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Rethinking Fashion: Ethics, Sustainability, and the Role of Non-Hegemonic Clothing

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Abstract *In recent years, the fashion system has undergone significant deterioration. The obsession with growth, mass production, and globalized aesthetics has transformed the fashion and garment industry into a space marked by ethical and environmental neglect. In response, a complex movement has emerged within the field, seeking to challenge and transform this reality. Designing ethical and sustainable fashion has become a central challenge, opening space for new analyses and critical inquiry. This theoretical essay aims to provoke reflection on the process of ethicization in fashion and explores how certain non-hegemonic and non-Western forms of clothing can offer innovative perspectives on the key issues and challenges currently facing the field. This reflection is illustrated through the case of the Cuentepec woman, whose clothing practices, situated outside the dominant fashion system, reflect a distinct worldview and deep social integration. The essay calls for a dialogue among designers and scholars to deconstruct prevailing paradigms and foster a more comprehensive, inclusive, and culturally sensitive approach to fashion.*

Keywords *Inclusive Fashion, Indigenous Clothing, Sustainable Fashion, Non-Hegemonic Fashion, Non-Western Clothing*

Repensando a moda: ética, sustentabilidade e o papel das vestimentas não-hegemônicas

Resumo Nos últimos anos, o sistema da moda tem passado por um processo significativo de deterioração. A obsessão pelo crescimento, pela produção em massa e por estéticas globalizadas transformou a indústria do vestuário em um espaço marcado por negligência ética e ambiental. Em resposta, um movimento complexo emergiu no campo, buscando desafiar e transformar essa realidade. Criar uma moda ética e sustentável tornou-se um desafio central, abrindo espaço para novas análises e questionamentos críticos. Este ensaio teórico propõe uma reflexão sobre o processo de eticização na moda e explora como determinadas formas de vestimenta não-hegemônicas e não-ocidentais podem oferecer perspectivas inovadoras sobre as principais questões e desafios atuais do setor. Essa reflexão é ilustrada por meio do caso da mulher de Cuentepec, cujas práticas de vestimenta, situadas fora do sistema dominante da moda, refletem uma cosmovisão própria e uma profunda integração social. O ensaio convida designers e pesquisadores a desconstruir paradigmas vigentes e a promover uma abordagem da moda mais abrangente, inclusiva e culturalmente sensível.

Palavras-chave Moda Inclusiva, Vestuário Indígena, Moda Sustentável, Moda Não-Hegemônica, Vestuário Não-Occidental.

Repensar la moda: ética, sostenibilidad y el papel de la vestimenta no hegemónica

Resumen En los últimos años, el sistema de la moda ha sufrido un notable proceso de deterioro. La obsesión por el crecimiento, la producción en masa y las estéticas globalizadas ha transformado a la industria del vestuario en un espacio marcado por la negligencia ética y ambiental. Como respuesta, ha surgido un complejo movimiento dentro del campo que busca desafiar y transformar esta realidad. Diseñar una moda ética y sostenible se ha convertido en un desafío central, abriendo paso a nuevos análisis y cuestionamientos críticos. Este ensayo teórico propone una reflexión sobre el proceso de eticización en la moda y explora cómo ciertas formas de vestimenta no hegemónicas y no occidentales pueden ofrecer perspectivas innovadoras sobre los principales temas y desafíos actuales del campo. Esta reflexión se ilustra a través del caso de la mujer de Cuentepec, cuyas prácticas de vestimenta, situadas al margen del sistema dominante de la moda, reflejan una cosmovisión propia e integración social profunda. El ensayo invita a diseñadores e investigadores a deconstruir los paradigmas dominantes y fomentar un enfoque de la moda más inclusivo, amplio y culturalmente consciente.

Palabras clave Moda Inclusiva, Vestimenta Indígena, Moda Sostenible, Moda No Hegemónica, Vestimenta No Occidental.

Introdução

In recent decades, fashion has lost its ability to serve society, and this negligence has led to an increase in ethical lapses within the industry. Consequently, the fashion system has shifted from being admired to becoming an example of imprudence and lack of ethics. Tragic events, such as the collapse of the Rana Plaza building in Bangladesh, have further exposed the enormous irresponsibility with which the sector operates, highlighting the unsustainability underpinning the current fashion system.

