encompassing more than 80 different feminist networks, organizations and collectives, the Feminist Confluence was a slower, more careful, more horizontal and less eurocentric construction which managed to ensure practices of collaboration, mutual respect and care for all the collectives and their different logics and cultures in the spaces. Unlike the productivist and eurocentric logics of the WSFTE process, the Feminist Confluence also had an understanding of the necessity of building activities with sufficient time, due to the respect of plurality, to build trust and make people feel meaningfully included in the process (as opposed to being tokenized). Furthermore, as feminists who understood the capitalist economic system as based on unpaid, invisible care work, but also intersecting with racism, patriarchy, anthropocentrism and other

interconnected structures of oppressions the Feminist Confluence also engaged with topics with an intersectional perspective, all the while making visible themes of care economies, migrant economies and informal economies - which the WSFTE did not consider as being part of its transformative economies framework.

The Feminist Confluence organized transversally and worked across a variety of different thematic axes of alternatives economies throughout the WSFTE process, by emphasizing economies based on care, sustainability, solidarity, community, a plurality of alternative economies that respond to concrete, local realities in a democratic ways and where work and daily life is organized around reciprocal care (Scampini, 2020). Politically, whether in the relationships between the organizers, the three statements produced by the Feminist Confluence or the activities it organized, there was an understanding of how capitalism, patriarchy, racism, hetero-normativity, anthropocentrism and caste-ism are inter-related and co-constitutive. They not only made visible the diversity of epistemologies emerging out of the intersections of different struggles within the current matrix of oppressions, they also made visible intersectional feminist solutions to address those structures of oppressions when building feminist economic alternatives - and the essential role played by women, people of color, queer, trans, gender-non conforming people, indigenous and rural communities, youth, people with disabilities, sex workers and other constituencies far too often ignored in White Western leftist spaces.

The intersectional feminist politics of the Feminist Confluence widely contributed to its success. A couple of participants went so far as to claim the Feminist Confluence "saved the Forum's reputation". Another feminist described how: "The Feminist Confluence inundated the Forum [...] the co-construction was so rich that it overflowed the concrete objective of organizing an

event." The overflowing is not related to the overall WSFTE process, but rather with the "desire to continue meeting after the Forum". When referring to the continuity of the Feminist Confluence, it endures not only because of the bridges it created between feminisms and the social and solidarity economy, agroecology and the commons during the WSFTE process, but also because of its core internationalist stance and a deep understanding of inter-relationality and interdependence. The Feminist Confluence organized not only in intersectional, non-eurocentric, horizontal and caring ways; *it generated strong relationships of sorority between the participants-organizers, in spite of the virtuality and the challenges of the global pandemic and nurtured a politic of friendship, radical care and love.*

To summarize, culturally, ideologically and organizationally, the main trends present throughout the process of the WSFTE were marked by a reproduction of coloniality, all of which impeded the construction of a politically relevant process, and ultimately failed to offer meaningful solutions to the systemic crisis. The incapacity of building and sustaining bridges between alternatives and movements is related to the consistent reproduction of neo-colonial continuities in political spaces, such as the WSFTE and other transnational spaces. This study has shown, yet again, that fostering lasting inter-connected local/regional confluences of alternatives around the world cannot be achieved by using the master's tools (to borrow Audre Lorde's famous words). However, the learnings and experiences of intersectional, non-eurocentric, feminist politics, ethics and practices can provide guidance and inspiration on how to address these tensions and create more sustainable, pluriversal bridges between movements and alternatives.

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5.5. Conclusion

This chapter ends with an appreciation of what was perhaps the most important legacy of the World Social Forum of Transformative Economies: *the connections and friendships generated and nurtured throughout and beyond the process*. Mainstream, Western-dominant theories of social movements – such as the theory of resource mobilization or political opportunities seeking to analyze the organizational forms of collective action, the tactics and strategies determining the "success" or "failure" of social movements (Tarrow, 1994; Melucci, 1996) - unfortunately ignore the importance of relationships, dismissing them as intangible outcomes and indicators. Ultimately, however, the politics of friendship are foundational to pluriversal political processes and the bridges we are striving to build between movements and alternatives to deal with the current systemic crisis. And while the WSFTE failed to create the multi-scalar, multi-sectoral confluences of alternatives supposed to emerge within and thrive beyond the process, the friendships generated during the process continue to live on. And this may have been the most transformative aspect of the WSFTE altogether.

It is also important to remember, as Mac Lorin claimed, that tensions between utopia and practice within the WSF are not only inevitable, they are also desirable, in that they help shape and improve future processes (Mac Lorin, 2020). True as that may be, we need to recognize, acknowledge and take responsibility for the harms caused during these collective political processes, in order not to reproduce them in the future. Which leads back to the aims of this study: 1) to encourage ongoing and future processes of articulation of alternatives and movement to address their internalized modernity/coloniality in order to nurture more horizontal, inclusive, accountable, caring pluriversal political processes, in which all alternatives, movements and

people can be heard, seen and articulated within a pluriverse, as a world in which *all* worlds should fit. This is essential not only to ensure their political legitimacy and relevance, but also to ensure their long-term sustainability and the wellbeing of the people participating in them - all the while safeguarding the ideals that we can and must strive to prefigure the alternative worlds we seek to build and weave together.

Chapter 6: Embodying pluriversal politics against the whitening and co-optation of a world in which many worlds fit[27]

"Many words are walked in the world. Many worlds are made. Many worlds make us. There are words and worlds that are lies and injustices. There are words that are truthful and true. In the world of the powerful there is room only for the big and their helpers. In the world we want, everybody fits. The world we want is a world in which many worlds fit"

(Indigenous Revolutionary Clandestine Committee and General Command of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation, 1996)

This chapter contributes to the literature on transitions towards the pluriverse (or "a world in which many worlds fit"), as a way of moving beyond the current civilizational crisis. Disputing abstract, disembodied, universalistic conceptions of the pluriverse, this chapter puts forward decolonial, feminist, antiracist perspectives to argue for the need to embody positioned pluriversal politics. This chapter partakes in such a pluriversal exercise by bringing into dialogue different strands of critical literature, namely Black marxisms, Black feminist marxisms, Zapatismo, and decolonial feminisms from Eastern Europe. More specifically, it first explores their connected yet differentiated, embodied readings and framings of the current civilizational crisis, as exemplified by racial capitalism and intersecting oppressions, the capitalist hydra as well as modernity/coloniality. The chapter then dives into the alternative projects emerging from

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27 This chapter is under review to be part of a book proposal on "Reparations as World-Making" for Duke University Press

these different onto-epistemic, body-political and geographical locations - such as reparations, abolition and autonomy - and the pluriversal pathways that can emerge from them. In doing so, this chapter seeks to prevent further idealization, co-optation and instrumentalization of radical pluriversal politics by white eurocentric academia while exploring some important considerations to take into account in the quest to advance towards more pluriversal politics, pathways and horizons.

6.1. Introduction: the pluriverse as a radical, continuous and concrete political praxis

We are currently experiencing a global conjuncture of multi-scalar, inter-connected economic, socio-environmental, health, (geo-)political and institutional crises happening throughout the world, as exemplified by the climate crisis, the global COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, the steady rise of neo-fascist and far-right movements, a deepening of socio-economic inequalities, and the destruction of social fabric, amongst other issues. This systemic crisis can be understood as a "civilizational crisis", or as a crisis of the Western, modern, colonial, racist, capitalist, cis-hetero-patriarchal project that has existed for at least 500 years since colonialism.

However, as this crisis is unfolding, we are also witnessing the increasing visibility/emergence of different forms of resistance, re-existence and the articulation of alternatives throughout the world (Esteva, 2014: 53). Concerned with the seemingly isolated nature of these alternative projects, many scholars and activists have been advocating for transitions towards what the Zapatistas called "a world in which many worlds fit" (Kothari et al., 2019). This world in which many worlds fit has come to be known and presented in the literature as "the pluriverse".

While acknowledging the impossibility of defining the pluriverse (which is neither possible nor desirable to define due to its very nature and essence), this chapter puts forward an overarching holistic framework to better understand the pluriverse while making its co-optation more difficult - all the while recognizing that the following approximation also represents one of many ways one can illustrate, sense and/or feel the pluriverse. Therefore, for the purpose of this chapter, the pluriverse is broadly understood as complex, open-ended, intersectional, embodied, pluri-cultural political horizons that can weave together different alternatives, cosmovisions, people, and other-than-human beings and entities together on multi-scalar levels, therefore co-creating a world in which all worlds fit.

In this sense, the pluriverse is neither a theory nor a concept, but rather a *radical, continuous, concrete political praxis*. I would also invite the readers to embrace a more embodied approach to defining the pluriverse and imagine what a world in which many worlds and people fit would *feel* like. Is it a feeling of belonging, joy or camaraderie that comes from being part of an interconnected whole? Is it a feeling of safety, trust and acceptance that comes from coexisting within a pluriverse? Perhaps it is also a feeling of discomfort, unease and tension that comes from such coexistence.

Despite the growing body of literature on the pluriverse, the scholarship focuses primarily on disembodied theoretical discussions on transitions to the pluriverse that often reproduce neo-colonial continuities, with little attempts to reflect with and learn from potential embodiments of pluriversal experiences (see chapter 4). Practical experiences, such as World Social Forums, that have been bringing thousands of movements and alternatives together since 2001 under the banner of "another possible world exists", have not proved successful in paving

the way(s) towards a pluriverse either due to similar reasons (see chapter 5). Neither theoretical nor practical attempted embodiments of the pluriverse seem to be able to build sustainable bridges and dialogues between alternatives and movements due to a consistent reproduction of coloniality and misalignment with pluriversal politics.

Building on the literature on transitions to the pluriverse and on the lessons of its attempted embodiments, this chapter explores *how to move towards more pluriversal political horizons while preventing further idealization, co-optation and instrumentalization of radical pluriversal political practices by white eurocentric academia.* It brings decolonial feminist and antiracist perspectives to argue for the need to embody positioned pluriversal politics - as opposed to abstract, disembodied, universalistic thinking - and to recognize the immeasurable pathways leading towards pluriversal political horizons. This chapter itself partakes in such a pluriversal exercise by bringing together three strands of critical literature: Zapatismo, black feminist marxisms, and decolonial feminisms from Eastern Europe. More specifically, it first explores their differentiated, yet interconnected, embodied readings, experiences and origins of the current systemic crisis, namely the capitalist hydra, racial capitalism, and modernity/coloniality. After that, it puts forward the positioned responses, struggles and alternatives against these different manifestations of the systemic crisis - such as autonomy, reparations and abolition - and their implications for shaping pluriversal political strategies against the backdrop of this civilizational crisis that do not reproduce the recurring neo-colonial continuities present in both theoretical and practical attempted embodiments of the pluriverse.

This preliminary dialogue is a critical response to the increasing co-optation and whitening of the pluriverse by eurocentric academia that devoids the pluriverse of its political radicality. This

chapter echoes Tuck and Yang's claim that "decolonization is not a metaphor" (Tuck and Yang, 2012) - for neither is the pluriverse. This chapter therefore encourages the scholarship to move away from the pluriverse as a metaphor and embrace the pluriverse as a radical, continuous, concrete political praxis that weaves alternatives, peoples, communities, practices, knowledges, cosmo-visions, other-than-humans beings and entities together in more horizontal and sustainable ways.

Having introduced this chapter, its main research question and arguments, the next section will present the methodology while situating the journey and my positionality. The third section puts forward different embodied framings of the civilizational crisis based on Zapatismo, black (feminist) Marxisms and decolonial feminisms from Eastern Europe: respectively the capitalist hydra, racial capitalism and modernity/coloniality. The fourth section brings together three alternative political projects emerging as a response to the different manifestations of the civilizational crisis, and their implications for shaping more pluriversal politics, pathways and horizons, while preventing further idealization, co-optation and instrumentalization of the pluriverse by white eurocentric academia.

6.2. Methodology

This chapter follows the footsteps of feminist scholars (such as Patricia Hill Collins, Gloria Anzaldua or Sandra Harding amongst many others) who highlighted the importance of standpoint epistemologies and theories that helps us recognize our location and implication in colonial divides (Azarmandi, 2018). Standpoint epistemological contributions also constitute pathways to explaining and changing oppressive systems of power, whereby one can either participate in systems of power or challenge them (Collins, 1977).

I write from a position of a white, privileged, middle class person living in a colonial Western European metropole (Barcelona, Spain), and a second generation, trans∗, queer migrant from former Yugoslavia, a country erased both geographically and epistemologically by Western imperialist forces, and conceived as belonging in the "Other" (Eastern) Europe. I consider my position to be located in a liminal space of nowhereness, and to inhabit multiple borders, insider/outsider spaces and bridge-building roles - all of which informs my life, my politics, and my work. Indeed, stemming from a deeper desire to find a sense of belonging, both my research and activism have been concerned with nurturing more accountable, more horizontal, pluriversal political processes that can articulate alternatives, movements and people together, within a world where all worlds and people fit.

My search for the pluriverse first led me to processes seeking to bring thousands of movements and alternatives together, like the World Social Forums, which I considered as potential catalyzers or potential practical embodiments of the pluriverse. However, my experiences in these processes allowed me to witness a consistent reproduction of neo-colonial continuities impeding the building of sustainable bridges and dialogues between alternatives and movements (as shown in chapter 5). Disillusioned by such experiences and their political irrelevance, I decided to retreat to more geographically rooted forms of organizing and joined a queer, migrant, transfeminist, anti-racist collective in Barcelona called the Center for Critical, Combative, Transfeminist, Antiracist Interventions (*Taller de Intervenciones Criticas Transfeministas Antiracistas Combativas*, t.i.c.t.a.c), which works through border thinking, embodied politics and dissident research to dismantle racist, transphobic, eurocentric, patriarchal systems, structures and practices, while imagining radical transformative horizon and acting towards social change.

The distinctions between the politics of this collective and that of white eurocentric leftist transnational political spaces I had been a part of could not be starker. *Had I been looking for pluriversal pathways in the wrong places?* Throughout my theoretical and practical learning from and engagement with this collective and anti-racist struggles in Barcelona and Spain, I came to be confronted with the remnants of my internalized eurocentrism which not only led me to see the pluriverse as something to be reified (as opposed to a concrete political praxis to embrace and a horizon to walk towards); it also made me overlook the *concrete material basis of a world in which many worlds fit,* by falling into the trap of a falsely idealized horizon with purist, linear conceptions of the pluriverse and its construction.

