

# Designing the Void: Activating the Garment–Body In-Between

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**Abstract** – This paper reframes the garment–body in-between not as a residual gap but as a generative spatial condition central to contemporary fashion design. Conventional approaches to dress construction often privilege surface and silhouette, treating the void between fabric and skin as technically necessary but conceptually silent. Drawing on deconstructivist philosophy, phenomenology of embodiment, and spatial theory that recognizes the agency of thresholds and interstices, the research reconceptualizes absence as a locus of presence, relation, and memory. A qualitative, practice-led methodology integrates expert interviews, thematic mapping, and iterative prototyping within a Method-to-Strategy Framework that links conceptual inquiry to material decision. The central research question asks: How can the in-between space between garment and body be activated as a communicative, transformative, and mnemonic medium within fashion design? The study identifies four design strategies that render the void operative. Interaction treats sound and air as communicative media. Boundaries reframe seams as negotiated thresholds. Transformation addresses temporality through motion, delay, and projection. Memory positions absence as an intimate archive of trace and care. Situated in the Sri Lankan design-education context, the paper offers studio-ready formats, an assessment rubric, and curricular implications, inviting designers and educators to work with absence rather than against it.

**Keywords:** In-between Space; Garment–Body Relation; Practice-led Design; Spatial Strategies in Fashion; Absence and Presence

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## I. Introduction

The dialogue between garment and body has long been framed through fit, silhouette, and surface. In industry training and aesthetic critique, the in-between space of air, distance, and movement is tolerated as allowance or exaggeration and rarely considered a substance in itself. This study begins from the premise that what is conventionally overlooked may hold the greatest potential for innovation. The in-between is approached as a site of activity rather than residue, capable of hosting communication, emotion, and temporal experience that exceed the descriptive power of silhouette alone.

Designers associated with deconstruction unsettled the conventions of seam, lining, and finish, revealing what was once hidden and refusing closure as a measure of value (Skivko 2020; Zborowska 2015). Yet much of that discourse remained visual and stylistic. The philosophical ground of deconstruction moves further, recognizing absence not as loss but as a formative condition. Presence is always laced with the trace of what is not fully present, and meaning is structured through difference and deferral (Derrida 1967; 1972; Caputo 2021). Architecture has long understood voids, thresholds, and interstices as generative materials. Courtyards regulate climate, verandas negotiate visibility, and apertures orchestrate attention. Such thinking suggests that fashion may be reimaged as an architecture of relation in which space is not a by-product but a design material.

Emerging from Sri Lankan inquiries into negative space and the dressed body that examined how layering, structuring, and filling can reconfigure experience (Liyanage and Hettiarachchi 2016; 2017), this paper extends that lineage through a practice-led framework. The study asks: How can the in-between space between garment and body be intentionally designed to carry interaction, negotiate boundaries, perform transformation, and hold memory? Conceptually, the ambition is to transform the void into an active participant in design thinking. Methodologically, the aim is to connect speculative mapping and empirical interviews to material practice in a transparent chain of evidence from reflection to prototype.

The contribution is threefold. First, the paper theorizes absence as presence in fashion, reframing the garment-body field as a spatial, sensory, and ethical problem. Second, it establishes a Method-to-Strategy Framework that links interviews and thematic maps to design experiments and named strategies. Third, it translates these insights for design pedagogy through micro-labs, live briefs, and research-through-design formats suited to the Sri Lankan studio, while remaining legible to international discourse.

## II. Literature Review

### A. Fashion, Deconstruction, And the Question of Depth

Deconstructivist practice surfaced internal structures, inverted linings, and accepted asymmetry as method rather than fault. These gestures revealed construction and unsettled ideals of finish, completeness, and propriety (Skivko 2020; Zborowska 2015). However, the reception of

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deconstruction often remained on the level of image and styling. Philosophically, deconstruction is a rigorous enquiry into how meaning is produced through absence, delay, and trace. It does not celebrate wreckage, nor reduce itself to unfinished hems. It recognizes that the cut and the fold generate form through the management of what is removed or deferred (Derrida 1967; 1972). This deeper account provides a foundation for treating the in-between as a design operator rather than a visual trope.

