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The Contribution of Regional Costume in Fashion

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Abstract

With this communication we intend to discuss the role of traditional costumes in the reinvention of some items in fashion in Portugal, through partnerships based on a co-creative work, transparency and complicity of players - designers, craftsmen, users, developers, among others, set up in Co-design domain.

We found a large source of inspiration in the Craft, which challenged designers to develop innovative projects in the field of fashion, with a view to promoting national cultural identity while satisfying the needs of economic and social sustainability of the regions

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1. Introduction

Modernity in craftwork tradition fosters the development of new products that answer the current fashion trends. By aligning the know-how of handcrafters and the thinking mindset of designers the creation of new products, new production processes and the development of new knowledge becomes possible. While keeping the cultural essence diverse techniques and traditional materials are combined, as an answer to the market needs; it's in this transformation that Design can have a very important role.

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Handicraft is often referred to as a collective memory of an heritage which is revealing in terms of the identity and culture of each population. The first man-made objects are dated from the beginning of mankind history itself and have always evolved with human development. The need to obtain daily use objects led to the production of handicraft goods. In our country handicraft is particularly expressed and relevant in areas such as “weaving, lace and embroidery, ceramics, jewelry, craftwork in leather, glass, metal, wood, stone and finally bone”[1].

The analysis to a population’s tradition through their regional costume allows us to take an interdisciplinary approach in the areas of design and handicraft, leveraging craftwork potential and it’s reinvention to address the modern trends. “design is positioned as a communication interface between an inherited past and a desired future” [2].

To know craftwork it’s not only to work on the past, the traditions and habits, but above all it’s to know our ancestral values and it’s techniques to create a creativity space, innovation, design and tradition that associates technical and cultural dimensions in building a national identity.

The concept of Co-design appears in this context as a strategy that suggests the inclusion of the user as an active participant from the beginning of the Project collaborating with all the Professional team involved in the process. It is, in fact, a partnership of co-creation and production between handcrafters and designers, that has innovation plus regional economic and social sustainability as key objectives.

This article has the objective to understand the way in which tradition in regional costumes has contributed to establishing fashion products in Portugal, through partnerships based on a co-creation work, transparency and complicity of all interveners – designers, handcrafters, users, promoters, among others. The intention was to find projects which took approaches that uncover the challenges that were thrown to these different actors to develop innovative products that promote the cultural identity of the regions.

2. Fashion, Tradition, Craftwork

Since very early times the need to dress Mankind, alongside with feeding and the search or construction of shelters, has been a priority need. From these physical needs, fashion evolves, visible not only in clothing and accessories, but also in behaviors, attitudes and thoughts, which reflect the values of a society, group or class [3]. Generally this is linked to the social status of each individual, regarding their differentiation or aggregation and belonging to a social group.

It is in this way that we find in regional costume the expression of different mentalities in each one of these groups, which summarize and mirror a culture. The permanence of costume from generation to generation, despite some degree of slow evolution, demonstrated its collective acceptance. Contrary to today’s trend of costume extinction as a consequence of the consumption society’s development, design develops appropriate products and roots them in a dynamic generated by the so called fashion phenomenon. However, the latter is becoming more and more temporary, changeable with a very fast trajectory in our Era of mass consumption.

In Portugal, as in other western countries, the different social classes have, from the eight hundreds, distinguished themselves by their economic power, profession and by their degree of culture and values. The haute bourgeoisie due to its political and economic power has imposed a fashion culture, based on their own needs and aesthetical values, which inspire the working class costume, independently of its adequacy to the different professions. In this sense, historiography of fashion has been centered on the study of clothing and accessories of dominant classes, expressing their urban ritual, as opposed to the popular costume that fits in many aspects of rural life.

Nevertheless, popular costume, associated with working classes, reflects as well, a culture linked to a space, a mentality and certain traditions, with a strong influence in fashion.