More specifically, in/through conversations, I was also confronted with the question of white reparations in relation to the pluriverse, or how to build, as Mbembe mentions, a "common world in which all of us can be full humans beings, on the heels of *onto-epistemic restitution and reparations* (emphasis added) (Mbembe, 2017: 182 in: Escobar, 2020: xxx). As the engagements in anti-racist struggles push the boundaries of my own whiteness and eurocentrism, the point of departure of this research also shifted towards the enfleshed experiences of cross-generational violence by white supremacy, coloniality, and other structures of oppression (instead of abstract, disembodied thinking reproducing empty, idealized rhetorics of the pluriverse). This is why this chapter engages with Black marxisms and Black feminist marxisms.

One of the ways of reclaiming the pluriverse from the clutches of white eurocentric academia is also to acknowledge, honor and make visible the Zapatista indigenous genealogies behind a world in which many worlds fit (which academia has re-appropriated and termed as "the pluriverse"). This chapter therefore also focuses on Zapatismo, and gives space to the context,

analysis and embodied experiences that led the Zapatista to extend the radical political invitation that the pluriverse is. In doing so, this chapter avoids falling into the trap of tokenizing and idealizing phrases such as "a world in which many worlds fit".

Finally, It is also important to note that this chapter was written in parallel with my geographical, body-political, and genealogical re-rooting in the territory and political cultures of former Yugoslavia. This process not only stemmed from my search for belonging, but also from the need to honor my genealogical and politico-cultural positionality. As I journaled before my departure: "*How can I speak from where I stand if I do not know where I am from?*". Therefore, my concrete, personal, political reacquainting in former Yugoslavia as a second generation migrant can also be mirrored in this chapter's attempts to engage with decolonial feminist thinking from the region.

This chapter emerges out of my liminal positionality and is located at the intersections of a broader PhD journey on the pluriverse, my engagement in anti-racist struggles in Spain and my former-Yugoslavian roots, which is how this chapter came to put in conversation Zapatismo, Black feminisms, Black marxisms and decolonial feminisms from Eastern Europe, while traveling through different geographies, with examples provided from the United States, Chiapas, Spain, and Eastern Europe.

Having situated my positionality as well as the journey that led to this chapter and its methodological approach, the next part will explore how Black marxisms, Black feminist marxisms, Eastern European decolonial feminisms and Zapatismo frame and experience key structural issues that are responsible for the current civilizational crisis and antithetical to the

pluriverse, respectively the racial capitalism and intersecting oppressions, modernity/coloniality as well as the capitalist hydra.

6.3. Embodied and positioned readings/framings of the systemic crisis

This section engages with different strands of critical literature tied to my liminal positionality, as explained in the previous section. It explores the differentiated, yet interconnected, embodied framings and experiences of the current civilizational crisis from the perspectives of Black marxisms and Black feminist marxisms, Eastern European decolonial feminisms and Zapatismo, respectively racial capitalism and intersecting oppressions, and coloniality/modernity and the capitalist hydra. As Pulido rightly puts, the conceptualization of a political problem shapes the political strategies to address it (Pulido, 2016).Therefore, in order not to reproduce neo-colonial continuities anchored in abstract and universalistic thinking that go hand in hand with the whitening and co-optation of the pluriverse by eurocentric academia, it is essential to contextualize and problematize the current/contemporary political moment from specific geographical, onto-epistemic locations and to consider the concrete material basis of a world in which many worlds fit. Doing so allows for the moving away from purist, idealized rhetorics of the pluriverse, and sheds light on important considerations in the shaping of concrete politically relevant strategies and praxis that can be articulated together as we walk towards more pluriversal horizons.

6.3.a. Black marxisms and Black feminisms: racial capitalism and intersecting oppressions

One way in which the white-washing and cooptation of the pluriverse can be resisted is by establishing how the civilizational crisis is connected to the creation, consolidation and imposition of a globalized racial capitalist system, dependent on a military and prison-industrial

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complex for its survival and thriving. Black marxisms and Black feminist marxisms demonstrate that we can neither ignore the material basis of the current system, namely racial capitalism, nor our collapsed relationships along racial lines if we are to advance towards the pluriverse - for which the former needs to be abolished and the latter repaired. While emerging in the specific context of the Black liberation movement in the United States, this radical political economic analysis is highly relevant for other contexts due to the differentiated yet interconnected realities experienced under a global racial capitalist system and global processes of racialization. Furthermore, the concept of race is intellectually, geographically and historically rooted in Western Europe (Kancler, 2020: 22) and was used to justify the dispossession, exploitation and slavery within Europe of the Irish, Jews, Roma and Slavs (as racialized subjects) since feudalism (Robinson, 1983: xvi). These processes, as will be explored later, manifest themselves within and between different Europes, amongst many other geographies. Therefore, tackling racial capitalism, racialization and racism in all their forms and manifestations are essential considerations for any theoretical and/or practical attempted embodiments of the pluriverse.

Racism is not simply a form of individual discrimination or bias, but "an integral part of a world system that subjects growing segments of the world's population to precarity and premature death" (Gonzalez, 2020:115). Racism and racialization encompass the covert and overt logics, practices and structure that marginalize people of color on the basis of a category of "race" (at the systemic, ideological and material levels) - all of which are projected on people on the basis of their color, culture, ethnic origins (Gržinić, Kancler, and Rexhepi, 2020). In other words, racialization represents the classification of bodies between superior and inferior based on those markers - with whiteness as a regime being privileged over non-whiteness and considered "colorless" and "neutral" (Grosfoguel et al., 2014).

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Against the white eurocentric critique of capitalism centering economic relations over others, Black marxists demonstrate that the nature of the capitalist system is *inherently racist* and the role of racism at the root of the logics of capital accumulation, capitalist relations and the role of the state - something Cedric Robinson described as "racial capitalism" (Robinson, 1983: xv). Indeed, he advanced a concept of racial regimes that deepens our understanding of the historically contingent character of racism, and how through racial capitalism we can understand the history of modern capitalism, not as emerging from a negation of feudalism but rather emerging *with* the feudal order, in a Western civilization already thoroughly infused with racialism and evolved into a modern world system of "racial capitalism" dependent on slavery, violence, imperialism and genocide (Kelley, 2017). The racial character of capitalism is fundamental in shaping the history of and the current neoliberal system. To borrow Wilson Gilmore's words, capitalism was and is "never *not* racial" (Wilson Gilmore, 2017: 1).

Such a framing allows us to move beyond color-blind systemic analyses, and by extension color-blind approaches to the pluriverse, and expose capitalism as operating under a white supremacist ideology and dependent not on a so-called invisible hand, but "the visible fist of state sanctioned violence and subjugation as a war on Black people", as exemplified by the prison and military industrial complexes, the continuous murders of Black and Brown people (especially women, working class, queer and/or trans* people) by the hands of the police and structural racism being the foundation of our societies and nation-states (Robinson, 1983: xiii). Again, while this emerges from the context of the United States, such violence is mirrored in many other (settler and non-settler) contexts, especially in the Global North - hence the importance of considering how to deal with racial capitalism as part of transitions to the pluriverse. For example, as Angela Davis points out, prisons "represent the *increasingly global*

strategy [emphasis added] of dealing with populations of people of color and immigrant populations from the countries of the Global South as surplus population, as disposable population" (Davis, 2016: 107).

In the context of settler, colonial and post-imperial metropoles, neoliberalism and racism are the pillars and fuel of "an expansive system of human management based on incarceration, surveillance, containment, pacification, lethal occupation, and gross misrepresentation" (Kelley, 2014). A crucial element in this political matrix is the prison-industrial complex and the military-industrial complexes working as anti-pluriversal technologies of erasure, exclusion and death - all of which have implications for the construction of the pluriverse. Indeed, it is essential to think about what transitions to the pluriverse called for by the scholarship would look like, within yet outside a system dependent both on the destruction of Nature and the disposability of certain bodies (racialized bodies, queer bodies, trans* bodies, migrant bodies, women bodies, disabled bodies, working class bodies) something described by Cameroonian philosopher Achile Mbembe as "necropolitics" (Mbembe, 2013).

To summarize, the notion of racial capitalism is one of the pillars of United Statesian Black marxist thinking, articulating capitalist exploitation together with racial domination based on social-historical, geo-political and body-political experiences of racial oppression as well as black rebellions in the making of the Black Radical Tradition as a "rejection of European slavery and a revulsion of racism in its totality" (ibid: 310; Kelley, 2017). The Black Radical Tradition is therefore inherently collective, antiracist and anticapitalist, as it stems from the "struggles that arrange social forces for Black survival over and against capital accumulation" (Melamed, 2015 : 80). It is also "a tradition that can be claimed by people everywhere [r]egardless of race,

regardless of nationality, regardless of geographical location" (Davis, 2016: 112), that belongs "to all people who are struggling for freedom" (Davis, 2016: 39) and therefor, in neo-colonial contexts, can be embraced as a possible pathway towards the enactment of a world in which all words and people fit.

Black US feminist thinkers such as Angela Davis, bell hooks, Audre Lorde, Sojourner Truth, Patricia Hill Collins, also show that capitalism is not only inherently racist and classist, it is also hetero-patriarchal. In her famous book, "Women, Race and Class", Marxist philosopher and former Black Panther Angela Davis puts together a Black feminist marxist analysis of the history of Black women since slavery and abolitionism to the Black women liberation movements of the 1960s. She examines women's fundamental role as field workers and care workers, their centrality in the history of Black revolts and abolitionism, and resisting the omnipresent racist and classist within the white women suffrage movements (Davis, 1981: 16-17). Black women therefore had to conjunctively resist those multiple systems of oppression, which is how the political tool and analytical framework of intersectionality emerged (although intersectionality existed prior to its naming).

Kimberlé Crenwshaw's article "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence against Women of color" (1991) first coined the term "intersectionality" by arguing that Black feminist intersectional inquiry and praxis are both needed to address the social problem of violence against black women. Another pioneer of intersectionality was the Third World Women's Alliance which published the newspaper "Triple Jeopardy" which addressed the triple oppressions of racism, sexism and imperialism (Davis, 2016: 19) The political tool and and analytical framework of intersectionality was further developed by black feminists (Combahee

River Collective, Kimberly Crenshaw, Audre Lorde, Patricia Hill Collins among others) and other feminists of color (Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherie Moraga) who examined power relations occurring at the intersections of race, class, gender, age, sexuality, ability, caste, age, and ethnicity (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2020: 73). Intersectionality is understood as *black feminist intersectionality*, in order to honor its genealogy and distinguish it from white, apolitical notions of intersectionality co-opted by the system, and used to talk about gender and sexuality while silencing race and racism (Ahmad 2012, in: Azarmandi, 2018). Rather than solely thinking of intersectionality of identities and oppressions, Davis also suggests a framing of intersectionality of *struggles* and demonstrates the importance of Black feminist marxisms to explore and nurture connections that are not always evident and visible and navigate through contradictions - all of which is relevant when building a world in which many worlds fit.

However, we also need to remain careful not to universalize and impose this analysis onto other contexts and remain critical of the linearity of historical materialism, which operates under a modern colonial logic of stages. Nevertheless, the frameworks of racial capitalism and intersectionality, while emerging in the context of the Black liberation struggles in the United States in the 1960s, can help make sense of how structures of oppressions operate in different contexts (especially other colonial metropoles and countries) and their own material bases - especially considering the globalized nature of capitalism and racialization processes. This is the case of Spain (one of the locations where this thesis is written) with its rampant institutional and social racism, detention centers, the *Ley de Extranjería* (the Law on Foreign Persons), the militarization of borders[28], and its economy built on racism, slavery, genocide, exploitation,

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[28] This chapter was written during the "Massacre of Melilla", where 37 Northern African migrants died at the hands of the Spanish and Moroccan security forces while trying to enter Spain

destruction and plunder (Comunidad Negra Africana y Afrodescendiente en España, 2020). More eloquently put by the Bloque Plumífero / Sexo Género Disidentes (2019) during the protest "Somos Resistencia Anti-Colonial" (We are the Anti-colonial Resistance) organized in Spain on October 12th against the Day of Hispanity celebrating the country's heritage (including that of colonization): "QUE LES ENTRE A TODAS ESAS CABEZAS BLANCAS: Somos la base material de VUESTRA riqueza Española, CATALANA y EUROPEA"[29].

Racial capitalism and intersectionality resonate with other frameworks, such as modernity/coloniality, which are similar yet grounded in different contexts, historical genealogies and realities, that of Latin America, which has also been adopted and applied in other contexts such as Eastern Europe, as the next subsection explores, while expanding on how logics of racialization are also present within and across different Europes, and why these are important considerations when advancing towards the pluriverse.

6.3.b. Eastern European decolonial feminisms: modernity/coloniality

The current hegemony of the West can be understood as a continuation of colonialism, in what Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano described as *colonialidad* (coloniality). Coloniality operate on multiple different levels and spheres of our lives, whether "in the spheres of the economy (appropriation of space, exploitation of labor, control of natural resources), the control of authority (institutions, army), the control of gender and sexuality (family, education), the control of subjectivity and knowledge (epistemology, education, formation of subjectivity) as well as the control of Nature" (Kancler, 2020: 22). Coloniality represents the historical and current concrete practices exercised by the modern/colonial project that excludes, silences, erases and kills

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[29] "GET THIS IN TO ALL THOSE WHITE HEADS: We are the material base of YOUR Spanish, CATALAN and EUROPEAN wealth"

other-than-modern, non-Western knowledges, practices and people (Kancler, 2020: 22). It is sustained within a dual matrix of power by the control mechanisms of modernity – the totalizing narrative projected by the Western civilizational project – which defines what should be considered a valid, legitimate reality - thereby legitimizing the exclusionary, silencing and genocidal practices of coloniality (Icaza and Vázquez. 2017: 52). Modernity and coloniality therefore constitute two sides of the same coin with both mechanisms being interrelated and feeding into each other. The articulation of coloniality and colonial matrix of power was developed in the context of Latin America, in parallel[30] with the analytical tools of black feminists and feminists of color in the United States of America, and emerging from grounded experiences of race and racialization. In resonance with racial capitalism, decolonial thinking established racialization and gendering as fundamental aspects and some of the main logics of colonialism, global capitalism, coloniality and modernity which are regulating the social, political, economic, cultural, epistemic and ontological spheres of life and manifests itself in violent processes of colonial differentiation, discrimination, separation, ghettoization and death (Grzinic, 2018; Kancler, 2020).

