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Weaving Textile Futures

Indigenous Resistance and Intellectual Property

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Indigenous textiles are objects and material culture creations often exposed and subjected to plagiarism by international brands. The concept of intellectual property is not created for, or considering indigenous dynamics and social structures. This article argues, through the study of a Mixtec community in Oaxaca, Mexico, how new concepts should be outlined. Through the use of ethnography and the anticipation of plagiarism, a community requests the work of an anthropologist to backup their textile knowledge and allow for a precedent to be set where the particular know-how is detailed as part of the Collective Intellectual Property of the community.

WEAVING AND WRITING: INTRODUCTION

On January 2015, textile plagiarism took the Internet by storm raising the question of how intellectual property should be considered, when the community of Santa María Tlahuitoltepec Mixe, in the Sierra Norte region of Oaxaca, announced that Isabel Marant, a French fashion designer, had plagiarized their blouse. Through a post on social media, the news of the plagiarism of the blouse started to circulate. A Mexican public figure blew the whistle on the issue by tweeting a picture of the blouse in a store.

This very controversial case turned the interest of the public towards the questions of legal protection of indigenous textiles. The authorities of Tlahuitoltepec released a statement in which they asked Marant to face the community and explain what happened, as well as demand the recognition of the authorship of the designs (Castillo 2017). Marant only denied the situation, arguing that she just "came up" with the design on her own, and that the similarities were merely a coincidence. It was not until Antik Batik, another European brand, sued Marant for plagiarizing their design, that Marant admitted to have taken "inspiration" from the Mixe blouse. Indigenous communities are not considered as legal entities, and therefore could not present a binding legal claim against Marant, unlike Antik Batik. In other words, it was not until Marant was faced with a legal claim that could actually get her in trouble, that she decided to side with the "lesser evil", and say that her inspiration came from an indigenous community, which had no way of legally prosecuting the issue.

This has been the case over and over again, with brands like Zara, Mango, and more recently, Carolina Herrera, dismissing very obvious accusations of plagiarism as "inspiration", if they even acknowledge them at all. Why would they respond differently, if they are not pressured to? Surely, they would not dare to plagiarize each other so bluntly. Anthropologists ask why. Some other examples include a 2019 plagiarism from Nike of guna textiles, or cases of Zara and Mango using Andean patterns in their clothing collections. These cases go beyond Mexican borders, since indigenous communities and traditional patterns exist all around the globe. The intention is to focus on communities within a specific territory, Mexico, to comment on specific relationships to particular legal systems and the relevance of ethnography within a specific framework.

The popularity of the case sparked, brought a wave of indignation from civilians, and the case was highly mediatized. The community of Santa María Tlahuitoltepec Mixe did not try to persecute the matter through legal apparatuses of any kind, at least in the beginning.

María del Carmen Castillo, from the Mexican National Institute of Anthropology and History, was entrusted with the task of creating an anthropological expert document of the blouse, for she had worked in the community for her master's research. She agreed, under the condition that two people from the community should be involved in the process, and that the document would stick to the general terms set forth by the statement released by the authorities (Castillo 2017). The document explains how the blouse is used in different contexts, how it has changed through the years, and how it represents a part of the identity of the community. The relevance of this action is present in the involvement of an anthropologist in using ethnographic data in a request the community had.

Particularly, this issue helps us see how a community can stand by themselves and be heard. With help from academia and institutions in Oaxaca like the Textile Museum, the authorities of Tlahuitoltepec found places to amplify their message.

