



DECOLONIAL PERSPECTIVES FOR A PLURIVERSAL DESIGN

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to reflect on the different nuances that Brazilian design can take in the face of decolonial narratives, which break with universal ideals for others based on the pluriverse (ESCOBAR 2016). We seek to understand the hegemonic position of the discipline to question its dominant place in the light of theories that elucidate the coloniality of power (QUIJANO, 2000). Through two lines of thought – border thought, which theorizes from the epistemic frontiers, and intersectional thought, which looks to the voids in the intersection of categories of race, gender, class and work – we raise theoretical and practical reflections that guide practitioners towards an attitude aligned with decolonial thought. The article is divided into three parts: (1) the relations between modernity and coloniality applied to the Brazilian context; (2) Brazilian design analyzed through border and intersectional thoughts; and (3) theoretical and practical reflections for the construction of a decolonial perspective for a pluriversal design. Based on these points, we address alternative paths to Brazilian design, which is based on emancipatory practices that guide the autonomy and freedom of subjectivities.

Keywords: Brazilian design, decolonial perspective, coloniality.

RESUMO

Este artigo tem como objetivo refletir sobre as diferentes nuances que o design brasileiro pode tomar diante de narrativas decoloniais, que rompem com ideais universais por outros baseados no pluriverso (ESCOBAR 2016). Buscamos aqui compreender o posicionamento hegemônico do campo a fim de questionar seu lugar dominante à luz de teorias que elucidam a colonialidade do poder (QUIJANO, 2000). Por meio de duas abordagens de pensamento – o fronteiro, que teoriza a partir das fronteiras epistêmicas, e outro interseccional, que olha a partir dos vazios nos encontros de categorias de raça, gênero, classe e trabalho – levantamos reflexões teóricas e práticas que orientam praticantes para uma atitude alinhada ao pensamento decolonial. O artigo divide-se em três partes: (1) as relações entre modernidade e colonialidade aplicadas ao contexto brasileiro; (2) o design brasileiro sob as lentes de pensamentos interseccional e fronteiro; e (3) reflexões teóricas e práticas para a construção de uma perspectiva decolonial para um design pluriversal. Com base nestes pontos, endereçamos caminhos alternativos ao design brasileiro, que tem como base práticas emancipatórias que orientam para a autonomia e a liberdade das subjetividades.

Palavras-chave: Design brasileiro, perspectiva decolonial, colonialidade.



INTRODUCTION

Between the 1950s and 1960s, design was established in Brazil as a profession that reflected modernity, having as its driving force the ideals of rationality, functionality and industrial advancement. Influenced by the post-war context, the field reflected in its bases of thought the modernization strategy carried out by international development agencies such as the IMF, the World Bank and the United Nations (ESCOBAR, 2016). The strategy promoted social well-being based on Western scientific and technocratic ideals, in which progress took place through a nation's productivity and accumulation of wealth (ACOSTA, 2016).

For the “first world” countries – according to the order of power in force at the time –, it was a moment of reconstruction and advance towards progress, a reassertion of Western power in a scenario of cold war and arms dispute. On the other side, below the Equator line, “third world” countries, seen through Western lenses, were dealing with humanitarian crises and the absence of industrialization. Lacking civilizing measures that gave up a primitive past to enter the development project. Arturo Escobar (1995, p. 46), when investigating the bases that shaped the concept of the “third world”, mentions the ambitious project of the imperialist nations in providing the necessary conditions to replicate the aspects that characterized “advanced societies at that time: high rates of industrialization and urbanization, the technification of agriculture, the rapid growth of material production and standard of living, and the adoption of modern education and its cultural values”.

For the author (Idem), the modernization project represented a new form of colonization for countries subjected to European and US domination in view of its authoritarian and exploitative character. As will be discussed below, the relations between colonization and the modernization project are, as the authors

Walter Mignolo and Madina Tlostanova (2016) point out, two sides of the same coin, acting as a vector that points its strength to a single project: permanence of Western thought as the predominant in the world.