As Mattoso [4] underlines, Portugal is a country that derives not from a ethnical origin, but from an administrative structure, uniting regions with different cultural specificities and without an unique identity. It is in this sense that regional costumes gain importance: by the identity and relationship that they confer each one of the distinct regions and by they role in building a national conscience. As stated by Silva and Jorge, about the cultural heterogeneity of the Portuguese territory “the national culture is rejected in plural, it is a mosaic of regional cultures of classes” [5].

In this context, regional costumes evoke a memory marked by the identity of the garments in the context of adaptation to different social and cultural needs. As part of traditional Portuguese culture, can be an indispensable response to Design, Stylish, an investigative perspective that runs through fields as the traditional techniques of textiles, jewelery and other accessories. The craft knowledge are revealed in the way contemporary resisted the hegemonic know-how and therefore should be designed as alternative modernities [6].

This costumes, whether in clothing or accessories, are the result of craft techniques derived from a secular tacit knowledge, identity of the Portuguese people, which extend beyond the time when the industry replaces manufacture. The concept of craft or "ancient techniques" [7] appears for the 1st time in the Italian Renaissance, to distinguish the manual work created and produced by an artisan who uses natural raw materials, those who design artefacts that would be produced by others.

Despite the craft activities are losing importance in the entire country, careful design requests for a changing industry, promotes social, cultural and humane dimension of national traditions, contributing to the process of design and effective operationalization of the concept of cultural sustainability, developing an innovative project, in response to personal needs, industrial and environmental aspects of society.

Thus, the design of a cultural and operational dimension "can accept the great challenges and intervene on strategies that determine the social and environmental quality of the changing world in which we live today. [8]

3. Design and Artisans

In recent decades designers have been assuming an increasingly close relationship with the target audience, particularly within the manufacturing companies for defining its product according to the needs expressed by its future users. But if the user-centered design is a specific phenomenon developed in the US since the 1970s, participatory approach has established itself in Northern Europe, and, currently, this is the interconnection of this two conceptions [9].

This association derive the concepts either of co-creation, which refers to an act of collective creativity, or co-design, which refers, in a broader sense, the joint generation of ideas and collaborative participation in the development of the design process [10].

"Co-Design is a general term that involves the Participatory Design, the Metadesign, Social Design and other design approaches that encourage participation. (...) The term "Co-Design" is used to refer to "do design with (others)»" [11].

Given the nature of the interventions and the participatory nature of the artisans in the creation and production of artefacts, it seemed important to put this research in a broad scope of design, understood as a "territory disciplinary goal that relates various disciplines that contemporary had made closer" [12].

We tried to approach the design centered on users, with the success criterion customer satisfaction[13], and the socio-cultural innovation [14], to cover not only concerns about the social context and sustainability, but also the participatory process in each intervention. We are in the domain of the concept of Co-Design, which includes users and others involved in the creative process, as active participants in the design process.

This approach also refers to the concept of co-creation associated with the act of collective creativity, a system that brings together the know-how (artisans) with the ability to think and design (designers), where each participant has an understanding and upcoming reality specific skills in which it operates, which arises from their training and / or career paths.

Trying to understand the intense dialogue between individuals who have identities and distinct knowledge, our study selected case studies which are based in identification of partnerships between designers and craftsmen who value relationships between border cultures "Today all cultures are border. All the arts are developed in relation to other arts: crafts migrate from the countryside to the city, films, videos and songs that narrate events of a people is exchanged with other "[15].

4. Successful partnerships in Portugal

The cases presented below refer to the recognition of innovative and sustainable business, created from the reconfiguration of the technical and craft materials and evoking images of traditional values and popular culture that are associated with a process of complicity and transparency between designers and craftsmen.

The “Capucha” is a traditional Portuguese coat, worn by men and women, characteristic of inland mountainous areas. It's kind of cloak that reaches to the knees and is based on the head with a curved cut in the forehead area, reinforced for the best fit, leaving free the body for the implementation of rural jobs. These covers were made of woolen cloth, a traditional Portuguese fabric made from 100% wool and beaten in water so as to make it thick and waterproof, suitable for the harsh climate of these regions.

This piece was taken as a result of a Co-design work, when the cooperative of the “Capuchinhas”, dedicated to the traditional art of weaving on the loom line and wool, found that the sustainability of the company went through collaboration with designers, production of parts appropriate to the current daily life.

