

## Contribution Title Training in Embroidery and Design Tools for Multiplier Agents in the Metropolitan Region of Belo Horizonte

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### Abstract

The challenges of incorporating small scale craftsmanship into the fashion industry persist, requiring a comprehensive and sustainable approach that encompasses products, services, and communication in a coordinated manner. With this objective, this project was conceived aimed at training embroidery production groups in the metropolitan region of Belo Horizonte, with the intention of boosting the local economy and promoting visibility in the market in a socially conscious way. The research focused on the application of design tools in the training of two groups of embroiderers: the Pontos de Luta Group and the Group of Embroiderers of the Parish of the Church of St. John the Evangelist. This approach aimed not only to improve product performance and design, but also to promote teaching-learning within these communities. The results obtained were significant, culminating in the creation of customized ecobags with embroidery, a new fashion product that meets contemporary demands for sustainability and style. These ecobags will not only be sold, but will also be used in events and promotional activities, such as the bazaars of the São João Evangelista Parish Group and the Bordações of the Pontos de Luta Group.

**Keywords:** Design Tools; Multipliers; Embroidery

### Introduction

With the change in fashion standards came the change in the way people shop [1]. The spread of these new fashion standards has changed consumer habits around the world. One of these new fronts of consumption is based on the appreciation of culture and handicrafts. As you go through history, you can see that handicraft activity has always been present in various cultures, after all, manual practices are impregnated with shared knowledge that reflects everyday collective experience. In short, handicrafts are the first way for human beings to dialogue with the world and with others. Handicrafts bring to light experiences, opinions and expressions of a certain group, which occur in a different way from the conception of their products. The signs that emanate from them are in accordance with the life repertoire of each member. Therefore, in order to understand embroidery in contemporary times, it is important to think of it not only as an economic activity, but also as a manifestation of culture, as well as an alternative communication channel [2].

Through an analysis of the development of the handicraft activity and the importance of its characters in the social scenario, it seeks to show aspects of the manual practice of embroidery, and its importance as a mechanism for renewal and reinvention of cultural products. Handicrafts act with relevance as a means of building paths for the popular strata that use embroidery as a search for an identity. Embroidery works as a catalyst and mediator of communication between the embroidery group and society, seeking to understand popular culture as a means of multipliers, in the communication of the formation of individuals inserted in the social fabric [2].

The definition of artisan is given by the knowledge and exercises of manual work, to which the result of this work includes cultural manifestations that contribute to maintain the history of a given place, its members and raw material used, as well as the techniques developed. Design seeks to understand the social, productive and economic relations of manual work, and the transfer of acquired and shared knowledge, as well as interactions with users. In this way, handicrafts act with a strong influence in various fields of activity [3, 4].

The relationship between artisans and designers is an important part of the new configurations of craftsmanship. This working relationship arises in the context of policies to promote handicrafts focused on the revitalization of the handmade object and attempts to adapt it to the market. The importance of the artisan's hands in the production of handicrafts is highlighted. However, to conceptualize the artisanal practice is also to discuss the various spheres of formation of a society. Thus, handicrafts can be defined as something heterogeneous, as a cultural expression of material value and with a strong immaterial load, transiting between tradition and contemporaneity [5]. Representing a new economic force that produces jobs and income, Brazilian handicrafts are a "relevant representation of the historical, cultural and social context of a given place. Currently, the consumption of handicrafts by fashion is being encouraged [6].

The present project aimed to apply and analyze the tools used for training in handmade embroidery, aiming at the valorization of handicrafts with the improvement of fashion design multipliers, applied and used in the metropolitan region of Belo Horizonte. Adding to the handmade product the ability to compete with the industrial market. To this end, it is necessary to invest in the improvement of the craftsman in terms of techniques and production processes. Thus, it is possible to create a network of social support and artisanal development, attributing value to the application of design tools used in the training and multiplication of embroidery groups with a vision focused on fashion, as a vehicle of income, belonging and communication with contemporary society.

