# Design thinking as an inspiration to interpret the imaginary of the aesthetic identity of fashion in Rio Grande do Sul

*O design thinking como inspiração para interpretar o imaginário da identidade estética da moda gaúcha*

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## ABSTRACT

Creating consists of an act that enables the ability to understand, in addition to the ability to relate, characterize, compose and signify. In this way, this research proposes to carry out a study about the imaginary of the urban and contemporary gaucho aesthetic identity, from the perspective of the creative industry, based on the proposal of a co-creation workshop, based on design thinking processes. Understanding the aesthetic identity of Gaucho fashion and its interpretation within the social context are central elements of this study, with the general objective of collecting local information and data about the aesthetic identity of Gaucho fashion, using them as policies for the development of style elements for a signature fashion collection. As a methodology, it uses a bibliographical research and also a field research, conducted in a qualitative and descriptive way. Therefore, from the concepts addressed, it became possible to validate the theoretical approach of the concepts conceived during the co-creation workshop as inspiration for the development of the color chart, models, cuts and aesthetics, choice of materials (trimmings and fabrics) seeking the identification of the target audience as well.

**Keywords:** Design thinking. Co-creation workshop. Gaucha's identity esthetics. style elements.

## *RESUMO*

*Criar consiste em um ato que possibilita a competência de compreender, além da aptidão em relacionar, caracterizar, compor e significar. Dessa maneira, esta pesquisa propôs um estudo acerca do imaginário da identidade estética gaúcha urbana e contemporânea, na perspectiva da indústria criativa, por meio de um* workshop *de cocriação, abalizado nos processos de* design thinking. *A compreensão da identidade estética da moda gaúcha e sua interpretação conforme o contexto social são elementos centrais deste estudo, cujo objetivo geral é coletar informações e dados locais sobre a identidade estética da moda gaúcha, utilizando-as como* policies *para o desenvolvimento de elementos de estilo para uma coleção de moda autoral. Como metodologia, utilizaram-se uma pesquisa bibliográfica e também uma pesquisa de campo, conduzida de forma qualitativa e descritiva. Com base nos conceitos abordados, tornou-se possível validar a abordagem teórica dos conceitos concebidos durante o* workshop *de cocriação como inspiração para o desenvolvimento da cartela de cores, modelagens, cortes e estética, escolha de materiais (aviamentos e tecidos), buscando a identificação do público-alvo.*

*Palavras-chave: Design thinking.* Workshop *de cocriação. Identidade estética gaúcha. Elementos de estilo.*

## INTRODUCTION

This article explored creative processes, specifically design thinking, in the fashion industry, using intuition as a starting point for problem-solving. The design thinking process enables symbolic transfers that give meaning to the product/ service being developed. The research is structured around proposing and conducting a co-creation workshop, inspired by design thinking principles, and involving six participants from various sectors of the creative industry. The guiding question of this research is the exploration of visual and aesthetic concepts related to the Gaucho identity, viewed through the lens of individuals from different creative sectors.

To understand how the social context influences fashion production and is influenced by it, the general objective included collecting local information and data about the aesthetic identity of Gaucho fashion. This information was used as policies[1] for developing style elements for a signature fashion collection. To make the research tangible, the specific objectives consisted of:
- understanding the creative with a focus on design thinking and its stages;
- studying Rio Grande do Sul imagination and identity;
- carrying out field research in the form of a co-creation workshop with creatives from different sectors, helping to identify the contemporary *Gaucho* aesthetic identity according to their perspective;
- developing concepts arising from field research that can inspire the creation of an original fashion collection.

This research has a basic nature and employs phenomenology as its method, aimed to manifest what the data are, in order to clarify them and, "it is limited to the essential and intrinsic aspects of the phenomenon, without resorting to deductions or empiricisms, seeking to understand it through intuition, aiming only at the data, the phenomenon, regardless of its real or fictitious nature" (Prodanov; Freitas, 2013, p. 36). Regarding the objective of the study, it is characterized as exploratory research, bringing knowledge about a topic through a bibliographic investigation, possible interviews, and analysis of examples.

Regarding technical procedures, bibliographical research was employed, drawing upon already published materials. Additionally, field research took the form of a co-creation workshop, aimed at addressing the research problem. This workshop unfolded in three phases:
- carrying out a literature review on the topic to provide context;
- development of techniques to be used in data collection and sample definition;
- establishment of how to record this collection and the techniques for analyzing the results.

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1   The term "policies" is used here as visual standards or guidelines to guide the development of stylistic elements in a fashion collection.

In approaching the problem, a qualitative method was employed, involving the interpretation and attribution of meanings to the analyzed events in a clear and descriptive manner. The environment was acknowledged as a direct source of the data presented (Prodanov & Freitas, 2013).

This article is an integral part of the Bachelor's degree work in Fashion at Universidade Feevale. The culmination of this academic endeavor was the creation of an original fashion collection titled "the aesthetics of cold" (Cherutti, 2018), which drew heavily from the concepts explored within this research. Structurally, the research is divided into four sections: the theoretical foundation, dedicated to conceptualizing creative processes through the lens of the design thinking methodology and its associated stages, using research carried out by Brown (2010), Vianna *et al*. (2012), and Ostrower (2014), among others; a section that delves into the exploration of the *Gaúcho* identity, addressing concepts of imaginary and identity, based on Durand (1998), Felippi (2006), and Hall (2015); analysis of workshop materials and data, from their conception to their tangible manifestations, assessing their viability in supporting the creation of an authorial fashion collection; and final considerations, which conclude the study, providing a synthesis of the research findings and future perspectives.