Recent practice-led research strengthens this shift from surface to spatial system. Carufel and Bye (2020) describe the body-garment relation as dynamic and situational rather than stable fit. Rissanen and McQuillan (2022) demonstrate how pattern cutting engages space and time as materials, while McQuillan and Rissanen (2021) align zero-waste strategies with spatial reasoning and circularity. Together, these studies invite designers to work through cuts, gaps, and assemblages as spatial events rather than purely optical features.

### ***B. The Void as a Design Operator in Spatial Disciplines***

Spatial design disciplines provide precedents for treating absence as substance. The Nolli Plan revealed Rome's interiors and exteriors as a continuous public figure, establishing that voids are not remainder but civic medium. In tropical and vernacular traditions, verandas and courtyards operate as climatic and social technologies that negotiate light, heat, airflow, and visibility. Contemporary architecture continues to treat gaps and thresholds as generative, whether through transparent envelopes or fluid geometries that choreograph movement and pause. Scholarship connecting architecture and clothing notes parallel concerns about enclosure, exposure, and the line between body and world (Zaitseva, Kizilova, and Bazarnov 2020). This study takes such parallels as operational cues. If a courtyard can regulate microclimate and social exchange, then a sleeve aperture or layered panel may orchestrate sensation and interaction at the body scale.

### ***C. Embodiment and the Sensing Body***

Phenomenology repositions the body from mannequin to subject. Perception is not a neutral recording of the world, but an active negotiation shaped by movement, attention, and habitus (Merleau-Ponty 1962). The concept of the body schema suggests that tools and garments extend perception and reach. Anthropology adds that techniques of the body are learned, practiced, and cultural, rather than given (Mauss 1973). Fashion theory develops this line by showing how dress mediates between the physical and the social, setting conditions for modesty, identity, and agency (Entwistle 2002). For this study, embodiment implies that the in-between is not a passive zone but a living membrane where heat, sound, airflow, and attention circulate. If garments extend perception, then voids frame perception and conduct it.

### ***D. Pluriversal Dress Logics***

A pluriversal lens resists a single model of dress and recognizes multiple coexisting worlds of making and meaning. The sari, kimono, and gele are not simply garments but spatial systems with distinct logics of wrapping, height, and movement. They modulate modesty, signal identity, and

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engage climate through strategies of layering, pleating, and knotting. The Sri Lankan osariya is an architecture of restraint and release, where pleat, fall, and drape organize air and attention. Rather than using such traditions as stylistic resources, this study treats them as evidence that the in-between is culturally specific and ethically charged. The aim is not to extract forms but to learn principles for negotiating distance, exposure, and relation in ways that are situated and respectful (Ingold 2011).

### ***E. Prior Work on the In-Between in Dress***

Design research in Sri Lanka has begun to articulate negative space as an operational field in dress. Studies of fit and interpersonal distance examine how clothing mediates psychological and physical boundaries (Beminiwaththa and Senanayaka 2019; De Silva, Liyanage, and Wickramasinghe 2017). Liyanage and Hettiarachchi (2016) identified three strategies for configuring negative space, namely filling, layering, and structuring. The present research builds on that foundation and extends it with temporality. By introducing transformation and memory, it treats the in-between not only as spatial geometry but also as temporal and affective medium.

## **III. Methodology**

### ***A. Approach and Stance***

The study adopts a qualitative, practice-led methodology that connects conceptual enquiry with material experimentation. Three streams of activity were integrated. A targeted literature review refined theoretical and contextual lenses. Semi-structured interviews drew transferable insights from adjacent spatial practices. Iterative prototyping tested those insights through materials, cuts, folds, and performances. The stance is reflexive. The designer-researcher participates in and observes the work and remains accountable for how positionality shapes interpretation and decision. Reflexivity here means a sustained attentiveness to judgement, bias, and care across reading, interviewing, and making.

Practice is not used to illustrate theory after the fact. Instead, practice produces theory through the disciplined handling of material and time. Each act of cutting, folding, layering, or pausing is logged as data and analyzed for its spatial and affective effect. To maintain rigor, a chain of evidence links conceptual prompts, interview codes, maps, prototypes, and named strategies. This chain ensures that outcomes can be traced back to sources, and that readers can understand how a garment detail embodies an interviewed concept or a mapped relation.

