

**MUD INVASION FROM THE FUNDÃO DAM AND ITS CONSEQUENCES IN THE LEISURE OF THE EMBROIDERY WOMEN OF BARRA LONGA (MG)****Received on:** February 05, 2025**Passed on:** June 18, 2025License: *Maira Elisa C. Martins Morais*

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**ABSTRACT:** The objective of this article is to report the impacts on the daily lives and leisure activities of the embroiderers of the city of Barra Longa, after the collapse of the Fundão dam in Minas Gerais. A direct approach was made with them, in search of sufficient elements to support the research, among them, the centrality of embroidery as a leisure activity. Among the negative impacts caused by the invasion of the mud, the losses of family histories told through embroidery and the impairment of socialization among the embroiderers, moments considered by them as leisure, stand out. It was found that embroidery not only represents a source of leisure and income, but also of recovery of memories and resilience, whose environmental impacts, time will never be able to remedy.

**KEYWORDS:** Embroidery. Dam failure. Leisure.**INVASÃO DE LAMA DA BARRAGEM DE FUNDÃO EM BARRA LONGA (MG) E SUAS CONSEQUÊNCIAS NO LAZER DAS BORDADEIRAS DESTA CIDADE**

**RESUMO:** Relatar os impactos ocorridos no cotidiano e no lazer das Bordadeiras da cidade de Barra Longa, após o rompimento da barragem de Fundão em Minas Gerais, é o objetivo desse artigo. Realizou-se uma aproximação direta com elas, na busca de elementos suficientes para embasar a pesquisa, dentre eles, a centralidade do bordado como lazer. Nos impactos negativos causados pela invasão da lama, destacam-se as perdas de historicidades familiares contadas através dos bordados e o comprometimento na socialização entre as bordadeiras, momentos considerados por elas, de lazer. Constatou-se que o bordado não apenas representa uma fonte de lazer e renda, mas também de resgate de memórias e de resiliência, cujos impactos ambientais ocorridos, o tempo jamais conseguirá remediar.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:**Bordado. Rompimento de barragem. Lazer.

## Introduction

The emergence of embroidery is dated to 30 thousand b.C., based on the study of a fossil found in Russia, depicting garments adorned with ivory. According to Lourenço (2012), the first embroideries were found in prehistory, with cross-stitch as the pioneer, and were used by cavemen, whose clothes were made of animal skin, needles made of bone, and threads made of animal guts or vegetable fibers. Silva (2006) corroborates this statement.

Embroidery may very well have originated already in Prehistory, if we consider the attitude of Mesolithic humans in joining animal hides to keep warm using threads of some resistance—often based on the use of animal and plant fibers—which allowed them to create certain decorative stitches that are still used today, such as double-thread stitching, spiral stitching, and the running stitch (Silva, 2006, p. 1).

Artistic works made with metal needles and the more elaborate techniques of hand embroidery emerged from the Middle East, and were later adopted by the Greeks. Because they are great admirers of beauty and luxury, they are responsible for the dissemination of this art, which has been perfected over time (Lourenço, 2012).

In parallel, Silva (2006) points out that this improvement followed the Middle Ages, an activity primarily performed by women, but there are reports that in the 16th century, men in the city of Lisbon in Portugal also embroidered (Silva, 2006, p.1).

The history of embroidery is intertwined with a feminine practice in spaces and times that highlight longing, loneliness, love, possibilities, and needs, as well as making explicit the misconduct of the exploitation to which women were subjected for centuries (Chagas, 2010).

In Brazil, the art of embroidery arrived with the Portuguese, passed down from mother to daughter. This tradition is sustained by a love of the craft, but it is threatened with extinction by younger generations due to daily circumstances that leave them with no time to dedicate to embroidery.

Even today, we can find, among old family heirlooms, embroidered cloths, pieces of fabric made by the skillful hands of grandmothers, great-grandmothers, and great-great-grandmothers, or bought or received as gifts and preserved for some special reason, forming a kind of sentimental private museum. Currently, given the fast-paced lifestyle and the demand for practicality, these 'little cloths', as they used to be called, are no longer in use. Some consider them excessive, others, tacky. And so, they rest and yellow at the bottom of many drawers. But it only takes someone to retrieve them for memories to resurface, hands to find comfort in their soft surfaces, eyes to get lost in the meticulous and delicate, or even extravagant and imaginative, designs, promoting an aesthetic experience unique to domestic environments (Malta, 2015, p.1).