## CREATIVE PROCESSES

Creative processes endeavor to structure and experiment with productive methods to establish a connection with the object being created. It is through these symbolic transfers that meaning is imbued into the product. According to Ostrower (2014), creative processes are underpinned by emotions, abstract thoughts, and intuition. Despite their conceptual and intellectual nature, they are intrinsically linked to intuition, which directly resonates with the individual's sensitivity. Intuition permeates every creative process, as it guides coherence, organization, comparison, and evaluation. Consequently, when emotions and experiences are shaped and organized, they bestow consciousness and significance upon the product, fundamentally characterizing this process as intuitive.

Hence, creative processes encompass a spectrum of possibilities, experiments, errors, and triumphs, culminating in one or more creative solutions, whether tangible or intangible. They involve diverse personalities and modes of thinking, serving as a nexus between self-awareness — self-knowledge — and interpersonal relations, facilitated by structures, communication, interactions, and the attribution of meanings. The ability to convey these meanings to the consumer is crucial. Engaging in the act of creation facilitates a deeper understanding of phenomena, constituting a comprehensive constructive process inherent to human endeavor (Ostrower, 2014).

The creative process "relies on synthesis, [on] the collaborative effort of assembling components to form comprehensive ideas. After gathering data, it becomes imperative to scrutinize and recognize meaningful patterns," facilitating the generation of alternatives and informed decision-making (Brown, 2010, p. 64-65).

In essence, it constitutes a problem-solving endeavor that can be segmented into multiple stages, each aimed at fostering inventive and pertinent solutions to various types of problems.

Given this perspective, this study draws inspiration from design thinking as a methodology to guide the development of field research in a workshop format. Design processes inherently entail the amalgamation of various methods that, when combined, tailor to the unique requirements of each project. Creative processes involve multiple cycles to systematically organize insights emerging at different stages of the process (Demarchi, 2011).

## DESIGN THINKING

According to Ambrose and Harris (2011), design is an ongoing process, and design thinking, as a methodical approach, permeates every stage of this journey, from the initial client briefing to the final project completion. Design thinking encapsulates project-oriented thinking, encompassing processes that transmute a problem into a design solution, necessitating a dual focus on both the project itself and the end user. Consequently, it translates individual insights, observations, and memories into the development of products and services aimed at enhancing people's lives. Novel ideas stem from the behavioral analysis of individuals, culminating in strategies to navigate the diverse realms in which people exist, with empathy often serving as a cornerstone. "Empathy is the mental habit that leads us to think of people as people, and not as laboratory rats or standard deviations" (Brown, 2010, p. 46-47).

These insights often stem from empathy, which involves comprehending the world of others — be it personas or a target audience —, their experiences, behaviors, and emotions. This understanding of cultures presents a significant opportunity for innovation, facilitating the discovery of solutions. Moreover, the utilization of empathy within the design thinking process enables the projection of experiences that resonate with the target audience, employing various sensory elements such as images, sounds, textures, shapes, symbols, and aromas. The process begins by identifying factors — or constraints — that aid in visualizing ideas, guided by three key criteria: "practicality (what is functionally feasible in the near future); viability (which is likely to be part of a sustainable business model); and desirability (what resonates with people)" (Brown, 2010, p. 18).

Authors Brown (2010) and Vianna et al. (2012) delineate design thinking processes into analogous and complementary phases. The former refers to them as the three spaces of innovation, comprising the phases of inspiration, ideation, and implementation. The latter label their stages as immersion, ideation, and prototyping.

The initial phase, immersion — or inspiration — seeks to contextualize the team regarding the problem by providing an overview of both the company and the customer. During this phase, the project's boundaries are defined, and the profiles of the target audience are identified. A comprehensive survey is

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conducted to gather all necessary information related to the problem's context, taking into account the brand's universe and the prevailing market trends. This information is then analyzed to identify relevant references and opportunities. The creation of inspiration panels or moodboards proves invaluable in comprehending the symbolic meanings of the concepts explored, as "images aid in understanding the processes of interpreting memory, meanings, and beliefs of individuals, thus influencing their cognitive and decision-making processes" (Vianna *et al*., 2012, p. 45).

Considering the scale of the problem and the company's reality, as outlined by Vianna *et al*. (2012), the focus shifts to the idealization/ideation phase, with the purpose of fostering the generation of creative and innovative ideas. Synthesis tools, established in the preceding phase, are employed to facilitate the creative process and the development of pertinent solutions to the problem at hand. During this phase, brainstorming sessions are conducted, drawing upon the received information, with the aim of generating as many ideas as possible in a dynamic, rapid, and efficient manner. The quantity of ideas generated in brainstorming sessions is paramount, as the quality of these ideas often stems from their abundance, thereby increasing the likelihood of attaining an innovative solution.