Nevertheless, as with any period of disruption, this crisis has also created significant opportunities. In recent years, after fashion was exposed and labeled negligent, a complex movement has emerged within the field, striving to break free from the shameful position imposed by an irresponsible system. Creating ethical and sustainable fashion has become the primary challenge for garment design. Consequently, several relevant initiatives and movements have arisen aiming to raise awareness among designers, brands, and consumers about sustainability in all its facets. We have also witnessed the resurgence of natural fibers and the adoption of “less harmful” materials in clothing. Additionally, innovative business models have emerged, aspiring to create a fairer fashion industry. The positive side of this crisis is that it has opened space for new analyses and critical questions.

This research contributes to this reflection and proposes new perspectives in the quest for long-desired sustainability. Thus, this reflective and interpretative paper (Meneghetti, 2011) takes an essayistic form structured as follows: In the first part, drawing on the discourse of renowned authors in fashion and design—such as Lipovetsky (1989), Berlim and Schulte (2021), Cardoso (2008), Margolin (2014), Miller (2013), and Ingold (2019)—we analyze the ongoing reconfiguration process within the field. This process attempts to move beyond a negative image by presenting possibilities to make the fashion domain a more comprehensive and inclusive space.

In the second part, based on Pineda (2024), Pineda (2025) research, we present the Mexican indigenous community of Cuentepec, its traditional clothing, and insights into the relationship between Cuentepec women and their native dress.

The main objective is to provoke reflection on the process of ethicization within the fashion field and explore how alternative forms of clothing—embodying experiences and expectations different from our own—can lead to a new understanding of fashion, its mechanisms, and contemporary challenges.

FASHION, A FIELD IN THE PROCESS OF RECONFIGURATION

Fashion is a unique aesthetic and sociological document. It is a phenomenon so original and with such a particular historical trajectory that it becomes an object of study of utmost importance. Lipovetsky (1989) compares fashion to a mirror, reflecting what makes our historical destiny most singular: the denial of the timeless power of traditional past, the modern fever for novelties, and the celebration of the social present. According to the author, fashion has ceased to be an aesthetic adornment of collective life to become its cornerstone, reshaping the entire society in its image and moving from the periphery to become hegemonic.

But what is fashion? The term is broad and can be considered a mechanism applicable to almost all conceivable areas of the modern world. Lipovetsky (1989) defines fashion as an independent device of any social object, characterized by a brief temporality, by more or less fanciful twists, and therefore, can affect very diverse spheres of collective life.

Although fashion applies to almost all social arenas, clothing is the focus of interest in this context. Every theory or history of fashion has clothing as its center of investigation, as it exhibits the most significant traits of the problem. For Lipovetsky, fashion has a locatable beginning in history and does not belong to all eras nor all civilizations. Fashion occurs in the Modern West and nowhere else. This idea of fashion as an exclusively Western phenomenon is shared by many other authors, based on the consensus that fashion originates and develops in Europe. Barthes (2009) describes fashion as a system of meanings with immaterial codes and values. The fashion system is responsible for driving trends, concepts, and ideas, thus contributing to the construction of identities and acting as an essential agent for communication between subjects. This system is influenced by various factors (cultural, political, economic) and affects different spheres of social life.

In recent years, the fashion system has undergone considerable wear and tear. The obsession with growth, mass production, and globalized style has transformed the fashion/garment industry into a space of unsustainable neglect. In 2013, a tragic event triggered a movement that had previously had little popular engagement. The collapse of the Rana Plaza building in Bangladesh, where 1,134 garment industry workers died while working for global brands in conditions akin to slavery, drew attention to problems that had long been ignored: the lack of transparency, injustice, and irresponsibility in the fashion industry. The episode resulted in a reaction from fashion designers, academics, and consumers. Since then, the problems in the area have been taken more seriously. Fashion was highlighted as negligent, and in some academic productions, the saturation of the system and the end of an era in the industry were declared (Edelkoort 2015; Carvalhal 2016; Salcedo 2014). Movements such as Fashion Revolution

emerged, aiming to raise awareness among brands and consumers about sustainability in all aspects. There were also innovations and reinventions in some production and marketing models, such as creative economy, slow fashion, fair trade, ethical fashion, eco fashion, and sustainable fashion, which sought or simulated seeking a fairer fashion. Berlim and Schulte (2021) currently recognize a complex movement in the field, attempting to move away from the shameful position imposed and celebrated by an exclusionary and irresponsible system.

