

Circular Planning and Social Extension: Application of the Hybrid Monsters Mitigation Methodology in Fashion Upcycling with Instituto Criar Mulher

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Breno Tenório Ramalho de Abreu

Universidade de Brasília

Lattes: 7972490396396615. Orcid: 0000-0003-1506-4886.

E-mail: abreubrenodesign@gmail.com

Rafaella de Castro Lacerda

Universidade de Brasília

Lattes: 8659593477199552. Orcid: 0009-0001-3601-5912.

E-mail: rafaella.c.lacerda@gmail.com

Sandra Regina Martins de Oliveira

Universidade de Brasília

Lattes: 5549827451888884. Orcid: 0009-0000-6120-1103.

E-mail: zaanndra75@gmail.com

Letícia Maria Costa Coury (Translator)

Universidade de Brasília

E-mail: lehcoury@gmail.com



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1 Introduction

Focus on the main ideas of the complete text, synthesizing them into 3 parts: introduction, development and conclusion. Images, tables, charts and graphs, footnotes and extensive citations can be dispensed with.

The contemporary fashion system operates as one of the most environmentally intensive and socially unequal industries worldwide. It combines accelerated production cycles, excessive resource extraction, and labor precarization, resulting in significant volumes of textile waste and deep social asymmetries. In peripheral urban contexts, women artisans and seamstresses often occupy the most vulnerable positions within this system, facing limited access to technical resources, reduced visibility of their knowledge, and restricted economic autonomy. In response to this scenario, this article presents and analyzes the application of the Hybrid Monsters Mitigation Methodology within a social extension project developed in partnership with Instituto Criar Mulher, a women-led collective based in Brasília, Brazil.

2 Development

Grounded in circular planning principles, social technology frameworks, and participatory design approaches, the study investigates how fashion upcycling practices can be structured beyond technical reuse strategies, functioning instead as pedagogical, political, and emancipatory processes. The concept of “hybrid monsters” is employed as an analytical and methodological tool to describe artifacts and systems produced by linear logics in which environmental, social, and symbolic contradictions coexist. Rather than seeking the elimination of these contradictions, the proposed methodology focuses on their mitigation through conscious design decisions, collective reflection, and situated making practices.

The research adopts a qualitative, practice-based methodology, combining action research, participant observation, design workshops, and material experimentation. The project was carried out at Casa Rosa, a community cultural and educational space, where a series of collaborative workshops were conducted with women participating in Instituto Criar Mulher. Activities included garment deconstruction, pattern adaptation, draping, sewing, and reconstruction using post-consumer textile waste. These

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hands-on processes were accompanied by collective discussions addressing consumption patterns, labor invisibility, gendered work, and the environmental impacts of fashion production.

Circular planning, within this context, was approached as a relational and processual framework rather than a closed technical model. Participants were encouraged to analyze material flows, temporalities of production, and decision-making processes involved in transforming discarded garments into new pieces. This approach emphasized care, adaptability, and critical awareness, countering dominant fashion paradigms centered on speed, standardization, and disposability.

The notion of hybrid monsters proved particularly productive in facilitating collective understanding of complex socio-material entanglements. In fashion upcycling, hybrid monsters emerge as garments that combine sustainability narratives with unresolved issues such as exploitative labor, aesthetic compromise, or limited durability. By naming and examining these contradictions, participants were able to develop strategies to mitigate their effects, such as redesigning garments to improve usability, incorporating visible mending techniques, and openly discussing the limits of material transformation.

An essential aspect of the methodology was the integration of reflective pauses within the making process. Participants shared stories related to the origin of materials, previous uses of garments, and personal relationships with clothing. These narratives revealed that textile waste is not merely a technical residue, but a carrier of memory, labor, and social value. By engaging with these dimensions, the project reframed upcycling as a practice of re-signification rather than simple reuse.

The results indicate that circular planning, when articulated as a social technology, generates impacts at multiple levels. Materially, the workshops contributed to the reduction of textile waste through the extension of garment lifecycles. Socially, participants reported increased confidence, strengthened peer networks, and greater autonomy in creative decision-making. Symbolically, the project challenged hegemonic fashion aesthetics by valuing imperfection, repair, and transformation as legitimate design qualities.

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From an educational perspective, the experience demonstrates how fashion design processes can be reoriented toward collective learning and social engagement. Instead of prioritizing novelty or market trends, the workshops emphasized responsibility, contextual awareness, and mutual support. This aligns with contemporary debates in design education that advocate for ethical, decolonial, and regenerative pedagogies capable of addressing socio-environmental crises.

The study also highlights the replicability of the Hybrid Monsters Mitigation Methodology. Because it relies on accessible tools, existing community infrastructure, and local knowledge, the approach can be adapted to different territories and groups facing similar challenges. Its strength lies in its flexibility and responsiveness to context, rather than in prescriptive formulas or universal solutions.

By situating fashion upcycling within extension practices, the article contributes to fashion studies, design research, and social innovation literature. It demonstrates that fashion can operate as a site of critical inquiry and social transformation when design methodologies acknowledge complexity, embrace contradiction, and prioritize collective agency. The mitigation of hybrid monsters emerges not as a final state, but as an ongoing practice of negotiation, care, and responsibility.

3 Conclusion

In conclusion, the application of the Hybrid Monsters Mitigation Methodology within the Instituto Criar Mulher project illustrates how circular planning can function as a meaningful social technology. By integrating participatory design, feminist perspectives, and material experimentation, the methodology addresses environmental and social challenges simultaneously. It repositions fashion as a medium for empowerment, dialogue, and regeneration, contributing to more just and sustainable futures through situated and collective design practices¹.

¹ Translated by: Letícia Maria Costa Coury, Bachelor's degree in Social Communication – Specialization in Organizational Communication, 2021. Area of expertise: Text revision and translation. E-mail: lehccoury@gmail.com

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