Decolonial feminist philosopher Maria Lugones articulates a critique of Quijano's concept of coloniality and how his conceptions of gender and sexuality are eurocentric and fall into the traps of reproducing binaries and an idea of sex and gender as natural (as opposed to socially constructed), and instead she introduced the concept of "the modern/colonial gender system" as a way of explaining that, the coloniality of power is co-constitutive of the modern/colonial system of gender which led to the colonial imposition of gender as a category and heterosexuality as the

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[30] It is important to acknowledging that some authors argued that Quijana borrowed from Black Marxist thinking - although it is not in the scope of this chapter to enter in such debates (Grosfoguel, 2018)

norm – both of which are deeply entwined with race – which was used to establish a system of societal hierarchy (Lugones 2008). Lugones also provides nuance to the analytical tool of intersectionality, for its reproduction of an ontology of separation/fragmentation/categorization, a logic of "purity" which does not account for category-transgressive, liminal, border-dwelling, mestiza subjects and misrepresentation/concealing of what she defined as "intermeshed" oppressions rather than interlocking ones (Carastathis, 2019: 85-86). To use Lugones' words: "To say that oppressions intermesh or coalesce is to say that no oppressing molds and reduces a person untouched by and separate from other oppressings that mold and reduce her" (Lugones, 2003: 264). The notion of intermeshed oppressions represents an important consideration when thinking, enacting, feeling transitions to the pluriverse, in that it sheds light on the "messy" iterative processes that would be involved in such transitions (as opposed to the linear, purist, idealized thinking of white eurocentric academia), and is in political alignment with an ontology of pluriversality (because it does not reproduce an ontology of separation).

While emerging in the Latin American context, the frameworks of modernity/(de)coloniality have also been adopted, developed and applied within other contexts, for example in former socialist countries of Eastern Europe. In the case of former Yugoslavia, the mechanisms of Western modernity/coloniality contributed not only to its geographical erasure from the map, but also its onto-epistemological one by obliterating the histories, knowledges, practices of resistance rooted in socialism, anti-colonialism and antifascism (Gržinić, Kancler and Rexhepi, 2020; Kancler, 2020: 24). In the wake of the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the different republics also increasingly subordinated to Western models of liberal democracies and free-market economies and embarked on neoliberal transition shock therapies through mass privatization, liberalization and deregulation (Bukvić, 2010). These policies were not only imposed via the conditionalities

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of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund's structural adjustment programs, or recommended by Western "experts" and advisors sent by Washington and the European Union (EU): beneath the surface was an underlying desire to quickly "catch up" with Western countries (Orenstein, 2009).

Boatcă explains the erasures of other Europes and the monopoly of the EU over the term "Europe" - which has come to be used as a synonym for - as well as the establishment of an ontological and moral superiority (through its the "modern", "democratic", "liberal" characters) over the backward, inferior, lesser (Eastern) Europes (Boatca, 2019: 5). It is important to remember that these ideological dualisms (or binaries) - between humans and nature, inferior and superior beings, men and women, modern and traditional, nature and culture - were also imposed during colonialism, and have been used throughout the centuries to legitimize and normalize Western forms of viewing and inhabiting the world. Boatcă argues that we need to account for the multiplicity of Europes and their respective (and contradictory) contributions to European civilization – replete with, and inseparable from colonialism, imperialism, slavery and warfare (Boatcă, 2013).

Eastern Europe and the Balkans - located in the semi-periphery within the world system and periphery within Europe - aspire towards an ideal of Europeanness (analogous of Western modernity) exemplified by the entering into the EU, and therefore are reproducing and imitating Western modernity and its logics of racialization (*ibid*: 6). This has been termed by Gržinić as a relation of "repetition" of Western Europe's political, economic, social, epistemic, ontological, institutional models:

"[F]ormer Eastern Europe is a frontier, but it is a spectral one; it does not divide, as a frontier normally does, but rather allows for a repetition and reproduction within itself of modes of life (biopolitics), modes of death (necropolitics), structures of governmentality, institutional control, systems of knowledge and regimes of aesthetics, and contemporary art and theory from Western Europe" (Gržinić, 2019: 100)

This imitation of modernity/coloniality is not only exemplified by this strive to "catch-up", but also in the violence of Eastern European countries' migration politics towards African and Asian ones. Indeed, by serving as the frontiers and "buffer zones" between the EU and other-than-European countries, Eastern European countries legitimize and reproduce the same logics of Western modernity all the while being simultaneously subjected to them - in the form of discrimination, control and deportation amongst other things (Boatcă, 2013: 7; Kancler, 2020: 22). Modernity/coloniality strives to erase the multiplicity of Europes and create a unique, totalizing "Europe" (modeled on the EU) that is Western and White. The EU's migratory control demonstrates how modernity/coloniality subjects people to an ontological marginalization and justifies the violence against those who are labeled and classified as either non-western or not-quite-western. The concept of "not-quite-western" is interesting as it points to racialization and racism being context-specific, with white Eastern Europeans being white, but not quite white/white enough for Western european stands, or being European but not quite European enough, but not really colonized (Gržinić, Kancler and Rexhepi, 2020).

The EU´s coloniality also operates through borderization, securitization, and citizenship. The division along colonial and racial lines within multiple Europes takes the form of citizenship, with the controlling apparatus of migration which differentiates on the basis on race, gender,

ethnicity, religion and class, meaning that citizenship was developed through the exclusion of non-European, non-White and non-Western populations from civic, political, social and cultural rights (Boatcă and Roth, 2015: 1). In order to integrate the EU, candidate countries must demonstrate a closeness to the European (modern) ideal, and the embracing of liberal democracy and neoliberal capitalism (Boatcă, 2019: 5, Gržinić, 2019: 108). EU as "Fortress Europe" was defined as a regime that is producing an accelerated, legally sanctioned system of restrictions, discriminations, and economic dispossessions, a space of intensified racialization that has at its core racism (Gržinić, 2019: 97). The invitation to consider more embodied, positioned pluriversal politics and pathways is essential because - beyond mere rethorics - it pushes us to think about how to even begin conceiving what transitions to the pluriverse would look like in such violent necro politico-economic contexts?

The EU, under the pretense of protecting its citizens, but also protecting refugees from "themselves" (i.e. preventing them from putting themselves in dangerous situations to enter the EU illegally), legitimizes the violent militarization, borderization and securitization of "buffer zones" situated along the Schengen border (Gržinić, 2019: 97). While the EU creates and funds agencies such as Frontex, to monitor and control the Schengen border zone and deal with what has been denominated as a "refugee crisis", it fails to recognize that the "refugee crisis" is actually a crisis of European politics and the crisis of a globalized capitalist economy rooted in the nation-state, cis-hetero-patriarchy, racism and colonialism (Gržinić, Kancler and Rexhepi, 2020: 28). Again, in the envisioned attempts to articulate movements and alternatives together within a world in which many worlds fit, how would these worlds fit together if they are separated by borders and fortresses?

Finally, it is important to mention the surge of ethno-nationalism in Eastern Europe as well as a steady growth and normalization of neo-fascist tendencies in the rest of the world (Gržinić, 2019: 114) - which are completely antithetical to the pluriverse. Nationalism and neo-fascism is driven by a small transnational elite (supported by the West) who simultaneously benefit from the globalized nature of capitalism, and use nationalistic discourses to dissimulate the expropriation of their countries and exploitation of their people by that same globalized system, thus producing a constant state of crisis that is neither exceptional nor episodic but rather has become the norm, and the very fabric of social life (Gržinić, 2019: 108; Gržinić, Kancler and Rexhepi, 2020: 20).

For the Zapatistas and other indigenous communities, the current situation – or this constant state of crisis – does not differ from the much longer historical experiences of indigenous people who have been living in a state of crisis for more than 500 years since colonialism. This chapter now turns to explore the radical bases of the political economy of the pluriverse as practice, as conceived by the Zapatistas, in their conception of the capitalist hydra, its connection to the civilizational crisis and its implications for the pluriverse.

6.3.c. Zapatismo and the capitalist hydra

Zapatismo is a political movement rooted in five centuries of struggle of indigenous communities of Chiapas, Mexico, especially the Tzeltal, Tzotzil, Tojolabal, Chol and Mam communities (Zibechi, 2020: 199). Created in 1983, the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (Zapatista Army of National Liberation, EZLN) first became internationally known in 1994, when thousands of armed indigenous people took control of the principal towns in Chiapas to demand autonomy for the indigenous peoples and self-government for the lands they had taken back from landowners (*ibid*: 199). The Zapatistas operate under seven principles: 1) to propose and not

impose; 2) to convince, not to win; 3) to obey, not command; 4) to represent, not supplant; 5) to go down, not up; 6) to serve others, not self; 7) to build, not destroy (Sub Marcos, 2003).

Their diagnosis of the problem is clear: "The bad and evil have a name, a history, an origin, a calendar, a geography: it is the capitalist system" (Subcomandante Moisés, 2016, 172). The metaphor of the hydra (a monster from Greek mythology with many heads, that can regenerates them every time they are cut off) has been used by the Zapatistas to describe the complex, shape-shifting, enduring nature of capitalism (Delgado Wise and Martínez Olivares, 2018: 186). The capitalist hydra takes on many forms, with different heads (patriarchy, racism, hetero-normativity, caste-ism, ableism, ageism, colonialism etc.) bound together by a dehumanizing social logic of exploitation and domination and with the capacity to regenerate, adapt and mutate once destroyed (Tischler, 2019: 255; Zibechi, 2015: 229). It is the "bloodiest and most cruel monster ever known in reality or fiction" (ELNZ - Comisón Sexta, 2016: 179). The hydra mutates and extends its reach: "every day, at every hour, in every corner of the planet, the Hydra rises again, rejuvenated and hungry. It then bites, swallows, and vomits only to begin the cycle all over again, but with a new face (ELNZ - Comisón Sexta, 2016: 198). Sometimes, it even regenerates and mutates in a way that may appear leftist - and uses institutionality as a cover: "to the extent that under the guise of the left, the hope for social change becomes a commodity, the hydra regenerates its heads and does so precisely through the deception of the right masquerading as the left, of the right to vote as a vehicle of social transformation that controls the social class struggle within the state apparatus" (Ríos Gordillo, 2018: 187). The Zapatistas highlight that while people might have different opinions on what the "mother head" of the capitalist hydra is, there is unity in the Sixth commission about the fact that the system

cannot be improved, it cannot be changed; it must be destroyed and rebuilt (ELNZ - Comisón Sexta, 2016: 180), and only then can pave the way for a worlds in which many worlds fit.

The consequences of the capitalist hydra are not only visible through "millions of unemployed, dispossessed and pariahs ("i.e. the living dead") it produces (or "vomits" as the Zapatistas would say), it also engendered a terrible storm - an analogy for the systemic/civilizational crisis in which we find ourselves (ELNZ - Comisón Sexta, 2016: 255; Delgado Wise and Martínez Olivares, 2018: 186). A few signs that the storm is coming have been highlighted by the Zapatistas: 1) a global economic and climate crisis; 2) the loss of legitimacy of institutions (government, media, police, judicial system etc.), 3) rampant corruption and tyranny; 4) a submission to global financialization and financial capital, debt and speculation, and 5) a crisis that creeps in insidiously "the kind that puts a foot in the door before you manage to close it" (ELNZ - Comisón Sexta, 2016: 188).

Zapatismo indicates that this storm is a part of a world war that occurs everywhere, in every way, all the time, whose target is the entire planet and humanity (ELNZ - Comisón Sexta, 2016: 255; Sub Marcos, 2003). Therefore, they understand political economy as war, and war as an integral part of the political economy, with the hydra feeding not only from profits made possible by the exploitation of Nature and people, dispossession, death and destruction (Rodríguez Lascano, 2018: 452). As "[capitalism's] creed is war" (ELNZ - Comisón Sexta, 2015: 197), capitalism and war are intrinsically related, with war being part of its genealogy, its development, its backbone, its main source of power (ELNZ - Comisión Sexta, 2016: 255).

Whether racial capitalism, modernity/coloniality, or the capitalist hydra, the conceptions of the civilizational crisis take different shapes based on their positionality, context and genealogical

origins - all of them being central to a world where many worlds and people fit. Indeed, there is no diagnosis better than another, as they are rooted in radically distinct historical and political contexts. While the content of these critical strands can never entirely apply to other contexts, they can resonate and be adopted/transformed to fit other contexts. It is in our diverse perceptions and diagnoses of this civilizational crisis that we find a multiplicity of diverse, interconnected and complementary solutions that, together, would make a world in which many worlds and people fit.

As part of this pluriversal exercise, this chapter now turns to the resistance in these different contexts and the alternative political proposals of reparations, abolition and autonomy, as well as their implications for the advancement towards more pluriversal political horizons, politics and pathways while preventing the whitening and co-optation of the pluriverse by white eurocentric academia.

6.4. Embodied and positioned pluriversal alternatives beyond the systemic crisis

This section explores reparations, abolition and autonomy as alternative political projects emerging as responses to the civilizational crisis from the different geographical, body-political, onto-epistemological locations of Black marxisms, Black feminist marxisms, Zapatismo and decolonial feminisms from Eastern Europe. Drawing from the embodied and positioned framings of key issues, this section elaborates on alternatives beyond the systemic crisis as well as their implications for advancing towards more pluriversal politics, pathways and horizons, all the while preventing further idealization, co-optation and instrumentalization of the pluriverse by white eurocentric academia.

6.4.a. Reparations and the pluriverse

This subsection explores reparations as one of the responses to racial capitalism and as an important consideration for transitions towards the pluriverse. As previously mentioned in the second section situating this chapter, this argument stems from concrete political engagement with anti-racist struggles in Spain. The invitation to think about reparations in relations to the pluriverse represents an important politico-pedagogical moment that made me discover and reassess the conditions of racialized capitalism as central to prevent the co-optation and reproduction of empty, abstract, disembodied idealized rhetorics of the pluriverse by white eurocentric academia. This section borrows from the literature and concrete demands of reparations that have already been articulated by outstanding scholars and activists (see Kelley, 2002: 114), and seeks to bring insights as to how reparations are relevant for the pluriverse.

As defined by the National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America, reparations are: *a process of repairing, healing and restoring a people injured because of their group identity and in violation of their fundamental human rights by governments, corporations, institutions and families. Those groups that have been injured have the right to obtain from the government, corporation, institution or family responsible for the injuries that which they need to repair and heal themselves. In addition to being a demand for justice, it is a principle of international human rights law. (National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America, 2020).* The Movement for Black Lives also states that reparations occur when the following five actions in place: "1) An official acknowledgment and apology for harm, public education, or memorial about the harm; 2) Compensation to a specific, defined group of individuals harmed by a violation, including descendants, as well as family and community members of individuals directly targeted for harm who were adversely affected; 3) Action to restore individuals harmed

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to the position they were in before the initial harm occurred; 4) Action to stop the systems, institutions, and practices causing the harm; and 5) Changes to laws, institutions, and systems aimed at ensuring that harm will not happen again" (Movement for Black Lives, 2019: 32).

