

Gender and decoloniality: thinking Brazilian design through local women's knowledge and textile practices

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Abstract: Rethinking design is essential to meet Sustainable Development Goals 5 and 12, as the field is also acknowledged for its important social role. In this article, we reflect on gender and decoloniality in Brazilian design to think about the field through women's handmade textile production, mostly present in home environments, aiming for commercial, emotional, and family-related purposes. Despite constant engagement, women's participation in design is rarely recognized, especially when related to textile production typically associated with a "feminine and subjective universe. However, these domestic practices demonstrate creative capacity to meet different needs and materialize solutions outside the formal design network. The concept of decoloniality enables us to discuss the possibility of legitimizing this marginalized knowledge, decentralizing existing theory and practice, opposing objective and neutral hegemonic knowledge, providing opportunities for diversity, and challenging the patriarchal values linked to design. Using a qualitative approach, we discuss selected aspects from the literature and data collected by an exploratory field study in which Brazilian women were interviewed on their practices related to textile production. Thus, we concluded that by considering a feminist-decolonial perspective, it is possible to resignify women and their handmade textile practices and incorporate them into Brazilian design, theory, and practice.

Keywords: Design and gender - Feminism - Decoloniality - Home environment - Handmade textile production - Women designers - Gender equality (Goal 5) - Responsible consumption and production (Goal 12)

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Introduction

Throughout the last few decades, the world has been challenged to face environmental, social, economic, and political problems. Since the 20th century, sustainability – in its multiple pillars – has become one of the main subjects addressed in contemporary societies. Developed by the United Nations (UN), the 2030 Agenda aims to mobilize member countries to act according to 17 Sustainable Development Goals, in which those problems' aspects are encompassed.

According to Fry (2017), design must engage in such a scenario because it “directs the form and content of the environment in which we live. It pervades our lives, constitutes a world within the world, and impacts how we view, understand, use and extend this world” (p. 24). Despite all the recognized social roles, and even though gender inequality is one of the issues for achieving the sustainable and equitable society hoped for in the 2030 Agenda, design still disregards gender and women designers as one of the field’s main subjects. Fortunately, recent studies (e.g., Almeida, 2022; Azambuja & Henriques, 2025; Buckley, 1986, 2020; Otto & Rössler, 2019; Pittaluga, 2025) have been concerned with demonstrating the extensive women’s contributions to design as practitioners and theorists. However, the lack of documentation about women in textile occupations (such as sewing, embroidery, knitting, and crochet), especially as something related to design theory and practice, is a significant motivation for our investigation.

Through our research trajectory, we are involved in understanding design’s social responsibility and the impacts of the contemporary global design and fashion industries on women designers’ work and life trajectories (Azambuja & Henriques, 2025). We are interested in discussing “non-professional” women designers, i.e., those who are not “qualified” to design according to the precepts of an industrial society (Braverman, 1981). Mothers, aunts, and grandmothers that produce textile artifacts in home environments are present in the daily lives of countless people throughout Latin American history. These women create and produce according to their own family needs, attending not only to commercial or income-generating purposes, but also emotional and family-related. However, design neglects these women’s ability to identify specific needs and problems, plan solutions, and, with their own bodies, perform the processes (techniques) necessary to solve them. This devaluation is also a significant aspect that motivates us.

Our investigation is compromised with Sustainable Development Goal 5, on “gender equality,” a fundamental human right and necessary for a prosperous and sustainable world. According to UN data, women spend about three times more hours on unpaid domestic work than men, making investments needed to dismantle the systemic barriers that interfere with the achievement of Goal 5. This research will contribute to the recognition and appreciation of women and their unpaid domestic work – whereupon handmade textile production is included – by discussing design concepts from a feminist-decolonial perspective. Also, we are compromised with Goal 12, “responsible consumption and production,” in which the following purposes are included: (1) reducing waste generation through recycling and reuse, (2) managing textile waste, and (3) raising awareness among people and places so they have sufficient information to develop sustainable lifestyles. Through our field study’s initial results, we found local social projects concerned with such issues.

Thus, in this article, we reflect on the possibility of rethinking design through women’s handmade, domestic, and textile production. To achieve this goal, first, we discuss aspects from the literature regarding design, gender, feminism, and decoloniality concepts to understand women, home environments, and textile production devaluation in the design field. Then, we analyze data collected by a field study in which Brazilian women were interviewed on their practices related to textile production to demonstrate and to legitimize (Curiel, 2020) distinct knowledge related to local female daily life.

Methodological proceedings

Our research is qualitative because it seeks to gain an in-depth reflection on possibilities for a design rooted in women's handmade, domestic, and textile production (Paschoarelli *et al.*, 2015). Using this approach, we addressed our goal through three phases. First, an exploratory literature review, in which we selected aspects related to design, gender, feminism, and decoloniality to reflect on and to comprehend the devaluation of women, textile practices, and home environments in design. Authors, such as Borges (2011), Bürdek (2010), Buckley (1986, 2020), Carvalho (2008), Curiel (2020), Lugones (2020), Oyewùmí (2020), and Pittaluga (2025, 2024), were aligned with our purposes and supported our arguments.

Second, we analyze data collected through a field study where we explored the research universe by interviewing Brazilian women on their handmade textile practices. The interviews were semi-structured (open-ended questions) into four main sections: first, personal data (name, age); second, handmade textile practices (learning experiences); third, creative and design processes (needs, preferences, thoughts); and fourth, image records (sharing of artifacts, materials, ateliers, techniques). Individual reports were prepared for each candidate, and the responses were then analyzed, interpreted, and discussed in conjunction with the insights from our literature review.