It is important to consider certain things to understand how this article is written. "Indigenous" is a term with various connotations and of debated pertinence, particularly for the groups of people it attempts to describe. The term is used through the length of this paper as an operative term in order to adhere to international legislation, and to maintain a homogenous concept line through the entire piece. Also, although there are techniques and textile descriptions, this analysis draws from original ethnography to generate a reflection on a wider topic, framing the issue through a specific case study. This means that not all reflections or considerations apply only to the context of San Pablo Tijaltepec

The textile industry is known as an ever-changing parade of colors, seasons, and styles. It would be impossible to pin-point the first time one culture copied another, or when textile plagiarism started, much as it is impossible to identify the first racist comment ever spoken. Thus, it is not the purpose of this paper to discuss the moral implications of textile plagiarism, or to enlighten on yet another cultural analysis of textile traditions. It is, rather, an observation of how anthropology can be both a tool and a means to shed light on issues that concern the communities so often portrayed in ethnography. Ethnographic practice can be taken to set a framework of actions to contribute in response to what these communities ask of our discipline. Ethnographic praxis in this case presented an opportunity to generate knowledge for the community to potentially use should a case of plagiarism present itself. Also, to have written accounts of the community's textile tradition as part of their heritage.

PLAGIARISM ON THE WORLD STAGE

"It happened again. It will keep happening." As the story of a famous designer brand from New York City that had plagiarized indigenous textile designs for her new 2018 clothing line broke through social media, people took to voicing that there should be a patent to protect those designs. I could only think of how we are not thinking about this issue of intellectual property from the core. Anyone who has taken a trip through the Mixtec Highlands of Oaxaca should be aware of the many turns and complications the road confronts the travelers with. After many trips up and down those mountains, I learned to identify the territory I traveled through. The *Nudo mixteco / Mixtec Knot* sets the stage for a complex matter surrounding indigenous communities and intellectual property, very much like those intertwined mountains in Oaxaca.

Since that case in 2015, many new accounts of plagiarism and outrage have come out to light, but this is still cited as an important turning point for researchers and actions that have

taken place since. Movements through social media spheres have taken action in creating maps, and documentation on plagiarism cases. The use of the internet, and discussions on social media, have taken a central role as a tool to communicate and learn.

Ethnography and Social Media Play a Role

The Tlahuitoltepec case brought to the attention of the Mexican public the issue of textile plagiarism and the evident lack of legal action that can be taken by the communities. It also rose questions of whether communities want or should take legal actions, sparking debates of how to avoid this from happening. The existence of an ethnographic document helped to back up what the community explained regarding the history and cultural significance of their blouse for having a documented and detailed account.

Through social media, many communities have raised their voice in their own terms against these cases. Every time it happens, the social media attention cycle starts with groups of people who are enraged and discuss the issue over and over. The idea of cultural appropriation, textile plagiarism, giving credit, and involving the communities in market processes are debated in online conversations. However, the sensible conclusion is always the same: there is no legal way to take action, there is no framework through which plagiarism of textiles from indigenous communities can be considered as something to prosecute. Also, the interest of how each community chooses to handle each case varies, sparking a discussion of how far non-indigenous activists can or should go in advocating for indigenous groups.

Community dynamics are changing, and so are communication strategies. The idea of having platforms to voice such happenings available to a larger audience is important in the sense that it generates new places to discuss what goes on inside these communities when plagiarism happens.

Figure 1. Woman embroidering in San Pablo Tijaltepec. © Amapola Rangel, 2018.

EMBROIDERING AND RESISTING

In the way we usually imagine indigenous groups, they are undeniably linked to clothing, music, dances, rituals, and artisanal productions of ceramics and textiles, that help identify them as a social group. We can all be amazed at the ability of women who sit with a backstrap loom tied to their waist and skillfully create wonderful pieces of colorful yarn. This practice can also portray, in a romanticized way, a continuity of customs that is not reflecting reality. Indigenous communities are often celebrated by the traditions that link them to the past, but not for how those traditions are inserted in their present realities (De Avila 1997). The global market values these colorful pieces of clothing without considering the life conditions, or the significance those textiles have for the communities that create them (Lechuga 1990; Stresser-Pean 2016). The particular transmission of knowledge is a relevant act of socialization in indigenous communities, making textiles a complex item of clothing, that represents far more than a need to cover the body. Some authors (Makovicky 2020) reject the traditional splits of mind (technique) and body (creation), considering both to be part of a whole, meaning that textiles draw from both the ideas that are portrayed within the fabric, and the social context that created them. The know-how, the embroidery technique and aesthetic distribution of elements, is learned and passed down from generation to generation. However, there is always room for change. Just as I do not wear the same

clothes my grandmother wore in her youth, nor do the women of Tijaltepec wear the same style of blouse as their grandmothers did. It drives from the same knowledge, but the elements adapt to what people want to portray at the time. Textiles are dynamic elements of material culture.