Other people can be invited to participate in this multidisciplinary team, from areas that conveniently bring other views, and add to the group's insights, thus developing co-creation workshops. This conglomerate of expertise can contribute positively, from different perspectives, with the generation of more complete and creative solutions, aiming at assertiveness. Therefore, the co-creation workshop is a systematic meeting of a specific group, with the aim of stimulating the creativity of individuals, through collaboration and a sense of collectivity, since co-creation is related to the act of collective creativity. People with some involvement — direct or indirect — with the solutions in the development process are usually invited (Vianna *et al*., 2012).

The last phase consists of implementation — or prototyping —, in which a prototype is created, that is, "the making of an idea tangible, the transition from the abstract to the physical in order to represent reality — even if simplified — and provide validations" (Vianna *et al*., 2012, p. 122). This prototype serves as a parameter for choosing an idea, helping the entire company to understand how an abstract idea can be materialized in the form of a product, being able to evaluate this product and improve it to identify the best solution. Even if rudimentary and simple, the important thing is that this prototype is functional, so that its weaknesses and strengths can be analyzed and, thus, it can be taken forward (Brown, 2010).

Thus, Figure 1 illustrates the creative process grounded in the design thinking methodology, providing a straightforward visualization of its phases. This schematic served as a guiding framework for the implementation of the co-creation workshop proposed in this study.
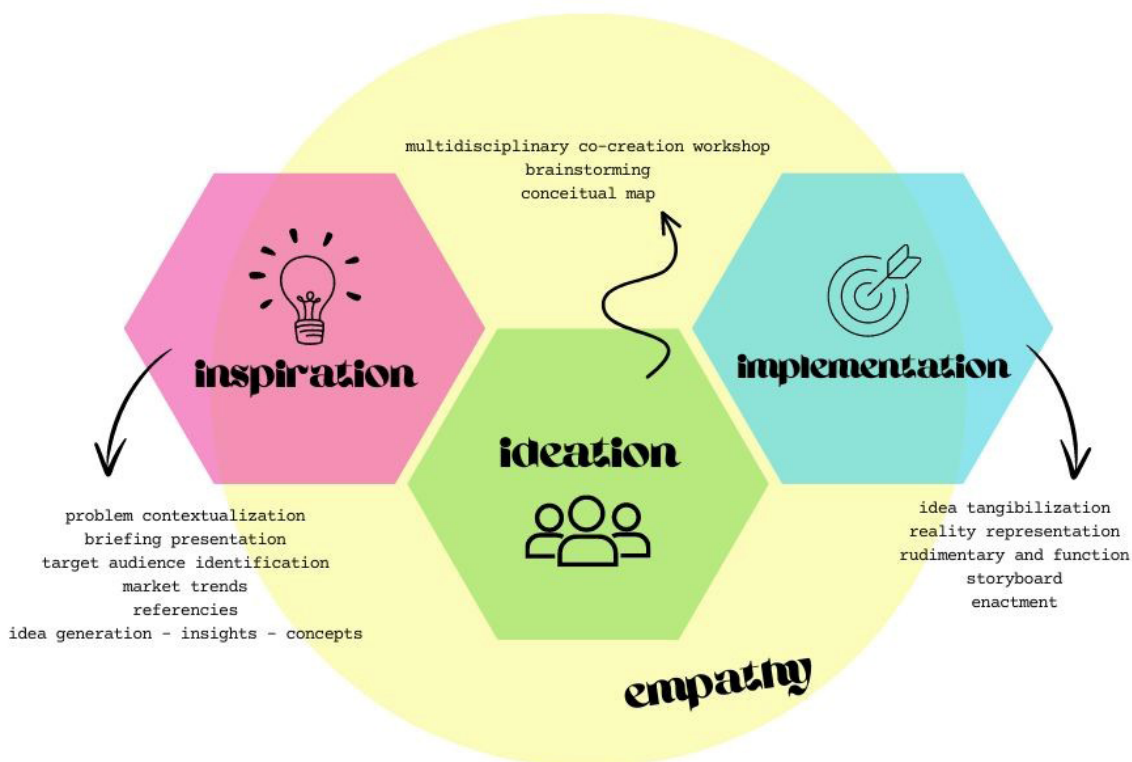
Figure 1. The creative process of design thinking.

The subsequent section delves into the collection, analysis, and findings derived from the study of the *Gaúcho* identity's imagery, as well as the field research conducted through a co-creation workshop format.

## IMAGINARY AND *GAÚCHO* IDENTITY

The concept of the imaginary and the identity of Rio Grande do Sul formed the foundation for crafting the briefing to be presented to participants in the forthcoming co-creation workshop, as detailed in the subsequent section. The imaginary encompasses individuals' perceptions of a particular event, taking into account historical occurrences, lived experiences, associated images, resemblances, and acquired knowledge. "Any manifestation of the image represents a kind of intermediary between an unmanifest unconscious and an active awareness," thereby being translated into symbols that indirectly allude to certain meanings (Durand, 1998, p. 36).

Identity encompasses various elements that contribute to an individual's sense of belonging, including ethnic, racial, religious, linguistic attributes, regional characteristics, meanings, and cultural values. "Thus, identity is essentially a construct that develops over time through unconscious processes, rather than being an innate entity present in consciousness at birth. There is always an element of 'imaginary' or fantasized unity within identity" (Hall, 2015, p. 24). Identities, according to the author, are shaped and reshaped based on the representation of their meanings, extending beyond mere political entities to encompass a collection of symbols that embody a culture.

