

Craft, design and decoloniality practices: opportunities for co-creation in Latin America

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to reflect on the relationship between design and craft from a decolonial perspective, with particular attention to embroidery as a cultural, political, and aesthetic practice in Latin America and the Caribbean. It argues that collaborative processes between designers and artisans may either reproduce colonial hierarchies or foster more equitable and horizontal forms of knowledge production, depending on how power relations are negotiated. Grounded in decolonial studies and Southern epistemologies, the research adopts a qualitative and interdisciplinary approach based on documentary analysis and theoretical reflection. By tracing a brief genealogy of embroidery and examining contemporary experiences of textile activism and co-creation, the article highlights embroidery as a practice of resistance, memory, and cultural continuity. It concludes that embroidery constitutes a continuous act of presence, reinvention, and transmission of ancestral knowledge and aesthetics, contributing to socially just and culturally grounded futures in Latin America.

Keywords: Design, Craft, Decoloniality, Co-creation, Latin America.

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between design and craft has been interpreted in different ways, reflecting distinct perspectives on collaboration, authorship, and value creation. Over time, these interactions have produced diverse outcomes, particularly when they generate positive social and economic impacts by expanding market opportunities, including in the tourism sector, and fostering innovation. For many artisans, collaboration with designers provides opportunities to gain visibility, establish professional networks, and access broader markets. However, these relationships are complex and multifaceted, requiring critical examination of their social, cultural, and economic implications.

According to Vidal (2017), design interventions in the craft sector should prioritize strengthening the sense of belonging and cultural identity as essential elements for sustaining production systems rooted in communities and territories. Materials and techniques employed in co-creative processes become expressions of place, historical context, and culturally situated ways of knowing and making. Similarly, Soto (2006) highlights the adaptive capacity of craft, emphasizing its continuity through innovation that integrates traditional knowledge into contemporary products and services.

Nevertheless, collaborations between designers and artisans are not always equitable or ethically grounded. Soto (2006) warns that some partnerships appropriate craft techniques merely to confer an "indigenous" or "traditional" appearance on preconceived products,

reducing traditional knowledge to a decorative and subordinate role. By contrast, Temeldas (2017) argues that collaboration between artisans and designers can contribute simultaneously to cultural preservation and innovation, particularly when craft knowledge is recognized as a form of problem-solving, decision-making, and material intelligence embodied in practice.

These tensions reveal the persistence of coloniality as an underlying structure that extends beyond the historical experience of colonialism. While colonialism refers to the political and administrative domination of one territory by another, coloniality denotes the enduring patterns of power, knowledge, and social hierarchies established during the colonial period that continue to shape contemporary societies even after formal political independence (Quijano, 2000). Within dominant design discourse, hierarchies of knowledge, aesthetics, and value frequently reinforce Eurocentric standards while marginalizing other epistemologies and forms of material culture. Likewise, the recurrent use of categories such as "utilitarian" or "contemporary" reproduces symbolic hierarchies that hinder the recognition of craft and design as practices of equal cultural legitimacy. As Farias (2018, p. 15) observes, coloniality established enduring structures of power that continue to influence social, cultural, and economic relations in Latin America.

Although closely related, the concepts of decolonization, decoloniality, and the decolonial are not synonymous. Decolonization refers to the historical process through which formerly colonized territories achieved political and administrative independence. Decoloniality, in contrast, constitutes a critical perspective that challenges the persistence of colonial structures of power, knowledge, and being beyond formal colonial rule. The term decolonial is used to characterize practices, methodologies, and theoretical approaches informed by this perspective, seeking to question Eurocentric assumptions while valuing plural epistemologies and historically marginalized forms of knowledge (Quijano, 2000).

Against this background, this article examines the relationship between design and craft from a decolonial perspective, discussing how collaborative practices can contribute to more equitable forms of knowledge production, strengthen cultural identities, and promote innovation grounded in community-based knowledge and territorial contexts.

1. DESIGN, CRAFT, AND DECOLONIZATION

In Introduction to Design Theory, Juan Acha (2009) distinguishes design from craft by emphasizing design's functional orientation, industrial scale, institutional framework, and theoretical grounding, in contrast to the empirical, tradition-based, and localized nature of craft production. Within capitalist modernity, tradition is often subordinated to modernity, reinforcing asymmetrical relationships in which designers are positioned as agents of conceptual authority, while artisans are relegated to manual execution. Such dynamics reproduce colonial power asymmetries in knowledge and labor, limiting the potential for equitable collaboration.