Embroidery in textiles has a particular significance, depending on the context and the different designs that are used (Santos Briones and Pérez-Tellez 2015). In Tijaltepec, textiles can have a particular symbolism in representing cultural aspects of social life. Not only is the act of embroidering a space of social exchange, but the embroidery itself can represent diverse aspects of cultural elements. For example, a common design represented in blouses is the deer, which is an important figure in Mixtec history, and local fauna. Also, many of the designs represented in the sleeves show the rivers, the mountains, and other local flora. Textiles are more than clothing. They "[…] represent the border between the individual and the social," (Turner 2012, 468). Designs and textile aesthetics are both fixed and negotiated with society, for it marks gender, sexual, cultural, and social differentiations, at the same time that they include individual expressions of identity. In indigenous communities, the concept of cloth is a vast and complicated one, that covers various aspects of identity and knowledge (Lechuga 1990).

Textiles and clothing are part of the identity of indigenous groups, but also represent a source of income for families in these communities. Anthropologists have described textiles traditions from around the world, focusing on technique and significance of this type of clothing (Lechuga 1990). However, a problem has risen outside the limited audience that reads academic papers. Textiles, more than mere crafts, are visual testimonies of time, space, and invention; they share relationships to what was, and what could be. Once inserted into a market, they become merchandise and commodities, desired objects derooted from their contexts and resignified through agency and invention (Appadurai 1986; Green 1999). This is where plagiarism and property become relevant: textile knowledge belongs to entire communities, not individuals. In today's market, the textiles are undervalued and are not considered as the particular know-how that they are. This also leads to the loss of a tradition, specially in favor of more marketable designs or embroidery techniques that can be more profitable related to market demand. Anthropology, however, also has an important application in describing these textiles, and in giving them a revalued status on an economic market (Escalona 2016; De Avila 1997).

San Pablo Tijaltepec

Within the Mixtec Highlands of Oaxaca, San Pablo Tijaltepec is a community of Mixtec people with an important textile history. While walking around the town square, one would see many women walking around, wearing an embroidered blouse and colorful skirts, adorned by beaded necklaces. The main panel in the front of the blouse will depict animal shapes in a sort of "negative" embroidery, generated through the technique known as *pepenado fruncido*, which consists in generating small lines in the fabric, and intertwining them through yarn. It creates a canvas that opens way for images of all sorts to be created by the women of Tijaltepec.

Figure 2. Blouse from San Pablo Tijaltepec. © Amapola Rangel, 2018.

The blouse is composed of four panels of embroidery: two in the front, united by a thick line of weaved yarn; and two for the sleeves, one on each side. The front panels usually portray animals, that used to be stylized images of local fauna, and can now be copied from images in books, magazines, or the internet. Some even include words or dates to mark when the blouse was created. Others include traces of older designs, in the form of houses, eagles or flora representations. Common animals to be represented here are deer, chickens, and eagles. However, with this new way of copying images from different places, one can find giraffes, caricature dogs, rhinos, or different types of fish. This means that now it is not necessary for the embroidery to reflect local fauna. For the sleeves, most people include geometric designs, or big flowers, also copied from various detailed sources.

Textile history and memory in the community go back to the times that were spent living between the valley and the mountains, represented through the lines that are embroidered to mark a path in each panel. It would be easy to fall into common arguments of how textiles preserve traditions, again linking them to the past. However, the blouse is not as it used to be, and neither is the skirt or most of the other elements. There has been change.