While contemporary agendas of reparations emerged from Black radical thought in the United States, reparations are also being articulated across other geographies (the Caribbean, Africa and throughout the diaspora), at different scales (local, national, transnational levels), and within different spheres of life (social, economic, political, environmental, epistemic) (Taiwo, 2022: 9). Some examples of reparation demands include but are not limited to: legislation that require countries to acknowledge the lasting impacts of slavery and establish and execute a plan to address those impacts, the recognition of the Atlantic slave trade as a crime against humanity, the acknowledgment and repatriation of stolen land, financial restitution, political self-determination, culturally relevant education programs, language recuperation, and the right to return (or repatriation), the cancellation of debt of historically colonized countries in the Global South, the return of stolen art objects, climate reparations in the forms of loss and damage and climate finance, putting down racist monuments, amongst many others demands (Kelley, 2002: 129; Taiwo, 2021; Movement for Black Lives, 2019: 42-43; Cullors, 2019: 1686). Following the position of Black philosopher Olufemi O. Taiwo, while this thesis supports and stands in solidarity with all forms of reparations, it also advocates for the need for a more systemic approach to reparations based on global justice (Taiwo, 2022: 9) - which is an essential consideration for the advancement towards a world in which many worlds fit.

Reparations are not charity, a paycheck, aid or poverty programs (all of which depoliticize the demands for reparations) (Tuck and Yang, 2012: 20; Kelley, 2002: 112). Reparations can be

co-opted and made devoid of their political radicality, just as the pluriverse. This can be exemplified by the human rights literature on reparations focusing on the economistic and juridical aspects of reparations (Pablo De Greiff, 2008) rather than engage with deeper questions on how to rebuild society. Therefore, the demands for reparations need to be embedded in a critique of racial capitalism, cis-hetero-patriarchy, anthropocentrism, ableism and other structures of oppressions in order not to reproduce them: *"Without accounting for and repairing the accumulated impact of past harms, we are destined to perpetuate them" (Movement for Black Lives, 2019: 36).* This is the case for example of previous theoretical and practical attempted embodiments of pluriversal politics examined in chapter 4 and 5.

Reparations are not metaphors. They are concrete demands and political projects meant to be *unsettling and uncomfortable*, as they allow us to talk about truth-telling, accountability, responsibility and debt. They are meant to be provocative in their disruption as well as in their provision of the material possibilities for pluriversal world making and prevention of its whitening and co-option. Reparations, in the context of transitions to the pluriverse, need to be understood as transformational, not solely as compensation. Compensation returns people to the same conditions that caused the violence in the place: "Imagine if reparations were treated as start-up capital for black entrepreneurs who merely want to mirror the dominant society? What would really change? [...] stop begging for inclusion in a corrupt system, take responsibility for transforming our culture, and remake ourselves as human beings (Kelley, 2002: 133). Transformational reparations, on the other hand, work towards the abolition of oppressive structures and the creation of more just societies. As Olufemi O. Taiwo put it, we need to think of "reparations in terms of building the just world we want to live in" (Taiwo, 2021), or the just world in which many worlds would fit.

Reparations are not an end in themselves, but rather stepping stones towards broader emancipatory horizons and, I would argue, one of the many underlying political conditions necessary to build and sustain the pluriverse out of the ashes of racial capitalism. As Kelley describes, "reparations did not represent any kind of long-range goal in our minds, but an intermediate step on the path to liberation" (Kelly, 2002: 123). The demand for reparations reaches and aims for far beyond receiving land and money. Indeed, it seeks to end all forms of oppression, for all people in the world: "it is a revolution for a better life, a better station for mankind, a surer harmony with the forces of life in the universe" (*ibid*: 126). A radical approach to reparations is part of a wider political project to abolish all forms of race, gender, class, heteronormative, ableist, caste-ist, age-ist oppression - all of which is conducive to building and compatible with a world in which all worlds and people fit.

Reparations are about re-imagining new institutions, relationships and systems that are based on self-determination and non-domination (Taiwo, 2022: 73). Self-determination can be understood as the "right of subordinated peoples to control their own destiny rather than having it imposed on them by foreign powers" (Gonzalez, 2020: 129). This, as we will see later on, resonates with the revolutionary project of autonomy of the Zapatistas. Reparations are part of a broader strategy to radically transform society and they inherently contribute to creating better societies for *everyone.* Furthermore, if reparations are not ends in themselves, but part of a larger, pluriversal world-making project, it is also concerned with *how* to get there - and the just distribution of benefits and burdens as we are rebuilding more just worlds (Taiwo, 2022: 74). The debates on transitions to the pluriverse would greatly benefit from thinking about this especially when considering the many *hows* involved in the articulations of these different worlds, peoples and alternatives together.

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Another fundamental question with regards to reparations is what to do with things that cannot be repaired (such as the loss of life, species extinction, the loss of cultural heritage, the loss of biodiversity, health, indigenous and local knowledges)? We cannot quantify lives that were lost, lives that were never allowed or the destruction of Nature. Therefore, in many ways, *reparations cannot repair*. In a dialogue between Fred Moten and Stefano Harvey, Moten explains: "if the United States finally decided to write me a check, I would cash the check and put it in the bank or go buy something stupid with it, a Rolls Royce or a Bentley, something that will really make George Stephanopoulos mad. I would accept the check, and be pissed off that it ain't as much as it should be. But I also know that what it is that is supposed to be repaired is irreparable. It can't be repaired. The only thing we can do is *tear this shit down completely and build something new* [emphasis added]" (Moten in Harney and Moten, 2013: 152).

Knowing that what needs to be repaired is not repairable allows us to consider reparations as a stepping stone in the struggle for liberation and to consider reparations in terms of building the just worlds we want to live in, knowing that these injustices occurred but can never be addressed. This approach does not ignore the past but rather sets the terms for present and future pluriversal world making (which institutions, which relationships would be in place - as opposed to trying to engage with backward looking questions to figure out what could possibly make up for the unspeakable horrors from which the current system was built on), and trying to repair a system that created the harm in the first place (Taiwo, 2021).

I argue that the literature on the pluriverse would greatly benefit from engaging with topics of reparations and different geographies of reparation (as the different forms of reparations take in different geographies of coloniality) (Azarmandi and Rexhepi, 2020) in the process of building

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pluriversal pathways, especially if we understand the civilizational crisis as being a consequence of racial capitalism. As stated previously, with racial capitalism emerging in the context of Black liberation movements in the United States in the 1960s being relevant to other contexts due to the globalized nature of capitalism and racialization, the same can be said about reparations. Indeed, racialized communities and collectives - whether Afro-descendents, Latin American and Caribbean and indigenous people - in Spain (a colonial country) are also demanding recognition and reparations for the historical and present damages, the end of institutional and social racism, the end of the plundering of the African and Latin American continents by Spanish companies and other territories, the end of the neocolonial economic and political relations of the Spanish State, the closing down of detention centers, the abolition of borders and the law on foreign persons, the regularization of all migrants, amongst other things (negrxs mgz, 2017; Comunidad Negra Africana y Afrodescendiente en España, 2022). More succinctly, as articulated by protesters during the anti-colonial march of October 12th 2019: "¡Devuelven Nos *todo!*[31]" (Bloque Plumífero/Sexo Género Disidentes, 2019). Interestingly, the Zapatistas also talk about reparations, but in their own terms: *"For everyone, everything [...] Nothing for ourselves"* (EZLN, Comisión Sexta, 2016: 248). They also mention the importance of repairing the relations with Mother Earth, and after their occupation of the land they needed to re-learn and find "the way to work with our Mother Earth" (*ibid*: 65). Thinking about reparations as Taiwo mentions in terms of relationships also resonates on a deeper, more personal level in my process of geographical, body-political, and genealogical re-rooting in the territory and political cultures of former Yugoslavia.

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[31] "Give us *everything* back!"

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Looking deeper into questions of responding to and preventing future harm, repairing relationships and creating more just worlds leads us to abolition - as the next subsection explores.

6.4.b. Abolition and the pluriverse

This subsection reflects with the literature and concrete demands of abolitionist movements in relation to the pluriverse, especially the agendas of border abolition, and argues that the question of the pluriverse as a world without national borders should figure more prominently in the debates on transitions to the pluriverse.

Indeed, the pluriverse (or a world in which many worlds fit) is antithetical to processes and structures *designed* to marginalize, exclude, empoverish, exploit and kill migrants, refugees, people of color, indigenous folks, trans, intersex, non-binary and gender diverse people, women, people with disabilities, people who use drugs, sex workers, poor people, people impacted by dividing castes and tribal lines, and all other-than-human living beings and entities. This is why we should turn to the movements and communities fighting against these machineries of anti-pluriversality for guidance and inspiration. Those collectives - such as t.i.c.t.a.c amongst so many other - fighting to abolish racist border regimes and racialized biopolitical forms of management of populations, to shut down migrant detention centers, to prevent deportations, to support migrants and refugees, to reclaim land, to put an end to racist, patriarchal, transphobic and homophobic laws, to abolish the military industrial complex and prison industrial complex, to cancel the heinous cycles of debt in which the Global South is locked in, to defend and reclaim the land and Nature against intensifying extractivism and dispossession. And in doing so, how these collectives are contributing to creating the conditions for a pluriverse to exist and thrive. As such, the literature on the pluriverse must center the struggles of marginalized people who are

already building these other worlds coexisting within the destructive, Western "One World World" (Escobar, 2020: 9).

The pluriverse resonates in the chants of migrants, refugees and anti-racist collective in Spain stating loudly and proudly "no nos vamos, no nos integramos" (we are not leaving and we are not integrating [into a eurocentric, white, racist, oppressive society]) (Red Juridica de t.i.c.t.a.c, 2021). The question of borders and state-hood is *central* to the construction of the pluriverse - in that they are antithetical to the pluriverse and cannot co-exist, as borders and walls lead to processes of division, exclusion, othering, isolation, separation, loss of livelihoods and life. This is especially important to consider, as the Global North continues to increase its military budgets and the European Union decision to increase its spending on defense, security and borders by 123% in the next five years, all of which has serious implications for bordering zones in Eastern Europe as seen in the previous section (Gonzalez, 2020; Transnational Institute, 2022).

There is no place for nation states and nationalism within the pluriverse. As Taiwo (2022: 101-102) claimed: "Statehood by itself cannot protect citizens from domination and thus cannot bring about justice without broader changes in the international arena. Everyone in the world order should have capabilities that grant effective access to the means of maintaining their biological existence, economic power, and political agency. Our target must be a global community thoroughly structured by non-domination". Therefore the abolition of borders and states represent *a conditio sine qua non* to building a pluriverse (Azarmandi and Rexhepi, 2020). In doing so, we also must consider and work towards the abolition of the modern prison industrial complex and carceral institutions created alongside the state to ensure its perennity (Gilmore Wilson, 2017: 2).

Abolition originates from the Black Radical Tradition, and is part of the continuity of struggles against slavery in the 19th century and the civil rights struggle in the 20th century. It is part of a wider Black feminist political lineage and emerges as a response to the tremendous rise of prison population and prison constructions in the US during the 1980s and 1990s as a result of the neoliberal turn (Davis et al., 2022: 48). However, abolition goes far beyond the tearing down of prisons in the United States as a goal - it includes the tearing down of all forms of structural oppressions *everywhere* (as Wilson Gilmore mentioned, it is "green, red and internationalist") (Wilson Gilmore in Azarmandi and Rexhepi, 2020). Abolition and reparations go hand in hand, as described by Patrisse Cullors: "Abolition calls on us not only to destabilize, deconstruct, and demolish oppressive systems, institutions, and practices, but also to repair histories of harm across the board." (Cullors, 2019: 1686). and it is "unimaginable without our radical anticapitalist, antiracist, decolonial, queer feminisms" (Davis et al., 2022: xii).

Abolition acknowledges that there is no repairing, that we need to destroy everything and build an entirely new system - which resonates with the conceptions of reparations in the previous section. It is not only the elimination of racism, borders, the prison industrial complex, private property (which include other-than-human beings and the rights of nature), domestic and international warfare, wage labor and imprisonment as the dominant form of punishment, fossil-fuel dependencies, de-fetishization of endless capitalist growth, extractive exploitation of natural resources; *it is the foundation of a new society* (Harney and Moten, 2013: 42; Sultana, 2022a). In this sense, it is interesting to consider abolition as one of the many potential pathways towards the pluriverse, in that it is a totality and it is ontological (Wilson Gilmore, 2011; Wilson Gilmore, 2017: 6). Abolition is also tied to ontological reparations, and the recognition, building and connecting of other worlds, world views, and cosmovisions as exemplified by the pluriverse.

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It is a totality in which excluded, marginalized and othered populations, beings, things, entities and ecosystems - both human and other-than-human - are *indispensable and cared for*. As Pellow explains, indispensability differs from assimilation and sees "all communities (other-than-human and human) as interconnected, interdependent but also sovereign and requiring the solidarity of others" (Pellow, 2016: 231) - which aligns with the political horizon of the pluriverse. The scholarship on the pluriverse would benefit to embrace such an understanding of interdependence as it "is both a socioecological reality and an affirmation of a politics of solidarity and coalition building that firmly states 'all of us or none!'" (*ibid*: 232).

Transformative and reparative justice frameworks emerging out of abolition work are not only conducive to the pluriverse in that they aim to tear down machineries of death and technologies of anti-relationality external to progressive movements, they show us the path in how to build more sustainable bridges *within and across* movements and alternatives. Abolition is also a *cultural intervention*, as it generates approaches to addressing the faultines, fractures, tensions and neocolonial continuities within movements and alternatives.

As Cullors describes, abolition is "how we treat each other. It is about how we show up in relationships. Abolition is about how we respond to harm caused and how we respond when we cause harm. It is differentiating between large-scale systems that have been built to perpetuate our harm, and individual harm caused against one another" (Cullors, 2019: 1694). It is a practice of care and a "a praxis that roots itself in the following principles: people's power; love, healing, and transformative justice; Black liberation; internationalism; anti-imperialism; dismantling structures; and practice, practice, practice" (*ibid*: 1685).