However, challenges to incorporating small scale craftsmanship into the fashion industry persist. In this context, it is necessary to rethink solutions that involve "a comprehensive view of the project, involving products, services and communication in a coordinated and sustainable way" [6]. With these changes in mind, this project was designed to help the socially conscious local economy gain more visibility in the market. From this study, it will also be possible to verify if the poles add cultural value to the pieces, based on traditional techniques of artisanal work and insertion of design. It will be important in this project to monitor the fashion research activities developed by the embroiderers and to identify the fashion research tools, which allow the group to monitor changes in consumer behavior each season, as well as product lines and collections. It is important to understand if the strategies used in teaching and learning provide the project participants with the opportunity to understand how the market works and if they can make a difference in the creation of original products with differentiated and competitive designs. Figure 1 shows one of the groups that were studied.



**Figure 1:** Embroidery group of St. John the Evangelist Parish, (2023).

## Theoretical Framework

Design was defined as the creation of something according to a plan. In traditional contexts, that “something” has typically been a product, service, built environment, information system, infrastructure, or technology intended to serve a specific purpose [7]. The goal of social design is to create supportive space for people who work with crafts to be able to manage their surroundings and have creative freedom. The term social design is used as the name of a broad practice that includes the use of human centered creativity as one of its fundamental principles [8].

Social design is different in that it separates the design process from the artifacts it produces and applies it to complex social challenges at the scale of systems [7]. Social design is the creation of new social conditions in cities, corporate cultures, communities, or teams with the intended outcomes of deeper civic or cultural engagement and greater creativity, resilience, equity, social justice, and human health. Along the way to these new social conditions, products and services are often developed, but they are the means to an end, part of a larger system that includes invisible social dynamics [9].

Embroidery groups organize meetings with the aim of training and improving skills in handicrafts, while preserving an ancestral culture that is in danger of disappearing due to the lack of interest of young people in learning the craft. During these meetings, the importance of manual sewing practiced by the artisans is highlighted, as it encompasses the field of design, enhancing the identity of Brazilian fashion through the knowledge shared by each member. Thus, traditional practices and knowledge are transmitted in weekly, fortnightly and monthly meetings, according to the dynamics of each group, through the adoption of various techniques and the introduction of new embroidery and sewing stitches [9].

The vastness and richness of a culture that involves various origins and manifests itself in many forms. Brazilian culture embraces a multitude of manifestations considered both national and heroic. New or old productions ranging from music to literature represent what is most national, considered heroic for challenging the difficulties inherent in producing culture. Thus, it is considered that Brazilian culture has always widely manifested these qualities, and a broad discussion without ideological bias about the phenomenon is necessary. Focusing on and discussing the national culture and its diversity is one of the biggest challenges for those who have representation in the country [10].

The concept of culture currently used presents culture as all learned behavior, everything that is independent of genetic transmission, distancing the cultural from the natural, affirming that man is the only being possessed of culture [10]. When we analyze the term “Culture” as an anthropological concept, it is evident that our cultural heritage has always conditioned us to react disparagingly to the behavior of those who act outside the standards accepted by most communities [11]. The way of seeing the world, the moral and evaluative appreciations, the different social behaviors and even the bodily postures, are examples of the cultural heritage that allows us to identify the individuals of a given culture.

It is understood that the culture of an individual is dependent on the culture of a group or class, and that the culture of a group or class is dependent on the culture of the society to which that group or class belongs. What delineates the marked characteristics in a culture is what differentiates them from others. In traditional societies and smaller communities, they share a culture that is more unified in their traditions, habits, and rites. There are different theories that consider culture as an adaptive system [11].

