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Sewing Apart and Together: The Experience of a Mask-Sewing Alliance in Times of COVID-19

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Abstract

Sewing is an act that has been both celebrated and criticized (Katoshevski & Huss, 2020; Parker, 1984; Talwar, 2018, 2019): it has been accused of reinforcing the creation of a "domestic ghetto" (Rogers, 1980, as cited in Guérin, 2017) for "third world women" (Mohanty, 2003), yet its economic potential and cultural significance have also been acknowledged. This article aims at unpacking "epiphanies" (Ellis et al., 2011) by focusing on an experience of sewing masks during the COVID-19 pandemic through a dialogue that fostered interrelational reflexivity (Gilbert & Sliep, 2009). More specifically, the article explores Jeanne's participation in the creation of an ad hoc sewing alliance with mothers from local elementary schools (and their friends). Inspired by decolonial feminist theories (Mohanty, 2003), it explores how positionalities play out and transform, as Jeanne acts as both a seamstress (insider) and a white social work student (outsider). The article focuses on the following aspects: (a) sewing as a political space questioning the domestic-public dichotomy and (b) building a "pluralist friendship" (Lugones, 1995) in sharing the act of sewing. Through the exploration of this mask-sewing alliance during the COVID-19 pandemic—an initiative that was far from being unique (CBC News, 2020)—we hope to open up discussions in social work on the possibilities of the underestimated act of sewing while critically acknowledging its limits.

Keywords: interrelational reflexivity; decolonial feminism; sewing; critical social work; friendship

Introduction

> Marthe, [1] a school-community liaison, gave me contact information for some people, and I made phone calls. So it started like that, a funny idea, a desire to see if other people felt like me: helpless, useless, angry, drowned in waves of incomprehension of a global catastrophe.
>
> —Jeanne, diary excerpt, January 6, 2021 (translation by the author)

Without time to think deeply and start collaborative processes, the sewing project that is described in this article originated in April 2020 from a very simple question from one of the authors[2]: "Who wants to sew masks with me?" The proposal was passed on by the

[1] Names have been changed for confidentiality purposes.

[2] Note that the main author of this article, Jeanne, initiated the "underground seamstresses" alliance. Roxane had already participated in autoethnographic approaches and has been interested for many years

school-community liaison (l'intervenante communautaire scolaire) to mothers involved in the parent committees of two elementary schools in my neighbourhood. This "funny idea" was an attempt to meet two simple needs: to provide fabric masks to the population of Parc-Extension (a neighbourhood in Montréal, Québec) and to channel the anguish of being trapped at home during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic. The "alliance" has continued to sew various items (mittens and hats) ordered by diverse community organizations, which has continued to this day.

This article aims to share a transformative experience—the formation of an underground alliance of seamstresses—during the COVID-19 pandemic. A desire to make this alliance visible is at the heart of this article, and many of the elements presented here were discussed and brought forward by different seamstresses involved in the project.

The dialogical approach used here aims to take a reflexive and critical look at this project from two perspectives: from that of Jeanne, with her double stance as a student completing a Master of Social Work and as the seamstress organizing the alliance, and that of (Roxane), a social work professor and critical feminist researcher, supporting her in her reflections. What follows is a dialogue of complementary "I's" that critically reflects on the intersections of stances of white women in academia in a project that not only focuses on sewing but also fosters the coming together of diverse racialized identities and unequal legal and socio-economic statuses.

In what follows, we first provide the methodological and theoretical rationale for our article and briefly discuss why we incorporated a decolonial feminist framework. Following this, we set the context for and provide insight into the social positioning of the two authors. We then draw on Jeanne's experiences with the underground seamstresses to raise the issues of sewing as an "'in-between' place,"[3] that allows for a blurring of the dichotomies of domestic and public places while fostering relationships amid isolation. The article concludes with a discussion on how a decolonial feminist framework enabled us to address the complexities of re/presentation around issues of dichotomies and in/visibility.

