

Through the eyes of the heart: My woven embodied learning of Jolobil and Lekil Kuxlejal

Keywords

Corazonar, Embodiment, Heart, Sentipensar, Weaving.

Modern-colonial views from the Global North overemphasise the mind for knowledge production and sense-making over the different dimensions of the body. In the Global South, different onto-epistemologies recognise that understanding goes beyond the mind like sentipensar and corazonar. This presentation discusses the meaningful insights from learning backstrap loom weaving (jolobil) as a decolonising approach. During my research journey, a growing intuitive desire to learn jolobil became a transformative experience shifting the direction and contributing to the investigation in different ways. The embodied reflexivity of jolobil connecting body, mind, heart and vital energy (spirit) in relationship with people and place allowed a holistic sense-making of Lekil Kuxlejal, a Mayan Tsotsil and Tseltal equivalent of Buen Vivir. Considering the importance of the different dimensions of the body for sense-making, and the presence of the heart in Mayan (and Mesoamerican) cultures, the documentation of my jolobil apprenticeship through “the eyes of the heart” served as a window to experience not only the labor intensive and complex process of backstrap loom weaving but also to enable the viewers to immerse themselves in jolobil, an understanding of my learning corazonando. Jolobil, a pre-colonial cultural practice taught by the goddess Ixchel, is currently a living practice directly related to the weaver’s well-being as part of a community, and is a medium to reconnect

with Indigenous ancestry and heritage. It also has strong emotional-affective dimensions where weavers require patience and concentration for letting the heart flow through the threads, nurturing and guiding the process providing a sense of harmony, well-being and belonging. The practice of jolobil is frequently done around family or in groups allowing intergenerational integration and knowledge transmission. These elements, aligned with my cultural heritage, were integrated through the inclusion of my family members during the field research, a decolonial stance as a Native Latin American woman. Another contribution from my embodied experience was using jolobil as a research metaphor weaving theories, methods and tools from different disciplines like anthropology, sociology and design alongside Indigenous knowledges. Using decolonisation as a transversal frame, this methodological approach intertwines visual-digital-sensorial ethnography, co-design, Mayan cosmovisión (worldview), textiles as resistance and Zapatismo for the exploration of what constitutes a fair-dignified life, Lekil Kuxlejal, for Mayan Tsotsil and Tseltal weavers in collective and horizontal collaboration. Echoing the weaver’s support of the loom with her lower back, jolobil includes the knowledge through our bodies and creative practices through embodiment, sentipensar and corazonar as the integration of ourselves with the whole, a ser uno con el todo.