Although Brazil already had its own traditions with the modern, recognized mainly in the fields of architecture and urbanism (CAVALCANTI, 2001), design was the driving force of this heritage through the aspect of mass industrial production for democratic access to material goods and services (MAGALHÃES, 1998). This article aims to deepen the notion of design coloniality in the Brazilian context, based on the legacies left by institutionalized design on modern and, later, neoliberal bases. As will be seen below, coloniality perpetuated “the underlying logic of the foundation and unfolding of Western civilization from the Renaissance until today” (MIGNOLO, 2017, p. 2), enabling its maintenance in global hegemony. The aim here is to locate the place of design – as a field of study and design action – in Eurocentric discourses (QUIJANO, 2000) and to understand its dominant character in Brazil.

This article aims to outline theoretical and practical reflections that help us to build a decolonial perspective for this field in the country. Therefore, within the broad studies and concepts of decoloniality constructed to form a new epistemology, we resort to two approaches. Intersectional thought, discussed from gender studies produced by feminist researchers (LUGONES, 2008; GONZALEZ 2019; FEDERICI, 2014). And border thought, elaborated by Walter Mignolo (2011) and inspired by postcolonial theories and critical border thinkers, in addition to the reflections provoked by the Modernity/Coloniality (M/C) research network (M/C) (BALLESTRIN, 2013). Through these, the notion of coloniality of design in Brazil will be analyzed and where we structure our reflections to question future courses of action.

¹ The Subaltern Studies group is composed of authors from countries of recent colonization who focused on post-imperial and post-colonial studies between the late 1970s and during the 1980s. See more in: Ballestrin, 2013.

We will try to understand the different characteristics that Brazilian design can take on decolonial narratives. The article is divided into three parts: (1) *the relations between modernity and coloniality applied to the Brazilian context*, presenting the origin of these debates, their theoretical intentions and how their development can be extended to our country; (2) *Brazilian design analyzed through border and intersectional thoughts*, to understand the different angles that design reflects from a decolonial perspective; and (3) *theoretical and practical reflections for the construction of a decolonial perspective in Brazilian design*, bringing different aspects that are revisited here in the light of design practice. Through these points, we seek to question the coloniality of Brazilian design and its performance challenges based on a decolonial perspective.

THE RELATIONS BETWEEN MODERNITY AND COLONIALITY APPLIED TO THE BRAZILIAN CONTEXT

Decolonial studies come from an effort by Latin American intellectuals to build an epistemology from the Global South, forming the Modernity/Coloniality (M/C) group in the late 1990s. The proposal of the M/C was to radicalize the approach constructed by the Latin American Subaltern Studies group¹, disaggregated in 1998. Disagreements among its members arose because the Subaltern Studies group used an epistemology based on the Global North, due to influences of the South Asian Subaltern school, from which the M/C group was inspired to form (BALLESTRIN, 2013). As former member Santiago Castro-Gómez (ALACIP, 2020) recounts, the network of researchers from various several Latin American

countries dismembered in 2006 due to political and conceptual disagreements². Among these, members' support for leftist governments that rose to power, seen by other members as an adaptation to the colonial and capitalist world. Other conceptual and theoretical reasons also caused divisions in the group, such as the lack of agreement on the totalizing revulsion towards modernity and its links with capitalism and coloniality. In addition to disagreements with the decolonial perspective just because of its geopolitical bias, losing meaning in matters of philosophy and subjectivity.

While active, the core of the debate of the M/C group was in the expansion of discourses against the current of modernity to the rest of the world. Rather than focusing only on recognizing the speech of the oppressed. Over its nearly thirty years of existence, the M/C group has been composed of intellectuals³ who focused on a research program that sought to think “*contrary to the great modernist narratives – Christianity, liberalism and Marxism –, placing its questioning at the very edges of thought and research systems for the possibility of non-Eurocentric ways of thinking*” (ESCOBAR, 2003, p. 53). In this way, its “*main guiding force (...) is a continued reflection on the Latin American cultural and political reality, including the subordinate knowledge of exploited and oppressed groups*” (Idem), contributing to the construction of an epistemology based in the Latin American experiences.

One of the pioneers is Aníbal Quijano (2000), a Peruvian sociologist, who points out that, although colonization has ended, its power relations are still alive through coloniality. For the author (idem), the continuity of these power relations encompasses dimensions of economy, nature and natural resources, gender and sexuality, subjectivity and knowledge (Idem; MIGNOLO, 2000, BALLESTRIN, 2013).

² See Santiago Castro Gómez's interview at the online event Primer Encuentro del Ciclo Virtual Cartografías del Pensamiento Político. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RhRX369QNVY>. Accessed on: June 16, 2021.