Women and their textile practices do not have a specific place, i.e., when it comes to Brazil and Latin America, they are present in countless places and in multiple ways. Thus, we elected candidates using “snowball,” a method used to study local groups that are difficult to access, such as women in their own homes. It is based on initial information that helps locate additional information, and successively. The sampling frame expands with each new piece of information (Vinuto, 2014). Our investigation's starting point was an informal interview with Dr. h.c. Adélia Borges, who organized the “EntreMeadas” exhibition at Bauru/São Paulo (Borges, 2023). The exhibition aimed to present the works of female textile artisans from the São Paulo state, such as the interviewees Eliana and Julia (See *Table 1*). The interviews were conducted in person or online—depending on the candidate's location—between July 2025 and September 2025. Their ages ranged from 27 to 104 years old. Each interview lasted up to two hours and included data collection through audio and image recordings and manual notes.

The project was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the School of Architecture, Arts, Communication, and Design at São Paulo State University (FAAC/UNESP) in April 2025¹. For all interviews, obtaining the candidate's signed agreement through the “Term of Free and Informed Consent/Consent of Data” was essential. To respect participants' health and comfort, the risks and benefits of the study were clearly explained, and participants were given the freedom to decide whether to allow their name and age to be included in the research results.

In the third phase, we discussed our initial results and concluded further steps needed to continue researching design, women, and handmade, domestic, and textile production.

Table 1. Interviews' information (Note. Elaborated by the authors (2025).

Names	Ages	Brazilian City/State	Community	Textile practices	Month year	Application
Aparecida, Débora, Denise	71, 37, 79	Bauru/SP	Crisálidas	Sewing, crochet, knitting, embroidery, upcycling	August 2025	In person
Eliana, Angélica	63, 37	Bauru/SP	-	Frivolité lace	August 2025	In person
Francisca	104	Arealva/SP	-	Turkish lace	September 2025	In person
Julia	32	Bauru/SP	Crisálidas	Sewing, crochet, knitting, embroidery, upcycling	July 2025	Online
Karine	27	Delfim Moreira/MG	Crocheteiras	Crochet	July 2025	Online
Majô	72	Bauru/SP	Crisálidas	Sewing, crochet, knitting, embroidery, upcycling	July 2025	In person

Textile production, design, and domestic system

According to Melaronka (2007), textile and needlework are traditional and necessary occupations carried out—mostly by women—since Antiquity. Among the activities practiced throughout the history of civilizations, textile production has always been one of the most significant, precisely because it subsidizes the materialization of artifacts needed for human survival, such as clothes. Dizdar and Ljustina (2019) describe findings of an archaeological discovery dated to the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC. Small objects—associated with spinning/weaving and sewing, such as iron knives and sewing needles and ceramic spindles – are commonly found in these excavations but are overlooked because they identify the daily work of communities and do not correspond to the more attractive items, such as jewelry. With rare exceptions, textile items were primarily found in the graves of adult women and were likely intended to indicate the importance of textile production in the formation of female identity. This occupation “took place in each household for their own needs, as an important part of the household economy, or as their contribution to the economy of the communities they belonged to” (Dizdar & Ljustina, 2019, p. 70).

Brazil—as Latin America in general—has a wide network of artisanal traditional practices. However, Borges (2011) stated that by adopting the “international style,” Brazilian design focused on developing itself through modern and industrial progress’ precepts:

O desejo deliberado de abolir o objeto feito à mão em prol do feito à máquina obedeceu à visão de que a tradição da manualidade era parte do passado de atraso, subdesenvolvimento e pobreza, que o futuro promissor proporcionado pelas máquinas nos faria superar. Em nome do progresso e da desejada inserção

do Brasil no concerto das nações desenvolvidas, melhor seria sepultar essas práticas empíricas e substituí-las pelo Novo, com N maiúsculo, redenção que seria trazida por um futuro pautado pelos princípios puramente racionais – a Ciência, a Técnica, a Metodologia [The deliberate desire to abolish handmade objects in favor of machine-made ones stemmed from the view that the tradition of manual work was part of a past of backwardness, underdevelopment, and poverty, which the promising future offered by machines would allow us to overcome. In the name of progress and the desired inclusion of Brazil in the concert of developed nations, it would be better to bury these empirical practices and replace them with the New, with a capital N, a redemption that would be brought about by a future guided by purely rational principles—Science, Technology, Methodology] (p. 31).

After the Second World War and with globalization, design was adapted to new market demands, which were stimulated by economic and international competition. According to Bürdek (2010), design:

[...] não poderia mais praticar métodos de configuração subjetivos e emocionais originários da manufatura, enquanto as empresas racionalizavam o projeto, a construção e a produção. Desta forma, era necessário que os designers se esforçassem para integrar métodos científicos nos processos de projeto, de forma a serem aceitos pela indústria como sérios parceiros [...it was no longer possible to practice subjective and emotional design methods originating from manufacturing, while companies were rationalizing design, construction, and production. Therefore, it was necessary for designers to strive to integrate scientific methods into design processes to be accepted by industry as serious partners] (p. 226).

An intense discussion resulted into a “design methodology”, i.e., a communicable and teachable production method. It contributed to the understanding of the logic and systematization of designer’s thinking and, consequently, of product design (Bürdek, 2010). Thus, due to industrial production, design is influenced by the division and qualification of labor. Designers are recognized for their formal education and, therefore, are qualified to practice design professionally. However, creative thinking and design intelligence are not exclusive of people with formal education, but a driving force widespread among populations in general, especially Latin Americans (Braverman, 1981; Borges, 2011). Design is a creative process, and creativity is an inherent potential of human beings, derived from the need to control the world for social organization, and even survival. Therefore, creating is an action integrated into human life, which is developed within a cultural context. The creative capacity to develop and materialize products, tools, and other diverse mechanisms that allow us to fulfill and intensify the human body functions makes humans the only living beings who create their own existence (Bürdek, 2010; Ostrower, 2013). The creativity of women who develop handmade textile artifacts was constantly disregarded by design theory and practice. As Buckley (1986) primarily defended:

Excluir o artesanato da história do design é, na verdade, excluir da história do design muito do que as mulheres projetaram. Para muitas mulheres, os modos artesanais de produção eram os únicos meios de produção disponíveis, porque não tinham acesso nem às fábricas do novo sistema industrial nem ao treinamento oferecido pelas novas escolas de design. De fato, o artesanato permitiu às mulheres uma oportunidade de expressar suas habilidades criativas e artísticas fora da profissão de design dominada pelos homens. Como modo de produção, foi facilmente adaptado ao ambiente doméstico e, portanto, compatível com os papéis femininos tradicionais [To exclude handicrafts from design history is to exclude from its history much of what women have designed. For them, handmade was the only means of production available, because they had no access to either the factories of the new industrial system or the training offered by the new design schools. Indeed, handicrafts allowed women an opportunity to express their creative and artistic abilities outside the male-dominated design profession. As a production mode, it was easily adapted to the domestic environment and therefore compatible with traditional female roles] (p. 07).

Carvalho (2008) reveals how the new home organization established in São Paulo between 1870 – 1920 influenced gender inequalities in Brazilian society. Its essence relies on the way artifacts are arranged and how they create a certain “gravitational field” to be associated with each gender – and its social function – thereby reflecting society. Thus, men’s everyday actions are “centripetal,” in which objects, and consequently, the home, represent the family through the construction of a masculine individuality, the “family man,” structuring the patriarchal system. Feminine actions are “centrifugal,” aiming to integrate the female body into all house spaces. The ornamentation produced by handicrafts (e.g., textiles and paintings) attested to the careful and loving housewife presence, being associated with the creation of an environment pleasing to the (male) eye.

These “applied arts” or “decorative arts” refer to the refinement and good taste derived from European styles. Textile handicrafts, as a strong female, artisanal, and intergenerational tradition, became an accessible option for the “lower” classes to also embrace these French and “bourgeois” aesthetic values. Family happiness – essential for the “growth of the nation” – is maintained through a controlled order provided by home decoration. Rather than establish territoriality, the “centrifugal force” expresses women’s “natural instinct” to please others, to mediate relationships. The social perception of the “woman-ornament” as administrators overlooked the possibility of their own individualization, since their time was structured by the desires and personalities of their relatives, employees, and friends. In the traditional patriarchal family, the father held all the power in the group, demanding that its members renounce any personal projects (Carvalho, 2008). Thus, we defend considering women’s private narratives, especially those who simply produce handmade textile artifacts for themselves, not necessarily aiming to achieve “external” goals. Their individualization processes were not allowed in history, much less in design. Excluded from public spheres, women worked at home, managing employees, supervising tasks, or performing them alongside their daughters or maids. These activities were part of

the domestic environment systematization through rules established by means of bourgeois values, aiming to “domesticate” women for their pre-established social role according to gender, social class, race, and age. In addition to ornamental purposes, artifacts produced by handmade methods were intended to conceal domestic work through camouflage. It included manual labor, which reveals a “degrading nature” of women’s involvement with these tasks, often devalued by the industrial logic of labor qualification. Therefore, the “estética que se imprime à ordem doméstica pressupõe simultaneamente o trabalho e a sua invisibilidade [aesthetic applied to domestic order simultaneously presupposes work and its invisibility]” (Carvalho, 2008: 286). Considering “sex-gender” binary (Butler, 2003) logic, the private spaces as homes should be the antithesis of work, present in public spaces. Domestic work was well done when it remained invisible, giving the space visual comfort for home enjoyment.

Feminist, decoloniality, and gender perspectives in design knowledge

Through this context, Pittaluga (2025) states “gender” as an analysis category, which reflects social and cultural inequalities between women and men. This hierarchical dichotomy is configured in a patriarchal system, in which men are the main power holders:

La sociedad latinoamericana en general y argentina en particular se estructura socialmente bajo una jerarquía de orden patriarcal. A qué nos referimos por patriarcal, pues etimológicamente significa “gobierno de los padres”, pero este término es definido por la teoría feminista como un sistema que consiste básicamente en la subyugación de la mujer frente al hombre [Latin American and Argentine societies are structured socially under a patriarchal hierarchy. Patriarchal, etymologically, means “fathers’ government,” but feminist theory defines this term as a system that basically consists of the subjugation of women to men] (p. 30).

Therefore, gender is a category used to explain this systematic oppression. Butler (2003) emphasizes it as how people’s sexual characteristics are represented unequally, directly dependent on the sociocultural values of a given society and historical moment. Western societies are constituted by the “sex-gender” binary system, and the representation of the subject “woman” has been conditioned by a Western and patriarchal system that establishes a supposedly existing “woman identity.” According to Pelúcio Silva *et al.* (2023), the relationship between “design and gender” is necessary for creative fields like design to prevent hegemony and promote transgressive thinking to effectively serve the diversity of users. To achieve plurality, designers need to demystify the gender concept in projects through transdisciplinarity. Embracing this critical perception and social responsibility, we can promote discussions on hierarchical domination supported by design. Using gender as an analysis category, Almeida (2022) proved through her research the importance of some individual women in the development of Brazilian design and stated:

[...] há uma série de produções e existências que estão fora do quadro do design. São narrativas e representações que se opta por não olhar e não enquadrar. Por essa escolha, determinadas práticas, histórias e pessoas se tornam não documentadas, ou até mesmo apagadas do campo. Esse percurso nos ensinou que o design não pode ser pensado como uma atividade isolada. Portanto, é preciso problematizar as definições, classificações, narrativas e representações mobilizadas pelo design, indagando suas inclusões e exclusões, e compreendendo esses mecanismos de seleção a partir de uma perspectiva social, econômica e política [...there are productions and existences outside the design framework. These are narratives and representations that are chosen not to be looked at. Thus, certain practices, stories, and people become undocumented or even erased from the field. This journey has taught us that design cannot be thought of as an isolated activity. Therefore, it is necessary to problematize the definitions, classifications, narratives, and representations mobilized by design, questioning its inclusions and exclusions, and understanding these selection mechanisms from social, economic, and political perspectives] (p. 372).