Methodology

To reach our goals as authors, we engaged in multiple discussions to reflect upon several themes anchored in Jeanne's experience: sewing and its conflicted relationship with feminism, in/visibility of "certain" work, and the place of friendship in social work. We share salient elements of our exchanges. We engaged in an exercise of interrelational reflexivity, which is at the heart of any social action that aims to transform a relationship or even practices (Gilbert & Sliep, 2009). Reflexivity is an "attempt to place one's premises into question, to

in the issues surrounding the notions of insider/outsider in both research and intervention dynamics (Caron, 2012; Caron et al., 2020). It was therefore following a reflection that was part of academic coursework that Jeanne proposed to Roxane that we pursue critical reflection on the topic of Jeanne's experience with this group of seamstresses using a reflexive and dialogical approach. This article is the fruit of this exercise. Both of us had previously collaborated in reflection on professional learning, and we have common interests in the realities of racialized women's groups and in feminist, anti-racist, and decolonial theoretical frameworks (Lorde, 1984; Mohanty, 2003; Vergès, 2019)

[3] We have coined the term "'in-between' place" to reflect the "ambivalence" (Young, 2005, p. 115) of the place of encounters, neither the home nor a public space . Also, "in-betweenness" is characteristic of decolonial feminism, and so this concept seemed coherent with our theoretical foundations.

suspend the obvious, to listen to alternative framing of reality, and to grapple with the comparative outcomes of multiple standpoints" (Gergen, 1999, p. 50). According to Gilbert and Sliep (2009), reflexivity is, in essence, relational as it occurs in a given context and is continuously reconstructed through the interaction between actors situated in space and time. Thus, as authors, we recognize that our differing social locations place us within complex and shifting power dynamics. Furthermore, as a discipline (here, social work) anchored in the "helping relationship," anti-racist and decolonial feminist social work approaches impel us to lean into these discomforts.

Consistent with the critical feminist work at the heart of this article, which seeks to challenge dominant and essentializing discourses about women's realities in particular, our interrelational reflective approach recognizes that perspectives on the world vary according to differences (of race, gender, class, sexuality, education, religion, ableism, etc.) and that these perspectives allow us to challenge rigid definitions of our experiences and purposes (Ellis et al., 2011). This reflective practice is consistent with what Chang (2016) called *interactive observation of the self*, a useful data-generating technique that provides access—through dialogue—to often elusive personal experiences such as emotions, motivations, and hidden or forgotten actions. Thus, through our dialogic exercise, we were able to "bring to the surface" what is often taken for granted, habitual (usual, expected), or even unconscious for each of us.

The data used to produce this article comes from three main types of materials: (a) information "found in the past" that allows us to reveal each person's positioning and motivations with regard to the alliance; (b) information "drawn from the present" that took the form of discussions between the two authors (6 meetings for a total of 15 hours) and served to generate the themes that constitute a basis for the article; and (c) a back-and-forth engagement with the literature. Indeed, while the primary material of this article is anchored in Jeanne's experience and in our dialogical discussions, the theoretical contributions—in particular, those related to decolonial feminism, but also the other themes at the heart of our exchanges (discussions)—have allowed us to deepen certain dimensions of the subjective analysis that occurred between us[4].

Breaking Down Dichotomies? Toward Developing a Decolonial Feminist Framework

Decolonial theory is based on the work of Latin American theorists such as Mignolo (1999, 2011), Escobar (2007, 2010), Dussel and Ibarra-Colado (2006), and Quijano (2000, 2007) and their critiques of eurocentric hegemonic patterns of knowledge and their claims of universality. "Decolonial theory can be seen as broadening non-[w]estern modes of thought of seeing and doing and demanding the acceptance of marginalized, different and alternative ontologies, epistemologies and world views" (Escobar, 2007, as cited in Manning, 2018, p. 313). Similarly, feminist theory has made generalizations based on experiences of white, western women, and women who do not fit this profile have been presented as "the Other" (Calas & Smircich, 2006). The work of the feminist Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1988, 2003) is significant as she showed how, for a long time, the reality of white, western, middle-class women was applied to women from all classes, races, religions, and parts of the world. The limited empirical engagement with marginalized, Indigenous women in the Global South has

[4] Note that this article is meant to be a dialogue and that it will sometimes switch from "we" to "I," and also to "she" when necessary. The authors' idea here is to "render" the different scales of our dialogue.

perpetuated this Otherness (Manning, 2018). Decolonial feminist theory engages us in debates to break down and complexify binary dichotomous analyses such as modern/traditional, us/them, victim/heroine. Therefore, Lugones (2007, 2008) called for dialogue with diverse groups of women in order to challenge liberal and white feminist paradigms that continue to dominate.