³ Among the authors involved are Walter D. Mignolo, Arturo Escobar, Aníbal Quijano, María Lugones, Gloria Anzaldúa, Nelson Maldonado Torres, Ramón Grosfoguel, Catherine Walsh and other social and political scientists who stand out for highlighting the historical erasure of non-Western societies – including their knowledge, subjectivities, traditions and trajectories – by Western hegemony. See more in: Ballestrin, 2013.

Quijano's work, in particular, points out how such power relations were strengthened in race and social identity classification processes and their consequences in labor relations. Such aspects can be seen in the hegemony of the white race as a colonizer in relation to the colonized races treated as inferior. To structure this thought, Quijano (Ibid., p. 120) states that:

The coloniality of labor control determined the geographic distribution of each one of the integrated forms of labor control in global capitalism. In other words, it determined the social geography of capitalism: capital, as a social formation for control of wage labor, was the axis around which all remaining forms of labor control, resources, and products were articulated. This made it dominant over all of them and gave a capitalist character to the whole of such a structure of labor control. But, at the same time, capital's specific social configuration was geographically and socially concentrated in Europe and, above all, among Europeans in the world of capitalism. And to this extent and in this way, Europe and the European constituted themselves as the center of the capitalist world economy.

While Quijano focused on the classification of race, the division of labor and the centrality of capitalism in Europe, other authors in the group later built a series of reflections on the coloniality of power in other dimensions. Among them, Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2007) analyzes the coloniality of power from the subjective dimension of being. Thus, identifying how modern discourses perpetuate a logic of life that rationalizes knowledge, feelings, culture, homogenizing the European way of being and thinking as universal.

Darcy Ribeiro (2006) reflects on the exploration and

catechization of indigenous peoples in the colonial period, bringing these aspects to the Brazilian context. According to Ribeiro (Ibid., p. 49), these were seen by the colonizers as *"human cattle, whose nature, closer to animals than to people, only recommended them to slavery"*. Ribeiro helps us understand how the imposition of a Eurocentric perspective and the bias of appropriation and violence crossed the different dimensions present in colonial Brazil: of being, of race, of work, and of gender. Luciana Ballestrin (2013, p. 13), when surveying the trajectory of the M/C group, mentions that it is in the *"identification of peoples according to their lack or excesses"* that the colonial difference is established, *"produced and reproduced by the coloniality of the power"*. It is in the absence of a vision that integrates these categories that certain social groups are more oppressed and exploited in power relations.

Maria Lugones (2008), also a member of the M/C group, also explores categorization, carefully analyzing the dimension of gender and sexuality. She starts from the coloniality of power elaborated by Quijano (2000) to indicate that it takes more than an understanding of sex, its resources and products to understand the dynamics that involve gender. Lugones sheds light on the idea that the *"reproductive function"* is attributed as a central characteristic of women, a biological truth imposed by western white supremacy. For her, the logic of separation into categories distorts what is found at the intersection, preventing the encounters between gender, race, class and work from being fully seen, and allowing situations such as violence against women of color⁴ to remain covered up. Returning to Ribeiro (2006)'s work, this aspect is evident when he locates the *"indigenous women"* as those who generate, from their womb, the vast mestizo offspring in Brazil, revealing the imposition of their historical reproductive role in the social division and work.

⁴ Maria Lugones (2008) uses the term women of color, originated in the United States by women victims of racial domination, as a coalition term against multiple oppressions. See more in: Lugones, 2008, p. 75 (first footnote).

Another author who helps to understand gender coloniality in Brazil is Lélia Gonzalez, researcher and activist of the Unified Black Movement in the 1980s. In her text “Racism and Sexism in Brazilian Culture”, Gonzalez (2019) places symbolic violence on Brazilian black women, which has occurred since the period of slavery, in which her classifications were reduced to the figure of the daily maid and to the “*mulatto goddess of my samba*”, exalted through her hypersexualization during carnival. The author (Ibid., p. 283) identifies this place of oblivion, marked by Lugones, in which “*precisely that anonymous black woman, inhabitant of the periphery, in the ups and downs of life, who suffers most tragically from the effects of the terrible white guilt. Exactly because it is she who survives through the provision of services, supporting the family practically alone.*” Gonzalez, looking at the intersection, strains the imposed classifications in search of a true vision of the experience of black women in Brazil based on systematic and generational oppression.