Many communities in the area do not wear embroidered clothes anymore. Although textiles are still made and appreciated, people wear commercial, imported clothing. However, Tijaltepec's people are proud of their blouses, and the attire the women wear. A common

sight anywhere in the community is to see women embroidering or assembling new blouses while caring for their animals, taking a break from household chores, or when they return from working in the field. There is a social and cultural relevance to keep making these blouses, as they have become an element of identity for the community. The continued relevance of textiles in Tijaltepec has to do with innovation, with how change has been made through time, allowing a tradition to live on.

BEFORE IT HAPPENS: ANTICIPATE A POSSIBILITY

The people in San Pablo Tijaltepec started to see their blouse being sold in heavy commercial places, like Oaxaca City, while following the media cases of other communities and their plagiarized textiles. They began to plan how to avoid that to happen to them, to find a way to anticipate a plagiarism. One initial thought was to restrict selling the items, but that harmed families' income and other aspects of commercialization. In the process of thinking how to proceed, someone suggested that the authorities should look for an anthropologist who could research and write about the textiles in the community. Although with a different purpose, originally to produce an anthropology expert document, my field work began there.

"We want you to help us create a way to protect what is ours before something happens to it," said the President of the San Pablo Tijaltepec community on my first visit. They intended for me to generate an anthropological expert document, where I established some cultural and technical aspects of the embroidery of the blouse to have as a background in case a plagiarism happened. In recent years, the blouse of Tijaltepec has been exposed to more market demand, which led to the creation of new collectives, and groups of women to sell their blouses in bigger cities. This, besides providing a new source of income for families, has brought internal disputes over how to prevent that their blouse should follow the same fate as other textiles, like the one from Santa Maria Tlahuitoltepec. "We are worried because maybe someone will want to steal it [the embroidery], and take [the blouse] away to make copies of it."

Change and Continuity

"I remember my mother wearing only little animals, because it was so hard to get the thread and it took so much time. They only made a little strip, not like today were young women make large designs. They use a lot of materials. It was not like that when I was little." Nadia is an elderly woman who frequently invited me into her smoke-filled kitchen. She taught me how to say many words and small phrases in Mixtec, because she hardly speaks Spanish. We had a fun relationship, where we only half understood each other with words, and the other half through drawings and translations. She drew designs she remembered in my little notebook, and helped me with explaining to other elders why my research was important. She explained many times how the blouse and the *nahua*, or skirt, had changed through the years. It was important to her that I understood that it was not always as it is today.

Textiles are accompanied by a mystic air of being settled and static, of drawing patterns from an unimaginable amount of knowledge gathered from the past, as if one of those threads could extend to the earliest memories of humankind. However, as mentioned above, most of the people reading this will not be wearing the same clothes their grandparents wore

back in their time. Fashion, style, and dress needs change. These aspects of material culture respond to social needs and trends, which in turn reflect particular issues of the social context in which clothes are made and used. "[Clothing] allows for a great possibility of construction, color and pattern formation, which gives [...] an almost infinite possibility of communication." (Schneider and Weiner 1989, 2) Considering clothing as a way to transmit cultural ideas, it is important to also see them through their changes, in a way to reflect how the society from which they emerge, has changed as well. If this is true for Western-based industrialized societies, it can also be true within indigenous communities.

Figure 3. Woman packing up to leave after the Day of the Dead festivities. © Amapola Rangel, 2018.

Roy Wagner (2016) explained how innovation and convention of cultural meanings and traits are a hand-in-hand process. The author explains that convention can only happen through a process of change, and that invention is achieved through combining context in convention, that makes particular traits a collective entity. In this particular case, both invention within embroidery imagery and the convention of adapting and creating new images to set in those panels, generate a continuum allowing creativity, adaptation, and re-invention of design to maintain the craft a living and used practice.