### ***B. Participants and Expert Interviews***

Participants were recruited through purposive sampling to represent disciplines that already treat space as active. The cohort included an architect, a performance designer, a sound designer, a memory practitioner, and a projection artist. Selection criteria emphasized the ability to articulate threshold, resonance, and temporality. Interviews lasted between forty and sixty minutes and were recorded with informed consent. Transcripts were produced verbatim. Data collection continued until saturation, when additional interviews generated no substantial new insights. This point was

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reached after seven in-depth interviews as codes and examples began to stabilize across participants.

**Table 1**  
*Interview Overview*

Participant role	Selection Rationale	Duration	Notes
Architect	Purpos- eful selectio- n for spatial articula- tion	45-6 0 min	Architecture and fashion intersection; focus on Negative Spaces
Conceptual Designer			Conceptual design/ philosophy; focus on Spaces You Can't See
Emotive Designer			Emotional Design/ wearable Technology
Memory Practitioner			Memory and cognitive design; neuroscience
Projection artist			Projection mapping and shadow design
Performance Designer			Fashion design performance/ choreography; focus on Dynamic Spaces
Sound Designer			Sound design/ acoustic engineering; focus on Sound Spaces
Textile Designer			Textile design/ layering techniques; focus on Layered Spaces

Note. This descriptive image outlines participant profiles and selection rationales. Adapted from Samarakkody, S. R. S. T. M. (2025). *Reimagining the 'In-Between Space': A Deconstructivist Exploration of Garment-Body Interaction in Fashion Design* (Bachelor's dissertation). Department of Integrated Design, University of Moratuwa

**Table 2**  
*Interview Overview*

Excerpt	Code	Theme
The in-between space acts as a mental construct, an extension of the self, embodied by the garment as a "second skin".	Psychological and Hypothetical Bubble	Psychological & Multi-dimensional
Memories simultaneously interact with the past, present, and future, shaping and reshaping meaning dynamically	Temporal Layers	Memory as a Multilayered Phenomenon
Negative space is not static; it dynamically "invades" or "chases" vacated areas to maintain equilibrium.	Interdependence of Spaces	Relational Existence
Shifting boundaries over time makes the in-between space dynamic.	Blurred, Redefined Boundaries	Dynamic Equilibrium

Note. This is a descriptive image of how key excerpts from the interviews were coded and thematically interpreted. Adapted from Samarakkody, S. R. S. T. M. (2025). *Reimagining the 'In-Between Space': A Deconstructivist Exploration of Garment-Body Interaction in Fashion Design* (Bachelor's dissertation). Department of Integrated Design, University of Moratuwa.

### C. Thematic Analysis and Mapping

A six-step thematic analysis adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006) guided engagement with transcripts. First, familiarization through repeated reading. Second, open coding across resonance, boundary, unfolding, trace, and opacity. Third, clustering codes into preliminary themes. Fourth, review and refinement against the full corpus. Fifth, naming and describing themes in relation to design relevance. Sixth, drawing thematic maps that would act as prompts for prototyping. Eight maps were produced. Sound Space addressed rustle, friction, and resonance. Emotive Space organized cues for projection and affect. Memory Space gathered trace, inscription, and patina. Layered Space modelled depth and translucency. Dynamic Space engaged expansion and contraction in motion. Projected Space explored light and shadow. Negative Space