In this context, decolonization must be understood not only as a historical process of political independence, but also as an ongoing epistemological and cultural transformation. Decoloniality, as developed in Latin American critical thought, seeks to dismantle the coloniality of power by challenging hegemonic regimes of knowledge, being, and perception that persist beyond formal colonial rule (Quijano, 2000; Mignolo, 2011; Walsh, 2012). From this perspective, decolonial design practices emerge from collective forms of organization and

from the recognition of community-based knowledge as a legitimate source of innovation and world-making.

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As Escobar (2016) argues, design must learn from traditional practices and respect the autonomy of communities rather than imposing external models. Collaborative design grounded in dialogue, reciprocity, and horizontality can contribute both to cultural continuity and to resistance against Eurocentric frameworks. These concerns resonate with Linda Tuhiwai Smith's critique of Western research paradigms, which have historically positioned Indigenous peoples as objects of knowledge rather than as knowledge producers (Smith, 2015).

From this perspective, many contemporary design practices remain extractive in nature: designers enter communities, appropriate symbols and techniques, and reinterpret them according to dominant aesthetic and market logics, often without recognition or reciprocity. Such dynamics reinforce a hierarchical division between design and craft, marginalizing Indigenous and popular aesthetics while legitimizing Western canons of art and design (Cusicanqui, 2018; hooks, 1995).

This article therefore advances a critical reflection on the relationship between design and craft—particularly embroidery—as a site for examining the decolonization of manual labor in Latin America and the Caribbean. It proposes that co-creation practices, when grounded in ethical engagement and epistemic reciprocity, can contribute to more socially just futures by valuing situated knowledge, sustaining cultural continuity, and challenging colonial hierarchies embedded in design practice.

Rather than treating communities as passive recipients of design interventions, this study emphasizes the importance of locating the relationship between designers, objects, and users within a framework of co-authorship and shared agency. It also calls for a critical reassessment of hegemonic positions within design practice in order to expand possibilities for projects made with, by, and for communities.

From the perspective of the colonized, a position from which I write and choose to privilege, the term 'research' is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism. [...] The ways in which scientific research is implicated in the worst excesses of colonialism remain a powerfully remembered history for many of the colonized peoples of the world (Tuhiwai Smith, 2015, p. 1 - our translation).

Thus, this article proposes a reflection on the relationship between design and craft, especially embroidery, as an opportunity for the decolonization of manual labor in Latin American and Caribbean countries. It is believed that such reflections can contribute to new proposals for co-creation work, aligned with desirable and socially just futures.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative and interdisciplinary approach grounded in decolonial studies, Epistemologies of the South, and critiques of Western hegemonic knowledge systems. It is based on documentary and visual analysis as a central methodological strategy, enabling a critical examination of modern science as a dominant epistemic regime. The theoretical framework draws on the work of Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, and Arturo Escobar, whose contributions interrogate the coloniality of knowledge, power, and representation.

The analysis is organized around two main analytical axes. The first examines embroidery as a cultural practice within Latin American and Caribbean contexts, focusing on its historical, social, and symbolic dimensions. The second explores contemporary forms of textile activism and co-creation, with emphasis on collective practices that integrate aesthetics, politics, and community engagement.

Through this approach, the study seeks to illuminate dimensions of knowledge production that are often excluded from dominant historiographies of art and design, particularly those associated with Indigenous and popular epistemologies. In doing so, it challenges the privileging of canonical narratives and foregrounds alternative ways of knowing and making rooted in lived experience and collective practice.

3. A BRIEF HISTORY OF EMBROIDERY IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

In pre-Inca Peru, textile production—including embroidery, weaving, and dyeing—achieved remarkable levels of technical and aesthetic sophistication. Cultures such as Paracas, Moche, Sicán, and Chimú developed highly complex textile systems long before European colonization (Pezzolo, 2019). Among them, the Paracas culture is particularly renowned for its elaborately embroidered funerary textiles, characterized by intricate iconography, vibrant chromatic composition, and advanced technical execution (Longhena; Alva, 2006).