In short, the mere act of adapting textiles to new tastes and necessities, very much like clothing in general, keep certain things alive. In the early 1990's, the blouses in Tijaltepec were decorated with thin strips of embroidery, probably seven centimeters tall. The images that were represented were of local animals, in a geometrical style that allowed for many figures to be embroidered in the same strip. Each blouse could contain about twelve animals in the front panels of the blouse. However, today each panel portrays one large figure with

much more detail than before. In my opinion, this is also something that makes it harder to copy or reproduce in industrial-level. The type of embroidery and the designs are complex to grasp or program within a machine. However, with a growing standardized taste in outside consumers, a pattern could be established and replicated, if not in the same technique, probably with the same aesthetic elements, meaning that, although not all elements are vulnerable to mass reproduction, the main image and composition of the blouse is actually exposed to plagiarism.

FRAMING THE LOCAL WITHIN THE GLOBAL: INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) was established in 1967 and counts 193 member states. Though an analysis of its composition, it is evident that the little-to-none indigenous representation limited the knowledge and inclusion of indigenous concerns for intellectual property. This including the idea of knowledge as a collective entity, and how, even if they are immersed in commercial settings, not all products are created under the same logics. Perhaps this is the reason why intellectual property is still considered as it was when it was invented: considering property as an individual and fixed asset, without considering the collectiveness that constitutes certain social groups, or the fact that knowledge changes through time.

Textiles vary according to what the social group creating them desires to transmit. Since they respond to cultural traits, they change with time and with generations of people who transmit the knowledge to the next one. This is a total opposite to intellectual property at its core. Innovation in this legal aspect implies a new artifact or design, but the complexity of textile production is that there are no two textiles alike. Each one is a particular creation. If we were to take intellectual property to its core, it would mean that each and every embroidered piece should be registered, and prevented from plagiarism through a particular and specific protection. This is not only impossible to do in indigenous communities, it is not practical, since there are so many new textiles being fabricated every day. Therefore, the idea of protecting the know-how and a particular style could be a way to express the idea that textile knowledge belongs to the community through which it emanates. However, this would leave little room for innovation, since it would imply that knowledge and style are drawn from this invisible thread that can be traced to the beginning of time.

The work to be done by anthropologists is vital in this uncertain field of international law. Ethnographic methods can be used to generate documentation drawn from the communities, and include them in procedings to adapt legal structures and definitions. The ethnographic method provides a way for academia to contribute with knowledge and examples of what has been done before, and a way to document what communities express in their desire to make it known that this know-how belongs to them. It is also a way to signal what goes on during these situations, and an opportunity for the information to reach other audiences.

The Individual versus the Collective

In the coasts of Panama and Colombia, in the region of Guna Yala, the Guna indigenous groups has achieved something that is an example of what can be made in a direction to solve this problem. The Regulating Law No. 20 of 2000 (Asamblea Legislativa

2000) states that the indigenous groups of Panama are recognized under the law as creators of Collective Material Culture. This law and this concept allowed the National Guna Congress to set forward a decree to protect their textile designs, called molas, after a big case of plagiarism in the 1980s (Marks 2014). Molas are woven panels, embroidered with appliqué reverse technique, that illustrate aspects of ritual or social life, flora, fauna, and other elements of Guna life.

This is an exemplary case because under the decree that protects the molas, the intellectual property is granted to the indigenous groups as a whole, and not to particular entities. Also, the law foresees changes and adaptations in designs. The Ruling of the Use of the Collective Right of "Mola Kuna Panama" (Ministerio de Comercio e Industrias n.d.), explains that designs are not static and are subjected to innovations and changes that do not change their legal status as property of the indigenous group. Anthropologists and lawyers of Guna ascent helped in the adaptation of this law to the customs and needs of the indigenous group (Marks 2014). Under this context, the owner of a luxury brand, Franklin Panama, whom I met during my time in Panama, sought for years to obtain a permit to reproduce molas in luxury fabrics and silk for their products. The owner personally negotiated with the Guna National Congress and obtained permission to reproduce molas, under the condition of giving a significant share of the profits to the Congress, which they use to encourage mola creation in their communities.