Based on this logic of domination, intrinsic to the coloniality of power, and its relationship with those dominated, we look at modernity as a project that articulates language, discourses and history in favor of a single way of living. The oppression and extermination of inferior groups (blacks, indigenous people, women, LGBTQIA+ people, and others) played a central role in the construction of modernity. Although many intellectuals have, to a certain extent, sought ways to negotiate other forms of action within the colonialist project, having sought alternative forms for the project⁵.

As indicated by Cardoso (2005), a myth was built that design was founded in Brazil between the

inauguration of the Institute of Contemporary Art – IAC (1951) and the Superior School of Industrial Design – ESDI (1963), while in fact, in that period, what happened was a rupture that redirected professional practice from a modernist matrix, stimulated in large part by the government⁶. Thus, a modern Brazil was projected that aimed to oppose slavery Brazil, but without effectively confronting the legacy of colonization.

Coloniality is a fundamental part of the modernization project in Brazil, which was built on language relations, the means of production, social relations, education, urbanism, etc. Such constituent relations of domination and oppression gained new nuances with the technological rise and the transition to the neoliberal period. The redistribution of the means of production, focused on expansion and capital accumulation, not only intensified existing inequalities, but also built binary relations between the center (Europe and the United States) and the periphery (poor countries below the Equator line). Escobar (2003, p. 57) corroborates this view when he states that “*globalization implies a radicalization and universalization of modernity*”.

BRAZILIAN DESIGN ANALYZED THROUGH BORDER AND INTERSECTIONAL THOUGHTS

How do we observe the presence of coloniality in Brazilian design? How is this materialized in the design action? We seek to answer these questions to locate design in these discourses and understand its hegemonic position to imagine possible paths for its

⁵ Many examples involve the search for an alternative modernity in Brazil, acting through disruptive gestures, although they were not intended to break with the hegemonic order on the colonial basis (segregation of race, gender and sexuality, and division of labor). These examples include the Week of Modern Art in 1922, which advocated for a Brazilian modernity, the inauguration of Brasília in 1960, which based its design on modernism understood as Brazilian, the foundation of the National Center for Cultural Reference, created by Aloisio Magalhães during the military dictatorship, the arts and crafts school project, whose activities would be conducted both by those who carry out and those who design, created by Lina Bo Bardi at Solar do Unhão in Salvador/BA suppressed by the military government, among others. See more in: Cavalcanti, 2001; Jacques, 2019; Anastassakis, 2014.

⁶ About this, Cardoso (2005, p. 10) sums up well that “it is clear that the implantation in Brazil of an ideology of modern design, between the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s – largely sponsored by government –, coincides with and integrates the greatest effort to insert the country into the new world economic system negotiated at Bretton Woods. Modern Brazil of Getúlio and Petrobrás, of Juscelino Kubitschek and Brasília, of Assis Chateaubriand and Masp, of Carlos Lacerda and ESDI, a new model of the country was intended – that of the “future” –, concluding the rupture with the archaic and slavery past initiated by the republican positivist thought.”

practices that move away from universal ideals and approach ideals based on the pluriverse (ESCOBAR, 2016). Pluriversality is relevant for thinking about other design practices, based on other cosmovisions and ways of living (ESCOBAR, 2016; KRENAK, 2019), and not just those instituted by modernity/coloniality.

We rely on two approaches of thought: the border and the intersectional. Border thought is based on the idea that there is a ground zero of knowledge in Europe, generating epistemic borders. Based on an *“order of classification made by those who place themselves at the top of humanity”* (MIGNOLO; TLOSTANOVA, 2016, p. 206), they are represented by types of *“colonial difference”*. This difference reflects the way in which knowledge and subjectivities are continuously shaped by the structures of the modern/colonial world (Ibid., 207), marked by *“encounters, border zones, processes of resistance, hybridization, [and] affirmation of cultural difference”* (ESCOBAR, 2018, p. 94). Thus, border thought refers to thinking across borders, rewriting their territorial epistemologies. This means detaching from a geography of reason based on a teleological and egocentric policy of knowledge, approaching one that is based on knowledge in geography and in the body. Therefore, border thought requires giving up the epistemologies of Western modernity, admitting that knowledge can be generated beyond norms and institutional control.