Hence, when depicting a regional identity such as that of the people of Rio Grande do Sul — the focus of this research — it becomes imperative to elucidate certain concepts about the subject and the characteristics of the individuals inhabiting the state of Rio Grande do Sul, tracing their history from its inception to contemporary times, encompassing the present day.

Therefore, firstly, it is necessary to clarify that the present study uses the term *gaúcho* referring to the people of Rio Grande do Sul, that is, to any and all individuals who were born and reside in the state of Rio Grande do Sul — without links to traditionalism or folklore —, despite a certain historical perspective being brought in to understand specific behaviors. It is also important to highlight that, based on historical research, the aim was to outline an aesthetic identity for these people, thinking about how individuals from different creative sectors — who are also *gaúchos* and encompass the target audience — see the contemporary urban *gaúcho*.

According to Felippi (2006), uncovering cultural patterns that represent the residents of Rio Grande do Sul entails a complex process. Certain elements encompassing history, politics, economy, and culture of the region allow for the analysis of a predominant identity that persists to this day. The term *gaúcho* is intricately linked with the borders of Uruguay and Argentina. The local culture's origins have been significantly influenced by these neighboring countries. In the 18th century, records of inhabitants in the Southern region, spanning Rio Grande do Sul, Uruguay, and Argentina, highlighted their cultural similarities. During this era, terms such as *gaúcho* and *gaudério* carried pejorative connotations, describing individuals as poorly dressed, dirty, devoid of values or sentiments. They were often labeled as thieves and lacking in character, though notably loyal to those providing temporary work and shelter.

The *gaúcho* identity is deeply rooted in the extensive history of Rio Grande do Sul, shaped by wars and the region's unique physical, geographic, cultural, and human characteristics (Freitas; Silveira, 2004). Alongside internal conflicts marked by revolutions and struggles, European cultural influence significantly contributed to the identity of Rio Grande do Sul. This influence stemmed from substantial waves of international migration during the 19th and 20th centuries, resulting in a diverse population composed of immigrants from various ethnic backgrounds, predominantly European. Consequently "although the *gaúcho* identity is traditionally represented by the fusion of Portuguese and Indigenous peoples, the discourse surrounding Gaucho identity also acknowledges the impact of diverse migratory streams (Africans, Azoreans, Germans, Italians, Poles, Jews, and others)" (Felippi, 2006, p. 67). Thus, any attempt to delineate the *gaúcho* aesthetic identity must necessarily consider the amalgamation of immigrant peoples in shaping their culture, customs, architecture, and movements.

In the contemporary world, globalization blurs the boundaries between local and global cultures, thereby expanding the notion of identity. On one hand, there is a trend toward the standardization of products, production methods, tastes, behaviors, and ideologies. Conversely, there are movements aimed at bridging the gap between local cultures and emphasizing their representation in the global arena, including within markets and economies (Felippi, 2006).

In view of this, fashion plays a significant role as a vector in the affirmation and construction of identities, influenced by the social context surrounding it. This context is defined by specific spatial and temporal characteristics, impacting the production of local material culture artifacts and being intrinsically linked to collective ideological movements that shape and compete for legitimacy. Fashion, in this sense, acts as a collective expression, reflecting social behaviors by interpreting contemporary trends and representing specific historical periods. When the collective imagination is shared, group identity emerges, encompassing various ethnic, racial, religious, linguistic, regional aspects, meanings, and cultural values. Identity is a continuous process, formed over time through unconscious processes, far from being an innate trait present in consciousness since birth (Durand, 1964; Durand, 1998; Hall, 2015).

## COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND RESULTS

Considering that identities are shaped and transformed by the representation of their meanings, extending beyond mere political entities to encompass a set of symbols reflecting a culture, this approach focuses on using fashion as a means of producing cultural goods, particularly through the representation of *gaúcho* aesthetic identity.

This study aimed to critically reflect on various aspects involved in producing an authorial fashion collection. Additionally, it sought to present the process of preparing and conducting field research, structured as a co-creation workshop inspired by the stages of design thinking. To create a favorable context for the participants, an interdisciplinary team was assembled, comprising individuals with diverse mindsets from the creative industry. This approach was based on the classification of Cultural Domains by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco) (2013), as shown in Figure 2.

Therefore, six individuals working in creative sectors were invited, each representing one of the Cultural Domains, divided into the following groups:
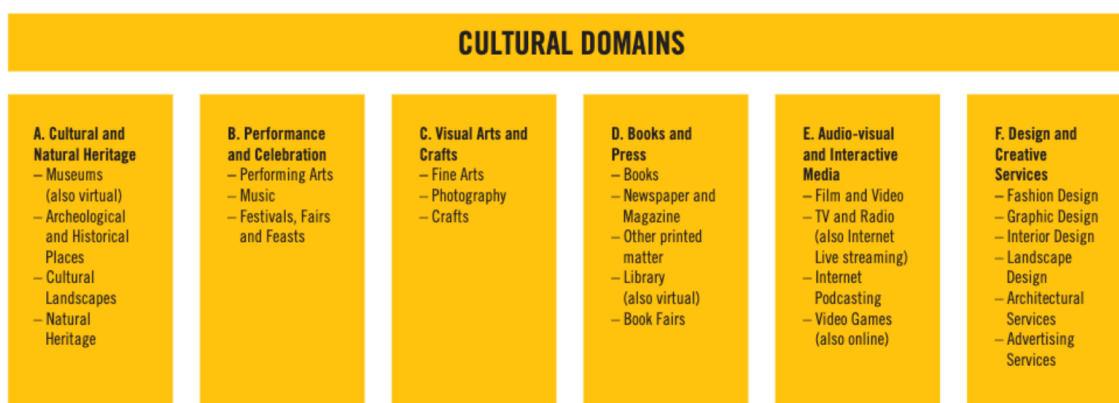


Source: Unesco (2013, p. 25)
Figure 2. Cultural Domains.