This was the case of Vânia Campos designer in a direct exchange of knowledge, know-how associated with the technical aspects of traditional raw materials and the ability to think associated with projective methodologies, analysis and synthesis of forming ideas and forms, initiates a partnership with the cooperative, a dialogue between design and crafts. Thus, the interpretation of this piece, the “Capucha”, continued its collaboration with the artisans, an approach to contemporary design, reinforcing the techniques and traditional materials, the interpretation of traditional culture and the economic viability of the appreciation of craft knowledge



Fig.1 The “Capucha”

The designer Filipe Faísca also develops a collection of pret à porter, Namban collection, presented at Moda Lisboa in 2010, with handmade textiles made by these artisans.

The brand presented “Toino Abel”, created in 2010 and developed in 2013, is anchored not only in the potential for exploitation of raw materials and ancient techniques, but also in connection to a cultural heritage, historical and symbolic. Born in the small Portuguese village of Castanheira, where historically focuses “esteiraria” activity in reed, in Portugal, this company, following the traditional processes of manufacture, produce bags made of reed collected along the Tagus river, under the eyes of designer Nuno Henriques, who reinterpreted the tradition and transposed to modernity. This is a sophisticated fashion accessory designed for the twenty-first century, with sizes and with different patterns: striped, chess or flowers.



Fig.2 Collection of Toino Abel

The expansion and the company's success is due to the innovation and entrepreneurship of this designer, recognizing the need for survival of artisans and realizing the need for rehabilitation of tradition and memory of craft baskets made of reed on a loom - the basket snack for school, picnic basket or basket for market purchases - sought to identify market niches and, in partnership with the artisans, undertook a sustainable business in the field of fashion accessories. This company has taken abroad culture and social traditions of a place, translated into bags that are sold in stores in cities such as Barcelona, Berlin and London, also relying on the online sales success in countries as far away as New Zealand and Australia.

The Portuguese jewelry became wider in the reign of Queen Mary I, 18th century., Due to the arrival in Lisbon of large amounts of gold and precious stones from Brazil.

It was at this time that some of the models that still mark the Portuguese identity, such as the Heart of Jesus, created by jewelers of the queen - the Rocaille style-, the Lacas, the rings, the earrings to the Queen, who later in the 19th century, gave rise to the King Earrings.



Fig.3 Portuguese jewelry - Heart of Jesus, Collection

These jewelry inspired all social classes, becoming a fixture of daily life, especially the northern women who use them as a complement costume. This reality, coupled with the abundance of gold and precious stones, took the masters of jewelry to revolutionize the concept and the techniques used in the late jewelry manufacture of the 2nd half of 18th century and early 19th century, placing Portugal at the forefront of European production jewelry. It was at this time that the watermark is said in Portugal by Minho jewelry, stylistically Baroque or Rocaille. It is a decorative work made of very thin wires in gold or silver, as made to compose a drawing.

Currently there has been a resurgence of this work that has gone through a period of neglect, and reappear in the traditional jewelers in the workshops of young designers with more stylized image produced with new materials, such as non-precious metals, polymers, composites, among others, which gives them the character of contemporary prop. This applies to the artistic creations of Sara Janela designer who reinterprets the "Contas de Viana" to create

the “Contas de Amor”, small hollow spheres executed in gold, decorated with fine filigree wire. The reasons are inspired by embroidered regional costumes and Viana do Castelo scarves. Traditionally Viana accounts were collected by Minho girls to make necklaces that were part of their dowry.



Fig 4 Toino Abel Collection

The concept of co-design within the jewelry is revealed for example in the artwork of Joana Caldeira designer who, in partnership with the workshops of Póvoa do Varzim, creates accessories filigree, enjoying the great technical ability of these craftsmen to this delicate manual work. The result of this co-creation assumes a relation of the traditional practice of the goldsmiths of Póvoa do Varzim with the current design, the recognition of the cultural value of filigree, revitalizing the profession and contributing to the social and economic rehabilitation of the region.