Tlostanova (2017, p. 4) refers to the coloniality of design as *“a control and discipline of our perception and interpretation of the world, of other human and non-human beings and things according to certain legitimate principles”*. It is about the imposition of a set of *“ontological, epistemic and axiological notions that affect the whole world”*, in which *“alternatives of life, social structures, environmental models or aesthetic*

principles were invariably discarded”. In the Brazilian context, it is necessary to admit design as the driving force of the modern/colonial project.

Also during the structuring of the field in the country, the motto of form and function, based on a radical rationality, reflected in educational institutions, so that their curricular bases were imported and adapted to German regulations⁷. These aspects were mirrored in a myriad of projects that brought these aesthetic and utilitarian ideals of modern life, imposing on society a totalitarian vision of what is good, what works (CARDOSO, 2011). For Cardoso (Idem), this vision is only confronted in the 1960s in dominant countries, especially with the work of Victor Papanek, and only in the 1980s in Brazil. Although confronting these bases has occurred in the field's trajectory, coloniality was present, especially through the principle of mimicry, in which rhetoric and values mirrored by modernity (TLOSTANOVA, 2017) were taken as central.

Therefore, border thought helps us to understand the countless ways in which Brazilian design has tried and is still trying to mold itself to the hegemonic design of the Global North. With the reduction of communication barriers, these nuances become even more imperceptible, however, very evident when we observe the focus on capital accumulation and the benefit of wealthy social groups because of their privileges of race, gender, class, and work.

By understanding the hegemonic place established in Brazilian design, we bring the second approach to reflect on the field: intersectional thought. The search to unite these two thoughts aims to bring a more complete view of the excluding processes produced by the field. As mentioned in the previous topic through the works of Maria Lugones (2008)

⁷ In the text *“With its back to Brazil: teaching an internationalist design”* by João de Souza Leite (2014), the author points to the rationalism instilled in design education in Brazil and the deliberate way in which the German bases were established in the country. In parallel, Bruna Montuori (in Braga; Ferreira, 2017), in an interview with professor emeritus at the PUC-Rio, José Ripper, pointed out in practical terms this imposition of a model, which generated a series of consequences to the teaching of design by prescribing a Eurocentric teaching. Aspects such as the choice of materials used, inadequate physical structure of laboratories and working hours that reflected the work routine in Europe, the inferiority of the figure of the studio master in relation to teachers, among others.

and Lélia Gonzalez (2019), intersectional thought allows a reading that reaches spaces that are in oblivion, located in the encounter between the different social classifications imposed by modernity. For Lugones, the *“intersectionality reveals what is not seen when categories such as gender and race are conceptualized as separate from each other”*. It is in the encounter of these categories that it is possible to identify certain types of oppression, invisible before the discourses of modernity propagated in the field of design.

Intersectional thought, when applied to Brazilian design, allows us to observe how actions of domination occur in the midst of design action, especially with regard to gender and race issues. When we look at design and think from its project, its marketing, distribution logistics, and its recycling, but we fail to observe the relationships of work, gender and race in uses, consumption, production and disposal, we allow epistemic violence (MIGNOLO; TLOSTANOVA 2016) is perpetuated. As intersectional thought shows us what is missing or hidden, *“we have the task of reconceptualizing the logic of intersection to avoid separability”* (LUGONES, 2008, p. 82).

In its history, design carries a tradition of gender and race exclusion, visible from the Bauhaus and its teaching plan. Through the trajectory of Marta Erps-Breuer, a former Bauhaus student, living in Brazil after the 1930s, Ana Julia Almeida and Maria Loschiavo dos Santos (2020) point out how women students at the Bauhaus were directed to specific activities delegated to women, such as weaving. In the article, Almeida and Loschiavo (Idem) point out the means by which Bauhaus students acted to overcome the place of exclusion imposed on women. They sought to circulate through more spaces, seeking working methods and artistic experimentation to acquire additional skills to use in their professional careers. By bringing intersectional thought to this case, we can see how the intersections of oppression

affecting women go back to the roots of design education. At the same time, we observe how these same women struggled to leave this intersection through alternative means, beyond weaving and the workshops dedicated to them.

THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A DECOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE FOR A PLURIVERSAL DESIGN

Between acceptances and rejections, design in Brazil was built on the foundations of modernity/coloniality. The following reflections aim to discuss about tools that articulate and maintain the hegemonic posture of design and possible gaps to be filled for subversion, aimed at building a pluriversal design, based on a decolonial perspective. Initially, it is discussed how linguistic universalism, including speeches and design tools, is responsible for the flattening of creative possibilities. We talk about the methods of projects to impose a way of functioning in society and fail to consider certain social relations and plural ways of relating to the world. Finally, reflections for the construction of a design based on decolonial thought will be presented.

The accumulation and transmission of knowledge takes place through language, whether verbal, visual or bodily. Argentine philosopher Diego Tatián (2013) presents a reflection on the language used in international congresses. According to the author, the dispute for the university/science production takes place between those who support their capture to serve the market and, theoretically and consequently, society, and between those who claim them as places of protection for heteronomies⁸. The standardization of universal terms for scientific communication, even

⁸ Here we use heteronomy in the sense of capturing the possibilities of autonomous existences, in other words, absence of autonomy, in the production of science subject to the will of the market.

more in a single language, contributes to the flattening of the knowledge under discussion, as it vanishes from possible cultural accumulations, from the plural ways of feeling and constructing reality and from symbolic repertoires (Ibid., p. 17).

Gonzalez (2019) emphasizes that African names like “*mucama*”, from the Quimbunda language, are displaced and emptied of their original meaning. Thus, hiding the knowledge brought by their ancestors, reappropriated from the interests of the ruling elite in institutionalized spaces, such as the dictionary. The author shows us, all the time, how this woman (*mucama*), her man, siblings, and children are continually treated as objects, including “*objects of knowledge*”. In her words (Ibid., p. 284), “*this is where we understand the resistance of certain analyses, which, by insisting on the priority of class struggle, refuse to incorporate the categories of race and sex. In other words, they insist on forgetting them*”.

In the field of design, the mechanism of the discourse of domination is no different. As recalled by Gui Bonsiepe (2011, p. 181) “*the theoretical discourse is also a discourse of power, a discourse of appropriation*”, theorizing about design practice consumes materiality and can distort or direct its intentions. Now, if the language that gives meaning to the result of the design practice is planned, the designation of the design process is a means to domination.

If the design practice of design also has its conventions for its registration, perpetuation, expansion, investigation and application in the world, through observation and data collection techniques, design methodologies and execution tools, it is necessary to consider that this set of standards forms a specific discourse. What do we designers do with data that we do not know how to parameterize? With production modes that we cannot optimize? With bodies that behave in ways our instruments cannot measure? We take them out of our sphere of action and reduce them to the *Other*, to the *vernacular design* or other exclusionary

nomenclatures. In light of the design canons, how can we understand productions not recognized as design practices?

If we observe the dynamics of the production of carnauba straw baskets that artisans from the village of Várzea Queimada in Piauí make to transport the harvest, we can see that they are replicated for generations without being registered in technical drawings. They are produced without consulting anthropometric tables, but from the bodies that make them and the bodies that use them; or even that they use design methods built from available technologies and materials, routinized according to the seasonality of the carnauba tree (NICOLETTI, 2018).

To understand these processes, memory must be weighed, which in Lélia Gonzalez’s definition (2019, p. 276-277), considers “as the not knowing that knows, this place of inscriptions that restore a history that was not written, the place where truth emerges”. It must be considered that the body accumulates experiences, resistances, knowledge prescribed in this unwritten history. As the anthropologist Marcel Mauss (2017, p. 421) points out, these body techniques are the “ways in which men, from society to society, in a traditional way, know how to use their bodies”. These unwritten memories overflow recurrently in the Brazilian context, seen in other settings not only outside of design but occasionally in its inner circle.

In this context, an example is the work of José Zanine Caldas, a self-taught architect, with the canoe builders who carved them out of a single trunk, in Nova Viçosa, state of Bahia. In his exchange with the artisans, he observed their abilities to round the wood using the adze⁹, adopting this technique in the construction of his furniture, most of them non-serial (CARVALHO, 2018). Although he was aligned with the construction of a modernity, Caldas was also aware of the creative potential of the knowledge of the body that makes.

⁹Tool with a handle and a curved cutting metal blade.