Among these productions and existences, we include anonymous women and handmade textile production present in the complex and invisible domestic system explained by Carvalho's (2008) analysis.

Queiroz and Souto (2024) explore how product development is based on the hegemonic norms and consequent values of a particular dominant group—male, white, and European. The creative contextualization of design solutions is generally mediated by historically pre-established norms that define what is considered a “good design,” i.e., modern, transparent, objective, and neutral. Disregarding diversity, “universal design” and its hegemony perpetuate multiple forms of exclusion and oppression, such as racism and sexism. As stated by Fry (2017), design shapes our decisions and actions; thus, neutrality imposes so many filters on data interpretation that it hinders our understanding of world complexities. However, feminist and gender perspectives enable new possibilities over these “traditional values.” As subject and object of studies, women have been transforming “traditional, legitimate, and universal science” centered on white Western men into a more diverse one (Louro, 2003).

The questioning of heteronormative and colonial epistemologies has become a priority to feminists in the 21st century. “New” ways of knowing, histories, and epistemic territories are urgently needed in the face of globally present environmental, political, and social crises. Some authors from the Global South, mainly African and Latin American women, have been studying “decoloniality” in recent decades. The concept refers to the possibilities of counterposing a power standard that, beyond the formal relations of colonialism, also involves how intersubjective relations (social and cultural perceptions) are articulated through domination and subordination. Therefore, “decolonial feminism” seeks to confront epistemologies and theories developed in Global North contexts—including feminism itself—highlighting the patriarchal system and consequent gender inequalities imposed through violence and oppression of colonizing processes (Hollanda, 2020).

According to Lugones (2020), “coloniality” and “modernity” refer to the global expansion of Eurocentric power, which controls all areas of life. This system penetrates the “controle do acesso ao sexo, a autoridade coletiva, o trabalho e a subjetividade/intersubjetividade, e atravessa também a produção de conhecimento a partir do próprio interior dessas relações intersubjetivas [control of access to sex, collective authority, work, and subjectivity/intersubjectivity, and also permeates the knowledge production from within these intersubjective relationships]” (p. 57). It also categorizes the world’s population through “races” (“racialization” phenomenon) to hierarchically organize human relations (superior and inferior races). Therefore, Eurocentric knowledge has been imposed as the only valid rationality, following the premise that there is the one who knows and the one who is known and, thus, can be controlled. Dichotomous categories became the norm: the dominator and the dominated, the superior and the inferior, man and woman, European and indigenous.

Coloniality is also divided into three main axes: “power,” which concerns the control of life areas; “to be,” determining the modern and Western notion of humanity, denying it to certain populations to justify enslavement, land conquest, war, and violence; and “to know,” making world knowledge neutral, universal, and valid only from the Global North’s viewpoint (Curiel, 2020). Thus, Lugones (2020) also characterizes the sex-gender binary system as colonial and modern, introducing the concept of “coloniality of gender.” Like race, gender is a fictional creation of the colonial/modern system for social control. The gender “woman” was essentially theorized in the 20th century by white women from the Global North and has the homogenizing meaning that all women are white, resulting in a clear demonstration of coloniality in feminist theories. Feminism arises from this system based on dichotomous categories and the “Western and patriarchal nuclear family” demonstrated by Carvalho (2008) through the domestic system. “Modern feminism” is widely criticized by decolonial authors, as it is a movement that falsely frees “all” women through the modernization and civilizing processes of colonialism. According to Oyewùmí (2020), modernity is defined by the:

[...] estabelecimento de uma hegemonia cultural euro-estadunidense em todo o mundo. Em nenhuma área essa hegemonia é mais profunda que na produção do conhecimento sobre o comportamento humano, sua história, sociedades e culturas. Como resultado, os interesses, preocupações, predileções, neuroses, preconceitos, instituições sociais e categorias sociais de euro-estadunidenses têm dominado a escrita da história humana [...establishment of a Euro-American cultural hegemony throughout the world. In no area is this hegemony more profound than in the production of knowledge about human behavior, its history, societies, and cultures. As a result, the interests, concerns, predilections, neuroses, prejudices, social institutions, and social categories of Euro-Americans have dominated the writing of human history] (p. 85).

Thus, we discuss how design, as a field of knowledge, is marked by these colonial and modern categories (Pittaluga, 2025). A “feminist epistemology” from the perspective of Global North theories seemed insufficient to understand why design in Latin America has

systematically excluded women and domestic environments from its analysis. Given the complexity of the colonial/modern gender system, Curiel (2020) defends decoloniality as a critical means for understanding the history and politics of our societies by questioning official historiographies. The European and North American knowledge produced is transported to Global South regions without recontextualization. Thus, “feminist and decolonial epistemology” offers new analytical perspectives for a better understanding of the relationships between race, gender, sexuality, class, and geopolitics, aiming at the production-legitimation of marginalized knowledge. This proposal suggests abandoning the colonialities of power, to know and to be, raising questions about the knowledge we produce, how it is produced, and its purpose:

Esse aspecto começa com o reconhecimento dos pontos de vista produzidos a partir das experiências vividas e que contribuem com a proposição de mundos mais justos e humanos, fora da matriz liberal/colonial. [...] Trata-se de identificar conceitos, categorias, teorias, que emergem das experiências subalternizadas, que geralmente são produzidas coletivamente, que têm a possibilidade de generalizar sem universalizar, de explicar realidades diferentes contribuindo com o rompimento da ideia de que esses conhecimentos são locais, individuais e incomunicáveis [This aspect begins with recognizing the viewpoints produced from lived experiences that contribute to proposing more just and humane worlds, outside the liberal/colonial matrix. [...] It is about identifying concepts, categories, and theories that emerge from subjugated experiences, which are generally produced collectively, with the potential to generalize without universalizing, to explain different realities, contributing to rupturing the idea that this knowledge is local, individual, and incommunicable] (Curiel, 2020: 134).