The legacy of embroidery, perpetuated through generations, evokes valuable memories of a lifetime and gives meaning to the lives of many women, where the right to access education has been marginalized, but with embroidery, a new horizon opens up for them and brings greater meaning to life (Chagas, 2010).

From the perspective of the embroiderers of Barra Longa, the importance of embroidery as a cultural knowledge and source of collective identity, as well as the maintenance of this knowledge, is presented as a fine line between culture, work, the environment, and leisure, in which embroidery is embedded, including for the preservation of historical family memories. As tangible and intangible cultural heritage, both attainable and unattainable, embroidery is included in human culture on a global level, and has extreme significance when speaking of the cultural identity of a people (Zanirato; Ribeiro, 2006, p. 252).

Located 172 km from Belo Horizonte, the capital of Minas Gerais (MG), the city of Barra Longa offers its visitors hospitality, distinctive cuisine, the production of cachaça, artisanal cheeses and many other cultural expressions, in addition to its scenic beauty due to the various waterfalls that attract many tourists. In this context, embroidery emerges as one of the main attractions, occupying the second position in income generation, giving Barra Longa the title of Brazilian capital of lacemaking.

Field research with the women embroiderers of the aforementioned city and their representations of the collective revealed important cultural knowledge and the value that embroidery holds for that region. However, after the collapse of the Fundão dam, there was a disruption of this social and collective process, where daily life and existing habits were forced to be rebuilt due to such a serious event, which wrote a new chapter in the city's history. In this discontinuity, embroidery as a leisure activity suffered a significant disruption, since the act of embroidering is treated by them as work, but also as a source of leisure. Therefore, there is no single concept to define these dimensions, work and leisure, since one must consider the subjectivity of what each individual involved in the process considers leisure or not. Regarding the understanding of the concept of leisure, Debortoli (2012) mentions the existence of this subjectivity in this concept, and Gomes (2014) reaffirms that each person expresses the concept of leisure based on the different phenomena that represent their reality.

Leisure, more than a concept or object, is understood as a process, as a way of life, emphasizing art, the body, co-responsibility, and sensitivity to life and the world at the heart of relationships. Announcing a reflection on leisure practices, establishing relationships with different stages of life, especially understanding the life journey as a path of development, wisdom, and the acquisition of life skills (Debortoli, 2012, p. 3).

Through the statements of these two aforementioned authors, it was possible to investigate whether leisure is present in the embroidery of these women embroiderers from Barra Longa, from a counter-hegemonic and transformative perspective, which may include them in the enjoyment of leisure. Gomes (2014, p. 3) reaffirms that "leisure is a complex social practice that encompasses a multiplicity of cultural, playful, contextualized, and historically situated experiences".

Embroidery is present in various forms, such as Brazilian, European, indigenous, and African cultural traditions. These different social groups have their

own forms of artisanal work, including cuisine, festivals, and other local traditions, which are considered “significant manifestations or testimonies of human culture, deemed essential for shaping the cultural identity of a people” (Zanirato; Ribeiro, 2006, p.252).

Therefore, it is possible to say that social, economic, and environmental conditions are fundamental to safeguarding the knowledge of ethnic communities and guaranteeing their continuity, including the preservation of cultural heritage, among them the art of embroidery. ALTV, an embroiderer, stated that it is rare to find someone in her family who enjoys embroidery. Your daughter, for example, doesn't like embroidery, but she does it just to help her mother, while your son likes crafts, but he doesn't embroider; he's more interested in painting on gourds.

I teach embroidery to my daughter, but she doesn't like it. She even helps me when I need it. But she doesn't like it. My boy likes (Crafts). He likes gourd painting (ALTV).

Embroidery gives life to these lives and can indeed be used as an expression of existence (Chagas, 2010), resistance, and a source of leisure. In search of new conditions for embroidery after the collapse of the Fundão dam, the embroiderers were forced to reinvent themselves and used embroidery to bring a minimum of pleasure and give new meaning to their lives, beyond just work.