In this way, culture is also understood as a generator of activities that lead to the enlightenment and education of the mind, related to the intellectual, moral and artistic aspects of human life, thus gaining a relevant space in the development process of advanced economies and deserving the attention of the whole society [10]. Brazil, largely due to its racial diversity, has a rare opportunity to have numerous different cultural manifestations that, in addition to the social aspect, help to move the economy. The recognition that, however different it may be, cultural manifestations are in line with the idea that respect for differences and novelties are fundamental for a country that seeks to maintain its identity. Even the most contestatory or supposedly negative works help to create a positive image of the country as a place that is not afraid to face its ills, and any official attempt to channel or shape culture can only have a negative

effect both socially and economically [4].

Brazilian culture, with its richness and diversity, represents a range of manifestations ranging from music to literature, reflecting the country's multiple origins. These manifestations are valued both for their national character and for their heroic aspect, in the face of the difficulties of cultural production. The discussion about Brazilian culture, therefore, requires a broad approach, free of ideological bias, emphasizing the need to understand and value cultural diversity [4].

Craftsmanship reflects the artisan's way of life and the heritage and skill that is passed down to them through the generations. It originally developed out of a need to fulfill daily needs; however, it has now evolved to appeal to a larger audience, thus becoming an important economic activity for traditionally based artisans [9].

The current modes of consumption create an unsustainable approach to fashion, she feels that fashion needs to play another role that identifies with sustainability concerns and cultivates new aspirations in consumers [12]. In addition to a functional goal, fashion needs to address the individual emotional connection that a consumer may have to the designed product. This connection, according to her, can be built by producing fashion based on values and skills, conscious and sustainable. Figure 2 shows the image of another group of embroiderers who were present in this research.



**Figure 2:** Embroidery group of St. John the Evangelist Parish, (2023).

These projects can thus sustain communities and livelihoods, as well as protect the environment. Innovation in designers' thinking can lead to new fashion trends and perceptions and thus set a course for this industry [9]. The awareness of the artisan about the relevance of the handicraft activity reverberates in the cultural and socioeconomic panorama of the country, and consequently, the best commercialization with a fair price. Encouraging the development of partnerships and improving the management of associations as well as the means of production, and the digital inclusion of artisans is another essential factor to expand the possibilities of insertion in the market and increase visibility, appreciation and credibility [13].

## Methodology

The study shows how it is possible to apply design tools in the training of embroidery production groups in the metropolitan region of Belo Horizonte, aiming at improving the performance and design of products produced by these two groups of embroiderers. The present case study has as research points two groups from the city of Belo Horizonte, Pontos de Luta, which has as its headquarters the house of Lúcia Cordeiro, one of the coordinators of the group of embroiderers located in the Funcionários neighborhood, in the south zone of the city. The other group belongs to the Parish of the Church of St. John the Evangelist, located at Rua do Ouro, 1050 in the Serra neighborhood, also in the southern region of the city, whose name is the Sewing and Embroidery Group of the Church of St. John the Evangelist.

Data collection employed the use of informal interviews with the professionals to verify the interviewees' view on which aspects can be capitalized on for performance improvements in the construction of new products. The target interviewees were the participants of these groups, who were accompanied in person by the researchers. The results of these interventions provided only an indicative measure of the interviewees' vision, since the research was based on focus groups integrated with informal interviews with the groups surveyed, and on the observation of the handmade sewing works developed. In this way, the method can be understood as the road-map, procedures and techniques used to achieve an end or by which a goal is achieved. In this study, the focus will be on the product design method [14]. To conclude the analysis of the research, after the product proposals were finished, they were analyzed to verify if the result was satisfactory, and if the proposed objective was to create a new product that was commercially sustainable. The final analyses were arranged by content of the questions elaborated in the initial objectives of the project.