We have yet to collectively practice abolition. This is especially difficult because of capitalism's constant deployment of "technologies of anti-relationality" preventing peripheral political projects of solidarity and the navigating the questions of difference through the practices of solidarity and political actions to dismantle the capitalist colonial system (Azarmandi and Rexhepi, 2020; Gržinić, Kancler, and Rexhepi: 2020). To create long-term sustainable "coalitions of conscience" and lasting political communities we need to self-reflect, talk about and address the (re-)production of violence against those with whom we are in coalition (Azarmandi, 2018). Building solidarity across movements and geographies of resistance towards the political project of abolition and reparations and the pluriverse require us to continuously unearth, address and move through/beyond the racialized, gendered, cis-hetero-normative, classist, ageist, ableist, caste-ist power relations *within and between* movements and alternatives which prevent politically relevant and sustainable bridges to be created. Meanwhile, against the technologies of death that are at work transnationally, migrants and migration continue to (re-)present a powerful force that - by crossing borders - demand radical changes of modern colonial societies and economies (Grzinic, 2018), and therefore are essential driving forces in the construction of a pluriverse. If we conceive reparations and abolition as the foundations of new societies, it would seem interesting to explore a concrete example of such alternative enclaves. Which is why this chapter now turns to the Zapatista revolutionary process of autonomy and their conception of a world in which many worlds fit.

6.4.c. Autonomy and the pluriverse

The Zapatistas remind us that capitalism and its logics dominate the world, but are neither omnipresent nor immortal, and that the storm "beyond the tempest and chaos, also makes the land fertile from which a new world is always born" (CNI and EZLN, 2016). Capitalism is

global, but so is the resistance against the capitalist Hydra (Rodríguez Lascano, 2018: 457). As such, this subsection turns to the Zapatista resistance to the capitalist hydra, and its implications for the construction of a world in which many worlds fit, nurtured by the fertile grounds left behind by the storm.

For the Zapatistas, the use of critical thinking is of utmost importance in order to understand the capitalist hydra from multiple locations and defeat it: "if we can reconstruct the genesis of the criminal and establish their modus operandi, we can stop them. We can find the way to defeat the hydra if we understand it, if we know what makes it tick" (EZLN - Comisión Sexta, 2016: 241). Before confronting the hydra to destroy it, we need to understand it and find ways of surviving and resisting its attacks, to fight on its terrain to understand its vulnerabilities (Ríos Gordillo, 2018: 189). It is in the survival and resistance against the attacks of the hydra that alternatives emerge. Zapatismo shows us that we cannot defeat the hydra with old/traditional forms of struggle (like taking over the State or protesting in the streets) (Delgado Wise and Martínez Olivares, 2018). Newer, more radical forms of resistance against capitalism are necessary.

One way of making a small dent into the system is to reclaim the means of production, to reconfigure productive forces, to heal the relationship with Mother Earth, and to not cooperate with or depend on the government (EZLN - Comisión Sexta, 2016: 66-67). The Zapatista practice of autonomy is exemplified by their attempt to change the underlying conditions that generate and produce current structures of political power in order to create new social relations, to dissolve "the pillars of domination that result in vertical relationships of power", and build democracy from below through the establishment of a *Junta del Buen Gobierno* (Good Governance Board), a representative governance model rooted in communities, with assemblies,

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consensus based decision making processes and rotative practices (Tischler, 2019: 254, Zibechi, 2020: 209). Autonomy is not only applied to governance but to all sectors of the economy and spheres of life, with the re-valuing of traditional medicine and establishment of autonomous clinics in order not to depend on state hospitals, and to create independent schools (Zibechi, 2020: 204). Autonomy is also practiced in the economy, with communities operating under a barter system and not dependent on the market, and based on the principle of self-sufficiency and re-localization of economic activities as well as the rejection of paid labor.

One of the central pillars of the revolutionary process is land - without which the Zapatistas could not have established autonomy and ownership of the means of production: "Since the uprising of 1 January 1994, some 200,000–250,000 hectares of good land, previously in the hands of large cattle farmers, have been occupied by the Zapatistas and members of peasant organizations. Having taken control of the land, the Zapatistas were able to build communities, municipalities and autonomous regions that differed from those not in Zapatista hands, with "productive autonomy and governance institutions that were not of the state" (Zibechi, 2020: 205). However, it is not only about occupying land, but having radical non-instrumental relations with Nature, healing the relationships with Nature and re-learning how to live in harmony with it - which echoes what this chapter already touched upon in relations to reparations (Delgado Wise and Martínez Olivares, 2018: 191).

For whichever of these spheres of life, the key to autonomy is collective work (not as an institution but as a set of social relations) underpinned by logics of reciprocity and mutual support (Zibechi, 2018). Collective organizing is central to the resistance to the capitalist Hydra, with an emphasis on moving from thoughts to words to action to thought and words and actions,

and to neither theorize without practice nor practice without theory (EZLN - Comisión Sexta, 2016: 181).

The goal of the Zapatistas is not to change the world by removing one totality and replacing it with another (such as eurocentric socialist thinking), but to destroy the system and rebuild it from scratch with a multiplicity and heterogeneity of movements, communities and alternatives (Zibechi, 2015: 51). The Zapatista resistance, while localized, has radiated and impacted the world far beyond Chiapas. However, the revolutionary praxis of the Zapatistas is not to be idealized, replicated or imposed (EZLN, Comisión Sexta, 2016: 66). It does not invite us to all embrace Zapatismo: "our thinking is not to give recipes on how to deal with the problem of capitalism" nor "to impose our thoughts on others" (Subcomandante Moisés, 2015: 346). Rather, it is for each community to find its own emancipatory pathways, to build diverse, plural, radical, anti-capitalist, anti-systemic alternatives - and work together with others while respecting our differences and always questioning through critical thinking (or as the Zapatistas would say "caminar preguntando"[32]) (Rodríguez Lascano, 2018: 459, Subcomandante Galeano, 2015: 214).

Considering capitalism takes different shapes depending on the context and is attacking people and Nature everywhere at all times - perhaps its death will also come from "a thousand little cuts", made by anti-systemic movements from around the world (Wallerstein, 2005: 209-213; Ríos Gordillo, 2018: 177). These anti-systemic movements, as they launch into battle and make thousands of these small cuts from all sides, might also take the form of a multi-headed hydra, or as Zibechi would call it, the "hydra of the revolution" (Zibechi, 2008: 119). Could this hydra of the revolution, then, foster the conditions to nurture a world in which all worlds and people fit,

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[32] asking as we walk

with alternatives flourishing out of the anti-capitalist struggles of movements and communities around the world?

A 'world in which many worlds fit' was first coined by the Comité Clandestino Revolucionario Indígena-Comandancia General (CCRI-CG) del Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) in 1996, as part of the 4th Declaration of the Selva Lacandona:

"Muchas palabras se caminan en el mundo. Muchos mundos se hacen. Muchos mundos nos hacen. Hay palabras y mundos que son mentiras e injusticias. Hay palabras y mundos que son verdades y verdaderos. Nosotros hacemos mundos verdaderos. Nosotros somos hechos por palabras verdaderas.

En el mundo del poderoso no caben más que los grandes y sus servidores. En el mundo que queremos nosotros caben todos. El mundo que queremos es uno donde quepan muchos mundos.[33]" (CCRI-CG del EZLN, 1996)

Subcomandante Insurgente Galeano and Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés pondered about the "house" that can encompass so many worlds and how to build it. The first task being to believe that this house is possible (and necessary) to create, and the second task being to build it collectively. They say that the day they will meet with others to build this house, "that day we will give them a hug and, as a welcome, we will receive them with a single question: "And what about *you*?" (Sub Galeano and Sub Moisés, 2016). This outward-oriented question to the readers and listeners is interesting in that it consists of a critical inquiry into the experiences of other

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[33] "Many words are walked in the world. Many worlds are made. Many worlds make us. There are words and worlds that are lies and injustices. There are words that are truthful and true. In the world of the powerful there is room only for the big and their helpers. In the world we want, everybody fits.The world we want is a world in which many worlds fit"

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communities and territories as well as their specific pathways to the pluriverse, and an invitation to think through and build this pluriverse together: "We think that maybe you will accept the invitation and help us solve a doubt: What is needed to build a new house, so big that it can fit not one but many worlds? That's all, or maybe not, but that's up to *you* (emphasis added)" (Sub Moisés and Sub Galeano, 2016).

Much like the resistance against the capitalist hydra and the creation of anti-capitalist, anti-systemic alternatives, the Zapatistas do not prescribe or indicate how to build a pluriverse. However, the homeland they are building collectively with Nature, is an embodiment of pluriversal politics. They are building the pluriverse from their own, place-based, context specific revolutionary experience. And perhaps the multiplicity of these radical alternative pathways (not just as islands of resistance, but interconnected archipelagos) consists of an embodiment of pluriversal politics. One might ask, what brings these alternative worlds together then? What makes these worlds "fit"? Is it a sense of belonging or as Comandante Zebedo said: "a esos mundos diferentes les decimos desde aquí, desde las montañas del sureste mexicano, *que no están solos*[34]" (CCRI-CG, 2003). Or is it being united over one "no" (to capitalism) and advocating for many "yes-es" (Callahan, 2005)?

For the Zapatistas, the revolutionary subject is not homogenous and individual, but heterogenous and collective. Each struggle, each movement, each alternative is context-specific and contingent, brings its particularities, and cannot be subjugated by a totality or universalism. The pluriverse brings together the struggles of all marginalized groups fighting against the multiple heads of the capitalist hydra, and is composed of a constellation of movements, alternatives and

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[34] "To those different worlds we say from here, from the mountains of the Mexican southeast, that they are not alone"

struggles. The revolutionary process leading towards this pluriverse is nurtured by *dialogues*, mutual respect and recognition of a multiplicity of anticapitalist struggles aimed at creating an anti-capitalist, polyphonic We - much like this chapter attempted to do by bringing Zapatismo, Black Marxisms, Black feminist marxisms and decolonial feminisms from Eastern Europe together.

6.5. Conclusion

This chapter contributes to the scholarship on the pluriverse and systemic alternatives, by bringing in decolonial, transfeminist, anti-racist perspectives to the debates on transitions to the pluriverse. Concerned with the increasing co-optation and whitening of a world in which many worlds fit by white eurocentric academia, this chapter argued for situated, embodied pathways to the pluriverse, as a radical continuous concrete political praxis, instead of abstract, empty, idealized, universalizing rhetorics. It partook in such a pluriversal exercise by bringing together multiple strands of critical literature located at the intersections of my positionality and political work. It first contextualized and problematized the different, yet interconnected readings and framings of the current civilizational crisis from the perspectives of Black Marxisms, Black feminist marxisms, Zapatismo and decolonial feminisms from Eastern Europe (namely racial capitalism and intersecting oppressions, modernity/coloniality, and the capitalist hydra), before introducing the alternative political projects that emerged from these onto-epistemic, body-political, geographical locations and reflecting on their implications for the construction of more pluriversal pathways, politics and horizons. This chapter hopes to pave the way for future areas of reflection focusing on how to address the fault lines and difficulties in alliance-building and the creation of coalitions between movements and alternatives, and how to articulate struggles at all geographies of resistance until we collectively build a world in which all worlds and people can fit.

Chapter 7. Discussion and conclusions: opening decolonial feminist pathways towards the pluriverse

"Coalition is always the horizon that rearranges both our possibilities and the conditions of those possibilities" (Lugones, 2003: 9)

The following section first presents the main findings of this thesis before discussing their contributions to academic and activist circles through the responses to the different sub-questions. Thirdly, it provides an opening with suggested future pluriversal research agendas as well as their implications in both theory and practice. Fourth and last, it offers general concluding reflections and offerings on the journey taken through this research.

7.1. Responses to the research questions

This is the part where the doctoral student is asked by White eurocentric neoliberal academia to state their contributions. Indeed, as explained by Tuck and Yang, researchers make claims for a living: "When we learn something from our data that may make a contribution to the field, we call that something a claim. To claim something is to mark it as new, and as newly mine [...] Claiming is an act of possessing, of making property, of enclosure" (Tuck and Yang, 2014b: 814). Drawing back to the practice of refusal, as explained in the theoretical framework (chapter 2), I embrace a third refusal that is concerned with making claims. I refuse to highlight my individual contributions because they are not mine: they neither belong to me nor to academia. This thesis is not meant to extract and produce knowledge as a commodity for the benefits of a capitalist academia/academic capitalism or for the sake of generating profits and prestige (Leyva

Solano, 2019: 49). As previously mentioned in the methodology (chapter 3), this thesis has never pretended to "invent" something that did not already exist out there, in theoretical praxis and practical theory. All this thesis did was to bring together already existing strands of radical political thinking, body-political knowledges and embodied experiences into dialogues to explore pluriversal possibilities. My personal "contributions" go as far as reading critical literature, conversing with a myriad of thinkers/doers (by engaging with their writings, in verbal dialogues or other types of collaboration), sitting with my feelings, reflections and thoughts, engaging with political processes of articulation of alternatives, and putting in the time, energy and effort to bring all these pieces together within this thesis. I share the discomfort and reluctance expressed by my dear colleague and comrade Zuleika Bibi Sheik (2023) to use the individual "I" or what Vázquez (2020) called authoritative "I" (which this thesis tried to avoid as much as possible, except when bringing in the topic of positionality). This thesis also attempted not to enact what Motta (2016: 35) called the figure of the "Academic Prophet" as a "monological subject speaking for and erasing the other".

Doctoral theses, because they are *designed* as individualized, destroy possibilities of truly collective authorship. Indeed, not only can there be only one name on the front page, the person whose name it is receives a title, unlike everyone else who contributed to the making of this thesis. However, this thesis was never written for the advancement of my political and/or academic career. Rather, it was always meant to be a vessel to flesh out a broader, longer term pluriversal political vision based on and inspired by processes of articulation of alternatives. So rather than expanding on what "my" contributions are, this section expands on the contributions of decolonial feminisms towards advancing towards more pluriversal horizons, and explains how the different research questions were tackled (or not) by this thesis. The fourth and final refusal

in this thesis is concerned with purposefully not disclosing certain findings in this chapter. This is because, following two axioms of Tuck and Yang's notion of refusal: "there are some forms of knowledge that the academy doesn't deserve" and "research may not be the intervention that is needed" (Tuck and Yang, 2014b: 813). These insights, however, exist and will serve the broader, more politically relevant aims of this research in its support of ongoing and future political pluriversal projects through other means than research. I therefore invite the readers to be open to the refusals, insights and lessons co-created throughout this thesis, especially those who believe in pluriversal pathways beyond the civilizational crisis, those who are working on bringing alternatives and movements together, those who are part of such movements and alternatives and want to critically intervene within them.