Figure 4. Guna woman finishing a mola in the streets of Panama City. © Amapola Rangel, 2017.

This law is clearly not perfect, because while walking in Panama City one will encounter hundreds of resellers, stores that use molas in their products, and markets that sell other household items, with molas embedded without recognition of who made them or what they are, even. The law protects molas against reproduction, but it does not state anything regarding the use of the mola once the Guna women have sold it. In these markets, one can also find textiles from Guatemala, Mexico, Colombia, and Peru, to name a few. The Guna people have achieved the determination of the terms under which they will commercialize their textiles, giving them a unitary and identity value, all in favor of the indigenous group. Tourism in Panama sparked the interest and the tourism-targeted commerce of textiles (Marks 2014; Martinez Mauri 2014), which in turn, placed textiles in a sort of danger regarding their usage in the market. The mercatilization of identity and indigeneity causes schisms in communities, regarding how they should be sold, at what price, and other competition issues that come with the selling of these products (Escalona 2016). In the case of Panama, this represents an issue because of high rates of migration to the city and the distinction of communication of the region of Guna Yala, as opposed to Panama City. This was mediated by the law, and with the works of anthropologists that have worked in the area and have published anthropological studies on the textiles, promoting to a wider audience what they are and what they represent.

WIPO and Indigenous Communities

Plagiarism of indigenous textiles has been a problem that has grown in different countries, taking internal problems with law-making and legal proposals about indigenous communities to an international level (Castillo 2017). Each country manages this situation differently, but it is now part of a generalized discussion on social media spheres related to cultural institutions, academic circles, and people interested in textiles, that they are endangered and that laws must be made in their favor. The application of anthropological analysis in the legal system can be a key tool to attempt to mediate between indigenous communities and a system that was not designed to consider them. Legally, there must be more background to a legislation on the protection of textiles than a simple vague idea. There needs to be consultation to the communities and an understanding of the complexity of what textiles represent. Ethnography can be the tool through which these consultations can be relevant and adapted to the context as needed.

The World Intellectual Property Organization [WIPO] specifies that, in order to register traditional crafts, there are two major concepts: a collective brand, and a certification brand (WIPO 2016). Collective brands must have one owner, which can be a company or a cooperative, and they are characterized for having a specific geographical origin, and a specific material and production technique. This could be considered a tool for registration and protection of indigenous textiles, but it does not consider that textiles traditions and designs do not have one owner, and this scheme would leave out other cooperatives that do not fall under the registry. This would, in theory, make illegal practice that belongs to past and future generations of communities or ethnic groups, that are also not located in one specific place at all times. What about those who migrate to a different country or city? Are they not as owners of their traditions and therefore entitled to reproduce them? An anthropological approach would consider factors such as migration and relations between

communities when planning a way to adapt intellectual property to the need of indigenous groups.

Figure 5. Women share a moment to embroider while at the local market. © Amapola Rangel, 2018.

The other proposal for protection is a certification brand, which is exemplified with the production of molas in Panama, and it involves the fact that there should be a certificate of authenticity given out with "original" molas to avoid imitations. During my fieldwork in Panama in December 2017, I observed the commerce of these textiles and talked with women selling them in different areas of the city. While in any market in Panama, one can see Guna women all over, selling and sewing molas. This, to any anthropologist, would make them "authentic," and they do not hand out any such certificate, because they are restricted by the Cultural authorities and are very difficult to acquire. Guna women who migrate to the city for educational or economic opportunities do not give out these certificates, but that does not make their piece any less authentic. In a way, it comes down to what is considered authentic in terms of origin – where it comes from and who made it –, and what can be considered authentic through the legal system – whether it has a certificate or not.