According to the French sociologist Joffre Dumazedier (1976), work and leisure are intertwined in human existence. The author considers leisure as a set of occupations opposed to work and states that leisure is a product of urban-industrial societies, thus excluding the enjoyment of leisure from communities and their traditional and rural cultures. Christianne Gomes (2004) disputes:

It is important to emphasize that, in everyday life, there are not always absolute boundaries between work and leisure, nor between leisure and professional, family, social, or political obligations. After all, we do not live in a society composed of neutral, watertight, and disconnected

dimensions, as the concept of leisure proposed by Dumazedier leads us to believe (Gomes 2004, p.121).

Gomes (2014) considers leisure as a human need within a constituted cultural dimension, encompassing individual and/or group values and interests, and tending to integrate its historical, social, and cultural context (Gomes, 2014).

Regarding the embroiderers of Barra Longa, it was possible to identify that there is no opposition between work and leisure, since, for them, embroidery brings dignity, acts as a source of income and is considered leisure, giving them self-knowledge, pleasure and rest. According to them, the relationship between society and nature is not experienced in a dualistic way; that is, all human and environmental dimensions converge in their artisanal and daily practices. It is necessary to establish a permanent and constructive dialogue with these women, in order to ensure the continuity of this cultural knowledge, and to find solutions to the problem not created by them: the dam collapse, which altered their ways of life.

To minimize these problems, it is important that the companies responsible for the disaster offer proposals that generate autonomy and restore the cultural identities of the city where our subject matter of study is located. It is important to make non-uniform decisions, considering the importance of this knowledge, not only as a source of income, but also for leisure. The losses, both material and immaterial, were numerous, making offers to resolve these impasses even more difficult. Embroidery falls within a field of relationships in which the practices of individuals are linked to their daily lives. Therefore, it cannot be considered static, and constitutes a particular mode of its interactions, which is why it is called cultural experience (Luce; Debortoli; Gomes, 2010). In this regard, the solutions presented do not engage with this experience.

From these perspectives, this study analyzed the cultural knowledge of the embroiderers of Barra Longa as a human need associated with cultural identities and leisure, as well as its main modifications after the collapse of the Fundão dam. Maintaining this cultural knowledge emerges as a challenge, since it has brought to light important nuances of this new context, including the preservation of historical family memories.

The answers found in the interactions between leisure and embroidery recognize the art of embroidery as a source of leisure, in a dialogue established between the knowledge acquired through a tradition passed down from mother to daughter. These experiences of embroidery as a leisure activity were disrupted by the collapse of the Fundão dam.

This paper explores the complex thought processes and meaning of life for these women embroiderers, where the structure offered by daily life and their habits is forced to be rebuilt due to an unwanted event.

## **Methodological Procedures**

### **Nature of the research**

This study was implemented using a qualitative, exploratory, and descriptive methodological approach, developed through dialogical processes. According to Freitas and Jabbour (2011), exploratory studies are those in which the researcher focuses on understanding a particular reality that has not yet been explored, with the aim of describing it, studying it, and understanding its intricacies.

This proposal herein is a practical research project that uses theory only to support the problem statement, focusing on producing knowledge about embroidery as

a source of leisure and resilience. The facts are elucidated through the collected testimonies, which reveal the consequences related to the transformations in the daily social practices of the embroiderers in the city of Barra Longa – Minas Gerais, after the collapse of the Fundão dam.

### **Ethical Considerations**

After the submission and approval of this project by the Research Ethics Committee with Human Beings of UFMG, CAAE – 36256620.6.0000.5149, and before conducting the interviews, the researcher informed the interviewees of the main objectives of the research and how they would be conducted. The interviews were only carried out after the signing of the Free and Informed Consent Form (TCLE), which guarantees confidentiality and the possibility for the participant to withdraw from the study at any time, if desired, as well as to obtain access to information about their results.

Due to the occurrence of the Covid-19 pandemic, which began in November 2019, during the interviews we had to use, in addition to protective masks covering the nose and mouth, physical distancing, in order to avoid compromising the health of the interviewees and the researcher. The names of the interviewees will be mentioned in this article using acronyms, in order to protect their identities.

### **Data Collection**

To enable the subjects' participation in data collection, the first contact was made, initially by telephone, through messages via the Whatsapp application,<sup>1</sup> with the

embroiderer MAL, in the year 2017. After being promptly assisted by her, this work proposal came to life and dates were set for data collection.