- culture and natural heritage;
- performance and celebration;
- visual arts and crafts;
- books and press;
- audiovisual and interactive media;
- design and creative services.

Thus, guest 1 (culture and natural heritage) has a degree in History and has worked as a teacher in the municipal network for 27 years; guest 2 (performance and celebration) is the manager of *Teatro Feevale*; guest 3 (visual arts and crafts) has a degree in Photography and works in the field of advertising photography; guest 4 (books and press) is a writer with published fiction and romance books, and also holds a law degree; guest 5 (audiovisual and interactive media) has a degree in Digital Games and a master's degree in Creative Industry, and works with sound design at a game development company; and finally, guest 6 (design and creative services) has a degree in Product Design with an emphasis on footwear and accessories, a master's degree in Creative Industry, and has worked for over 12 years in the footwear industry.

Contact was made via email, and the day before the meeting, guest 2, from the theater sector, announced that he would not be able to attend the scheduled date due to professional reasons. To honor the agreement with the remaining participants, it was decided to proceed with the dynamics with the five confirmed guests. The meeting location was chosen to be easily accessible and conducive to creativity, which led to selecting the Experimental Communication Agency (*Agência Experimental de Comunicação* – Agecom) at Universidade Feevale in Novo Hamburgo, Rio Grande do Sul (RS). Data collection occurred through the completion of two of the three phases proposed by the design thinking creative process — inspiration and ideation — while the final phase, implementation, will be conducted in a subsequent study, covering the entire development of the authorial fashion collection "the aesthetics of cold," which will be showcased at the 27th edition of the *Projeta-me* event, a fashion show for the institution's Fashion graduates.

For recording the data collection, audio recording was chosen to facilitate subsequent analysis, along with photos of the processes, moodboard, and mind map. To optimize time and increase productivity in generating ideas and concepts, only three activities related to each phase of the creative process were conducted, led by the researcher. Firstly, the research and the problem were contextualized for the guests through an illustrative presentation of the creation brief. Afterwards, two questions were posed to stimulate the creative thinking of the guests: Which image, for you, represents the *gaúcho* identity?; and Which keywords translate the *gaúcho* identity?

At that moment, everyone gathered around a round table, equipped with colorful post-its, pens, and cardboard, to write down the main words that emerged

from the discussion. The first stage of brainstorming then began, based on the experiences and knowledge of the guests themselves regarding their backgrounds and their idea of *gaúcho* identity, based on who they knew as *gaúcho*. This discussion revealed a kind of paradox, that is, the stereotype of the *gaucho*, associated with images of horses, the pampas, the roper, and the traditions upheld by *gaúcho* tradition centers, is quite distant from the daily reality of a resident of the Metropolitan Region of Porto Alegre (RS). Furthermore, it is easier to establish an image of Rio de Janeiro or Ceará, due to their unique climate — heat —, whereas Rio Grande do Sul often experiences four seasons in a single day, adding to the region's diversity.

Through references and insights, the participants also suggested that *gaúchos* share more similarities with their neighboring countries, Uruguay and Argentina, and that this connection makes them a more reflective, intense, and welcoming people, characterized by a strong sense of community. Because Rio Grande do Sul is a border state, it exhibits traits of militarism, *"bravado"* — a term mentioned by one of the guests —, sobriety, and masculinity. Additionally, it was noted that *gaúchos* are perceived as beautiful, elegant, and refined, based on a "European standard." This perception is linked to the diverse mix of peoples that formed Rio Grande do Sul — particularly European immigrants —, which makes the region somewhat akin to a Brazilian Europe, especially in terms of organization and the architecture of some cities. Up to this point, the discussion was naturally guided by the guests' experiences and perceptions, without direction or interference from the researchers.

It was noticed that when asked about the figure of the *gaúcho*, all the guests envisioned a male figure. This led to a discussion about how the people of Rio Grande do Sul still exhibit a sexist culture in their daily lives. Regarding women from Rio Grande do Sul, they are often associated with the stereotype of thinness and strive for balance in their clothing choices. Considering that Rio Grande do Sul experiences lower temperatures, *gaúchas* balance different layers of upper garments to keep warm — such as a second skin, a wool blouse, a vest, a scarf, and a coat — with more fitted lower pieces, maintaining proportion.

The conversation then shifted to how *gaúchas* dress, prompting discussion about their tendency toward traditional attire, often featuring pieces made of leather and fur. The cold climate was viewed as a positive differentiator in terms of fashion possibilities. When asked about possible compositions involving leather, guest 6 suggested mixing it with cotton and satin fabrics. They also mentioned specific cuts and clothing styles aligned with the daily life of *gaúchas*, influenced by tailoring, such as blazers, vests, shirts, and shorts, as well as pieces with geometric cuts and refined designs, contributing to the elegance previously mentioned. Additionally, it was noted that *gaúchas* possess the ability to incorporate items from men's wardrobes into their attire, adapting them in a feminine and representative manner.