Both the collective and the certification brand models, much like origin denominations and other legal figures, are constructed in what already exists as legislation for protecting goods in the market. These categories exist under the concept of intellectual property, but have proved to be insufficient to protect traditions and knowledge from indigenous communities around the world.

"IT IS A PART OF EVERYONE": COLLECTIVENESS AND ETHNOGRAPHY

Anthropology is a collective endeavor. It requires the ethnographer to be in touch with different people, to describe through different perspectives, to think through different authors, to explain ideas to different audiences. Textiles are also collective elements of culture. They drive from knowledge that is transmitted from one generation to another. Although each textile is an individual and unique piece, they also reflect changes in social structure, cultural continuums, and sociopolitical practice. Textiles anticipate, especially when we consider through ethnography how the piece itself speaks of the context where it was created, and how it can set into action a possible future. Just as the women of San Pablo Tijaltepec share their embroidery with each other, I now share the importance of ethnography with this audience, to represent and exemplify why our method is relevant.

Figure 6. Women of Tijaltepec gathered around the plaza. © Amapola Rangel, 2019.

Ethnography in this case represents a tool, in the form of a document, that the people of Tijaltepec can have and use at their convenience. Anthropology and its different fields can provide perspectives through which to take on a complex issue like intellectual property. Considering this, Legal Anthropology can provide a framework where legal documents are contextualized through implementation in indigenous communities. It is here where we can ask ourselves why the current system has failed to provide a proper concept that might be

useful in protesting or acting against textile plagiarism. After considering all past happenings, we can consider what is missing from the narrative. It might be a little obvious, but the answer is: the communities.

TOWARDS COMMUNITY-CENTERED DISCUSSIONS

Instead of trying to accommodate indigenous logics within existing paradigms, legal frameworks should generate new concepts that can be inserted into legislation regarding intellectual property, but that are proposed from the communities, and not the other way around. Legal frameworks are not designed or settled through considering what these communities have to say for themselves. It is important that this happens in order to provide more context and possibilities when generating change. It also has to do with how legal hegemony works, with an industry-oriented society proposing legal statutes for a general population within a determined geographical setting, without considering how diverse societies that might live within that territory operate under different logics. Anna Tsing uses the term *scalability* (2015) to define how to use the preserve the same framework in new dimensions of applicability. Considering this, it would be useful to generate ethnographies in the local level, an use them to generate a more comprehensive macro legal framework. The idea being that considering how textiles and material culture operate, there can be new possibilities to name types of "property". Leaving the Political Anthropology discussion and criticism of the State for another day, it is important to set the focus on diversity. Ethnography situates different communities within their nation-state context, in this case, Mexico. This also sets the stage for new proposals directly from the communities, towards the larger legal apparatus.

In Tijaltepec the narrative of the blouse, of the know-how to the embroidery and technique, is that it belongs to everyone. Women exchange embroidered pieces to copy, or to be finished by somebody else. Textiles are not private. They are public, they are part of what makes the community a whole. I do not believe that at this point I can set forth the answer to my question by introducing a proper term, but inserting the idea of *Collective* Intellectual Property into the discussion might be a first step into using ethnography to generate and propose these concepts.

Every textile is different. Every blouse is created to represent whatever its creator decided to include. It is part of a personal decision of style and design, but of a collective generation of aesthetic and taste. It is part of what constitutes a community's heritage, and passed-down know-how, but each generation adapts it to what is relevant to them. Where to draw the line? There is no proper way of knowing how the blouse will look like in a few years or the next decades, but ethnography can help us draw a line towards those futures, anticipating and tending to the need to make the world know what the people of San Pablo Tijaltepec do, and how their textiles belong to them.

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NOTES

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1. The few names that are mentioned are changed to protect the integrity of my original sources, and I did not use frontal photographs of people in the community to protect their identities and personal wishes. Wider shots of events were authorized for all academic and research purposes related to my stay in the community by authorities and the people in the first plains.

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