According to Pittaluga (2025, 2024), plurality allows a more inclusive design, which responds to the particularities of each situation, avoiding the perpetuation of inequalities and exclusions. By analyzing the Montserrat typography produced by a woman designer from Argentina, she demonstrates that focusing on “decoloniality and gender” enables an analysis of how Latin American typography can simultaneously encode patriarchal and Eurocentric values and, alternatively, be tools of resistance and cultural affirmation. This approach is not limited to “productos finales, sino que también examina los procesos de creación y los contextos en los que se desarrolla la tipografía. Se considera quién está creando tipografías, qué voces están representadas y cuáles están ausentes en el campo del diseño tipográfico latinoamericano [final products, but also examines the creative processes and contexts in which typography develops. It considers who is creating, whose voices are represented, and which are absent in the Latin American typographic design field]” (Pittaluga, 2025: 51).

Applied to the analysis of women and their handmade textile production in design, this focus reveals marks of the colonial/modern gender system. Yet, it also demonstrates a resistance to these impositions insofar as these handmade practices are manifestations of knowledge, technique, and material culture. Besides, due to an empowering aspect, they enable women to earn income in pursuit of financial independence, the formation of

communities with other women in similar situations, acting in favor of their individual desires and needs, and the development of a vast creative and design capacity for solving situational problems. Such as Montserrat typography analyzed by Pittaluga (2025), the women's domestic and handmade textile practices:

[...] no rechaza por completo las influencias globales, sino que las fusiona con elementos locales, creando un producto híbrido que habita en los intersticios entre lo global y lo local, lo tradicional y lo contemporáneo. Esta hibridez refleja la realidad de muchas sociedades latinoamericanas y [...] opera como un dispositivo de negociación cultural, donde la globalización no se experimenta como una imposición externa, sino como un espacio de reinterpretación y transformación [...] do not reject global influences, but rather fuse them with local elements, creating a hybrid product that inhabits the spaces between the global and the local, the traditional and the contemporary. This hybridity reflects the reality of many Latin American societies and [...] operates as a mechanism for cultural negotiation, where globalization is not experienced as an external imposition but as a space for reinterpretation and transformation] (pp. 57-58).

Field study results: intergeneration, upcycling, and local communities

An exploratory field study was conducted through interviews with women between 24 and 104 years old from different Brazilian cities, such as Bauru and Arealva, located in São Paulo state, and Delfim Moreira, in Minas Gerais state. These women practice – individually and collectively – crochet, embroidery, Frivolité and Turkish laces, sewing, and upcycling (Table 1). In this article, we aim to demonstrate some previous results and analysis by considering local women's narratives to speculate on the possibility of thinking about local Brazilian design through women, handmade textile production, and home environments. We do not intend to delve deeply into the social and cultural characteristics of the cities and regions, or their life contexts and textile practices theories. We emphasize that there are countless of these women and communities throughout Brazil and Latin America, hence the importance of portraying and considering them as part of the design network. Our investigation represents only a small and qualitative sample to stimulate our discussion and future research. Thus, after recording women's testimonies, our analysis resulted in four main points for discussion: (1) intergenerational knowledge; (2) material reuse; (3) individualization processes; and (4) local communities.

a. Intergenerational knowledge

Intergenerational knowledge is passed through generations. The interviewees acquired textile practices knowledge, such as sewing, crocheting, lacemaking, and embroidery, by

listening and watching family women at home. This “domestic knowledge” is not official according to the precepts of “traditional” knowledge production, which decoloniality challenges.

Costura tem muita memória, né? Eu lembro, minha mãe costurava, outra memória é assim, a gente lembra da mãe da gente costurando. Minha mãe fazia a roupa da gente, seis filhos e ela que costurava pra todo mundo [Sewing evokes so many memories, doesn't it? I remember my mother sewing; another memory is like that, we remember our mother sewing. My mother made our clothes, six children, and she sewed for everyone] (Denise)².

Acompanhando pela minha mãe, né? Junto com a minha mãe, ajudava minha mãe fazer as nossas roupas quando nós éramos crianças, não tinha roupa pra comprar. Então, eu tenho fotos, tudo [...], tudo que minha mãe que fez. Então... só de acompanhar vendo, fazendo, né? [...] fica esse histórico na vida da gente, né? [Along with my mother. Together with my mother, I helped her make our clothes when we were children; we didn't have clothes to buy. So, I have photos, everything [...], everything my mother made. So... just by watching and doing it, [...] it becomes a part of our lives]. (Aparecida)

b. Material reuse

Material reuse to produce new consumer goods has been a major focus of sustainability in design. Concepts such as “upcycling” and “circular and creative economy” in the design and fashion industries have gained prominence as a politically correct trend for textile waste management. However, material reuse has been widely applied in the daily lives of these women and their families over decades. Upcycling clothes and textiles happens due to a lack of purchasing power and access to services for marketing new products.

Eu sou neta de italiano e você sabe que os italianos, a gente fala tanto hoje dessa história do reciclado, do recuperado, do... upcycling, a minha mãe falava remendar. E pobre remendava [...]. Então assim, porque esse povo aprendeu a fazer isso, porque lá atrás, eu nasci na roça, imagina! Que você tem essa, hoje, mesmo as pessoas com menos poder aquisitivo têm acesso, a gente não tinha, né? O acesso, não sei se a mãe sua fala, ou a vó fala, você não tinha as coisas que você tem hoje, imagina! Então assim, você reaproveitava, você refazia as coisas, né? Então, eu aprendi isso com a minha mãe a fazer. E isso, então, veio de casa, então eu falo assim “hoje é tão moderno”, “não é moderno [...]”, só que tinha outro jeito, outro nome, as pessoas reaproveitavam porque tinha pouco. [I'm the granddaughter of Italians, and you know that Italians, we talk so much today about recycling, recovering, upcycling, my mother used to say “mending”. And poor people mended [...]. So, because these people learned to do this, because back then, I was born in the countryside, imagine! That you have this today, even people with less purchasing power have access, we didn't have it, right? Access, I don't

know if your mother or grandmother says it, but you didn't have the things you have today, imagine! So, you reused and remade things, right? So, I learned this from my mother. And this, then, came from home, so I say, "Today it's so modern," "It's not modern [...]," but there was another [...] name, people reused because there wasn't too much] (Majô).

