

Wild Cane Basketwork: a successful case study

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Climate change, new power relationships and changes in economic paradigms are examples of issues that are challenges for contemporary society. Solutions should ensure different approaches are compatible, and it is from this perspective that we present the relationships between theory and practice that are being applied in the areas of design, the arts and crafts and management in the research and extension project being conducted by The Imaginary Laboratory, Federal University of Pernambuco, with the community of Ponta de Pedras in the municipality of Goiana, Pernambuco, Brazil. The aim of this article is to discuss how the concepts of sustainability, competitiveness and innovation, and methodologies for developing artifacts can be applied in the relationship between design and a handicraft environment, by means of a case study on an Artisan Community of Cestaria Cana-Brava (Wild Cane Basketwork). Situated on the northern coast, Ponta de Pedras is frequented by holiday-makers while cottage fishing and the sugarcane industry are the two main sources of income. In this location, the wicker is of Wild Cane fiber, which is abundant in the region and dates back to the age when Brazil was colonised and this served as an argument for the design strategy which in partnership with other institutions made it feasible to mount a project focused on generating income for the wives and daughters of fishermen. As Bonsiepe states, the designer observes the world from the perspective of projectuality, thus making it possible to experiment anew with regard to the use of products, signs and services, contextualized by the socio-cultural dynamics. In this case in which the concept of competitiveness and innovation of the design included enhancing the quality of the product and the production processes, identifying new uses, aggregating new materials. Already supported in Canclini when he claims that modern development does not suppress traditional cultures, the concept of culture and sustainability has been strengthened by giving value to local references. The model developed is focused on the community and the product, and is supported on the axes of management, production, communication, and design and market, which are permeated with sustainability issues. With this approach, the workshops were supervised by the technical team from the laboratory The Imaginary which, in order to consolidate the group, took hold of concepts, methods and tools for management so as to reinforce a methodological participative strategy. Appropriate housekeeping resource for the local reality was set aside and improved the processes and quality of the physical space. In parallel, the Watchful Eye method was adapted to prototype patterns, visual identity and support materials for communication. The results indicate that Cestaria Cana-Brava is today recognized for its quality and diversity of products, group organization and ability to coordinate and communicate, and is therefore one of the successful cases of the Brazilian handicraft industry, thus confirming the importance of bringing public and private efforts together in order to achieve sustainable solutions.