Once the inspiration phase concluded, the ideation stage commenced with a second round of brainstorming. Guests were tasked with transforming their ideas

into concepts by combining keywords they deemed similar and complementary. They were challenged to avoid repeating keywords that could fit into multiple concepts. Upon analyzing the keywords raised thus far, it was decided to categorize them into two groups: behavior and imagery.

Each concept was written on a cardboard, and the guests engaged in discussions to determine which keywords belonged to each concept, without any interference from the researcher. Consequently, keywords such as pride, European colonization, parochialism, careful dressing, authoritarianism, border state, *chimar-rão*, welcoming people, traditionalism, receptivity, bravery, reflectiveness, plurality, intensity, *pampa*, why do we always have to do it right?, readiness for war, *macho*, unhurried conversation, and interior with introspection were attributed to the concept of behavior of the people of Rio Grande do Sul.

The keywords bowtie, sober, boots, cotton, satin, tall people, more refined modeling, leggings instead of pantyhose, stereotype of thinness, aesthetics of cold, beautiful, geometric cuts, rigid, discreet, *tropeiro*, elegant, tailoring, European standard, proportion (balance), leather, short clothes (lower), covering more on the upper part, conservative, masculine, overlapping, heat of 30°C, and cold of 6°C were attributed to the concept of imagery, from the perspective of the guests. Figure 3 depicts the two brainstorming tables formed around the behavioral and imagery fields.

To conclude the dynamic with the construction of a mental map further summarizing the scope of the concepts formulated, the guests were asked to distill



Figure 3. Brainstorming: Concept of Imagery.

each concept into, at most, three words that could express their aesthetic identity. Regarding imagery, it was suggested that the people of Rio Grande do Sul are beautiful, adhering to a distinct standard of beauty, reminiscent of the various *gaúcha* beauty queens. Additionally, the word sober was introduced to characterize the region's use of elements, always in a restrained manner, without excessive colors, thereby creating elegant compositions. Elegant was chosen as the third word to encapsulate the concept of imagery: *gaúchos* are beautiful and elegant people, but in a restrained manner.

To translate the concept of *gaúcho* behavior, focusing on product development and its relation to the fashion collection to be produced in the second stage of this study, the first word mentioned was reflective. It was noted that a characteristic behavioral tendency among girls from Rio Grande do Sul is their reflection on environmental issues, reuse, and questions such as "where do my clothes come from?", a reflection emblematic of contemporary society. Another key aspect addressed was plurality, stemming from the blending of peoples and cultures through colonization, resulting in a highly diverse identity. Plurality is also evident in the *gaúcho* stereotype, which, while traditionally rooted, coexists with an urban and diverse daily life, shaped by the region's fluctuating climate, where temperatures can vary from 30°C one day to 12°C the next, even in summer.

Finally, a word emerged that had not been mentioned until then but resonated with all the guests: alternative. This term reflects the *gaúcho*'s desire to be different from everyone else, to be original in their story and their anthem. *Gaúchos* embrace their unique way of being, valuing individuality and distinctiveness.

Figure 4 represents, in an illustrative way, the mental map developed based on the translation of the imagery and behavior concepts.

The field research, conducted in the format of a co-creation workshop, lasted around two hours and provided a unique perspective on the Rio Grande do Sul



Figure 4. Mind map.

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identity. It delivered aesthetic concepts of fashion and behavior that relate to other sectors of the local creative industry. Initially, the research aimed only to extract the main aesthetic concepts of *gaúcho* identity from the guests' perspectives — a concise and theoretical outlook from the creative industry, justifying its short duration. These concepts will be addressed practically in a subsequent study, during the third phase proposed by design thinking, the implementation, through the authors' free interpretation of the data obtained from the workshop, aiming to materialize these concepts into women's clothing pieces.

Therefore, the proposals for the development of a collection are presented below. The intention is to discuss how the concepts raised during the field research will be utilized, alongside the theoretical framework, in the development of the collection project.

## PROPOSALS FOR STYLE ELEMENTS FOR A COLLECTION

Considering that identities are shaped and transformed by the representation of their meanings, expanding beyond a mere political entity to encompass a set of symbols that reflect a culture, this section proposes a connection between this process and the investigation into what the field of design produces through its dialectical relationship with society. Thus, we present proposals for the development of the "aesthetics of cold" fashion collection, based on the authors' free interpretation of the symbolic representation of concepts elaborated during field research into the imaginary of contemporary urban *gaúcho* aesthetic identity, in alignment with the theoretical framework.

In this way, the diversity and plurality addressed during the discussion were incorporated, highlighting the striking characteristics of Rio Grande do Sul. The collection aims to cover varied stereotypes, portraying traditionalist imagery alongside urban aesthetics, which embrace the mixing of different races and cultures. This plurality reflects the complexity of the cultural identity of Rio Grande do Sul residents in contemporary times. Identity is formed based on various aspects that allow individuals to feel part of something, encompassing ethnic, racial, religious, linguistic, and regional characteristics, as well as cultural meanings and values. Consequently, opposing behaviors are observed, such as traditionalist *versus* urban movements, the bravery and kindness of the *gaúchos*, and the experience of four well-defined seasons throughout the year, sometimes even in a single day, as previously discussed.