The meeting with the embroiderers took place at the "Casa das Artes", a place that houses a shop dedicated to exhibiting and selling the embroidery, crochet, and general handicrafts they create. In order to obtain greater accuracy in the information collected in the field, we used semi-structured interviews to initiate the dialogues, which were recorded using a digital voice recorder Sony Icd-px470 4gb Mp3. Permission was requested via audio recording to enrich the research.

The interviews were designed to help guide the accounts on topics pre-established by the researcher, but without restricting them; on the contrary, they aimed to encourage spontaneity, in an attempt to capture individual revelations and impressions. The meetings lasted between 30 minutes and up to 2 hours, depending on time availability and respecting the topics requested by them. The sample size was determined based on the attendance of the embroiderers on the scheduled date and time.

The transcripts were completed in full, which allowed us to capture and analyze all the details of the thinking of each actor involved in this stage of the research. The study analyzed embroidery associated with leisure activities and the consequences caused by the mudslide in the city.

## **Data Analysis**

During the data analysis, the testimonies were separated into categories, which followed the ideas and phrases present in the speeches that dealt with the same theme. From there, topics were added to the text as needed, always seeking to use a consistent theoretical foundation to support the analyses. A chronology of events was established, ordered by their relevance as they appeared in the subjects' discourse.

The development of field research with the embroiderers of Barra Longa described the collective representations of these embroiderers, understanding them as members of a cultural embroidery process in the region. The work explored the field of complexity through interactions and connections, seeking to understand the phenomenon under study, focusing on the relationships and convergences between the testimonies themselves, the local reality, and the theory that supports the debate.

### **Results and Discussion: Embroidery, a meaning for life.**

This article aims to highlight the leisure found in the act of embroidery by the embroiderers of Barra Longa, as well as the changes that have occurred in this art form after the collapse of the Fundão dam. In the city of Barra Longa, embroidery was brought from Portugal, especially from the Ilha da Madeira, and was adopted by the embroiderers of that region. Later, these embroiderers gave the embroidery an original and unique character, giving it a regional Barra Longa style. This story is confirmed by the accounts of AMP and MAL, which describe its origin and contribute to understanding the quality of these embroideries.

Embroidery has been practiced in Barra Longa since the arrival of the bandeirantes (explorers/pioneers). That is, before the city was founded. And when they arrived here, pioneering, people were already there embroidering. And now, recently, it has been discovered why our embroidery is so perfect. Because he came with a family from Portugal, from the Ilha da Madeira. It is said that the origin of our embroidery is from the Ilha da Madeira. Well, I don't know how the embroidery is done there, but I've heard it's very meticulous. That's the land of embroidery, and it was a family from there who brought embroidery here. I have absolutely no idea what the family name is. It was a researcher who discovered that. He snooped around until he found out.

The city was founded by a certain Mathias Barbosa.<sup>2</sup> He's the first one who arrived here, right? I think that's right, I think his name is really Matias Barbosa.

But that family already came with him. But they weren't important family. I just liked to embroider. I don't know exactly what it was like, but that was the comment I heard. That's the only one, because I wasn't the one who researched it, right? MAL will talk to you all about this in more detail tomorrow, okay? (AMP).