## Results

After choosing the participating groups, face-to-face meetings were scheduled with the members. After closely monitoring the two groups, it was found that although they have different characteristics and purposes, they have in common the experience of the embroiderers. The methods they use to embroider are already consolidated by this experience. Then, the researchers met to decide which academic knowledge would add value to the work of these groups and concluded that it would not be interesting to propose a new methodology, considering that there would be a natural resistance on the part of the embroiderers to apply the new methods, since their knowledge is already established and is efficient for the completion of their objectives. It was then decided to present to the groups a new fashion product, the ecobags, which in addition to being a trend that is on the rise, are sustainable, versatile and saleable. The idea was presented to the coordinators of the groups, who accepted and liked very much what was proposed. It was agreed with them that the researchers would give two ecobags to each group, and they would be embroidered. Molds were also provided, so that they could make other bags later (Fig.3).



**Figure 3:** Moulds and Ecobags.

Following the two groups, it was found that although they have different characteristics and purposes, they have in common the experience of the embroiderers. The methods they use to embroider are already consolidated by this experience. Figure 4 shows the results of the developed product.

The expectation of this work was to present to the groups of embroiderers a new design tool, which would add value to the work developed by them. The goal was achieved, as a new fashion product (Ecobags) was presented to them and will be useful in the reality of both. The group from the Parish of St. John the Evangelist will sell the Ecobags in its next bazaars and the group Pontos de Luta will use them in its Embroideries.



Figure 4: Moulds and Ecobags.

**Final Thoughts**

During the Case Study in the multiplying poles chosen in the city of Belo Horizonte, the São João Evangelista Sewing and Embroidery Group and the Pontos de Luta Collective, it was realized that embroidery, in addition to being a practice loaded with culture, aesthetic values, emotional and social bonds, works as an escape valve for these groups. Because it is a place where they allow themselves to pass on tacit, explicit or cultural knowledge, using creativity, dedicating time with commitment and love to the meetings proposed in both groups.

With very different characteristics in terms of the target audience and objectives, the embroidery groups surveyed also present distinct designs in their pieces. The Collective Pontos de Luta com as BordAções focuses on the city’s architecture, fauna, flora, socio-cultural agendas, art, defense of democracy, tributes, among other agendas that may arise and does not sell the pieces, in figure 5 we have an example of a tribute made to the singer Gilberto Gil for the passage of his 80th birthday. The São João Evangelista Sewing and Embroidery group already invests in pieces for use in the home, such as: set of towels, dish towels, tablecloths, among other productions, and sells all embroidered pieces. In figure 5 the image illustrates some pieces produced by the latter group for a Christmas bazaar.



Figure 5: Part of the banner in honor of singer Gilberto Gil and pieces produced by Grupo São João Evangelista, (2022).

Although the pieces of the two groups have different designs, it was observed that the two groups use the same stitches in many pieces, the approach of each group showed how singular and unique a piece embroidered many times with the same type of fabric, threads and needles become, thus evidencing the cultural repertoire of each embroiderer and the focus of each group.

It was realized during the period of this project, how important the craft of embroidery is for these groups, which goes far beyond stitches and needles. Collectives are formed by friendships, affection, respect and acceptance that become moments that will be remembered for a lifetime. The fact that the embroiderer feels that she belongs to a group improves her self-esteem, thus making her social life more attractive and intense, since the largest portion of embroidery groups are between 60 and 93 years old, where gradually and naturally the social life becomes more routine after retirement. Embroidery becomes a new path and awakening, in addition to being a hobby for members, since Brazil is becoming more and more a country of the elderly, the importance of disseminating and valuing this art is paramount for the emotional and mental health of the participants.

The results achieved in the case study led us to want to share more of the craft of embroidery for society, especially for the new generation. Both groups were concerned about the lack of interest of young people in learning to embroider and consequently passing on ancestral knowledge, an art loaded with history and culture, to future generations. Surveys such as these promote the dissemination of art, craft and embroidery, and difficulties faced by the group in devaluing handicrafts by a portion of society. Our main role as researchers is to promote the art of embroidery and not let the knowledge of this craft be erased or forgotten from our history, and to help in the appreciation of the society of handmade pieces.

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