The traditionalist aspect can be represented by using leather and fur in the composition of the pieces, as well as incorporating tailored cuts in shirts, blazers, vests, and shorts. Additionally, the development of more elaborate and structured models can be enhanced by elements such as boots and hats. The urban side of *gaúchas* can be reproduced through geometric cuts and mixed compositions, bringing a more laid-back and alternative look to the collection. This diversity can also be expressed through the asymmetry of the pieces and the combination of more structured fabrics, like leather and cotton, with lighter and more fluid fabrics, such as satin and crepe.

Masculinity, another element identified during the co-creation workshop as part of the *gaúcho* identity, is reflected in the use of tailoring, which has its origins in the men's wardrobe. This influence appears in the development of some wider models with straighter cuts, mixed with details and more fitted pieces at the bottom, highlighting the silhouette of the female body through balance and proportion. The collection features overlapping pieces to demonstrate the characteristic temperature variation of the South Region, accommodating the fluctuating conditions of everyday life that can range from cold to hot. The proposal also includes combining different elements, overlaps, and larger pieces, while maintaining the sobriety and elegance highlighted in the mental map. This sobriety is represented by a reduced color palette based on the aesthetics of the cold, featuring cold colors such as black, gray, brown, beige, white, and shades of blue, along with solid colors and discreet prints. Additionally, the use of some embroidery and handmade work is proposed to convey a sense of introspection and reflectivity.

The mix of creativity and culture lies in the cultural and historical values that the fashion products in this research aim to embody. These products link traditional knowledge from the past (through the previously analyzed imaginary of the *gaúcho* identity) with current technologies (production processes). Therefore, Figure 5 presents a diagram containing the main concepts identified during the workshop and the proposal for making these ideas tangible.

The analysis of the field research conducted in a co-creation workshop resulted in the generation of alternatives and proposals for the development of an authorial

**plurality**
complexity;
leather and fur x
crepe and satin;
asymmetry;
layering

**elegance**
looser fits mixed with
tailored pieces;
balance and proportion

**tailoring**
shirts, blazers,
vests and shorts;
geometric cuts;
structured patterns

**aesthetic of cold**
reduced color palette:
black, gray, brown,
beige, white and
shades of blue

**masculinity**
robust touch;
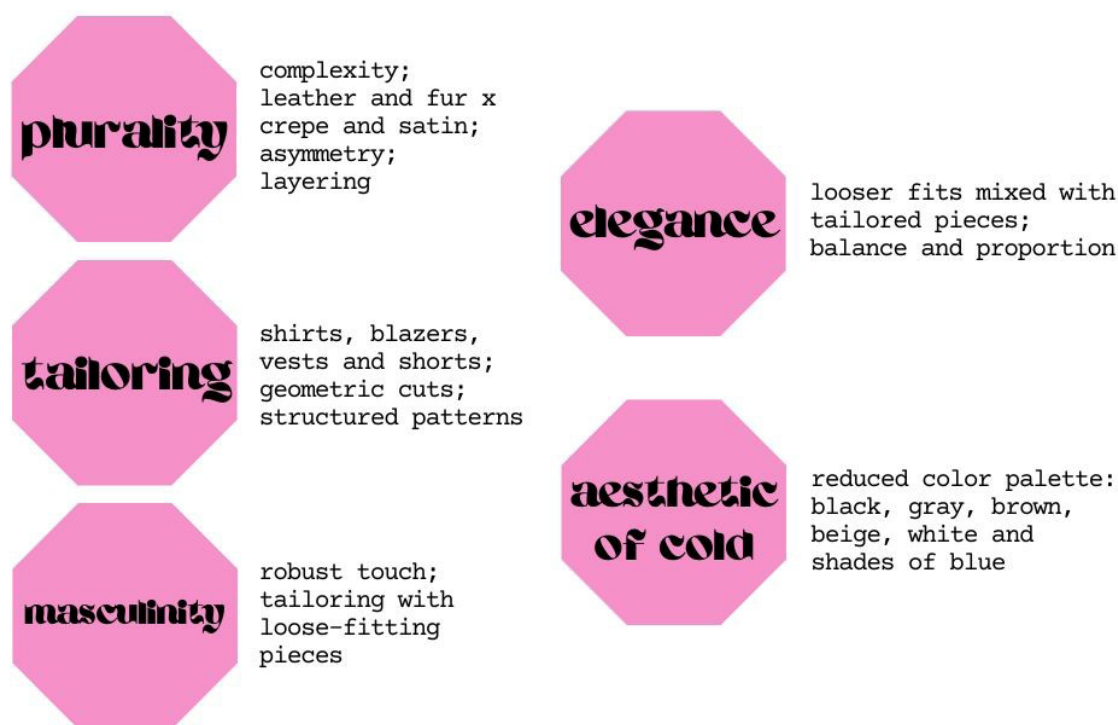tailoring with
loose-fitting
pieces

Figure 5. Proposals for collection development.

fashion collection. This collection is inspired by the concepts of urban and contemporary *gaúcho* aesthetic identity from the perspective of creatives from different

sectors of the creative industry. These concepts can be translated into style elements, as "a collection must present visual unity, and the pieces must maintain a relationship with each other. This relationship is obtained through the style elements and the collection theme, with all pieces reporting the same inspiration" (Treptow, 2013, p. 132). According to Treptow (2013), these elements can include lines, colors, applied textures, silhouettes, shapes, and applications, among others. The union of these elements in the collection generates aesthetically attractive combinations, and visually, a similarity between the looks can be observed due to their repetition with variations from one model to another, transforming the collection into a unique and original one.