Complex Representation and Positionality

Decolonial feminist theory encourages us to re/think social work and engage with our neighbours to understand both their experiences and knowledge about sewing and their lived experiences. Following Manning (2018), we then advocate for a practice "that is morally engaged in ethical pursuits and questions of power" (p. 314). In addressing the complexities of representation and positionality, a decolonial feminist framework encourages reflexivity by inviting us to explore power relations and representational practices when engaging with women. Integrating decolonial feminist thought caused us to be honest about the motivations behind the initiative, as well as about the identities, positions, assumptions, and anxieties when creating and then leading the project (Manning, 2018). As Foley (2002) suggested, a decolonial feminist framework embraces a reflexive questioning of our position as re/presenter and an examination of power relationships. Thus, reflecting on the socially constructed nature of *self*—the self of all persons involved in the sewing alliance—is particularly important in the context of practice involving multiple axes of difference, inequalities, and geopolitics (Sultana, 2007).

Participants in Our Story: An Exercise in Positioning

Sewing is sometimes accused of confining women to "domestic ghettos" (Rogers, 1980, as cited in Guérin, 2017, p. 132) on the one hand, while being praised for its capacity to empower so-called third world women[5] through artisanal microenterprises on the other hand (Guérin et al., 2013). Sewing is also singled out as a privileged pastime of the western world but also is viewed as an action of feminist anti-capitalist resistance through the slow act of creation (Bain, 2016).

A brief moment here, to position ourselves and question these dichotomic definitions of sewing, in accordance with Mohanty's (2003) decolonial feminist advice about "defining our genealogies" (p. 125): I, Jeanne, followed an interest in sewing and seamstresses that began in my teenage years when I discovered sewing for its creative and liberating aspects. Thus, like many white, middle-class women, I was part of what has been called the *new domesticity* (Matchar, 2013; Padilla Carroll, 2016), which was motivated by a rejection of commodity capitalism to freely create by oneself by returning to so-called traditional ways of doing things (Matchar, 2013), while being rightly criticized for the often apolitical discourse linked to it.

Being a seamstress has been a defining aspect of my identity in many of my social circles, as I was often "the friend" who could make the custom dress, "the young person" who came to

[5] The term *third world women* (Mohanty, 2003) is used as an "analytical and political category" (p. 46). The choice of this term seeks to underline the connections of histories and struggles of women in the Third World while acknowledging the heterogeneity of social positions within it. In our first language (French), we would have used a term that could be translated as "women from the Souths," which better reflects the alliances, collaborations, and differences within that constructed category of community.

immigrant women's sewing groups, or "the one" who talked about embroidery with my literacy and francophone students.

The dozen other members of this sewing alliance were neighbours in the Montréal neighbourhood of Parc-Ex (as it is often familiarly called), as well as mothers, daughters, wives, and daughters-in-law. Some were Canadian citizens, but the majority were involved in a refugee-claim process in Canada and therefore, refugee claimants (mostly Indian-Punjabi Sikhs, some Indian Hindus). Some women had university degrees, but most had a high-school education. Nearly half of the women had minimal knowledge of English (a few basic words) and no knowledge of French; others spoke intermediate English, and only three also spoke French, making our exchanges multilingual encounters with English as the dominant language (a second language for Jeanne), but where Punjabi and Hindi were abundantly spoken. As Talwar (2018) proposed, it seems important to name these identity elements in order to highlight the multiple oppressions that a large majority of the women involved in the project faced (precarious status, linguistic isolation, lack of access to higher education, racism, lack of access to subsidized daycare, ineligibility for the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) financial assistance during COVID-19, etc.) without defining them solely on the basis of these oppressions. It was their skills as "seamstresses" or their willingness to develop an expertise to become seamstresses that brought us together: some were professional seamstresses, while some sewed as a hobby and others wanted to develop this expertise to earn income. Their citizenship status was not an admissibility criterion and was never formally queried

Threading Our Way Through

Sewing as a Political Place: Blurring the Boundaries of Private-Domestic-Invisible Work

> I remember walking down the stairs. There is this long, dark hallway and dozens of shoes in the doorway. "Please come." She invites me into one of the bedrooms. Her husband is sleeping in the bed. Or was he watching TV? I can't remember. I meet their son. There is a small corner with an armchair and a small table. Her sewing machine is on the same cabinet as the TV, right next to it. I think I understand why she invited me. The entrance to the apartment is not the entrance to her home. Her home is this room. She takes out a pack of masks. "Thank you, thank you," I tell her. "I really want to pay you. I am looking for money, you know," I add. She tells me, "No, no," and that she loves making masks and that she doesn't need money. She adds that, if I find money, "It's good, but if not, it does not matter."
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> —Jeanne, diary excerpt, December 21, 2020