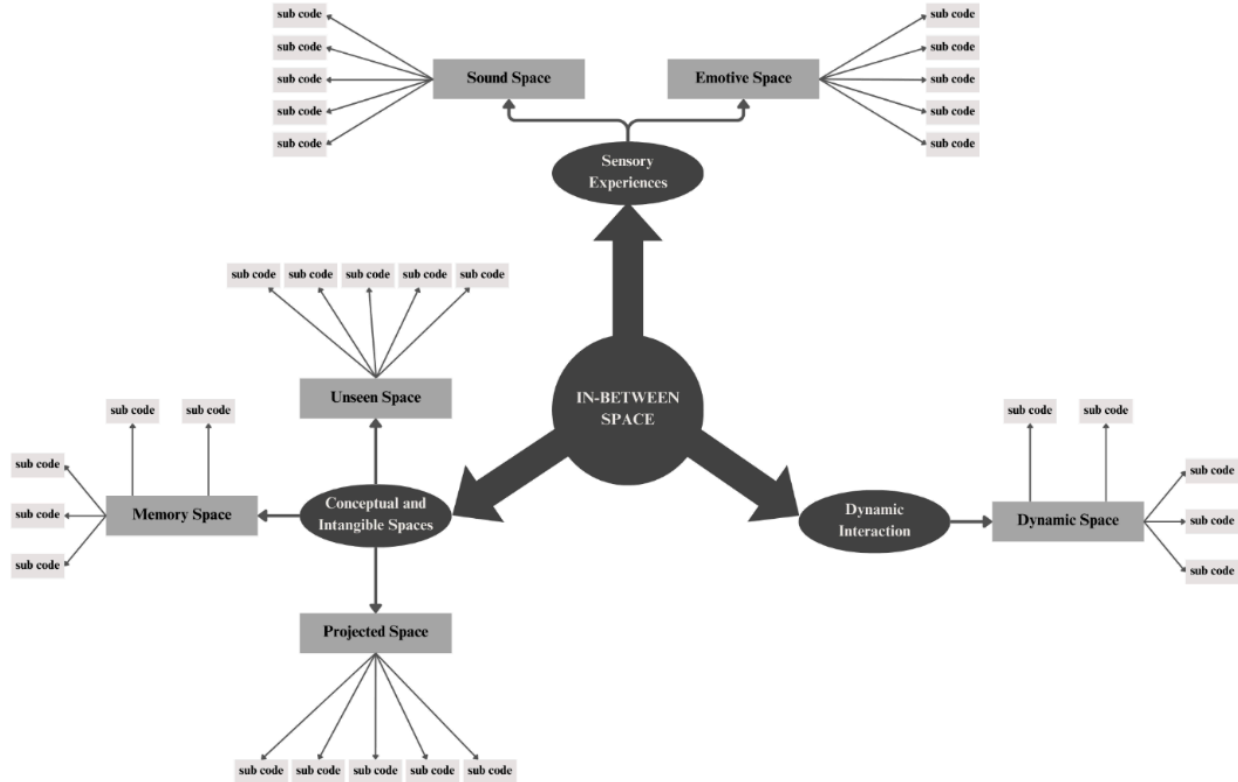
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considered subtraction and balance. Unseen Space focused on proprioception and peripheral awareness.

**Figure 1**  
Sample Thematic Map



Note. This is a descriptive image illustrates the interconnections among key themes defining the in-between space. Reproduced from Samarakkody, S. R. S. T. M. (2025, p. 36). *Reimagining the 'In-Between Space': A Deconstructivist Exploration of Garment–Body Interaction in Fashion Design* (Bachelor's dissertation). Department of Integrated Design, University of Moratuwa.

The maps were not mood boards. Each condensed theoretical and empirical relationships into clear operational instructions, for example, introduce a concealed air gap at the shoulder to produce a gentle rustle at two steps per second, or combine translucent and opaque layers to create a threshold that opens under specific gestures. The maps therefore served as speculative instruments that moved thinking into making without collapsing complexity.

#### D. Prototyping and Documentation

Prototyping proceeded in three clusters that corresponded to the thematic maps and the interview codes. Cluster A investigated folding and layering through unstitched or lightly stitched panels that could create and release volume with breath and step. Materials included lightweight cottons, organza, bamboo viscose, and paper composites that recorded crease memory. Cluster B examined cut outs and negative apertures that could migrate around joints. Slits, darts, and

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removable inserts were used to test how absence might move with a reach or a twist. Cluster C combined sound and projected light to study how the garment could register presence in time and space. Pairings of soft and stiff layers generated controlled rustle, while low intensity projection traced delay and after image.

Documentation prioritized spatial effect rather than finish quality. Each prototype was photographed in sequence and annotated with its originating map, the material choice, the intended spatial behavior, and the observed outcome. Short reflective notes were taken from wearers on comfort, heat, self-awareness, and perceived distance from others. These qualitative accounts were used to triangulate observations with embodied experience. Where appropriate, simple timing and distance measures were recorded to relate material change to movement duration or step length.

**Figure 2**  
Some Workshop Day Photos



*Note. These are descriptive images documenting key moments from the workshop process, capturing participant engagement. Reproduced from Samarakkody, S. R. S. T. M. (2025). Reimagining the 'In-Between Space': A Deconstructivist Exploration of Garment-Body Interaction in Fashion Design (Bachelor's dissertation). Department of Integrated Design, University of Moratuwa.*

### **E. Method to Strategy Framework**

To integrate the evidence across interviews, maps, and prototypes, a Method to Strategy Framework was developed. The framework comprises two connected instruments. The first is a tabular matrix that logs, row by row, how a particular strategy emerges. Columns record the interview quotation, the map prompt, the prototype identifier, and the distilled strategy. The second is a parallel path diagram that shows how four contributions consolidate across activities: Interaction, Boundaries, Transformation, and Memory.