As we are going through an unprecedented civilizational crisis generated by the logics of a capitalist, modern/colonial, patriarchal, racist, anthropocentric societal project, numerous calls have been made by both activist and academic circles for pluriversal transitions articulating together a multitude of already-existing systemic alternatives, as one of the ways to advance towards much-needed paradigmatic shifts. **The main research question that this thesis attempted to bring insights to is:** *how to strive towards a praxis of pluriversality that can support the weaving of systemic alternatives?* Taking on a pluri(-un-)disciplinary approach, this thesis is located at the intersections of numerous fields and schools of critical thinking, such as post-development, social movement studies, decolonial feminisms and Black radical thought, with findings and contributions to debates within, across and beyond these disciplines. The contributions as will be explained in this chapter, are also more far reaching than the narrow categorizations offered by eurocentric academic structure, and operate in deeper, more personal and sometimes impossibly accountable ways.

This thesis demonstrated that we can strive towards a praxis of pluriversality that can support the weaving of alternatives through a decolonial feminist praxis and by addressing and repairing the harms caused by the current system, by abolishing existing interrelated structures of oppressions, and building autonomous alternatives. This response operates on two levels. The first is concerned with affirming what is needed for striving towards pluriversal horizons (reparations, abolition and autonomy), while the second is related to the the methodological and epistemological decisions that need to be taken in order not to reproduce the epistemic violence of the abstract, disembodied academy while responding to such a research question (in this sense the thesis responds to the "how" with another how"). This other "how" is equally important as the response to the main research question. These considerations include, but are not limited to:

1) Unearthing, addressing, and seeking to not reproduce modern/colonial logics (that are antithetical to pluriversal politics) in theoretical and practical articulations of alternatives;

2) Understanding oppressions as intermeshed, and adopting an embodied, positioned approach to the pluriverse that is onto-epistemologically, body-politically located, and that embraces plurality in a non-dominant way;

3) Listening to and dialoguing with non-eurocentric epistemologies and ontologies, by refusing to engage with processes, structures and logics of anti-relationality, and by practicing bridge-building/weaving alternatives in non-dominant, pluri-cultural, loving ways;

4) Embodying a politics of care and love when building processes of articulation of alternatives rooted in decolonial feminist praxis that is attentive to and critical of the manifestations of modernity/coloniality that occur within and between alternatives;

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5) Understanding alternatives as embodied, complex, plural and open-ended (as opposed to abstract, disembodied, essentialized narratives/discourses), and the pluriverse as a concrete, continuous political praxis and horizons to walk towards (as opposed to something to be reified);

6) Warning against, being attentive to and trying to prevent the Whitening and co-optation of the pluriverse's radicality by considering the material basis of a world in which many worlds fit (as opposed to falling into the trap of a falsely idealized horizon with purist, linear conceptions of the pluriverse and its construction).

This research demonstrated that the issue not only lies with a *lack* of bridges between alternatives and movements, but also in *the ways bridges are being built*, both theoretically and practically. Building bridges between alternatives on the foundations of the same oppressive logics that these alternatives offer solutions to is bound to fail (as demonstrated in chapter 4 and 5). The consistent reproduction of modernity/coloniality in the literature (chapter 4) and case study of processes of articulation of alternatives (chapter 5), directly impedes - theoretically and practically - the weaving of alternatives within a pluriverse, and therefore a way of moving beyond the current civilizational crisis. However, decolonial feminisms and feminisms from/in the margins (chapter 4 and 5) through their understandings of oppressions as intermeshed and intersecting as well as their embodied and non-monocultural approaches offer valuable tools and learning possibilities to unearth and address the neocolonial continuities impeding both theoretical and practical attempted embodiments of the pluriverse (such as abstract, disembodied, categorical, universalistic, eurocentric theory and praxis).

Finally, in order to prevent further idealization, co-optation and instrumentalization of radical pluriversal politics by White eurocentric academia this thesis argued for the need to embody positioned pluriversal politics and explore the material basis of a world in which many worlds fit, based on decolonial feminist, anti-racist perspectives (Chapter 6). It paved the way towards important considerations to take into account in the quest to advance towards more pluriversal politics, pathways and horizons, such as reparations, abolition and autonomy, by bringing into dialogue Black radical thought, decolonial feminisms and Zapatismo. It showed the necessity to engage with the multiple existing geographies of reparations in the process of building pluriversal pathways, as these provide the material possibilities for pluriversal world-making and stepping stones towards the dismantling of oppressive structures that can go hand-in-and with the creation of more just societies, new institutions, relationships and systems free from oppression (Chapter 6). This must go hand in hand with the necessary abolition of the global modern/colonial machinery of exclusion, segregation, occupation and death, as well as the recognition, building and connecting of alternative worlds into a plural totality in which excluded, marginalized and othered populations, beings, things, entities and ecosystems - both human and other-than-human - are indispensable and cared for.

Conceptually, this thesis contributes to the fields of feminism, in particular decolonial feminism, post-development, social movement studies and Black radical thought by mobilizing three concepts that are not used in the study of the pluriverse and feminist decoloniality: "weaving" "bridging" and "striving towards". This is not done in an abstract, disembodied way, but is theoretically embodied by the thesis. Furthermore, reparations, abolition and autonomy as considerations for pluriversal worldmaking are absent from academic and activist circles that are working towards the articulation of alternatives. Methodologically, this thesis contributed to

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highlighting the importance of enacting refusal as research against epistemic violence, in consistency with the theoretical framework developed in chapter 2, as well as an ethic of relational accountability, positioned knowledges and practices highlighted in chapter 3.

Empirically, while there is a plethora of studies on World Social Fora, this thesis strived to go beyond mere analysis, critique and overview of the results of the WSFTE. Rather, it focused on the process and highlighted the importance of upholding a decolonial feminist praxis rooted in care, a politics of friendship and repairing the harms that had been caused by the process. So, while this thesis follows this tradition of critical social movement studies analysis with a participatory action-research approach, it takes a step forward in articulating a decolonial feminist perspective and provides learning possibilities for current and future processes of articulation of alternatives.

Finally, it is important to highlight an activist relevance of this thesis, as it attempted to make critical interventions in academic and activist spaces prone to modern/colonial logics. The origins of this thesis stemmed from transnational political organizing and the desire to step back in order to articulate a long-term political vision based on the collective experiences of the political spaces I was/am a part of. While my initial (eurocentric) intention had been to discover the formula or recipe to build a pluriverse, I quickly became confronted with problems of universalisms, White saviorism, epistemic violence and erasure, fuelled by modernity/coloniality, in both academic and activist circles working on the pluriverse. The critical unpacking and unlearning of such logics not only led this thesis to become more positioned, embodied, incarnated, less universalistic, less categorical, it also led to the discovery of pockets of resistance, elements, people, networks within and outside academia working to

dismantle the violence of the current system. A contribution of this thesis is to show the existence of these other-than-modern possibilities. This thesis refused to separate the political from the personal, and dissolved the false barriers created by academia's politics of knowledge that separates theory from praxis. This thesis showed that *knowledge is praxis*, knowledge is political, and it is embodied. Therefore the contributions of this thesis are political in two ways: 1) in the epistemological sense through the epistemological political praxis that the thesis is enacting and putting into practice in an academy focused on minimizing or erasing embodied practices (which are political and feminist); 2) it breaks away from patriarchal discourses highlighting the importance of "structure" and dissolves the false binary between the micro-politics and macro-politics by bringing together the politics of friendship, emotions, love, radical care, body-politics, the importance of building radical communities of care, the role of healing, structural issues of racial capitalism, modernity/coloniality, the capitalist hydra, systemic alternatives and processes trying to bring them together in an interwoven, non-hierarchical way.

The next subsections recapitulates the insights and reflections that emerged throughout the thesis and the tackling of its three sub-questions.

7.1.a. Decolonial feminist contributions to the field of post-development

The fourth chapter took the shape of a critical review and analysis of the post-development literature on the pluriverse through the lenses of feminisms located ontologically and epistemologically in the margins (decolonial feminisms, Abya Yalla feminisms, Black feminisms). As outlined in the theoretical framework, these feminist currents distance themselves from White, urban, middle-class, Western/eurocentric, trans-exclusionary ones and articulate themselves beyond the dominant frameworks of gender, womanhood, sexuality etc. (Lugones,

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2008). They are qualified as being in the margins because while they have emerged within, they are outside of the dominant modern/colonial system (hooks, 1984: viii). Such approach was adopted not only because of my own political positioning (outlined in the introduction), but also because it allowed to create a dialogue between a diversity of epistemologies emerging out of different struggles, in a way that both respected their particularities whilst finding points of convergence, without renouncing to the political horizon of dismantling all structures of oppression. It was the respect of diversity in the quest for convergence in the struggle against racial, cis-heteropatriarchal capitalism and the building of alternatives that made feminisms from the margins an appealing choice when engaging with questions and debates related to the pluriverse.

The first contribution from feminisms in the margins to the debates on transitions to the pluriverse lies in their intersectional approach and their notion of intermeshed oppressions (which addresses the limitations of intersectionality). As outlined in the theoretical framework, intersectionality has become a fundamental tool and analytical perspective that helps us understand how multiple and differentiated social oppressions related to class, gender, race/ethnicities, age and sexuality are inter-related and co-constitutive, while intermeshed oppression goes beyond the socio-ontological fragmentation and purisms underlying intersecting oppressions to encompass category-transgressive, liminal, border-dwelling, mestiza subjects.

For example, the field of post-development could benefit from rethinking the category of "women" in order to foster more inclusive understandings of the pluriverse. Indeed, the post-development literature not only reproduces the colonial false binary between categories of "men" and "women", but fails to mention altogether queer, non-binary, intersex, trans* and other

gender-expansive people from any reflections on the pluriverse (Kothari et al., 2019: xxx; Demaria and Kothari, 2017). It does not specifically mention the fundamental role of women, women of color or indigenous women and trans women *in the post-development alternatives present in its repertoire* – which is problematic as it makes their presence in these other alternatives invisible - or in sustaining processes of articulation of alternatives. As outlined by decolonial feminists, by being co-constituted by patriarchy, heteronormativity, cisgenderism and eurocentrism, coloniality can only be overcome through a process of de-patriarchalization and going beyond the binary, cis-gender, universalist category of women imposed by eurocentric thinking. Failing to do so would not lead to a world in which all worlds and people fit, as it would exclude everyone that does not fall in this narrow category.

Feminisms from/in the margins in general (but especially the notion of intermeshed oppression) also help us see the extent to which categorical thinking is present in the post-development literature. Indeed, while post-development presents the pluriverse as a way forward to dismantle all systemic oppressions, it is not clear how the post-development alternatives that would supposedly be part of this pluriverse tackle such oppressions as a whole. The literature on the pluriverse also fails to mention heteronormativity, cis-genderism and ableism as structures of oppression to address while advancing towards the pluriverse (which cannot be conceived without gender and disability justice). Decolonial feminisms highlight that bridges and synergies cannot be created towards a pluriverse free from oppression, if the systems of oppression based on class, gender, race, caste, sexuality, gender, ability are made invisible, with no understanding of how they are interconnected and intermeshed. This is because it will prevent us from seeing, listening to and centering those who are oppressed and building systemic alternatives through the

resistance to the current system, thereby impeding the nurturing of a pluriverse as a world in which *all* people should fit.

The second contribution from decolonial feminisms is concerned with the shift from abstract, disembodied, cis-gender male, western-centered paradigms of knowledge to ones that are historically embodied and embedded in peoples' personal experiences. Indeed, the literature on the pluriverse rarely acknowledges the importance of research positionality or transparently conveys the privileges of all its authors, except in the cases of Mignolo (2018: xi) and Escobar (2020). It also focuses heavily on sole narratives and theories of the pluriverse rather than its practical embodiments or embodying the pluriverse in its theorizations (Beling et al., 2018: 309; Kothari, Demaria and Acosta, 2014). The discussions remain abstract and theoretical, but as seen in chapter 3, we must pay attention to the material basis and conditions required to build and sustain a pluriverse in order not to fall into abstract, idealized, empty rhetorics that can easily lead to neo-colonial co-optation of the increasingly popular concept of pluriverse – therefore making it devoid of its political meaning. Another reason why it is important to adopt a more enfleshed or embodied approach is the current reinforcement of the assumption that the pluriverse does not already exist – which is a consequence of abstract, disembodied thinking (Kothari et al., 2019: 339; Leyva Solano, 2019). Unfortunately, this prevents the field of post-development from expanding its research horizons and considering, for example, the concrete practices of processes attempting to foster spaces of mutual exchange, learning and collaboration between movements and alternatives, as was shown in the second chapter with the World Social Forum experiences.

The third contribution from decolonial feminisms is its non-universalistic perspective and epistemology of pluriversality that - as previously explained - can articulate a multitude of anti-oppressive struggles, knowledges and practices in convergent ways that are respectful of diversities and particularities. In doing so, decolonial feminisms encourage us to view the pluriverse not as a single matrix or a unique totalizing alternative system made out of all post-development alternatives, but as an interconnected plurality that is multidimensional, multi-layered and complex. This is a great learning for post-development, especially its framing of alternatives as uni-dimensional monolithic entities with most alternatives being referred to in the singular, except for *buen vivires* and feminisms, rather than plural, open-ended, complex and often paradoxical *processes* (Kothari and Demaria, 2017; Escobar, 2015; Escobar, 2017a: 138). Decolonial feminists encourage us to approach the pluriverse with an understanding of the plurality (and messiness) of the alternatives within it. Failing to do so would be inherently paradoxical to the pluriversality of the political horizon put forward by the Zapatistas. We see this problem arise in the scholarship on the pluriverse that often makes universalistic claims reproducing the logics of modernity/coloniality (Beling et al., 2018; Kothari et al., 2019: xxxiii).

A decolonial perspective, whilst extremely critical of modern/coloniality, does not aim to dismiss western forms of viewing the world altogether; but rather establish horizontal intercultural dialogues between western and other-than-western knowledges on equal footing. A decolonial feminist perspective would argue that any one global attempt at bringing post-development alternatives together would be neither possible nor desirable if we are striving towards the pluriverse as a holistically interconnected diversity rather than a unified totality, and that the complex, mosaic construction of a plurality of knowledges and practices around the world can only be achieved by decolonizing and dismantling universalistic, mono-cultural frameworks.

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Establishing more bridges between post-development and feminisms from/in the margins can contribute to unearthing some neo-colonial continuities in the post-development literature on the pluriverse. These include a lack of intersectional approach and the reproduction of the coloniality of gender which impedes more inclusive understandings of the pluriverse, a disembodied approach that ignores the research positionality and privileges of post-development authors and a focus on narratives rather than practical embodiments of the pluriverse, as well as some universalistic tendencies and approach to alternatives as uni-dimensional monolithic entities rather than plural, open-ended and complex processes.