The Paracas civilization emerged between approximately 700 BCE and 200 CE, developing extensive knowledge of environmental adaptation and water resource management in coastal desert regions of present-day Peru. Much of what is known about this society derives from archaeological excavations of its necropolis conducted by Julio C. Tello in the 1920s.

Geographically, Paracas developed along the southern coast of Peru, with its cultural influence extending across valleys such as Chincha, Pisco, Ica, Palpa, and Río Grande (Pezzolo, 2019). Archaeological evidence indicates that its textile production was supported by the use of high-quality materials such as alpaca and vicuña fibers, cotton, and multicolored feathers. This textile tradition is widely regarded as one of the most sophisticated among ancient Andean civilizations, distinguished by its refined visual language combining animal, anthropomorphic, and geometric motifs.

Embroidery, in particular, reached exceptional levels of technical and artistic refinement prior to European contact. According to the Center for Textile Technological Innovation (Cite-Sipán, 2017, pp. 20–21), Paracas artisans employed both loom-based techniques, such as plain weaving, and non-loom techniques, including knotting and flat braiding, to construct complex mythological representations of supernatural beings. Over time, embroiderers introduced significant innovations, transforming compositional structures from linear to curvilinear

motifs and applying a rich chromatic palette that included red, yellow, blue, green, black, and sienna tones.

The Chancay culture contributed significantly to the development of reticular weaving, characterized by quadrangular and triangular patterns that enabled the interlacing of warp threads. The Nazca culture, on the other hand, produced highly elaborate textiles decorated with embroidered, painted, or feathered motifs, using advanced polychrome wool techniques. According to archaeologists Giuseppe Orefici, Johny Isla, and Markus Reindel, the Nazca used natural dyes: indigo for blue tones, and anthraquinones and cochineal for red, pink, and orange tones (Boucherie *et al.*, 2016).

During the Inca and Colonial periods, within the Tahuantinsuyo Empire, the so-called textile mita emerged, in which a large part of the population was compelled to spin and weave, according to Statsny (1987). The author states that, during the Viceroyalty, Andean textiles underwent significant transformations in their production, with Indigenous iconography being replaced by Western motifs. The Spanish colonizers showed great interest in textiles and storage warehouses. In 1545, the obrajes were established—compulsory labor workshops dedicated to large-scale textile production.

Embroidery is known to be an ancient practice whose origins date back to prehistoric times. Archaeological evidence indicates that the use of needle and thread predates the development of agriculture, with records dating to the Upper Paleolithic period, around 15,000 BCE. More recent studies suggest that the oldest known embroidery was identified in present-day South America, on a reed mat from the Chinchorro cemetery in northern Chile, dating between 5,400 and 3,700 years ago, representing one of the earliest textile records in the world. In addition, discoveries in Guitarrero Cave in Peru have revealed textile fragments and cords dating back approximately 12,000 years, indicating even earlier textile practices in the region (Jolie *et al.*, 2011).

The aforementioned plant-fiber mat was embroidered with camelid fiber and human hair, forming geometric patterns and complementing the funerary garments of individuals buried in that cemetery. A plant-fiber needle, 7.5 cm long and 0.2 cm in diameter, was also found at the site. In Latin America and the Caribbean, despite changes in symbols, insignia, and patterns—often reinterpreted through the incorporation of Mesoamerican myths and legends—traces of Indigenous cosmogonies remain alive in embroidery practices. Embroiderers perpetuate this tradition across generations, constituting a legacy of experience, imagination, and technical skill (Queiroz, 2011).

Historically, textiles were also used as a form of tribute payment among peoples such as the Mexica, the Inca, and other pre-Columbian civilizations, while also ensuring a certain degree of economic autonomy for women. The fragility of the materials and the complexity of their production processes generate an intersubjective context in which environmental conditions directly influence the selection of colors and materials. Oral tradition has been the primary means of preserving the symbolic meanings associated with embroidery techniques in Latin America and the Caribbean. It is important to note that during the Spanish colonial period in the sixteenth century, women's clothing underwent transformations, such as the replacement, in some contexts, of the huipil with the blouse. However, these changes did not fundamentally alter embroidery techniques or aesthetics, which continued to function as a form of cultural expression (Villaruel, 2024).