This framework performs three functions. Analytically, it renders the research transparent by showing how each named strategy is grounded in evidence rather than assertion. Pedagogically, it provides a model that teachers can adapt for studio briefs where students must articulate the path

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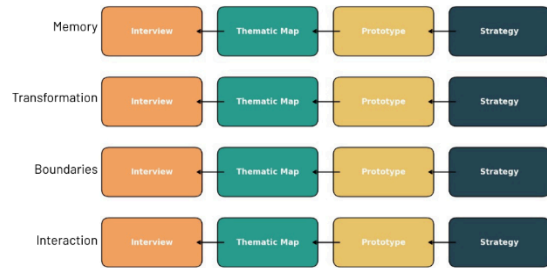
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from concept to decision. Practically, it allows a designer to revisit choices and adjust variables without losing the logic that produced a result.

**Figure 3**  
Method-to-Strategy Framework: table and parallel pathways diagram

Category	Interview Insight	Thematic Map	Prototype	Strategy
Interaction	Sound Designer: The in-between space acts as a mental construct, an extension of the self, embodied by the garment as a "second skin".	Sound Space	Rustling layered fabrics amplifying mood	Design voids as multisensory interface
Boundaries	Architect: Negative space is not static; it dynamically "invades" or "chases" vacated areas to maintain equilibrium.	Negative Space	Wrap garments with retractable panels	Garment edges are shifting thresholds
Transformation	Performance Designer: Shifting boundaries over time makes the in-between space dynamic.	Dynamic Space	Pleated garment expanding with movement	Use temporality as design material
Memory	Memory Practitioner: Memories simultaneously interact with the past, present, and future, shaping and reshaping meaning dynamically	Memory Space	Transparent layered garment with textures	Embed memory through layering and transparency



**Parallel Pathways: From Interviews to Strategy  
Across Four Categories**

Note. This is a descriptive image of the framework triangulates interview insight, thematic maps, and prototype explorations into actionable strategies across Interaction, Boundaries, Transformation, and Memory.

## Findings and Discussion

The findings are presented as four interrelated strategies that activate the in-between as an operative field. Each strategy is introduced through the relevant interview insight and map prompt, illustrated by one or more prototypes, and discussed for implications in practice and pedagogy.

### A. Interaction: The In-Between as Communicative Interface

Interviews with the sound designer emphasized clothing as an acoustic filter. The Sound Space map prompted trials with layered rustling textiles. Prototypes demonstrated that the void creates an audible presence that marks pace and proximity. Wearer reflections noted a change in self-awareness and in how others approached shared spaces.

- Strategies for practice: select fabric pairs that register friction softly; place layers at shoulder, hip, and ankle to modulate cadence; introduce micro-voids by separating layers with narrow channels so that air pockets act as resonance chambers.
- Implications: interaction is not limited to touch or sight. Designers can work with sound to create subtle social signals in performance, urban walking, and therapeutic contexts.
- Pedagogical move: a studio exercise asks students to build a thirty-second sound walk using one layered garment. Assessment observes how sound changes with gait and how the in-between creates a felt bubble

### B. Boundaries: The In-Between as Negotiated Threshold

Architectural interviews reframed seams as thresholds. The Layered Space map guided wraps with retractable and translucent panels. Prototypes showed that edges can become zones of opening rather than fixed borders.

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- Strategies for practice: replace single seam edges with overlapping tongues; design sleeve entries as slits under a controlled flap; use graded translucency in double layers so that boundary conditions can be tuned by light and intention.
- Implications: garments allow everyday micro-choreography where the wearer performs boundary decisions with small gestures. This supports modesty, climate control, and social proximity that change through a day.
- Pedagogical move: a brief requires three modes of openness staged in a short performance. Assessment focuses on clarity of threshold design

### **C. Transformation: The In-Between as Temporal Engine**

Performance design interviews insisted that certain garments only appear in motion. The Dynamic and Projected maps drove pleat-based prototypes that delay outline, expand with gesture, and respond to projected light.