The embodiment of more pluriversal politics can support processes of articulation of alternatives to be more coherent between their values and their practices. This matters not only for their political legitimacy, but also to ensure the sustainability of these processes as well as the wellbeing of the people within them (as was shown in the empirical case study in chapter 2). Such reflections are equally important for alternatives such as degrowth, climate justice movements, or the social solidarity economies (amongst many others) which are coming under fire for not addressing racism, neo-colonialism, patriarchy in their spaces and thinking - thereby preventing the fostering of politically meaningful alliances with groups from the Global South, especially feminist ones. These lessons therefore extend far beyond post-development and the literature on the pluriverse; *they are relevant for any other strands of critical literature, alternative or movement that calls itself progressive)*. Indeed, these lessons extend beyond academia into the realm of activism, and are as valuable in theory as they are in practice as the next part will show.

7.1.b. Decolonial feminist contributions to a global process of articulation of alternatives

Keeping in mind the neocolonial continuities identified in the post-development literature, the second chapter sought to understand *how existing processes of articulations of alternatives are being carried out?* The research examined a particular political process attempting to build multi-scalar confluences of alternatives, the World Social Forum of Transformative Economies (WSFTE) through the lenses of decolonial feminisms. Concerned with the lack of studies on concrete political processes bringing movements and alternatives together (as outlined in chapter 4), chapter 5 focused on the World Social Forum of Transformative Economies, a political process that attempted to build and sustain multi-scalar, multi-sectoral confluences of alternatives from 2018 and 2020. Using participatory action-research methods, this chapter provided a critical analysis of the cultural, ideological and organizational aspects underpinning the WSFTE process from a decolonial feminist perspective. More specifically, it unearths the neocolonial continuities that led to its demise (such as patriarchal logics and a reproduction of coloniality), before delving into the learning possibilities offered by decolonial feminisms to address these neo-colonial continuities in both theory and praxis. The overall contribution to social movement studies is the decolonial feminist participatory action-research approach taken in this study of the WSFTE which was sensitive to power relations. More specifically, such an approach was capable of unearthing the neocolonial continuities that led to the demise of the WSFTE and offered valuable lessons for ongoing and future processes of articulation of movements and alternatives. This is explained further in the next paragraphs.

Firstly, a feminist lens allowed to shed light on the unjust gendered division of labor between the "technical" and the "political", with on one hand a body of technicians (mostly young women) in charge of invisibilized logistical and care work (qualified as reproductive labor), and on the other

hand a body of actors (mostly men) making political decisions, setting the agenda, content, methodology etc. (qualified as productive labor). Such division of labor was also present within the political body of the WSFTE, with women taking turns to facilitate meetings, take notes, send reminders, moderate conflicts between men, amongst other tasks made invisible by a capitalist organizational culture that does not value care work, yet is entirely dependent on it. This led to an internal erosion of the process, tensions and burnout - and begged the question not only of political sustainability of the process, but also of its capacity to dismantle patriarchal structures of oppression externally when not being capable of doing so internally.

The first contribution from decolonial feminisms in this study beyond the unearthing of patriarchal structures and dynamics as a consequence of the coloniality of gender, are the understanding and valuing of care work and all the ant-work required to build and sustain political processes, spaces and movements. This comes with concrete political praxis of equally distributing reproductive labor, rotating roles and responsibilities, and an awareness of power relations at all times (which no process is immune to), and holding each other accountable. This was the case of the Feminist Confluence, which implement inclusive strategies to ensure the participation of all people, the visibility and appreciation of all labor, a setting of horizontality and a carefully planned rotative equal division of labor of all the ant-work required to sustain the space and the activities of the Confluence.

The second contribution from decolonial feminism is related to highlighting the predominance of White, eurocentric politics and the exclusion of historically and presently marginalized constituencies, namely: people from the Global South, women and people of color, indigenous folks and rural communities, queer, trans* people, sex workers, refugees, migrants, informal

workers, youth, working class people, people with disabilities, etc. The erasure of migrant economies, informal economies, indigenous economies, anti-racist movements and other actors working on economic justice (from non-eurocentric lenses) from the process of building a *world* social forum of *transformative* economies questioned the transformative nature of a process designed to offer alternatives to the very same oppressive system it was reproducing. None of which, decolonial feminists, would argue are conducive to or aligned with pluriversal politics.

The Feminist Confluence did also struggle with the issue of representation in its space, though much less that the WSFTE process, and successfully managed to build virtual connections and meaningful ties across languages, political cultures and geographies through practices of mutual care, active/attentive listening, intercultural dialogues and language plurality. Through a slower, more horizontal construction which managed to ensure practices of collaboration, mutual respect and care for all the collectives and their different logics and cultures in the spaces. Unlike the productivist and eurocentric logics of the WSFTE process, the Feminist Confluence also had an understanding of the necessity of building activities with sufficient time, due to the respect of plurality, to build trust and make people feel included in the process (as opposed to being tokenized). Furthermore, as feminists who understood the capitalist economic system as based on unpaid, invisible care work, the Feminist Confluence also engaged in topics of migrant economies and informal economies - which the WSFTE did not consider as being part of its transformative economies framework.

The third contribution of decolonial feminisms is their conceptualizations of oppressions as intermeshed (and their critical perspective of intersectionality) to unearth and address power relations based on race, class, gender, age, sexuality, ability, caste, age, and ethnicity, not only as

a question of identity, but *of positionality in relation to the colonial imperial divide*. A decolonial feminist analysis of the WSFTE pointed to issues of racism, ageism, sexism and classism occuring frequently throughout the process, from micro-aggressions, to tokenism and practices of othering, which begs the question of: *what can a racist, sexist, cis-heteronormative, ageist, classist process offer as an alternative to a societal project based on racism, cis-hetero-patriarchy, capitalism and ageism?*

Politically, whether in the relationships between the organizers or the activities organized by the Feminist confluence, there was an understanding of how capitalism, patriarchy, racism, hetero-normativity, anthropocentrism and caste-ism are inter-related and co-constitutive. They not only made visible the diversity of epistemologies emerging out of the intersections of different struggles within the current matrix of oppressions, they also made visible intersectional feminist solutions to address those structures of oppressions when building feminist economic alternatives - and the essential role played by women, people of color, queer, trans, gender-non conforming people, indigenous and rural communities, youth, people with disabilities, sex workers and other constituencies far too often ignored in White Western leftist spaces. Chapter 5 also demonstrated that the politics of friendship are foundational to pluriversal political processes and the bridges we are striving to build between movements and alternatives to deal with the current systemic crisis. And while the WSFTE failed to create the multi-scalar, multi-sectoral confluences of alternatives supposed to emerge within and thrive beyond the process, the friendships generated during the process continue to live on to this day.

Such reflections are essential not only because of the renewed interest for the World Social Forum that emerged during the pandemic of COVID-19, but primarily in light of the current

civilizational crisis and the urgent necessity to foster much-needed paradigmatic shifts. In this sense, all the aforementioned lessons drawn from this particular experience seek to inform ongoing and future attempts at weaving alternatives and movements together in more sustainable, politically coherent ways that do not reproduce neo-colonial continuities and can be conducive to more pluriversal horizons, therefore leading us to the third and final sub-question.

7.1.c. Mutually enriching dialogues between Black radical thought, decolonial feminisms and Zapatismo

Considering that neither the theoretical nor practical attempted articulations of alternatives examined in this research were pluriversal or conducive to more pluriversal horizons due to the consistent reproduction of of coloniality impeding the building of sustainable bridges and dialogues between alternatives and movements (chapter 4 and 5), chapter 6 focused on an important missing part of the puzzle: that of the underlying political-economic conditions necessary to build and sustain bridges within a pluriverse. More specifically, it explored ***how to prevent pluriversal political praxis from being co-opted and made devoid of its radicality?***

Chapter 6 disputed abstract, disembodied, universalistic conceptions of the pluriverse, and put forward decolonial, feminist, antiracist perspectives to argue for the need to embody positioned pluriversal politics and consider the concrete material basis of a world in which many worlds fit. It contended that doing so can prevent further idealization, co-optation and instrumentalization of radical pluriversal politics by White eurocentric academia while exploring some important considerations to take into account in the quest to advance towards more pluriversal politics, pathways and horizons.

Chapter 6 represented a theoretical embodiment of positioned pluriversal politics by bringing together different strands of critical literature located at the intersections of my own liminal positionality as a decolonial feminist thinker, a transfeminist anti-racist activist and a second generation migrant from Eastern Europe, namely Black radical thought and decolonial feminisms from Eastern Europe. Doing so allowed me to consider the implications of the material conditions required to enable transitions to the pluriverse from these different epistemic and ontological locations, and pose important considerations to take into account when engaging with the pluriverse.

The conceptualization of a political problem shapes the political strategies to address this problem. As the pluriverse necessarily emerges from within yet is outside the dominant system, it is important to reflect on different contexts in which the pluriverse could materialize. This is why chapter 6 explored connected yet differentiated, embodied readings and framings of the current civilizational crisis articulated by the aforementioned strands: racial capitalism and intersecting oppressions, the capitalist hydra as well as modernity/coloniality. Therefore, in order not to reproduce neo-colonial continuities anchored in abstract and universalistic thinking that go hand in hand with the whitening and co-optation of the pluriverse by eurocentric academia, it is essential to contextualize and problematize the current/contemporary political moment from specific geographical, body-political, onto-epistemic locations and to consider the concrete material basis of a world in which many worlds fit. Doing so allowed chapter 6 to move away from purist, idealized rhetorics of the pluriverse, and shed light on important considerations in the shaping of concrete politically relevant strategies and praxis that can be articulated together as we walk towards more pluriversal horizons.

Chapter 6 argued that the literature on the pluriverse would greatly benefit from engaging with topics of reparations and different geographies of reparation (as the different forms of reparations take in different geographies of coloniality) in the process of building pluriversal pathways, especially if we understand the civilizational crisis as being a consequence of racial capitalism. Indeed, one way in which the white-washing and cooptation of the pluriverse can be resisted is by establishing how the civilizational crisis is connected to the creation, consolidation and imposition of a globalized racial capitalist system with intersecting systems of oppressions, as articulated by Black marxists and Black feminist marxists. Reparations, then, as an alternative project emerging from this onto-epistemic and geographic location, is one of the responses to racial capitalism and an important consideration for transitions towards the pluriverse, in that it provides the material possibilities for pluriversal world making and stepping stones towards the abolition of oppressive structures that can go hand-in-and with the creation of more just societies, new institutions, relationships and systems free from oppression.

Another important consideration when moving towards more pluriversal political horizons is to consider modernity/coloniality as a system of oppressions to be addressed in all their shapes and forms. Decolonial feminist thinkers from Eastern Europe, located in the semi-periphery of the world system offer valuable insights with regards to the complexities of the modern/colonial system and its reproduction/repetition by the periphery. If the logics of discrimination, control, deportation, securitization, borderization, segregation and citizenship are omnipresent, how to even begin conceiving what transitions to the pluriverse would look like in violent necro politico-economic contexts? How can we build a world in which all worlds and people fit together if they are separated by borders?

This is where chapter 6 argued that the question of the pluriverse as a world without national borders should figure more prominently in the debates, and that the abolition of borders and states represent *a conditio sine qua non* to building a pluriverse. In doing so, the debates must consider the abolition of the modern prison industrial complex and carceral institutions created alongside the state to ensure its perennity. Abolition includes the tearing down of all forms of structural oppressions everywhere, and repair histories and current occurrences of harm - which connects back to the question of reparations. Abolition is also tied to ontological reparations, and the recognition, building and connecting of other worlds, world views, and cosmovisions as exemplified by the pluriverse. It is a totality in which excluded, marginalized and othered populations, beings, things, entities and ecosystems - both human and other-than-human - are indispensable and cared for.

Having provided an overview of the answer to the main research question and three sub-questions, as well as the contributions this thesis made to different academic fields and activist circles, this chapter now moves on to future action-research agendas that remain to be explored.

7.2. Future action-research agendas: coalitions-building, transformative justice and the decolonization of academia

This part offers a reflection on some areas that should be explored with regards to transitions to the pluriverse, and the necessary political implications of such action-research agendas for academic and activist circles. First of all, it is important to acknowledge that this subsection purposefully omits certain pathways for academia to explore. Echoing Tuck and Yang's reflexions on refusal against the academy as a "colonial collector or knowledge", not only does

academia not deserve to know about certain embodied knowledges and practices, but these knowledges "already have their own place, and placing them in the academy is removal, not respect" (Tuck and Yang, 2014b: 813).

That said, an important area to be built on the foundations of this research is concerned with coalitions-building, and deepening the trailblazing reflexions of María Lugones on "World" traveling and coalitions, when she refers to the needs of forming resistant, interdependent and plural coalitions against the system's logics of individualism, separation, fragmentation and anti-relationality (Lugones, 2003: 108). More specifically, there should be more focus on both successful and failed cross-movement experiences, with reflections on the difficulties of establishing alliances and ways to navigate the contradictions and tensions that arise in their creation and unfolding. In this sense, abolition and transformative justice as *cultural interventions* represent important contributions as they can generate approaches to address the faultines, fractures, tensions and neocolonial continuities within movements and alternatives (Cullors, 2019) and therefore merits more attention in the scholarship on the pluriverse, in processes of articulations of alternatives and beyond. Indeed, transformative and reparative justice frameworks emerging out of abolition work could not only be conducive to more pluriversal pathways in that they aim to tear down machineries of death and technologies of anti-relationality external to progressive movements, they show us the path in how to build more sustainable bridges *within and across* movements and alternatives (Dixon and Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2020; Kaba, 2021; Davis, Dent and Richie, 2022).

Collectively practicing abolition, or upholding transformative/reparative justice approaches is especially difficult because of capitalism's constant deployment of "technologies of

anti-relationality" preventing peripheral political projects of solidarity and the navigating the questions of difference through the practices of solidarity and political actions to dismantle the capitalist colonial system (Azarmandi and Rexhepi, 2020; Gržinić, Kancler, and Rexhepi: 2020). To create long-term sustainable "coalitions of conscience" and lasting political communities we need to self-reflect, talk about and address the (re-)production of violence against those with whom we are in coalition (Azarmandi, 2018). Building solidarity across movements and geographies of resistance towards the political project of abolition, reparations and the pluriverse require us to continuously unearth, address and move through/beyond the racialized, gendered, cis-hetero-normative, classist, ageist, ableist, caste-ist power relations *within and between* movements and alternatives which prevent politically relevant and sustainable bridges to be created.