Cobo (1979) reports that during the Inca period, ornaments and adornments - including colors and materials - were strictly regulated. Variations in materials, designs, and chromatic schemes expressed ranks, privileges, and social roles among both the living and the dead. Not only humans, but also idols and huacas - sacred stones and mummified Inca bodies - were carefully adorned with appropriate textiles. Textile iconography communicated distinctions of gender, status categories, and possibly lineage relations. While these visual systems reiterate social hierarchies, they also reveal inclusive dimensions. Women occupied a central position in social formation and mythology and can be identified in embroidery through clothing and gold adornments, which indicate elevated social status.

Currently, it is observed that Indigenous women in Latin America, through the embroidery of their own garments, actively construct identities aligned with their cultural frameworks. This manual practice incorporates multiple ways of conceiving the symbolic environment, mediating natural forces through signs that function not only as protection for the self but also for their surrounding communities (Villarroel, 2024). This worldview of care for oneself and others suggests that existence is embedded in a network of mutual determinations. It is not a fragmented form of scientific knowledge, but rather a process of subjectivation that produces cosmogonies and integrated forms of knowledge.

However, embroidery, as it became increasingly repetitive and associated with obedience, coincided with the institutionalization of processes of racialization and the feminization of labor markets in later centuries within colonial contexts. What was initially a ritual practice involving techniques, beliefs, and protective symbols evolved into economic networks for the commercialization of embroidery in Colonial Latin America, particularly in Mexico and Peru during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Tapia, 2003). This transformation aligns with the hierarchization of cultural practices within a sexist and colonial spatial order, mobilized to transmit moral and Christian values in educational institutions in New Spain.

The governance of subjectivity emerges with the modern project, which establishes a division between public space - associated with the economy - and private space - rendered non-economic. Public authorities increasingly exercised control over life, promoting heterosexual marriage as a mechanism for the racialization of domestic space. By confining women to the private sphere, this domain was colonized through the creation of fixed categories such as woman, Black, Indigenous, man, and white, naturalized and essentialized within a visual-epistemological regime (Blanca, 2011).

The establishment of these classificatory markers institutes biopolitical regimes aimed at preventing undesirable contact and maintaining social “well-being.” Within this framework, the ideal of the heteronormative family is institutionalized, excluding collective or communal arrangements—such as those of Indigenous and Quilombola populations—and delegitimizing forms of relationality involving sexual diversity or racial mixing. Consequently, practices of care are displaced and intensified as instruments of discipline and sanitization. The production of subjectivities—Black, Indigenous, women, men, and white—is thus the outcome of this modern, scientific, and colonial process of racialization and sexual differentiation

4. AESTHETIC, COGNITIVE, AND AFFECTIVE ASPECTS

Embroidery remains a form of artistic expression that, through contemporary practices, reclaims its status as a medium of communication and critical reflection. Artists engaged in this technique explore its expressive and creative potential across diverse contexts. Its

aesthetic, cognitive, and affective dimensions activate multiple systems of meaning within both craft and art, incorporating principles such as precision, rhythm, and expressivity - processes that extend beyond conventional forms of rational and instrumental specialization.

During the military dictatorships in Latin America, embroidery was appropriated as a political practice without losing its aesthetic dimension. In this context, the Chilean arpilleras stand out as a significant form of feminist artistic expression. During the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet (1973–1990), the production and circulation of arpilleras - textile works created by women later known as Las Arpilleras - enabled many of them to sustain their livelihoods while also providing essential economic support for their families. Today, the term arpillera is used both to designate the technique and the artwork itself (Blanca, 2011).

To understand the political and symbolic force of these productions, it is necessary to situate them within the broader historical struggle of Chilean women for legal recognition and civic visibility. Since the nineteenth century, women mobilized around demands for the recognition of their legal personality. In 1915, the *Círculo de Lectura* was founded within a women's social club, fostering spaces for public intellectual engagement. In 1931, the Labor Code granted women the right to receive wages directly, without male mediation, and in 1934 the Civil Code further expanded women's legal capacity by granting parental authority (Blanca, 2011). These legal advances contributed to the consolidation of women's participation in public life, which later informed their political resistance during the dictatorship.