- Strategies for practice: use pleats that store energy and release it on extension; place concealed volumes that open under twist or reach; position garments for slow projection to split outline in time.
- Implications: transformation aligns clothing with lived movement and allows adaptation across roles and climates without full change.
- Pedagogical move: a brief requires distinct figures at rest and in movement. Assessment focuses on quality of delay and reveals and on the role of the in-between.

### **D. Memory: The In-Between as Archive**

The memory practitioner interview focused on residue. The Memory and Unseen maps guided transparent layering and inscription. Prototypes embedded text fragments and threads within inner folds.

- Strategies for practice: stitch narratives into inner layers; allow seams to carry tiny pockets that mark place and time; use controlled fray in protected zones so that edges record wear as patina.
- Implications: memory can be carried in subtle ways that protect meaning from spectacle and allow agency.
- Pedagogical move: a brief asks for a memory garment that holds three layers of story with restraint and care.

### **E. Comparative Capsules and Pluriversal Validation**

To test transferability, the strategies were examined against a set of comparative dress logics. The African gele constructs height and social relation through knot architecture. The knot frames air as a charged component and teaches how the in between can hold status and kinship. Middle Eastern layering modulates airflow and opacity for climate and modesty, offering principles for graded thresholds and thermal comfort. Indigenous weaving systems embed meaning within structure, suggesting that seams and intersections can carry narrative rather than only force management.

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Within Sri Lanka, the osariya demonstrates how pleat and fall organize attention and airflow without tailoring.

These comparative studies are not appropriations. They are dialogues that respect origin and context. They confirm that the in-between is culturally specific and ethically loaded. For design education in Sri Lanka, this plurality underscores the need to teach spatial reasoning through local and regional examples while maintaining critical distance from exoticism.

## ***F. From Strategies to Contributions***

Across the four strategies, a coherent contribution emerges. Interaction defines the in between as a communicative interface that can register cadence and proximity through sound and air. Boundaries recast seams and openings as negotiated thresholds that support everyday decisions about exposure, climate, and relations. Transformation establishes temporality as a design material, allowing garments to perform across intervals rather than only in stillness. Memory treats absence as an archive that can hold personal narrative and patina with care.

These contributions extend prior accounts of negative space that emphasized geometry by adding multisensory and temporal dimensions. They also provide an adaptable framework that bridges theory and studio practice. In a context where resources are limited, the strategies favor low technology and high attentiveness, positioning design as a relational and ecological act rather than a race for novelty.

## **Pedagogical Translation for IDR Context**

### ***A. Framing Pedagogy Through the In-Between***

The Method to Strategy Framework was developed not only to organize findings but also to function in teaching. It aligns with the ethos of the Department of Integrated Design, which emphasizes contextual, embodied, and process driven learning. The framework invites teachers and students to treat absence, trace, and relation as active components of design intelligence. It translates theoretical and ethnographic insights into tasks that are concrete, time bound, and assessable, while preserving the exploratory spirit of studio culture.

### ***B. Studio Formats***

Three studio formats translate the research into teachable structures that can be adapted across semesters and levels.

#### ***1. Format A: Micro labs***

Short iterative exercises focus on one spatial quality at a time and accumulate into a composite project.

- Week 1: Sound and Interaction. Pair two contrasting fabrics to produce a controlled rustle at walking pace. Measure cadence and document audibility at one, two, and three meters.

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- Week 2: Thresholds. Build a sleeve or hem that moves through closed, filtered, and open states using overlapping tongues and graded translucency.
- Week 3: Transformation. Design a pleated insert that stays dormant at rest and unfolds under twist or reach. Time the delay between initiating movement and the visible change.
- Week 4: Memory. Embed a private narrative in an inner layer using stitched pockets or inscription. Reflect on ethics of disclosure.
- Week 5: Integration. Combine at least two labs to create a coherent garment. Present a ninety second performance that demonstrates spatial intent.

## **2. Format B: Live briefs with community partners**

Students collaborate with a performance troupe, a craft collective, or a cultural organization to develop garments that activate the in between through sound, light, or narrative layering. The brief foregrounds consent, reciprocity, and attribution. Partners co define success criteria and share authorship in documentation. The format trains students to navigate ethics, time, and resource constraints outside the classroom.

## **3. Format C: Research through design projects**

Students select two thematic maps as drivers, maintain a friction log to record failures and discoveries, and deliver a portfolio that links each design decision to evidence. The focus is on learning to articulate the chain from concept to cut, rather than on flawless finish. The final presentation combines prototypes, short videos, and a reflective text that locates the work in relation to culture and climate.