The first time that I brought a sewing machine to one of the seamstresses stayed with me for a long time: Was I reproducing the domestic exploitation of the global, capitalist manufacturing sector?[6] Our lockdown situations were drastically unequal (especially in terms of living space, having children at home all the time, or access to financial assistance). I had a quiet, calm place to sew and had access to financial assistance (CERB) since my French-

[6] The sewing machines were brought to each person's home on my wheeled cart. I found them through my social network or on donation platforms, repaired them, and then took them to seamstresses' homes.

teaching job had been interrupted in the context of COVID-19. I did not seek (and never received) any remuneration from this project.

Yet the image of the "fatigue of the racialized body"(Vergès, 2019, p. 115 [translation by the authors]) haunted me: these women must have had better things to do than make cloth masks for an impromptu community initiative begun by a young white woman! While sewing in the garment-manufacturing industry has been reported as one of the top four employment sectors for refugee claimants in Canada (Lacroix, 2006), it seemed unfair that it was these women with this status who were performing sewing tasks as "volunteer work." I quickly associated sewing with a form of slavery for them. However, for me, sewing felt like liberation in that situation! Vergès (2019) allowed me to revisit this essentially binary analysis of our relationship to sewing: by wanting to "rescue" them (p. 32) from domestic labour, was I denying their freely expressed desire to sew?

I wanted to meet them, to create, to organize a resistance based on my, and several other women's, abilities in sewing, and they all told me that they wanted to help their neighbourhood, to create with their hands, to "free their disturbed mind," as many of them said, and to earn some money if possible. What if I tried to unite these apparent opposites? Was there a way for them to sew *and* earn some money? And who would be responsible for making that possible?

In the urgency of an improvised project, because I was accustomed to the ins and outs of funding and was fluent in English and French (oral and written), I alone took on the responsibility of seeking funding. A first grant of $5,000 came through quickly, allowing payment for the sewing of masks in the short term, and then other funds followed sporadically. Being conscious of the unstable employment conditions that have been particularly acute for women asylum seekers during COVID-19 (Hanley, 2020) and recognizing my limitations in creating an employability project from scratch, I realized that the project ended up as a financial support rather than a stable source of income[7]. Despite our different social situations, we decided to move forward together, according to our desires and our capacities. Like Lorde (1984), "we [chose] each other and the edge of each other's battles" (p. 118).

However, the decision to take on the fundraising role was uncomfortable for me, as it seemed to "invisibilize" the other seamstresses as I became the "face" of the alliance on online social and community networks. Negotiating my discomfort while doing this work was a challenge, and because of the health emergency, there was no time to discuss the roles and responsibilities of members of the alliance. In the imperfect context we were in (with no possibility of meeting in person and with different communication obstacles), I tried to make the alliance's work visible through my discussions, my presentations of our project, and my networking, thus highlighting the "continuity between housework and factory work"(Mohanty, 2003, p. 148). I tried to show the links between the local and the global, creating a "borderland" (Anzaldúa, 1999) between the factory and the living room, between private and public, making visible the too-often invisible seams. The masks were made in each of our homes but were distributed in the public space by community organizations in the neighbourhood. We were not a factory and had no intention of standardizing our practices, so the masks varied in size and colour. The presence of each seamstress was therefore perceptible behind each mask…

[7] The seamstresses later confided that the money for the masks was, for most of them, the first remuneration they had ever received, here in Canada or elsewhere.

The time it took to sew each item, the real costs of production including materials and tools, and the seamstresses themselves (who sometimes came to deliver their own production) were made known to our community through our project. This way of operating thus came to create a form of silent solidarity at a distance with many anonymized and invisibilized South Asian fashion-industry workers, some of whom had been laid off during the pandemic (Brydges & Hanlon, 2020; Kabir et al., 2021; Kyritsis et al., 2020)). While the precarious financial situations of community organizations too often put them in the position of choosing the lowest bidder, our project attempted to create a link between inequalities locally, and globally, through the sewn object: would an organization choose to buy cheaper, or would it find the funding to subsidize honourably paid work? Without claiming to bring about large-scale structural change, we made visible certain third-world-women workers (Mohanty, 2003) in the industry, here and elsewhere, through the physical sewn object, the fruit of a neighbour's work. This ended up being my partial and imperfect short-term strategy to negotiate my own position of power within the alliance. A position I had agreed to take on and which took me on, in a way: because of my knowledge of languages and my literacy with internet communication.