Within the arpilleras movement, motherhood emerges as a central form of feminist resistance, particularly among women whose children were forcibly disappeared under the regime. In this context, motherhood is transformed into narrative, index, and material testimony of the existence of sons and daughters whose absence was politically produced and systematically erased.

The role of grandmothers and mothers in the search for missing children, women, and men during dictatorial regimes across Latin America - such as in Chile, Peru, Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay - invites a broader reflection on the multiple configurations of motherhood. According to Blanca (2011), as early as 1926 Chile already had 51 secondary schools and a significant female teaching workforce accustomed to public expression. This educational expansion developed in parallel with the strengthening of feminist movements, contributing to the formation of female political citizenship. Within this context, motherhood as a form of protest emerged during the dictatorship, challenging the patriarchal conception of motherhood as a merely biological or domestic attribute.

Figure 1 presents one of the anonymous embroideries produced in Chile in the late 1970s. While the arpilleras could have resorted to written slogans, they instead chose to create textile works that articulate an aesthetic of female existence, transforming embroidery into a visual language of testimony, resistance, and collective memory.



Figure 1. Embroidery displayed at the exhibition “Adiós, Pinochet” – Collection of Heidi and Peter Gessler, Switzerland. Source: Diony Sanz, 2025.

According to Albarrán González (2020), the embroidery of the arpilleras carries a significance that extends beyond its symbolic and conceptual power: it functions as a reconstruction of living memory through the stitching together of fragments of clothing belonging to disappeared persons. Many embroidered images were created from remnants of garments belonging to missing daughters and sons, transforming manual labor into an organic form of artistic expression. Historical time is also inscribed in the plasticity of its metonymic language, in which physical fragments become evidence of the “living dead,” since many of the disappeared were never properly buried. Thus, embroidery functions as both an aesthetic and political document.

The choice of embroidery as an artistic form represents both a denunciation of violence and an act of social protest - distinct from the positions adopted by other conservative women’s groups in Chilean society during the 1960s and 1970s. This practice has its roots in a popular tradition in Isla Negra, Chile, where groups of women gathered to embroider textiles as a means of subsistence and collective expression.

4.1 Collective postures in embroidery

In light of the worsening political, economic, and social situation in Brazil - and particularly in Belo Horizonte - there emerged an urgent demand for new forms of political action, especially in contexts marked by democratic setbacks and the erosion of social rights. Within this scenario, the collective “Lines of the Horizon - Embroidering Politics, Embroidering for Justice” was created as a creative and engaged response, linking textile practices to political activism (Batista, 2018).

With a non-partisan and progressive orientation, and aiming to defend democracy through embroidery, this collective from Minas Gerais inspired the formation of several other groups in state capitals across Brazil in subsequent years. This process led to the creation of Novelo das Linhas, a broader network that connects these initiatives. In response to the advance of the political far right in the country, these collectives positioned themselves - and continue to position themselves - as active agents in the defense of democracy and human rights,

occupying streets and public squares and using social media as a platform for mobilization (Batista, 2018).

Focusing on direct engagement with people in public spaces, embroidery collectives seek to express feelings, lived experiences, and political demands through participatory actions such as open workshops and embroidery circles held in squares, streets, and other community spaces. In these gatherings, participants collectively produce textile works that function as vehicles of communication - embroidered pamphlets or ideological banners - constituting aesthetic and political interventions that materialize social demands in visual form. The embroidered pamphlets, for instance, are small textile pieces bearing critical phrases, symbols, or illustrations, operating as alternative communication devices that circulate hand-to-hand or are placed in strategic urban locations. Banners, in turn, are strips of fabric embroidered with impactful words or expressions, representing a condensed form of symbolic manifestation that is both easy to produce and widely disseminated.

This practice reinforces the relational and collaborative dimension of embroidery, mobilizing memories, affects, and collective repertoires that engage the public in a sensitive and simultaneously politically committed way. In this sense, the collectives reaffirm embroidery as a tool for activism, expanding its reach beyond manual production and transforming it into an instrument for occupying public space, enacting social denunciation, and strengthening solidarity networks.

According to Silva (2024), although certain pieces are completed by a single individual, the process of embroidery production generally involves multiple hands, skills, and contributions. Thus, each embroidered piece not only expresses the individuality of its maker, but also carries the memory, identity, and collective experience of the women involved in its creation. Figure 2 presents some of the works produced by the “Linhas do Horizonte” collective.