Another important point is related to the fact that politically meaningful research on the pluriverse will never emerge within eurocentric knowledge structures, and that any calls for future action-research agendas to be undertaken must come hand-in-hand with a call to decolonize academia. This is especially the case as academia is still mostly an archive of injustice, based on the extraction of knowledges and exploitation of people, for the purpose of capital accumulation (whether intellectual or financial) (Tuck and Yang, 2014a: 289). Academia is devoid of real commitments to social, economic, environmental, racial, gender, disability justice due to its current complicities and allegiances to the current oppressive system (all the while - ironically - claiming to be "objective", "neutral" and "universal"), and will gladly co-opt radical alternatives to serve its purpose.

As shown in chapter 4, there are very few theoretical embodiments of the pluriverse. The current constraints of format, content and language imposed by the modern/colonial academic system (which determines what consists of "academically acceptable scholarship") impede pluriversal theorizations, truly collective authorship, non-extractivist knowledge cultivation as well as inter-cultural dialogues that can weave a plurality of knowledges together (Palmero et al., 2014: 28-30). How then, can any kind of scholarship provide non-oppressive, politically coherent accounts of the pluriverse and the articulations of alternatives within it? By engaging and establishing more bridges with decolonial theory, the future scholarship could rally behind the calls to decolonize academia and research methods in order to address the complicities of the neoliberal university with the erasing mechanisms of modernity/coloniality - and strive to integrate pluriversal ways of writing, thinking and feeling about the pluriverse and beyond.

By embracing onto-epistemological decolonization and being more politically and ethically coherent between the visions of the pluriverse and its theorizations, the scholarship could both "write about" the pluriverse and be the written/theoretical embodiment of it, as this thesis attempted to do. There is no one way to do so, as Mignolo would say: "The pathways [towards unlearning] are varied, and each of us has to build it according to their personal history. Taking pluriversality seriously, and not only talking about it, means knowing, being able to think, living and doing things in other ways" (Mignolo in Palmero et al., 2014: 12). This research embraced a decolonial feminist approach to foster dialogues between a pluralities of knowledges and practices in connection to the debates on pluriversal transitions, and committed itself to navigate neoliberal eurocentric academic structure and use as less oppressive research methods as possible, while acknowledging my power and privilege as the person writing this thesis who will

gain recognition and advance in my career as a result (a limitation that this thesis was not able to tackle and overcome).

Considering the ever-growing liberal co-optation of anti-racism, it is important to reiterate the critique of unreflective, "charitable anti-racism" (Gržinić, Kancler, and Rexhepi: 2020) hand-in-hand with the calls to decolonize academia, to practice abolition or transformative justice, to engage with and push for reparations as stepping stones for pluriversal worlds making. There is great rage, shame and discomfort in knowing how academic articles or thesis, such as this one, written by White anti-racists who ultimately do not have to give up their land, power or privilege while they "gain professional kudos or a boost in their reputations for being so sensitive or self-aware" - which is extremely problematic (Tuck and Yang, 2012: 10). However, as Angela Davis mentioned, we are all responsible for naming and fighting against racism and all other forms of oppression, with the Black Radical Tradition as "a tradition that can be claimed by people everywhere [r]egardless of race, regardless of nationality, regardless of geographical location" (Davis, 2016: 112). This thesis therefore hoped to contribute to the development of effective strategies, tactics, and politics, to re-politicize solidarity, build alliances and articulate a common struggle for liberation (Gržinić, Kancler, and Rexhepi: 2020). It therefore aligns with Tuck and Young's notion of solidarity as "an uneasy, reserved, and unsettled matter that neither reconciles present grievances nor forecloses future conflict" (Tuck and Young, 2012: 3).

Epistemically, the currently neoliberal eurocentric academia is co-opting the concept of pluriverse into a whitened rhetoric calling for more bridges to be built between seemingly isolated movements and alternatives, without addressing processes of onto-epistemic erasure caused by the modern/colonial system. I maintain that the pluriverse is being increasingly

white-washed and risks becoming devoid of its political radically by being equated to a mere synonym for diversity (understood in the neoliberal sense). However, the pluriverse implies holding various epistemologies, ontologies and realities without one claiming superiority over another. It is based on an understanding that the world is pluriversally constructed and therefore can be conceived as an alternative to Western universalism and its totalizing, monocultural framework. If we believe that the world is made of multiple worlds (ontological pluriversality), how can we produce knowledges that reflects this way of seeing the world (epistemological pluriversality)?

Currently, the predominance of epistemic coloniality is still leading to the reproduction of universal, monocultural, extractivist perspectives that erase the pluriversal knowledges and practices of the global South - which is politically incompatible with the horizons of the pluriverse. As Kancler described, academia is "a White space, a Eurocentric fabric of subjectification, a disciplinary institution and an institution of control, whose aim is to reproduce and maintain the existing colonial capitalist system through the continuous exclusions in terms of class, race, gender, sexuality, ability, language, spirituality, etc" (Kancler, 2020: 17). Similarly, Tuck and Yang described the ways settler colonialism shape academic knowledge structures and systems to justify, legitimize and maintain unfair social structures (Tuck and Young, 2012: 2) while Harney and Moten equated the current academic system to prisons, in that "they are both involved in their way with the reduction and command of the social individual!" (Harney and Moten, 2013: 42).

In order for the pluriverse to not become just a metaphor, we need epistemic reparations and a deep reckoning of the epistemological and ontological racism and patriarchy at work within

academic spaces and eurocentric knowledge structures. These include, but are not limited to breaking down academic walls, challenging the existing political economy of global Eurocentric academia, producing counter-genealogies of thought, decolonizing curriculums, abolishing university fees, retroactive forgiveness of student loans, continuing to build separate non-institutions (like the pluriversity), more open-access and slower scholarship, addressing questions of who gets tenure and who does not, whose worldviews get to count as knowledge, what counts as relevant scholarship and why, abolishing violent extractivist research, reparations for the systemic denial of access to high-quality educational opportunities in the form of full and free access for all people of color, undocumented migrants, refugees and formerly incarcerated people, adopting decolonial deconstructive and reconstructive strategies in the classroom, research agendas and institutional environments (Kancler, 2020; Tuck and Young, 2012: 2; Rutatzibwa, 2019: 158).

As mentioned earlier and throughout the thesis, the world is already made up of a multitude of ontologies, knowledges, cosmovisions, practices. In other words, the pluriverse already exists. Hence, this research did not pretend to invent (or re-invent) anything that does not already exist outside the academic world and is being lived by people and communities. This project represented (at best) a demonstration of practical and active solidarity that aimed to sediment the learnings of previous experiences to help foster the imagination, recognition and articulations of alternative worlds and peoples within a pluriverse.

7.3. Closing reflections and offerings

This thesis began as an attempt to explore and weave together alternative knowledges, practices, visions and models conducive to the pluriverse, or a world in which all worlds and people fit. As

outlined in the introduction, the political seeds of this thesis were sowed in Latin America alongside feminist anti-globalization movements in 2017. My participation in preparing the week of action against the 11th meeting of the World Trade Organization and its agenda of liberalization, privatization and deregulation of the global economy emanated from the desire to understand what kind of infrastructure allowed tens of thousands of people to come together, united in their diversity, to repudiate the current neoliberal order and promote systemic alternatives. Needless to say that the results of that week of action far exceeded my wildest dreams and expectations.

Moments such as these matter for numerous reasons: showing dissent, articulating resistance movements, promoting and strengthening alternative ways of organizing our economies and societies, but more importantly, it is about coming together as a global community, and nurturing lasting ties and friendships. As the philosopher Ivan Illich claimed when reflecting on the importance of relationships: "if community life exists at all today, it is in some way the *consequence of friendship* cultivated by each one who initiates it. [...] Society will only be as good as the political result of these friendships" (Illich, Brown and Mitcham, 1997).

I would also like to offer a reflection on the importance and power of love in fostering politically radical, meaningful and sustainable ties between movements and alternatives within a pluriverse that is just, healing and free from oppressions. There are still very few writings on love that are not deemed "for the naive, the weak and hopelessly romantic" (hooks, 2001: xix). However, love as both an ethic and a praxis is not only political, it is radical. We are reminded of that radicality by transfeminist activists Dani D'Emilia and Daniel B. Chávez, co-authors of the Living Manifesto on Radical Tenderness which encourages us to critically and lovingly move away from

modern/colonial political ways of being, feeling and relating to ourselves, to others and to Nature (D'Emilia and Chávez, 2015). We are reminded of the power of love by Black radical thinkers such as hooks, who claimed how "Fear is the primary force upholding structures of domination" and "when we choose to love we choose to move against fear - against alienation and separation. The choice to love is a choice to connect - to find ourselves in the other" (hooks, 2001: 93). That fear of difference is one of the driving forces of the intensification of extreme forms of racist, transphobic, homophobic, misogynistic violence that is accompanying the steady rise of neo-fascist, far-right and religious fundamentalist movements, groups and political parties around the world calling for the annihilation of anyone who is different, of anyone who stands out.

If we understand that such "domination cannot exist in any social situation where a love ethic prevails" (hooks, 2001: 98) then doing that labor of love within and across progressive movements is all the more important. In conversation with Fred Moten, Robin D.G Kelley, citing Dr. Martin Luther King, says: "power at its best, power at its best is love… implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is love correcting everything that stands against love" (Kelley in Cooper, Walcott and, 2018: 169). He continues by claiming: "The fundamental struggle is not class struggle anymore, but the struggle to become more human. And to become more human is to basically recognize what it means to live with to live for and about, with love, to build community where there's no outside. [...] Love where there's no outside where you're constantly building community, which is filled with tension to do that. It's a struggle to do that" (*ibid*).

This thesis and the political projects and movements it is in solidarity with, whether in the content or in the process of creating that content, has been a labor of love and an embodiment of

an ethic and praxis of love, against a modern/colonial world (and academic institution) of domination and fear. Whether through the friendships nurtured within and throughout this research project, to engaging in a pluriversal exercise of bridge-building between different experiences, strands of critical thinking and geographies of resistance, to love by "learning to travel to other people's worlds" as María Lugones wrote (Lugones, 2003: 102), to unlearning and relearning in/through conversations and collaborations with loved ones in a "critical and loving" way that "does not collapse in the face of our contradictions" (D'Emilia and Chávez, 2015) and to the village it took for this research journey to unfold in the ways it has. In this sense (and many others), this thesis is a demonstration of love and friendship as one of the strongest foundations for any bridge we are attempting to build between alternatives and movements.

The struggles against global hegemony and the paths towards the construction and articulation of alternative political visions and projects can be a very lonely one. However, the power of coming together against modernity/coloniality is something far more powerful than can ever be captured by this thesis. To be seen, to be heard, to be validated, to be held, to belong, to be amongst people who understand you. To be together, to move together, to be in movement together. As Sciullo (2019: 6) writes on the importance of movement: Sciullo (2019: 6): "If we are to think about resistance, radicalism, and change, we need to think about lines of flight, we need to think about movement. Not movement in the ablest sense, but rather movement in the active instability needed to resist dominant racial discourses. This includes mental, physical, spiritual and intellectual movement. It is history beyond what we already know and embrace, as well as history beyond what we already criticize. Slacktivism, history months, and mighty pens will not get us where we are arriving. We need to think about departing, and fugitivity is that attempt to depart." Progressive movements are not only transitory, fluid, social mobilizations; they

represent *alternatives in and of themselves* with *s*ocial relations that are neither capitalist nor institutionalized and which only become visible when they turn into a movement and act in a different mode than dictated by the establishment (Zibechi and Hardt, 2013: 40). These are concrete projects in communities implementing alternative ways of living in peoples' everyday lives (Garza and Sánchez, 2017). Such movements are also processes "of creative experimentation in which the values of 'another world' are put into practice" (Pleyers, 2013: 38). In other words, progressive movements do not only protest against and oppose the current system; they strive to embody different worlds in their daily practices as coherently as possible with their values and political projects – whilst navigating the contradictions of still being part of the system they are trying to change. Yet, a movement is not only an expression of collective action; it also refers to a constant, collective flow and ability to question a given society, one's place within it as well as *the continuous evolution of personal subjectivities* in the process of building and articulating other worlds.

Building on this, this thesis is not only a contribution to the aforementioned fields of research and activist circles; it is a depiction of the evolution of my own subjectivity, political thinking and identity. Continuously unlearning and relearning other-than-modern ways of thinking, doing and being. Progressively understanding the multiple borders and liminal spaces I inhabit as part of my positionality. Understanding the deeper reasons for undertaking this research (beyond the political necessity of articulating and leveraging the multiplicity of systemic alternatives around the world to respond to the current civilizational crisis). Understanding how this research stemmed from a deeper desire of belonging and a need to foster spaces free from oppressions, where all the "outsiders within" can find a home where they belong, where silenced alternatives can be heard, and where invisibilized and isolated struggles can be seen and articulated within a

pluriverse – as a world in which *all* worlds fit (and a world in which I may fit in too). A world in which all the misfits fit, as someone very dear to me once said.

Five years later, writing this conclusion possibly represents one of the most challenging endeavors of this research. Perhaps because it marks the end of a meaningful political, personal and collective project. Perhaps it is the fact that the results were different than what I had expected. Perhaps it is the apprehension of what comes next. The further I advance towards the closing of this PhD journey, the more horizons are opening up in front of me. One of these horizons is tied to my gender identity, and the exploration and transition underpinning it. Only at this stage of the writing can I finally circle back to the question of home and belonging, which is central to this research and ask myself: *what does it mean to not feel a sense of belonging in my own body and in the gender that I was assigned to at birth? And how can I possibly belong anywhere if I feel like I don't even belong in my own body?*

Perhaps the most unexpected answer brought to light by this PhD is to find a home in my own body. To learn how to make my body my home. That this trans* body, which, by way of inhabiting multiple borders, liminal spaces and fluid identities, *is actually an embodiment of the pluriverse in and of itself.* And how, while I set myself out into the world searching for a pluriverse for years, I only now realize it has also been inside me all along.

So it is with both profound gratitude and humility that I speak to this research and to all the people and processes who made its undertaking and accomplishment possible. The partial (political, personal and collective) insights put forward in this thesis could not have been unearthed without you. As I mark the end of this PhD research with this last sentence, I hope to continue walking alongside you towards new horizons that can help foster the imagination,

recognition and articulations of alternative worlds within a pluriverse free from oppression, within a world in which all worlds, peoples and other-than human beings and entities can fit and belong.

<div align="center">

The bridge I must be

Is the bridge to my own power

I must translate

My own fears

Mediate

My own weaknesses

I must be the bridge to nowhere

But my true self

And then

I will be useful.

</div>

(Excerpt from "The Bridge Poem" by Kate Rushin, in Moraga and Anzaldúa, 2015: xxxiii-xxxiv)

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