

Unweaving the Technique: Embroidering Autonomous Landscapes

Carolina Martínez Tolosa, Héctor Tabares Rodríguez and Aura Cruz Aburto,
collaborating as Diseño Detonante Experimental Studio

Corresponding Author Email

didetonante@gmail.com

ORCID

Carolina Martínez Tolosa <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-5764-9744>

Héctor Tabares Rodríguez <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-1076-2786>

Aura Cruz Aburto <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4175-7240>

How to cite

Carolina Martínez Tolosa, Héctor Tabares Rodríguez and Aura Cruz Aburto, 'Unweaving the Technique: Embroidering Autonomous Landscape', *Footprint Delft Architecture Theory Journal*, vol. 18, no. 2 (2024): 117-126, <https://doi.org/10.59490/footprint.18.2.7724>.

Submitted 30 June 2023

Revised 20 April 2024

Accepted 03 July 2024

Published 10 February 2025

Abstract

Through a critical experience of reconstruction at the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, Oaxaca, Mexico, we present various ontological components that manifest as specific cosmotechnics of this territory. These cosmotechnical manifestations enunciate singularity, resistance and emancipation.

Keywords:

Resistance, emancipation, agency, territory, recognition, ritual



We see techniques as potential agentic actions capable of revealing their own conceptions of the world, and at the same time revealing what we ignore as we speak from different places. As *Diseño Detonante*, we wish to discover and spark other narratives, starting from the connection of multiple realities, territories, fictions and actions.

In 2017, we travelled to Mexico City to discuss our short film *Armadillo*.¹ But upon arrival, an earthquake redirected our journey to the earthquake-stricken Isthmus of Tehuantepec in Oaxaca. Here, amid a history of colonial dispossession, the indigenous Binnizá and Ikoote peoples – primarily the women among them – resist and envision alternative futures. The six months we spent in Oaxaca produced a documentary, *Lumbre en el Viento* (Fire in the wind), which explores the interwoven territories shaped by the affections and diverse life experiences inherent in the relationships, crafts and daily lives of the Tehuantepec communities.²

These images, taken from *Lumbre en el Viento*, represent part of the plural ontologies, relations and technologies from which we will continue to challenge dominant narratives of progress. We are thankful to the strength and collective knowledge of APIIDTT and other communities that continue to resist the unrelenting forces of neo-colonial dispossession.³

Lumbre en el viento reflects the complexity of cosmotechnics, where relationships with life, memories and worldviews of the territories are encoded and decoded. Yet at the same time, these relationships must also be connected and mutually transformed in order to be situated in the now.

Agency

The word 'indigenous' is not synonymous with lack, ignorance or obsolescence, nor does it correspond to the 'past'. On the contrary, it is the present multiplicity of knowledge that transforms itself and transforms the present, and mobilises its own worlds and territories. After the earthquake destroyed their villages and the kitchens that sustain their sovereignty, the APIIDTT proposed, before rebuilding walls and structures, to start by rebuilding the connections within the communities and their territories. It was the women who led the rebuilding process; by coming together, sharing and joking, they wove the necessary resistances to create their own counter-narrative, against colonising and patriarchal logics. Through their agency they recognised their own community wealth and power, preserving their dignity and identity.



Territory

Mud, water and straw were the building materials in these communities until the arrival of concrete, which, in conjunction with a narrative of progress, overtook both ways of building and ways of thinking. Today in the isthmus people use the term 'material' when referring to concrete, as if concrete is the only building material possible. This idea was challenged when the locals decided to rebuild their kitchens using traditional adobe construction technologies. Many hands together mixed the earth, straw and water that came to form their kitchens. This also serves as a metaphor, reminding the people that territory is not only a physical place where we build cities or extract resources. Instead, territory weaves natural and human contexts, and is inherently tied to the people who inhabit it.



Recognition

The indigenous women worked together to bridge some of the fault lines caused by the earthquake, while at the same time opening new fault lines through their resistance to hegemonic, Western concepts of progress. Out of the smog that privileges Western ideals over indigenous ways of knowing, this recognition was a self-affirming act of collective healing.



Ritual

Rituals are inherently tied to culture, and are what preserve the cultural wealth of a people. Ritual is what preserves a people and allows for survival. The Global North has imposed a way of thinking based in the 'rational', which deems indigenous rituals as uncivilised and even dirty or backwards. Although Western culture has tried to erase indigenous peoples' cultures, languages, and histories, the people have survived. Ritual lives on and preserves memory and connections with territory. Ritual is a form of resistance. Through ritual, indigenous people assert: 'we are here!'



Notes

1. Available at: <https://techniquesjournal.com/im-explosion/>.
2. Diseño Detonante, *Lumbre en el Viento*, 2017, Oaxaca, Mexico. Length: 40 min., <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VBPoumnPuC8&t=423s>.
3. APIIDTT is the 'Asamblea de Pueblos Indígenas del Istmo en Defensa de la Tierra y el Territorio' (Assembly of Indigenous peoples of the isthmus in defence of land and territory).

Biography

Hector Tabares Rodriguez is a filmmaker-designer. He says: questioning is the practice that has taught me the most, mainly because it destabilises and forces me to create other inhabitable bodies, like changing my skin while articulating experiences. I am interested in critical dialogues, dialogues that can be contaminated with other perceptions and knowledge.

Carolina Martínez Tolosa is a designer-filmmaker. She is mobilised and passionate about the ontological, political and transformative dimension of design, with a strong desire to situate design in a constellation of sociology, psychology, history and other knowledges and insights from outside the academy. She likes to imagine disobediences, and weave realities and fictions among others. She believes that caring practice is a powerful way to make theory.

Aura R. Cruz Aburto has a bachelor's in architecture from Tec de Monterrey, a master's degree in design, and she is a candidate for a doctorate in philosophy of science at National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). Aura considers herself a designer-philosopher, between art, design and philosophy. Her main research interest is in the power of emancipation of creative practices, such as design and art.