Sewing as a Place of Relationships Despite Isolation

> The playfulness that gives meaning to our activity includes uncertainty, but in this case the uncertainty is an openness to surprise.… We are not worried about competence. We are not wedded to a particular way of doing things. While playful we have not abandoned ourselves to, nor are we stuck in, any particular "world." We are there creatively
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> —Lugones (1987), p. 16)

A particularly challenging aspect of the project was its lack of fixed structure, which brought instability to our long-term planning. However, it was this fluidity that quickly bonded us, and we were connected by the masks and a WhatsApp group. We were constantly redefining ourselves: the involvement of the seamstresses who were present at the beginning of the project changed along the way in the face of new job offers. Some left the alliance and then returned during a layoff or the lockdown of one of their children due to school public-health measures. If we received a special order, new seamstresses would get involved. They were free to participate for as long as they wanted and were able to, and very short-term goals were set from there. The alliance thus developed at the pace of the seamstresses, a tempo that was often destabilizing for me, I confess, because we were unable to make long-term commitments due to the precariousness of their status.

Although it fuelled uncertainty, this lack of a "road map" or "success criteria" spurred a sense of "playful, loving world travel" (Lugones, 1987, p. 3). We discovered each other in the WhatsApp group, in our doorways, in a brief moment sharing tea in a living room amid scraps of fabric.

Soon, despite and thanks to our differences, we were sewing our own relationship like one sews a quilt, one piece at a time: a real "solidarity as a process and a work-in-progress" (de Jong, 2017, p. 157). A reciprocal affective bond was gradually established through our doorway meetings, which became emblematic of this in-between place where we were attempting to comply with public-health measures while acknowledging our need of a break

from isolation. In the time of COVID-19, Bardwell-Jones' (2017) words about the enticing dangerousness of borders have a particularly relevant tone:

> Homes can be transformed by recognizing the borderlands as an interactive place, which invite unknown and possibly dangerous encounters with differently situated others. These perilous spaces establish a sense of continuity between communities and enable social transformation to take place. (p. 159)

It is in this uncertain space of encounter that our bonds were created and that a deeper friendship between some of them was built over time: through short in-person conversations, phone calls to talk about perfect patterns, and exchanges of food, plants, or pictures of quilts and Punjabi fashion. The construction of this "pluralist friendship" (Lugones, 1995, p. 141), recognizing the plurality of our realities despite unequal social positions, was not spontaneous. It still requires constant and profound epistemological work, which is far from being finished.

"Through giving to each other, we learn to experience mutuality," (hooks, 2018, p. 164). This mutuality in the making allowed me to become the "supportive" neighbour who accompanies someone to a local organization to deal with housing issues, waits outside after someone else's interview in a garment factory, listens to confessions of stress before a refugee hearing, or discusses solutions for tensions with a schoolteacher. I was learning with humility about the daily lives of my neighbours in the context of a pandemic. I was able to witness their creative and inspiring strategies for connecting with other persons despite the pandemic. I was trying to act from my channels of power without acting "for" the other. I was learning to act from my channels of power without being totally paralyzed by white guilt. As one of the seamstresses said during a conflict-resolution meeting, when the women all agreed that "some stitches on the hats were not good" and that the work had to be redone, everything was going to be okay because "we are a circle. We are like family."

In other words, sewing offered us the possibility of being together not in a social-service or a customer-service relationship but in a relationship of neighbourliness, sharing, creativity, and aesthetic appreciation. (Yes, we did have fun making "beautiful" masks!) We remained connected by a similarity despite our differences in power: we all said we wanted to "do something" in the pandemic storm that was isolating us in our homes. Our masks became a symbol of an alliance, a "joint struggle" recognizing our differences and building on them (Lorde, 1984). This allowed us to connect to the outside world while remaining at home, to find an escape in the domestic confection of objects that would have the chance to move around and meet people, which we humans no longer had the possibility of doing. The masks, the lucky ones, could meet each other freely.