Figure 2. Embroidered squares by the Linhas do Horizonte collective. Source: Diony Sanz, 2025.

These collectives seek to establish connections with the public, raising awareness of both global causes—such as the defense of Palestinian freedom—and local struggles, such as opposition to the privatization of SABESP in São Paulo. By using embroidery as a central communicative medium, embroiderers enable it to function as a mediator between themselves and the public. As an artistic and artisanal practice imbued with meaning, embroidery produces a “particular visual and sensory activation,” generating new forms of engagement with both the objects and the messages they convey (González-Arango et al., 2022, p. 142).

Members of these collectives are fully aware of the power of embroidery as a mediator of social relations, as it encourages their active participation in public life (Peixoto, 2020). The author notes that embroidery, due to its aesthetic appeal and its association with care and dedication, tends to mitigate aggressive reactions in contexts of ideological disagreement. In this sense, embroidery is not limited to historical testimony; rather, it constitutes a continuous act of presence, re-creation, and transmission of ancestral knowledge and aesthetic practices.

The choices within textile activism—techniques, materials, and aesthetics—are intentional and carry specific meanings for each collective. In this context, Parker (1984), in her seminal work *The Subversive Stitch*, argues that although embroidery has historically been used to reinforce ideals of female docility, it also contains subversive potential. Thus, the relationship between textiles and femininity has long been intertwined within art history and visual culture.

The collective “Bordados pela Paz de México” (Embroideries for Peace in Mexico) is organized as a horizontal structure in which all voices carry equal weight, allowing ideas and decisions to circulate without hierarchical constraints. This group has expanded the practice of embroidery beyond national borders, organizing stitching sessions in various Mexican cities and exhibitions that denounce violence through embroidered scarves—functioning as an active response to the globalization of violence. The names of people murdered in Honduras, as well as those of missing daughters and sons sought by the Mothers and Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina, are embroidered onto these scarves. Established in 2011, the movement has grown significantly, now encompassing thousands of scarves that narrate the stories of those who were “fallen” during the Calderón administration. Through social networks and media circulation, other individuals and collectives with similar perspectives have adopted embroidery as a language of political expression (Montero, 2012).

Beyond denouncement and mobilization, these collectives also seek forms of tribute and gratitude. According to Goes (2022), the collective “Pontos de Luta” (Points of Struggle), based in Belo Horizonte and composed of 64 embroiderers and one embroiderer, produced an embroidered banner in 2022 in honor of the 80th birthday of composer and singer Gilberto Gil. The production process began in February and lasted approximately two and a half months, unfolding as a collaborative practice that highlights the potential of manual work as an expression of affection, resistance, and cultural memory.

The embroidery references Gil’s emblematic composition “A Linha e o Linho” (*The Thread and the Linen*) - dedicated to his wife, Flora Gil - whose verse “It is your life that I want to embroider in mine / As if I were the cloth, and you were the thread” was incorporated into the piece as a central element. The selection of this excerpt underscores not only the poetic dimension of Gil’s work, but also embroidery as a metaphor for affective relationships and the collective construction of identity. This banner constitutes an aesthetically structured artistic object, rich in symbolism and affective resonance.

Figure 3 shows some of the comics embroidered by different artists from the “Pontos de Luta” collective, structuring the object of the tribute.



Figure 3. Parts of the banner made by various artists from the Pontos de Luta Collective. Source: Diony Sanz, 2025.

Embroidery, both in collective works and individual productions, manifests itself as an activity of love and peace. While embroidering, people rediscover the meaning of doing, feeling, and communicating, transforming the act into artistic expression. Embroidery brings people together and unites them around common goals. It is a form of resistance to violence, an expression of critical thinking, and a belief in social transformation.

5. POSSIBILITIES FOR CO-CREATION

It can be observed that co-creation has generally been a guiding principle for the reestablishment of many educational programs in Latin America. Although largely confined to the limited framework of neoliberal multiculturalism, most countries in the region have enshrined the right to intercultural education in their constitutions. Thus, there has been a proliferation of diverse experiences that, with varying degrees of success, seek to promote the interculturalization of curricula. The revitalization of indigenous languages usually plays a central role in these processes, with an emphasis on Bilingual Intercultural Education (BIE). It is essential to emphasize that, in societies whose original languages have been historically subordinated, linguistic revitalization conditions the possibilities for effective recognition of their own and alternative epistemes. Thus, in Latin America and the Caribbean, it can be observed that the decline in the use of indigenous languages has meant the silencing of a great diversity of worldviews, ways of thinking, and unique forms of knowledge production.