The discourse of domination is also in design methods. Bonsiepe (2011, p. 226) reports how in the 1960s the discussion about the relationship between science and design caused heated debates about methodology because it was believed that the method would be the legitimation of the design process “making it more objective than subjective whims”. Also according to the author, it was Herbert Simon, representative of the design sciences, who influenced a large part of design methodologies, his methodological orientation came from the field of engineering and recommended “leaving behind the phase of mere experimentation” (Idem, p. 227). Escobar (2007) reaffirms that an economic discourse that proposed to reform underdeveloped societies uses disciplinary methodologies, which in a colonial way prescribe ways of handling relationships, imposing hierarchies to maintain power. Although this pragmatism has been revised in recent decades, design methodologies in the field were not willing to consider and try to understand such “*subjective whims*”. In other words, it is admitted to limit the contact possibilities of design practice in favor of a supposed validation of scientific rigidity.

If these design methodologies are based on models centered on what is covered by rigid scientific models, it must be admitted that they exclude what they cannot systematize. Therefore, they exclude several social actors, technologies, data, etc., resulting in the continuous erasure of ways of doing, living and existing. Admitting that these methodologies have the product user as the main actor, also known as the target audience, all other actors involved in the production, interaction and disposal cycle are neglected. For the production stage, for example, factory workers, their environment and their interactions with their tools and with their peers are not considered. Nor are the employees to whom maintenance will be delegated during use considered; finally, it is not designed considering those who will work on recycling the discarded object.

Ezio Manzini (2017, p. 44-46) recently proposes to interpret the design process in two ways: the conventional way, which would be a standardized way of designing, and the *design way*, which would be the result of the human capacity to create Interpretations like this one propose the recognition of human creative capacity, in an attempt to capture solutions generated outside the field of design, but still establishing hierarchies. The dissemination of design toolkits elaborated by design offices to conduct design practice among groups of people¹⁰, demonstrates how much the design discourse maintains a hierarchical structure. These aspects were revisited by Dori Tunstall (2013) when questioning American methodologies such as design thinking and design for innovation, repositioning her discourses in light of the colonial perspective. For Tunstall (Ibid., p. 236) “*values of design thinking draw from a progressive narrative of global salvation that ignores non-Western ways of thinking rooted in craft practices that predate the West (...)*” positioning “*Western design companies in a unique hierarchical position enabling them to guide non-Western institutions on how to solve problems*”.

The design discourse, with its apparatus of methods and tools, stands as a mediator between people’s inventive capacity and their actions in the world. As Bonsiepe (2011, p. 38) points out, “*design and the design discourse today reflect the interests of the dominant economies that, under the banner of globalization, are seeking to organize the world according to their hegemonic interests*”. These interests also extend to the means of production that design drives. Alberto Acosta (2016) denounces the modern project of imposing a development model, which sought to implement a re-edition of the lifestyles of countries from the center of capital to the peripheries. Realizing that the imposition of a model of domination under the rhetoric of development began to crack in the 1980s and 1990s, the colonial proposal was renewed through neoliberal reforms, which in turn intensified social conflicts and environmental problems (Idem, p. 63). For these problems, the traps of “sustainable

¹⁰ For example, the IDEO Human Centered Design Toolkit, or the NESTA agency from UK called DIY (Development, Impact and You).

development” or “green capitalism” were created (Idem p. 86). Which are nothing more than ways to justify/enable production based on predatory means of dealing with Nature and imposing a way of life that suppresses plural existences. On the consequences of this model, Ailton Krenak (2019, p. 52) makes the following consideration:

There is something about these layers that is almost human: a layer we have identified that is fading, that is being wiped out of the interface of very human humans. Almost humans are thousands of people who insist on staying out of this civilized dance, the technique, the control of the planet. And for dancing a strange choreography, they are removed from the scene, through epidemics, poverty, hunger, directed violence.

These thousands of almost humans are the ones that also make up the so-called Pluriverse. Arturo Escobar (2018) brought the concept of Pluriverse to the debate for the field of design, which refers to the composition of different ways of inhabiting the planet, or, as the author likes to define it using the Zapatista maxim: a world where many worlds fit.