The revitalization of this sector also echoed in the work of designer Liliana Guerreiro, a joint work with renowned filigree artisans, creates a recognized jewelry collection also internationally to be exposed in MoMA.

The brand “Namorar Portugal” created the concept from the theme of Vila Verde lover's scarfs transposing the fashion accessories in silver. This company develops its work with teams of designers and craftsmen in a symbiosis between modernity and tradition.

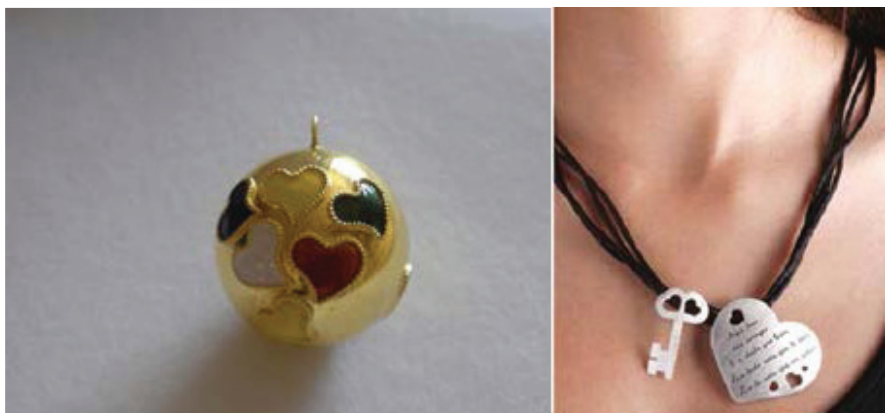


Fig. 5 Namorar Portugal

The lacework “Bilros de Peniche” is an art older than four centuries of existence that arrived in Portugal through trade with Flanders, becoming an ex-libris of Portuguese crafts. This art of weaving, once practiced by women of fishermen, has become a symbol of identity in the fishing village of Peniche. Creativity and innovation, culture and tradition are the basis for a jewelry collection that associates the work with diamonds, precious stones and filigree gold or bobbin lace. This partnership promoted by Peniche City Council joined the expertise of jewelers and lace makers of Peniche, a design work unique pieces where shall revise the Portuguese traditional ancestral techniques.



Fig 6 - The lacework “Bilros de Peniche”

“The focus on product innovation and attracting new niche markets is an important part of all the strategy around sustainability of Peniche bobbin-lace” [16].

This lace work, a constant approximation to current fashion trends, it is also applied to clothing or as textiles for making garments or as applications on clothes or even shoes.

5. Conclusion

The investigative journey undertaken this work largely exceeded the initial goals outlined by placing highlighted a significant number of projects arising from either the survival needs of the craftsmen and sustainability of regions or demand the professional development of young designers , along with the desire to perpetuate the values and products of an ancient tradition

We note that these projects, based on the identification of market needs, materialized in a Co-design attitude, creating innovative products in fashion, based on references of traditional Portuguese culture. However, there were numerous cases, which, while not constituting a work in Co-design, offer also important situations, enhancer realities based on the development of fashion products from traditional culture.

We highlight:

The experimental cases, set to academic situations, with the promotion of workshops, international conferences, among others, for the purpose of dissemination and promotion of craft techniques; cases where the designers design products and hire craftsmen to produce them, without integrating the collaborative process of identification of needs, to find solutions and co - creation of the product; Finally, small and medium enterprises that have realized the importance of this symbolism in regional costumes can have the success of its fashion products, hire designers to recreate this universe, adapting it to the materials, equipment and technologies to more innovative. (Alma Lusa , Alma e Coração, Rutz, Portugal Joalharia).

Of the examples presented we can see that the materials, techniques, methods and knowledge of Portuguese cultural and technological specificities, used collaboratively, seeking sustainable solutions. The path taken by this craft in traditional costumes faces the challenge of renewing and reinventing itself. Projects submitted testify to a co-creative action in the design of identity objects of culture and contemporary society, materialized in innovative articles of clothing, artistic jewelry and accessories, based on the Co-design process.

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