Wrapped in plastic, sold through illusions, and priced at the cost of what leaks through its cracks, fashion has been cornered by the diffusion of information and the emergence of a human sense of engagement in life. Thus, in an area where aesthetics has always prevailed, ethics are now becoming present (Berlim and Schulte 2021, p. 09).

It seems that reflecting and thinking about fashion has never been so necessary, and it also seems that fashion has never been so thought about and reflected upon. Finally, the field of fashion appears to be in search of ethics.

What role does design play in this process?

According to Cardoso (2008), design has a great advantage over other disciplines because its historical position at the frontiers between idea and object, the general and the specific, art and science, culture and technology, environment and user places it in an ideal position to make impactful contributions to society and the world. The author states that design is undergoing a period of freedom. The normative rigidity that dominated the field for a long time now seems to be opening up to distinct narratives. In recent years, design has witnessed a clear diversification in its possibilities for work.

Margolin (2014) asserts that design, as an activity that generates plans, products, and projects, produces tangible results that can serve as examples or arguments to define possible ways of life. However, according to the author, a change in the discourse of the field is imperative, as design has been strongly embedded in consumer culture since its inception. For this change to happen, there must first be awareness among its practitioners and theorists. A first step would be to reformulate the role of design and find ways to intervene in humanity's massive problems. Design can work towards a broader understanding of human beings so that the field can not only create products and services but also improve the world that surrounds it.

According to Ingold (2019), today more than ever, it has become

clear that the certainties upon which our existence was founded have led the world to the brink. We cannot choose to be born in another era; our historical moment and current conditions were shaped by the actions of past generations. Retracing our steps amidst the ruins is a task for all of us. We need to forge alternatives to our existential problems and take a moment to reflect on the cultural constructions that shaped us. It is necessary to question our own ways of doing things.

In the specific case of clothing design, Berlim and Schulte (2021) agree with Ingold in suggesting that the way we understand fashion and its mechanisms may represent the precise point of change — the breaking of paradigms that can make a significant difference.

The much-desired sustainability in fashion is probably not just in the implementation of new business models or the use of less polluting materials, but also in questioning and reconsidering the codes that have always governed our way of dressing.

New Paths

An alternative and significant step in this paradigm shift could be recognizing and engaging with those whom the system has always ignored; accepting that we coexist in multiple ways and that there can be numerous ways of doing things, thinking, and communicating.

Other ways of being in and forming part of this world are practiced by indigenous peoples and traditional communities, who have their own priorities, demands, and proposals that we are often unaware of because they have been erased and excluded.

It is estimated that more than 400 indigenous groups live in the Latin American region, representing between 40 and 50 million people (UNDP, 2004). Some reside in urban areas, while others live in rural regions. The fact is that we who live in the region are fortunate to share the territory with peoples who have worldviews and ways of understanding reality that we can no longer ignore.

Colonialism and imperialism have left a trail of deep inequalities and social injustices in our territory and have installed the epistemological legacy of Eurocentrism, which prevents us from understanding the world from the very world in which we live and from its own epistemes (Porto-Gonçalves, 2005).

Deconstructing our understanding of fashion is urgent; a change in attitude towards modernity is necessary. A decolonial turn is fundamental because it allows us to configure another space of knowledge production, while at the same time legitimizing and making visible the “historical-cultural heterogeneity” of Latin America as a space where different ways of thinking and other worlds coexist, beyond the dualistic vision of Eurocentrism (Escobar, 2005).

A natural question arises here: how can engaging with indigenous communities contribute to making the fashion field more ethical? We do not have the answers, and probably no one does. Nor are we suggesting that indigenous communities are the solution to the industry's woes, but we are certain of one thing: they have different approaches and appreciations of clothing that do not coincide with our own, and that can lead us to an innovative understanding of the problems of contemporary fashion.

THE CASE OF THE CUENTEPEC WOMAN AND HER RELATIONSHIP WITH CLOTHING

Some indigenous communities and their ways of dressing hold specific appreciations and notions that do not coincide with those of Western societies. The case of the women of Cuentepec and their traditional dress exemplifies how clothing, far from the fashion system, can interact and be part of the social dynamic from a particular viewpoint.

Cuatepec is a small Nahuatl indigenous community in central Mexico. According to INEGI (2020), Cuentepec has a population of 4001 inhabitants, 2026 women and 1975 men.

Cuatepec people have kept their habits and customs alive for centuries. Most of the population, both adults and children, speak the Nahuatl language, and the adult women of the community still wear the traditional attire, also called *kueuitl*, every day. Cuentepec is an indigenous community that, through its daily practices and actions, reaffirms its tradition and deepest beliefs, its ethnic identity and its sense of belonging to the territory.