As a proposal for design to promote the Pluriverse, Escobar (Idem, p. 188-189) suggests some postures. Among them, he emphasizes providing conditions for community creations structurally connected with globalized environments; create favorable spaces for the life projects of the communities and the constitution of coexistence societies; consider the perspective of preserving and enhancing self-sufficiency when engaging with heteronomous social actors and technologies (including markets, digital technologies, extractive operations, and so on) occurs; and devising effective means to encourage diverse economies (social and solidarity economies, alternative

capitalist and non-capitalist economies) among others. These postures point to the formation of scenarios for collective emancipation, promotion of autonomy and construction of cooperative relationships to reverse the humanitarian and environmental crisis. According to Acosta (2016, p. 27):

People must organize themselves to recover and take control of their lives. However, it is no longer just about defending the workforce and recovering free time for workers – that is, it is not just about opposing the exploitation of labor. Also at stake is the defense of life against anthropocentric schemes of the productive organization, which cause the destruction of the planet.

Therefore, the humanitarian and environmental crisis is intrinsically related to the expropriation of the control of life itself, by people and collectives to maintain a capital-accumulation structure. The common goods are exploited¹¹, including Nature, and people’s labor are also exploited so that the wealth produced by them is concentrated in the hands of a few. To reverse this scenario, Silvia Federici (2014, p. 153) indicates that it is necessary a *“long-term increase in awareness, intercultural exchange and collective construction, together with all communities that (...) are interested in claiming the recovery of the land from a vital point of view (...)”*, in this way, spaces of autonomy and the *“idea that our reproduction must take place at the expense of the rest of the commons (or commoners) and the common goods of the planet”* will be rejected.

An example of collective construction to be mentioned are the approximations between design students, members of LaDA/ESDI/UERJ¹², different artists and indigenous intellectual figures, through partnerships between the school and the Museum of the Indian in Rio de Janeiro and other collaborators.

¹¹ In Silvia Federici’s definition of what is common: “We have air, water and common land, digital goods and common services. Acquired rights (for example, social security pensions) are also often described as common, as well as languages, libraries and collective productions of ancient culture.” See more in: Federici, 2014, p. 145-157.

¹² Design and Anthropology Laboratory of the Superior School of Industrial Design of the State University of Rio de Janeiro. See more at: <http://ladaesdi.com.br/>

Coordinator and teacher Zoy Anastassakis (2019) narrates in her article “It is in the struggle that we meet” the experiences and exchanges with indigenous cosmologies, bringing students a deeper understanding of border thought to build the transition from modern universalist to pluriversal thinking.

Community practice, one of the keys to transforming a model of coloniality into another model that is pluriversal, is also part of the processes to promote the autonomy of being, according to Paulo Freire (2015). For the educator, community practice is closely linked to the territory and goes through the process of recognizing cultural identities that will help to stimulate the creative capacity, freeing people from imposing and predatory models of dealing with the way of being in the world. Furthermore, for Arturo Escobar (2016), an autonomous design emancipated from colonialities is based on this reaffirmation of identity, on the right to territoriality, in a language that, as previously presented, is detached from adaptations for the purpose of domination, and above all, on the right to conditions for the search for its own autonomy and the right to build its own vision of the future.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The text presented sought to relate the criticism made by Latin American intellectuals to Modernity/Coloniality with the establishment of the canons in the field of design. The M/C group, producer of studies that propose pluriversal societies, therefore decolonial, serves as support to rethink the design field. In this article, a history of how the Modernity/Coloniality project led to the construction of a hegemonic design was described, suppressing and flattening of creative possibilities and reinforcing inequalities to serve a totalitarian project. We discussed the mechanisms used for its efficiency and how the project development tools in the field of design are aligned with these universalizing goals.

Although there are still many challenges for the field, its opportunities for action, which recognize the different movements in favor of historically oppressed groups, open opportunities for a practice oriented towards communal and solidary values. Border and intersectional thoughts approaches help us to shed light on the voids, the spaces of erasure and understand that the project of coloniality is in constant maintenance. When brought to design, they suggest a reorientation for their design action, which swims against the current of a discourse that promotes primitive accumulation, in favor of a project of self-sufficiency for communities and care for ecosystems.

We believe, therefore, that a design aligned with the decolonial perspective puts itself at the forefront of a mission that gives up on these universalizing goals. Its purpose is to welcome practices based on relationships, on communal and multiverse perspectives that support other ways of living and being. These are a design process that involves collective actions with actors who are at the intersection and whose horizon is the recognition of other epistemologies and ontologies to foster emancipatory practices that support and strengthen autonomy.

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