Discussion and Conclusion: (In)Visibility for Whom and Why

> Enter that space. Let us meet here.
>
> —hooks (1992), p. 343

These words have guided us in our proposal to enter into the space of sewing and also to enter into an (in)visible work of (im)migrant women. "Still (in)visible, the work of women?" ask Robert and Toupin (2018). While gains on this front have been made in recent years in Canada, the work of many women is still (in)visible and complex and it takes on multiple faces. This article is a contribution to making visible both the work of im/migrant women and also the sometimes "despised" occupation that is sewing.

The goal of this article was not to "speak for" but to bring forward the voices of an alliance of women through an "object": sewing. More specifically, our intention was to make visible an alliance that stemmed from Jeanne's initiative and has given rise to a collective process of creating masks during a pandemic and then to personal (for Jeanne) and dialogical (for Jeanne and Roxane) reflections. We acknowledge that we did not dive deeply into the problematic position of whiteness within the alliance. This was a conscious choice because the diverse discussions with seamstresses and neighbours did not foreground racial differences but rather centred differences in status within Canada: asylum-seeker versus citizen. We did not want to avoid the issue of race, which is an everyday source of both privilege and oppression, but decided to highlight that, in this situation, the hierarchy of power was profoundly determined by the continuum of precarity and security of status. Access to financial help, language classes, and subsidized work in Québec is reserved for people with permanent residency, and the mentioned elements were the central reasons for the development of the alliance.

And in the context of a pandemic, during which public-health authorities have imposed constraints that have unequally impacted many of the women in our alliance—who have (is it worth reiterating?) precarious migrant status—can sewing masks in the private sphere be seen as an act of resistance? Of resistance to isolation? Of resistance to a slide into hyper-precariousness? Can it become a daring symbol of their strategies to *sew their lives* into the fabric of Canadian citizenship? As some of the requests from seamstresses for recommendation letters for their refugee hearing has shown, however small this project may have been, it has come to symbolize an act of *strategic* resistance for many. Also, when seen in the larger contemporary history of decolonial struggles, Lindio-McGovern and Wallimann (2012)'s words guided our thoughts: "Neoliberal globalization is not a neutral process, it is gendered, and has exacerbated domestic and global social inequalities. Thus, a growing resistance against its destructive course and an active search for alternatives is in the making" (p. 1).

Vergès mentioned that a decolonial feminist approach aims to give "visibility to struggles, memories, histories, lives, sexualities [that] have been very important for oppressed peoples worldwide, and still [are]" (Gerber, 2020, para. 5). She also insisted on not losing sight of the fact that "visibility is also an element of capitalistic logic: things must be made visible to become objects and merchandise" (para. 5). It turns out to be essential to recognize that visibilization is a strategic move that is part of a dichotomous epistemology, even if we try to think in terms of continuity. What we decide to show or hide is also the result of a contextual analysis of what will be most beneficial in achieving our goal. Here, it is sewing as a form of social bonding through a diversity of positionings that is brought to light, casting shadows on the eternal "business of care" (para.19) that plagues this project. Once again, it is racialized women who sew and participate, not in "cleaning the world" (Vergès, 2019, p. 8) as in the cleaning industry but in "protecting the world" by making masks for others to have a "comfortable [and healthy] life" (p. 9). It is "bandage justice with rainbows" that has been applied to the oozing wounds inflicted by others, who are conspicuous as ever by their absence. In other words, in our analysis here, the desire to share the "beauty" of the alliance, the moments of connection in the ugliness of the world, have left the operative gendered and racialized system relatively unscathed. Precarious remuneration, based on the desire to help, was given, but without creating long-term stability. As a result, even though true and deep

friendships have been created, participants still only have access to underpaid jobs in the textile industry. The "lucky" ones who manage to find a job will contribute to the capitalist system of mass production of objects bought by other people—objects that they may be lucky enough to meet again in a second-hand store. Or perhaps the journey of global capitalism will take these textile items to "noble places," ending their days in a local landfill or shamelessly flooding second-hand markets on another continent (Brooks, 2013).

And yet, in spite of everything, when one rainy day I (Jeanne) received calls from several seamstresses to see if there was any fabric left to make leggings for themselves, while I myself was repairing a skirt, I said to myself that we still have the pleasure of stitching[8] despite the injustice of the world. And, humbly, that deserves to be honoured.

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[8] "Stitching," and not "sewing," is the word most commonly used by seamstresses. For the sake of clarity and of coherence with the scientific literature, "sewing" has been used throughout this article. The choice of "stitching" here is intentional: it acknowledges in the conclusion of the article the term used by the members of the collective.

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