Eu não vou ir lá comprar uma outra roupa, eu vou consertar a que eu tenho! E isso é muito mais óbvio, né? Sendo que, às vezes quando a gente vai atender [...] oficinas na faculdade, às vezes é uma coisa tipo "nossa, realmente, eu poderia estar customizando essa peça, poderia estar indo num brechó, eu poderia estar tendo uma opção mais sustentável", sendo que essa opção sustentável dentro das mulheres em vulnerabilidade que a gente atende, era uma opção óbvia, né? [...] já era algo prático pra elas [I'm not going to go buy another outfit, I'm going to fix the one I have! And that's much more obvious, right? Sometimes when we're doing workshops at the university, sometimes it's something like, "Wow, I could be customizing this piece, I could be going to a thrift store, I could be having a more sustainable option," when that sustainable option, for the socially vulnerable women we attend, was an obvious one, right? [...] it was already something practical for them]. (Julia, about the Crisálidas Group's women).

To produce Turkish lace, Francisca reuses pieces of iron from the umbrellas' frames. All she needs is cotton thread and an improvised needle. "*Hoje, das minhas mãos saem toalhas, vestidos, blusas, saias, tudo! Até vestido de noiva de renda turca eu já fiz [Today, towels, dresses, shirts, skirts, everything comes out of my hands! I've even made a Turkish lace wedding dress]*" (Francisca, 2021, as cited in Gabrielli, 2021: 31).

These women and communities' "everyday material reuse" is not a commercial/consumer trend but a practical need that improves creative capacity. It is interesting to note that production occurs using "locally available materials," aligning with Goal 12 of the 2030 Agenda. Also, by solving specific problems in their daily lives, the women also create opportunities for extra income through this "improvised" handicraft, developing means to financial independence historically denied to them.

c. Individualization processes

Contrasting patriarchal system precepts, in which women should serve the collective, women have demonstrated individualization processes. After learning the textile practices alongside family women and understanding their local, social, and cultural contexts and production possibilities (e.g., available materials), the interviewees develop tastes and needs. They design according to their wishes and perception of themselves as an individual, aspects empowered by their communities.

E a gente escolhe, sabe? Não é uma costura obrigatória, mas uma costura gostosa, que é bem o que a gente quer fazer, a gente inventa bolsa, inventa... Aí, eu tô precisando dar uma [...] melhorada nessa minha saia que eu comprei pronta,

mas aí eu quero que ela fique mais bonita, mais alegre. Então, tô aproveitando aqui, que agora eu tô bem, tô ficando bem com a máquina [And we get to choose, you know? It's not obligatory sewing, but enjoyable, which is exactly what we want to do, we invent bags, we invent... So, I need to improve this skirt I bought, but I want it to be prettier, more cheerful. So, I'm taking advantage of this time now, since I'm feeling good, I'm getting comfortable with the sewing machine] (Denise).

Quer dizer, todo mundo gostou, mas o principal é que eu gostei. A gente tem que fazer e tem que gostar, né? Imagina as outras pessoas gostar e a gente não gostar [I mean, everyone liked it, but the main thing is that I liked it. We must do it and we must like it, right? Imagine other people liking it and we not liking it] (Denise).

Eu acho que pra mim o que é mais legal de costurar é a independência, né? Você ser autossuficiente em algumas coisas, sabe? É igual você vai cozinhar, você fica livre de uma série de coisas, porque você sabe, né? Como que você gosta da comida [I think what's best about sewing for me is the independence, you know? Being self-sufficient in some things, you know? It's like when you cook, you're free from a lot of things because you know, right? How you like your food] (Débora).

Eu sei bordado, eu sei crochê, eu sei pintar, eu sei fazer [...] qualquer manualidade [...], mas “ah não, eu não sou criativa, eu não sei fazer outras manualidades”, né? Sendo que muitas vezes o corpo já sabe, porque você tem noção [...]. É que a gente não faz as coisas só com a cabeça, mesmo essas coisas criativas vamos dizer assim, [...], mas você desenha com o corpo, você costura com corpo, você faz todas as manualidades, né? Você cozinha. Você limpa sua casa, você costura. Tudo isso você tá fazendo com o seu corpo, então não tem como não trazer essas reminiscências posturais [...] no seu trabalho. [...] E como que às vezes daí, [...] é sempre num processo de tipo “ah, eu tô fazendo isso aqui, mas já tá feio”, elas nem começaram e já tá feio, né? Então, é entender que elas não vêm a beleza nesse processo, elas conseguem ver, por exemplo, na coleguinha do lado. Mas no processo delas, elas não conseguem ver, porque, para elas, [...] já é algo que [...] tá tão intrínseco dentro dessa rotina que ela é tão desvalorizada, dentro desse serviço doméstico que acaba englobando seja a cozinha, seja casa, seja cuidado com os filhos ou netos [I know embroidery, I know crochet, I know how to paint, I know how to do [...] any kind of craft [...], but “Oh no, I'm not creative, I don't know how to do other crafts.”