## **C. Assessment Rubric**

Traditional fashion assessments privilege silhouette, tailoring proficiency, and finishing. The rubric adapted from this research adds criteria that evaluate spatial intelligence, relational care, and methodological clarity.

- Criterion 1: Spatial activation: Does the garment demonstrate activation of the in between through sound, layering, transformation, or memory in a controlled and legible way.
- Criterion 2: Method clarity: Is there a transparent path from concept to material decision documented through maps, logs, and prototypes.
- Criterion 3: Care and ethics: Are cultural references treated with respect and consent Does the work avoid exoticism and credit collaborators.
- Criterion 4: Restraint and proportion: Is innovation balanced with coherence and usability Does the work avoid novelty for novelty's sake.
- Criterion 5: Communication: Do documentation, captions, and performance make the spatial strategy evident to an informed audience.

The rubric is designed to support multiple routes to excellence and to recognize labor in research, reflection, and collaboration, not only labor in finish.

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## **D. Curricular Implications**

Embedding the framework within the IDR curriculum suggests three implications. First, from artefact to process. The balance shifts from the finished garment to reflective iteration, allowing error to become a site of knowledge rather than a reason for penalty. Second, cultural sensitivity. Teaching the in-between as a cultural field trains students to work with plurality and care, especially in contexts where modesty, climate, and identity are negotiated. Third, plural pathways. By engaging diverse dress logics through dialogue rather than extraction, the curriculum resists homogenization and opens space for situated practice that honors both local and global epistemologies.

## **Limitations and Future Work**

### **A. Limitations**

- Scale and materials. Prototypes were exploratory and constructed with studio grade materials. While appropriate for iteration, they do not model long term wear, laundering, or industrial feasibility.
- Wearer studies. Participant engagement was limited to short testing sessions and reflective notes. Longitudinal studies capture how the in between changes through weeks of use, storage, and climate.
- Cultural and technological scope. Comparative capsules were indicative rather than exhaustive. Deeper co research with craftspeople would enrich cultural validity. Technology was deliberately minimal to focus on material presence, which excluded responsive textiles and sensor systems that might extend interaction.
- Documentation. Still photography dominated. Motion capture and sound recording would offer stronger analysis of timing, cadence, and resonance.

### **B. Future Work**

- Typological expansion. Extend from draped and layered studies to tailored systems, knitwear, and hybrid garments that combine soft and semi rigid elements.
- Material and technological integration. Investigate bio-based textiles, recycled composites, and low energy responsive materials for sound and light. Explore simple sensors to record cadence or heat without compromising ecological goals.
- Participatory studies. Conduct longitudinal trials with diverse wearers in daily life, using diaries and periodic interviews to examine social perception, comfort, and agency.
- Cultural co design. Collaborate with local and regional crafts practitioners to co-develop thresholds, knots, and wraps that embed traditional spatial logics with contemporary ethics.

## **Conclusion**

This study has argued that the space between garment and body is not a residue to be ignored but a living medium that carries communication, negotiation, transformation, and memory. Through a practice-led methodology that combined expert interviews, thematic mapping, and prototyping,

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the research established a Method to Strategy Framework to link reflection and material decision. Four strategies emerged with clarity. Interaction treats the in between as a communicative interface. Boundaries reframe seams as thresholds that can be adjusted through everyday acts. Transformation positions temporality as a design material with staged release and delay. Memory locates narrative and care within concealed layers.

For research, the work models a rigorous conversation between theory and making that generates situated knowledge. For education, it offers studio formats and a rubric that align reflective practice with material experimentation within Sri Lanka's curriculum. For practice, it presents low technology and high attentiveness as credible routes to innovation. Designing with the in between shifts fashion from object to encounter and from spectacle to relation, allowing garments to become architectures of care within the Global South and beyond.

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#### **Ethical Considerations**

All interviews were conducted with informed consent under departmental guidance for undergraduate research ethics.

#### **Author Contributions**

S.R.S.T. Mindula Samarakkody conducted the primary research, interviews, thematic mapping, and prototype development, and drafted the initial manuscript. Prasanna Pitigala Liyanage provided conceptual framing, expanded the theoretical base, structured the Method-to-Strategy Framework, and prepared the paper for journal submission as corresponding author.

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