According to Pineda (2025), the community is characterized by pendular migration, which involves the daily movement of people to work in other cities. In Cuentepec, a large number of adult women put on their *kueuitl* every day and travel to the large urban centers nearby, such as Cuernavaca (population 341,702) and Mexico City (population 9,209,944), to sell local products (beans, fruit or peanuts) on the street and in the various markets, or to do domestic work (as cleaners or cooks).

Daily, about 540 people leave the community on 11 buses, as well as in several private cars that leave packed between 5 and 8 in the morning (Orihuela, 2021).

Given this migratory phenomenon, the tradition of the *kueuitl* becomes special, because the woman from Cuentepec, even though she spends most of her time in the region's large urban centers, does not allow herself to be contaminated by other aesthetic references and proudly wears her typical clothing every day.

The continuity in the customs of Cuentepec women and the repetition of models inherited from the past, which perpetuate the forms of their clothes even in an era when, the phenomenon of fashion, with all its

individualism and frivolity, has taken over virtually all spheres of collective life, results in a unique phenomenon. However, the particularities involving the kueuitl and its relationship with indigenous women go far beyond tradition.

The Kueuitl

Currently, there are two types of traditional clothing used in the community: one that is worn only by elderly women and the other, used by adults and younger women. Here follows a description of the latter, as it is the most common and current attire.

The traditional clothing mainly consists of three pieces: a satin-colored dress with a pleated lower part and a colorful apron (Figure 1). These two pieces together form the complete dress, also known in the community as kueuitl (the literal translation to Spanish is “falda”, meaning skirt).

The kueuitl is usually accompanied by a rebozo (a handmade fabric used to cover the back), which in the community is also called payo. The old tradition says that unmarried women should wear the rebozo open, while married women should cross it. In recent years, these codes have fallen into disuse, and currently only elderly women pay attention to this detail.

Figure 1: Dolls from the community wearing the kueuitl.
Source: The author



Both the dress and the apron are designed and made by Cuentepec women. In the community, there are two shops where all the necessary materials for making the garments can be found: fabrics, trimmings, threads, and so on.

The main fabric used for the dress is a satin jacquard that in the community is known as “mismilia” or “mismilique” because of its shine. The type of jacquard used is brocade, that is, a thick and heavy fabric made with a jacquard loom and satin weave, often with a raised floral pattern. The position of the threads makes the fabric very durable.

For the apron, a checkered fabric called “mascotin fabric” is used,

with a polyester and cotton composition, ideal for this type of piece.

The rebozo or payo is the only piece that is not made in the community, being sold in local stores. It comes from the State of Mexico, where it is made in a completely artisanal process. It is a delicate and exclusive piece, and according to the women in the community, it is also expensive. The price of the rebozos available in the community stores at the time of this research was approximately \$1,200 Mexican pesos, equivalent, in the year 2023, to seven daily minimum wages in the State of Morelos.

The tradition of attire in Cuentepec has been perpetuated for many generations. Unfortunately, there are no data or historical records of when or how the kueuitl began to be used, but women in the community mention that this is how mothers, grandmothers, and ancestors dressed.

Currently, Cuentepec is experiencing a rapid process of transition, and some women from the new generations no longer want to wear the kueuitl. Despite this changing scenario, the indigenous women's attire in Cuentepec continues to be a unique and unmistakable cultural symbol of their community (Pineda, 2024).

Some peculiarities of the dress and its relationship with the indigenous woman

Part of my doctoral research included an ethnographic study supported by participant observation in the Nahua indigenous community of Cuentepec, aiming to understand the relationship of the Cuentepec woman with her native dress. Thus, between May 2022 and January 2023, I had the great opportunity to be there and observe. Among so many new things I saw and learned in this rich experience, some disconcerted me, as they challenged some of my previous conceptions. From the beginning of the research, I realized that the kueuitl (the main element of the traditional attire) carried unique messages and meanings that did not necessarily coincide with those managed in Western societies. In the following lines, I briefly present some of them.

Two dresses, two generations

Previously, we described the kueuitl corresponding to the dress of the younger women. This attire is certainly the most seen and used in the community nowadays. However, elderly women use another type of kueuitl, the original one, which consists of four pieces: a blouse, a pleated skirt, a pleated apron that only covers the skirt, and a rebozo (figure 2). At some point in the 20th century, and there is no consensus on when and why, the traditional female attire of the Cuentepec community ceased to be a skirt and blouse and became a whole dress.