Therefore, among the elements of style, we can consider geometric cuts, balance and proportion, layering, horizontality, and the mix of textures and opposites. Geometric cuts and lines were proposed, featuring more straight and linear designs, in keeping with the theme of horizontality, in wider pieces and with more structured modeling. Balance and proportion can occur through the composition of wide pieces paired with more fitted lower pieces, subtly defining the feminine silhouette, also using leather belts for this purpose. Layering allows the combination of several pieces to create a cohesive look, including pants or leggings, a skirt, a shirt, and a cape or overcoat, representing the need to shelter from the cold, along with the ability to adapt to the high temperatures characteristic of a temperate climate. The mix of textures and opposites relates to the *gaúcho*'s plurality, through the combination of more structured materials — such as leather, beaten wool, and denim — with lighter, more fluid fabrics — like crepe and neoprene — in tailored pieces, demonstrating the sudden changes in temperature. Opposites also refer to the blend between the urban *gaúcho* girl, in her busy daily life in the city, and elements of traditional *gaúcho* culture, through parochialism, pride, and internalization.

Figure 6 presents a panel with the style elements to be used in the development of the collection's pieces, based on references originating from the proposed theme.

This composition of few elements is the result of work that is both casual and judicious, demonstrating rigor, depth, clarity, subtlety, and lightness. Therefore, it was concluded that gauchos express themselves through interiority, also referring to sobriety and conservatism mentioned in the field research. As a release that communicates the essence of the aesthetics of cold, we have: "The cold, a natural phenomenon always present on the agenda of the national media and, at the same time, a metaphor capable of speaking about us in a comprehensive and defining way, symbolizes Rio Grande do Sul and is symbolized by it" (Ramil, 2004, p. 13-14).

> Thus, the collection The Aesthetics of Cold draws its inspiration from this cold and characteristic climate, as the cold is a defining feature of Rio Grande do Sul that sets it apart from the rest of the country, creating a certain visual unity among *gaúchos*. Through a reduced color palette, the collection seeks to capture the *gaúcho* aesthetic identity in an urban and contemporary manner, interpreting regional cultural elements, represen-

Figure 6. Style elements panel.

> ted in a casual collection for the busy everyday life of *gaúcha*s (Cherutti, 2018, p. 194).

In short, the analysis of the field research, conducted through the co-creation workshop, resulted in concrete alternatives and proposals for developing an original fashion collection. These proposals are based on the concepts of *gaúcho* aesthetic identity, interpreted in an urban and contemporary way, according to the participants' perspective within the creative industry. This wealth of ideas and style elements converges to create a cohesive, unique, and original collection that seeks not only to reflect the expression and preservation of *gaúcho*'s cultural identity but also to contribute to it.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This research provided an understanding of the imagery associated with *gaúcho* identity, rooted in cultural, historical, and social concepts. By exploring the perspectives of participants in the co-creation workshop, policies were identified for developing stylistic elements for a distinctive fashion collection inspired by *gaúcho* aesthetic identity. This exploration revealed that the *gaúcho* imagery is intricately connected to elements such as regional history, the influences of diverse peoples and cultures, and geographical and climatic characteristics. Furthermore, *gaúcho* identity is a complex construct shaped over time through subconscious processes, involving people's self-perception and the representation of meanings through symbols.

The proposed objectives were achieved through the development of a theoretical framework and analysis of field research. Creative processes, particularly design thinking within the fashion realm, were employed to generate alternative aesthetic proposals. The dynamics of the co-creation workshop facilitated an exchange among

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professionals from various creative sectors, representing the Cultural Domains defined by Unesco (2013). This diversity of perspectives enriched the comprehension of *gaúcho* identity, encompassing behavioral and visual elements.

The result of this process was the creation of proposals for an original fashion collection called "the aesthetics of cold." This collection, based on identified style elements, aimed to balance *gaúcho* tradition with contemporary influences, incorporating cultural diversity, the unique climate, and the behavioral characteristics identified during the workshop. Geometric cuts, layering, balance and proportion, horizontality, and a mix of textures and contrasts are elements that represent the plurality of *gaúcho* identity, both in people's behavior and in their aesthetic choices.

Finally, the study provides insights for the creative industry, emphasizing the richness and complexity of *gaúcho* identity. The interdisciplinarity fostered by the co-creation workshop contributed to a holistic understanding of *gaúcho* culture and aesthetics, enhancing the creative process and inspiring the creation of a collection aimed at capturing the essence of *gaúcho* aesthetic identity. This work represents an initial step in exploring practical approaches to Gaucho identity in fashion and suggests opportunities for future research, such as the implementation of the proposed collection and its reception by the public. Furthermore, it underscores the importance of considering cultural diversity and contemporary dynamics when exploring a region's identity.

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