Even though many times the body already knows, because you are aware [...]. The thing is, we don't do things just with our heads, even these creative things [...], but you draw with your body, you sew with your body, you do all the crafts. You cook. You clean your house, and you sew. You're doing all of that

with your body, so there's no way to avoid bringing those postural reminiscences [...] into your work. [...] And sometimes, [...] it's always in a process like, "Oh, I'm doing it, but it's already ugly," they haven't even started, and it's already ugly. So, it's about understanding that they don't see beauty in this process; they can see it, for example, in their colleague. But in their process, they can't see it because, for them, sometimes it's something like [...] so intrinsic within this routine that it's so undervalued within this domestic service that encompasses cooking, the house, or taking care of children or grandchildren]. (Julia, about the Crisálidas Group's women).

d. Local communities

To empower women's creative capacity, they teach other people and develop their own communities in home environments, such as Eliana, Angélica, and Francisca. Some interviewees participate in social projects, such as Crisálidas Group (Instagram: @crisalidasbauru) and Crocheteiras Collective (Instagram: @coletivo_crocheteiras). These local communities are supported by the three previous points: intergenerational knowledge acquired by the women, the need to reuse materials, and individualization processes expressed through handmade textile practices.

The Crisálidas Group emerged from the Association of Recyclable Material Collectors of Bauru and Region (ASCAM), which focuses on the reuse and repair of furniture and electronics. Among the materials collected for recycling, there was a large quantity of clothes and pieces of fabric, which were not inserted into the reverse logistics of recycling and the consequent waste management of the city; they were often discarded in the landfill. Driven by the environmental and social problems generated, Julia and Majô developed the Crisálidas Group, aiming to collect clothes and textiles for repairs and to create new objects. Since 2021, they have built a network between local people and other local social projects (such as As Saletes–Instagram: @as.saletes–and Costura E Cria– Instagram: @costuraecria.acao). In the beginning, Julia and Majô also aimed to teach technical aspects of textile production. However, the participants usually know how to sew or to perform other handmade textile practices. What is needed is to empower them to understand their own problem-solving and creative capabilities; beyond commercial interests such as profit, the group aims to help the local community, especially women in social vulnerability. In Delfim Moreira, it was traditionally common to find women chatting and crocheting. In the last twenty years, external agents have emerged proposing opportunities to commercialize these textile artifacts and consequently generate extra income. This exploitative scheme is a reality in numerous Brazilian cities with artisanal traditions. Usually, the women produce objects, the external agents buy them at low prices (around R\$0.50 per piece in Delfim Moreira), and resell them in larger cities at high prices as "luxury handicrafts." With their labor extremely undervalued, some women became demotivated and stopped crocheting. Frustrated with this context and motivated by childhood memories of crochet, Karine created the Crocheteiras Collective in 2024, aiming to revive this local female tradition. Including creating an honest space to commerce (<https://coletivo-crocheteiras>).

catalog.yampi.io/), where women can sell their objects at fair prices and receive the full amount to obtain the much-desired extra income.

In these local communities, women meet to share, learn, cooperate, and be empowered. They also act positively, managing textile waste and raising local awareness regarding the environment and the harmful power relations involved in handmade textile practices. Recovering the crochet tradition in Delfim Moreira, for example, has not been an easy task. But the local women themselves talk amongst themselves to persuade those who still produce for external agents to join the collective:

A maioria é da minha família, mas existem algumas que não são. E aí essas que não são, na verdade, não fui eu que cheguei até elas, foram as outras artesãs que já estavam no coletivo. Que foi por um pedido meu, falei “olha gente, a gente precisa chegar em mais pessoas e eu tô abrindo para vocês fazerem esses convites”. E aí elas foram até essas mulheres e convidaram essas mulheres. Eu tenho aqui, uma informação de que três delas ainda atuavam com esse cara. E que elas foram convencidas por essas artesãs do coletivo de que faria mais sentido fazer parte do coletivo do que trabalhar para esse cara. [...] Por exemplo, minha tia... ou minha avó são pessoas de confiança dessa outra artesã, ao conversar com ela, ela se viu em uma situação de que “bom, alguém que eu confio, que quer meu bem, está me propondo isso, eu acho que, assim como ela vai entrar, caberia também eu arriscar” [Most of them are from my family, but there are some who aren't. And those who aren't, it wasn't me who approached them; it was the other artisans who were already in the collective. It was at my request, I said, “Look, everyone, we need to reach more people, and I'm opening it up for you to make these invitations.” And then they went to these women and invited them. I have information that three of them were still working with this guy. And that they were convinced by these artisans from the collective that it would make more sense to be part of the collective than to work for this guy. [...] For example, my aunt... or my grandmother are people this other artisan trusts; when talking to her, she found herself in a situation where “Well, someone I trust, who wants what's best for me, is proposing this to me; I think that, just as she's going to join, it would also be appropriate for me to take the risk” (Karine).

Awareness-raising exists to empower women, strengthen their textile practices, and educate local people about the environmental impacts of the design and fashion industries. Unfortunately, for both initiatives presented, there is a lack of financial support from local institutions and governments so they can provide proper environments and conditions to maintain the groups. Often, they must financially support themselves independently and depend on donations.

Conclusion

To discuss design from the perspective of women's textile production in marginalized home environments is complex, because design in Brazil and Latin America is a vast scientific, knowledge-based, and project-based field. The results of such reflection require further study and applied research. However, we noticed that the feminist-decolonial perspective and gender as a category of analysis allow us to observe current design concepts critically. They allow methodological interpretations, data analysis, and discussion to occur from a different viewpoint by "detailing" it and allowing other perspectives to emerge. They reflect on other possible approaches, without confining design to a single definition, but rather as a multiple and plural field.