According to Herrejón (1994), changes in traditional clothing are normal and necessary for the preservation of traditions. In order for tradition to remain in time, it has to go hand in hand with it. Tradition, according to the author, is succession over time, a temporal process, and as a temporal process, it is change: all the necessary change to continue.

But the number of pieces is not the only difference between the dresses of the two generations. The pleats of the skirts of elderly women are considerably wider than the pleats of the dresses of younger women (Figure 2). The reason for this difference is simpler than it seems: it is the passage of time and its effect on the body. The pleating work done by Cuentepec native women is very meticulous; some of them make a pleat smaller than a centimeter and it is clear that keeping this dress well ironed, with perfect pleats, is a complicated task that requires a lot of time and effort. The elderly Cuentepec woman does not have the same strength and disposition as the young women to iron clothes; thus, as the Cuentepec woman ages, the pleats of her skirt become larger.

The pleating of traditional clothing reflects the indigenous woman's recognition of her ageing process, her maturity and her physical decay (Pineda, 2025).

Figure 2: Two dresses, two generations.

Source: The author



The Cuentepec Apron

Another detail that exemplifies the complexity of traditional attire is found in the apron worn by the women of the community.

The apron, as it is currently understood in Western societies, is a garment used to protect the front of clothing from things that could damage it. Hence, the apron is used by some professionals such as cooks, gardeners, painters, or cleaners, who are subject to stains, paint, grease, etc. However, in the case of the Cuentepec woman, this logic does not apply. The apron in the traditional attire does not have a protective purpose. They see the apron as a fundamental and inseparable part of the *kueuitl*. In fact, when the Cuentepec woman cooks or, for some reason, needs to cover her clothes, she uses another common apron over her dress, even over the traditional apron.

The color of the apron plays a significant role for the women of the community (Pineda, 2024). The attire system of the Cuentepec community is cataloged, according to Saulquin (2010), as “non-fashion”. This system is characterized by a stable and fixed style. The repetition of models inherited from the past and the perpetuity of forms are the main peculiarities of their clothing. In this context, the color of dresses and aprons plays a significant role because color emerges as one of the few resources for aesthetic differentiation. The color of the *kueuitl* opens up space for women to use their creativity and create compositions of their liking (Figure 3). The Cuentepec woman is not interested in collectively following a trend but in building a personal style based on the mixture of colors of the dress with the apron.

Figure 3: Color as a differentiation resource.

Source: The author



A survey showed that each Cuentepec woman has, on average, 32 kueuitl (understood here as the inseparable composition of base dress + apron), and that the main criterion for getting a new dress made is color. In other words, new dresses are usually of a color that is not yet at home, increasing the possibilities when creating compositions. If we consider that the kueuitl is formed by the composition of the two pieces and that each woman has more than 30 dresses and more than 30 aprons of different colors, we can deduce that the Cuentepec woman has abundant options to form varied color combinations and even not repeat them for a long time (Pineda, 2024).

The Cuentepec women harbor two contradictory and well-defined attitudes towards personality. One is the tendency to distinguish and differentiate themselves from others through the affirmation of individuality (the apron and its colors represent this resource that allows them to assert their personality through color compositions); the other is to uniform and integrate to not feel displaced (the kueuitl offers them a sense of belonging to the territory). Thus, through attire, the indigenous woman of Cuentepec achieves a sense of security.

But the apron of the Cuentepec woman also has a utilitarian purpose. The apron is used in everyday chores assisting the Cuentepec woman in basic daily tasks, but not as a protective garment, rather what Miller (2013) calls a prothetic quality. The piece is an undeniable aid in the domestic tasks of the Cuentepec woman, able to clean her face, dry her hands or grab hot pots, transport hot tortillas from the stove to the table. On the other hand, the lower part of the apron also functions as a small bag to carry small objects, which the woman wraps in the fabric and brings close to her body to transport them (figure 4).

Figure 4 The apron for carrying objects.

Source The author



According to Pineda (2024) the presence of the apron in the daily life of the Cuentepec woman is so constant and permanent that it seems like an extension of her body.

The Ritual of the Scapular

The scapular is a ritual that derives from an illness of cultural origin in some of the indigenous communities of central Mexico. The goal of the ritual is to cure “mixo” or “scapular disease” and alleviate the symptoms derived from it.