Currently, design is perceived as a project-based discipline whose starting point is the solution of specific needs through object proposals that add aesthetic and functional value (Vidal, 2017). This perspective is not dissociated from craft, since both practices intervene in culture, interpreting it and translating its demands into goods that are incorporated into everyday life.

It is understood that there are some similarities and differences between product design and craft. However, the main purpose of their articulation should be the preservation and continuity of craft knowledge, as well as its cultural meanings, through its integration into industrial systems, processes, and objects. This combination, however, raises relevant

questions: are these collaborations socially and economically equitable? The answer is not trivial, as it involves different perspectives — those of the artisan, the designer, and all the actors involved in the co-creation process.

There are multiple positions and analyses regarding the relationship between design and craft. It is possible to say, however, that the results of this synergy are varied. For some designers, such collaborations have proved to be very beneficial; for certain artisans, however, they have meant that their skills have been rendered invisible, dependence on intermediaries, and difficulties in accessing broader markets. Thus, the designer's intervention in the craft sector should prioritize strengthening the essence and identity of craft practice, recognizing it as a fundamental link in the production chain of goods and as part of the conditions necessary for the sustainability of a community or region.

The materials and techniques used in the creation of an object are hallmarks of a territory, a way of thinking, and an era (Vidal, 2017). The ancestral knowledge held by artisans can be transferred through collaborative design practices, enabling the transmission of knowledge and skills to new products. In this sense, collaborative work plays an essential role in mediating between tradition and innovation, enhancing the cultural and social value of craft.

6. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is observed that the articulation between design and craft constitutes a dynamic and multifaceted field in which tensions and potentialities coexist. Although permeated by challenges related to the recognition of traditional knowledge and the equitable distribution of the benefits generated, this relationship also enables cultural valorization, the strengthening of local identities, and the construction of more equitable collaborative practices. Thus, when guided by ethical and dialogical principles and mutual respect, the interaction between designers and artisans can be configured as a powerful pathway toward sustainable and decolonial development, reaffirming craft as a living, creative, and socially relevant practice.

The analysis of embroidery as a symbolic and political language highlights its centrality as a practice of resistance and cultural expression in Latin America, especially among Indigenous peoples. Historically, manual work has been mobilized not only as an aesthetic or utilitarian activity, but also as a form of struggle, memory preservation, and identity affirmation. During the colonial period, many of the signs present in embroidery were interpreted by European colonizers as demonic symbols, revealing more about their own cultural misunderstandings than about the original meanings embedded in these visual systems. Despite this, such signs persisted in textiles, garments, and ornaments, resisting erasure through the silent force of repetition and intergenerational transmission.

In this way, embroidery, as a simultaneously subjective and collective practice, continues to operate as a medium that articulates memory, spirituality, territory, and politics. The persistence of its visual and symbolic languages in clothing and adornments reveals a cultural force that challenges and destabilizes colonial narratives, affirming other ways of existing, knowing, and resisting.

In this sense, embroidery is not limited to historical testimony: it constitutes a continuous act of presence, reinvention, and transmission of ancestral knowledge and aesthetics. The dimension of presence is evidenced in the ethnographic and historical discussions presented

throughout the text, particularly in the ways embroidery operates as embodied practice in everyday life, public interventions, and collective actions, where material making becomes a form of situated existence and political visibility. The dimension of reinvention is demonstrated through the multiple historical and contemporary appropriations of embroidery - ranging from Indigenous textile traditions to its reconfiguration in political collectives and activist practices - showing how techniques, meanings, and visual codes are continuously re-signified in response to shifting social and political contexts. Finally, the dimension of transmission is supported by the intergenerational continuity of textile knowledge, as evidenced in both historical accounts of Indigenous textile systems and contemporary practices in which techniques, symbols, and narratives are preserved, taught, and collectively reactivated as forms of cultural memory and epistemic survival.

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