According to Escobar (2016), design needs to be conceived independently of the market demands and reoriented to prioritize creative experimentation with concepts, territories, and materials appropriated by subaltern and local communities aiming to redefine their life projects in harmony with Earth's needs. Thus, the "we all design" idea must be considered to originate proposals for ethnographic, participatory, and collaborative design. "Popular design" and the endogenous practices that sustained the lives of countless Latin American communities were eliminated from the history and formation of the modern-colonial design. Suddenly, "una amplia gama de ricas y vibrantes tradiciones fue reducida a la nada: manifestaciones informes de un hecho presuntamente ineluctable, el 'subdesarrollo' [a wide range of rich and vibrant traditions was reduced to nothing: manifestations were reported through a supposedly inevitable fact, 'underdevelopment']" (Escobar, 2016, p. 29). As defended by decolonial authors, thinking of patriarchy as the main harmful source for the contemporary civilizational model also means combating it, not only by considering the exploitation and liberation of subjugated women, but by addressing the systematic destruction of nature and other ways of living "outside" this system. To act differently, it is needed to transform ontological discussions, detach design from its modernist and unsustainable practices, and recover the notions of community and autonomy. We reflect on the possibility of a Brazilian design based on the local knowledge of women, such as the interviewees from Bauru/SP, Arealva/SP, and Delfim Moreira/MG. If design were conceived from the perspective of women's manual, domestic, and informal textile production, what theories, practices, innovations, solutions, and artifacts might emerge? We believe that by understanding, ethnographically and collaboratively, who these women are, what their environments are, and why design excludes such things, it is possible to consider ways to achieve social and cultural inclusion in local design. Especially in relation to marginalized people, environments, and communities. According to our exploratory field study, local social projects dealing with textile production should be empowered and valued, since they address undervalued and important aspects for rethinking design in its ontological scope: (1) textile practices, intergenerational and ancestral knowledge; (2) women's individualization processes, largely disregarded in the patriarchal system; (3) (re)use of local materials to meet specific needs and/or generate extra income; and (4) the consequent formation of communities that reverberate these previous aspects in collective creation processes, strengthening empowerment networks. In future research, we aim to delve deeper into how to legitimize the knowledge of these interviewees and social pro-

jects through design. We noticed the need to further explore the literature studied, especially regarding the circular economy, circular fashion, the relationship between design and territory, design and memory, design and domesticity, and design, gender, race, and decoloniality. From this context, we felt motivated to contribute to the Brazilian design reorientation, especially considering a feminist-decolonial perspective, to a non-modern and non-colonial field of knowledge. Gender and decoloniality allow us to resignify women and their handmade textile practices, which are mostly found in their own homes and socializing environments, such as local social projects. Thus, it will be possible to incorporate these other ways of thinking and doing into the theory and practice of a pluralistic, local, Brazilian, and Latin American design.

Notes

1. Research's CAAE number: 86726325.3.0000.5663. It must be applied at the following link: <https://plataformabrasil.saude.gov.br/login.jsf>; in “Confirmar Aprovação pelo CAAE ou Parecer”.
2. We presented some candidates' statements highlighted as direct quotations (APA style) and in *Italic*, informing their names in parentheses. The statements were freely translated to English to better understanding, as other in-text citations.

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Resumen: Repensar el diseño es esencial para alcanzar los ODS 5 y 12, ya que este campo también es reconocido por su importante papel social. Reflexionamos sobre el género y la decolonialidad en el diseño brasileño para pensar sobre el campo a través de la producción textil manual femenina, presente en el ámbito doméstico, con fines comerciales, emocionales y familiares. A pesar de constante, la participación de las mujeres en el diseño rara vez se reconoce, especialmente cuando se relaciona con la producción textil, típicamente asociada a un “universo femenino y subjetivo”. Estas prácticas domésticas demuestran la capacidad creativa para satisfacer diferentes necesidades y materializar soluciones fuera del ámbito formal del diseño. La decolonialidad nos permite discutir la posibilidad de legitimar este conocimiento marginado, descentralizar la teoría y la práctica existentes, oponernos al conocimiento hegemónico objetivo y neutral, promover oportunidades para la diversidad y desafiar los valores patriarcales vinculados al diseño. Cualitativamente, analizamos aspectos seleccionados de la literatura y datos de un estudio de campo, en el que se entrevistó a mujeres brasileñas sobre sus prácticas textiles. Así, concluimos que, al considerar una perspectiva feminista-decolonial, es posible resignificar a las mujeres y sus prácticas textiles manuales e incorporarlas al diseño brasileño, teoría y práctica.

Palabras clave: Diseño y género - Feminismo - Decolonialidad - Ámbito doméstico - Producción textil manual - Mujeres diseñadoras - Igualdad de género (Objetivo 5) - Producción y consumo responsables (Objetivo 12)

Resumo: Repensar o design é essencial para alcançar os ODS 5 e 12, uma vez que esse campo também é reconhecido por seu importante papel social. Refletimos sobre gênero e decolonialidade no design brasileiro a partir da produção têxtil manual realizada por mulheres no âmbito doméstico, com finalidades comerciais, emocionais e familiares. Embora constante, a participação feminina no design raramente é reconhecida, especialmente quando ligada à produção têxtil, frequentemente associada a um “universo feminino e subjetivo”. Tais práticas domésticas evidenciam a capacidade criativa de atender a diferentes necessidades e materializar soluções fora do âmbito formal do design. A decolonialidade permite discutir a possibilidade de legitimar esse conhecimento marginalizado, descentralizar a teoria e a prática existentes, confrontar o saber hegemônico objetivo e neutro, promover oportunidades para a diversidade e desafiar os valores patriarcales vinculados ao design. Do ponto de vista qualitativo, analisamos aspectos selecionados da literatura e dados provenientes de um estudo de campo, no qual mulheres brasileiras foram entrevistadas acerca de suas práticas têxteis. Assim, concluímos que, ao considerar

uma perspectiva feminista-decolonial, torna-se possível ressignificar as mulheres e suas práticas têxteis manuais e incorporá-las ao design brasileiro, tanto na teoria quanto na prática.

Palavras-chave: Design e gênero - Feminismo - Decolonialidade - Âmbito doméstico - Produção têxtil manual - Mulheres designers - Igualdade de gênero (ODS 5) - Produção e consumo responsáveis (ODS 12)