The symptoms may vary from person to person, but some of the most common manifestations are headache, stomachache, diarrhea, and vomiting. The treatment for this disease consists of giving the patient a scapular with the image of Saint Dominic.

According to Gonzalez and Santana (2020), the scapular disease has been part of the community for many years, and the ritual to treat it is one of the most important in the Cuentepec indigenous tradition. The ritual begins with the diagnosis of the disease, performed by the healer, who will choose a community representative to act as a godparent and who will be responsible for giving a scapular as a gift to cure the patient.

The role of the godparent is essential, as the process of sacralizing the scapular consists of three elements: religion, the act of gifting, and the love of the giver (De Brito et al., 2021).

The ritual begins with a meeting between the patient’s family, the godparent, and the godparent’s family. The patient’s family is responsible for providing food and drink for the celebration. After everyone has enjoyed a meal and drunk to the point of inebriation, they meet with the patient and perform a ceremony to give him or her the scapular. As the first act, the godparents remove the patient’s clothes and dress them in a set of red clothes. When the patient is a woman, they use the traditional dress of the community.

The change of clothes, carried out by the godparent, represents an act of love (a necessary element for the sacralization process). The role of clothing in the ritual is noteworthy here, as the treatment of the disease begins specifically with a change of clothes. It is important to mention that, according to tradition, for the treatment to work, the dress must be red.

According to Gonzalez (2020), all elements of the ritual, including the attire, play a fundamental role in the patient’s recovery, as they facilitate the opening to a sacred dimension. In the scapular ritual, the traditional dress of the Cuentepec woman represents the love of the godparent, who will carefully dress the patient’s body. The *kueuitl* then becomes a code of entry into festive time and space and, along with other symbols of the celebration, will be responsible for the patient’s cure.

The cure of *mixo* through the ritual makes sense in Laraia’s (2007) words when he argues that culture can have great healing power. Accord-

ding to the author, the faith that the patient places in the efficacy of the medicine or in the power of cultural agents can bring about the cure of illnesses, whether real or imaginary.

The scapular ritual makes evident the importance of attire for the women of the community, as in the celebration, the traditional red dress becomes a liturgical object, a sacred symbol that will contribute to the ritual's dignity and beauty. Without the red dress, there is no ritual; without the red dress, there is no cure for the disease (Pineda, 2024).

CONCLUSIONS

This paper began by outlining a new reality for fashion studies: after decades of celebrating an irresponsible and exclusionary system, the pursuit of ethics appears to have finally gained relevance, becoming a shared goal among designers and academics.

In light of this shift, we questioned the scope of existing measures and proposed that sustainability in fashion may not lie solely in implementing new business models or using less polluting materials. Perhaps the way we understand fashion and its underlying mechanisms represents the precise point at which change must occur.

Accordingly, this study proposed rethinking the codes that have long governed how we dress. In doing so—and with the aim of fostering collective learning—we suggested acknowledging and engaging with those whom the system has historically ignored. We introduced the indigenous Mexican community of Cuentepec and presented key aspects of the relationship between women and their traditional dress: differences across generations, aprons that serve both prosthetic and symbolic functions, and the integral role of clothing in the social dynamics of indigenous women.

The aim was to show, through this example, how the cultural heritage and knowledge of indigenous peoples and traditional communities offer worldviews that can meaningfully contribute to rethinking fashion and clothing. The people of Cuentepec represent just one among hundreds of indigenous groups and traditional communities in Latin America who hold ways of understanding reality that we can no longer afford to ignore.

Rather than concluding the discussion, this paper sought to provoke reflection on how non-hegemonic and non-Western forms of dress can lead to innovative understandings of the key issues and contemporary challenges in the field. Miller (2013) reminds us that the best way to question our own experiences and expectations is to learn from those whose lives differ radically from our own. Similarly, Ingold (2019) argues that learning from others requires observation—not in the sense of objectifying them, but in taking them seriously, attending to their actions and words, and listening with respect to what they have to teach us:

“It’s not about interpreting or explaining the behavior of others. On the contrary, it is about sharing in their presence, learning from their life experiences, and applying this knowledge to our conceptions of what human life could be like—its conditions and future possibilities” (Ingold, 2019, p. 10).

The proposal is, ultimately, to take others seriously—not by agreeing or disagreeing with them, but by confronting the challenges they pose to our assumptions about how things are, the kind of life we live, and our relationship with the world.

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