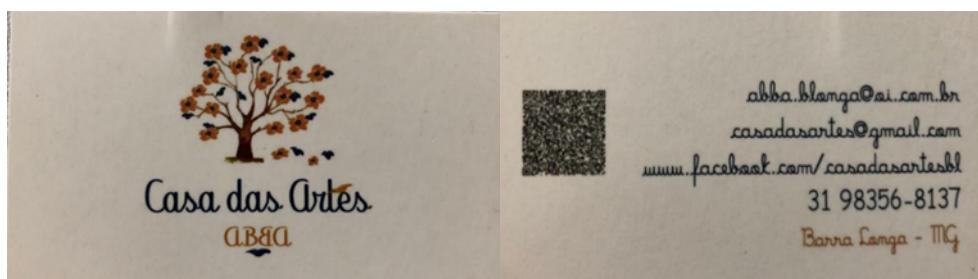
Well, I don't know the year, but I can talk about a few things. When I really started to become a professional in the art of embroidery, this tradition in Barra Longa, I got very involved and sought to learn more. What happens: Barra Longa, ever since the Portuguese came to Brazil, was also colonized by the Portuguese. We have two linguistics professors here in Barra Longa who are professors at UFMG. In their research, they reported that Barra Longa was colonized by people from the Madeira Island region, specifically the Portuguese from Portugal. So, that's why this embroidery is so intricate, you know, this kind of embroidery that everyone has at least one embroidered piece of at home, right? I come from a traditional family; I had a grandmother who made old-fashioned embroidery, a very characteristic piece from this region, and the color was also characteristic of this region, so I believe that's it, right? And here, we had old embroidery workshops, which belonged to Budi, I don't know her name, I just know it was Budi. It was with Richelieu embroidery, machine embroidery, on those old pedal-operated machines. And Dona Lalá's salon, which was the salon that did the satin embroidery, the little dots, and it also has the drawn thread embroidery, which belonged to my relatives, which is the drawn thread work from the north, and this old drawn thread work that belonged to Zica and Marica. These are the things I know, like this. This Dona Lalá, she had a defect in her leg, she limped, and she was a teacher, and when she found herself like that, she couldn't manage to work, so she started embroidering, embroidering trousseaus. People came from many places bringing the trousseau for the whole family, for the young women who were getting married, for her to make, you understand? So, what I know is based on these accounts, but if you have any more questions or curiosities, I'm happy to answer them, okay? And today we continue the tradition of this embroidery, and it extends throughout the entire territory, you understand. In rural communities, we have many embroiderers. There is crocheted, which is very well made here in Barra Longa, and there was also a family here who used to make this fringe — today they call it *macramé*, but in the past they called it *brólia fringe* or *abrolhos fringe*, I'm not sure; people here in Barra Longa used to say *brólia*. There was a family that did this kind of work here in Barra Longa, which today they call *macramé* (MAL).

Embroidery acts as a way of being and seeing the world, and its products or results are an integral part of the lives of many women. It is a process of learning, mastering techniques and repertoires, disciplining the body, and creating bonds (Brito, 2010). Nine embroiderers participated in the study, with an average age ranging from 34 to 73 years. Most of the embroiderers were interviewed through a pre-arranged meeting at Casa das Artes, the location of the project run by the Association of Barra Longa of Embroiderers and Artisans (ABBA<sup>3</sup>), in partnership with 30 other artisans from the city. The exceptions were the embroiderers RBFF and DFFB, who received us in their

homes, and also the embroiderer MAL, who, due to scheduling conflicts, was interviewed by telephone via the Whatsapp application<sup>4</sup>.

ABBA promotes handicrafts in Barra Longa, giving greater visibility to the work done by the city's artisans. The city of Barra Longa is known for the beauty and perfection of its embroidery (ABBA, 2021). The knowledge of embroidery was passed down from generation to generation as a way to keep the tradition of this art alive and to stay connected to the knowledge and stories of their mothers and grandmothers, in a multifaceted and diverse body of knowledge. The embroiderers use this knowledge to reproduce everyday scenes as a form of expression and interaction between the embroiderer, the group, and the place where they are located. This sharing of knowledge also provides moments of leisure and helps in the reorganization of spaces and new embroidery styles. The life trajectories related to embroidery as a source of leisure reveal their historical context before and after the collapse of the Fundão dam.

**Figure 1:** Graphic Arts Casa das Artes



**Source:** Photograph by the author (2020).

Casa das Artes is a simple house that serves as an exhibition space for handcrafted items available for sale. The embroiderers said they were part of projects

related to embroidery; some said they were only part of the project of Casa das Artes, while others were part of both ABBA and Casa das Artes. LGR claims she has never been part of any such project because, according to her, it is very difficult to participate in such projects, and she has always worked embroidering for others.

The girls from the Association and Meninas da Barra are essentially the same group, and I also participate in the other group. Of the two groups, the difference is that there are two members there who do not participate in Casa das Artes, the rest are all together and mixed up (ALTV).

I don't belong to the Association because of the people who are there. You try to get in and they say there's a ton of bureaucracy involved. There was even an embroidery course offered by the Association and Casa das Artes; I tried to enroll but ended up giving up. I want to participate (LGR).

It's because, let's suppose, Margarida receives the towel order. She goes and buys the towel, chooses the branch, gives me the thread, and then I embroider. The order is hers, and I'm embroidering it for her. She takes the order, I embroider it, and she pays me for the embroidery I did, and the rest is hers. There are four people I embroider for here in Barra Longa, I embroider for Chiquita, but I mostly embroider for Margarida (LGR).

The collapse of the Fundão dam and the destruction of the city of Barra Longa influenced the continuation of ABBA's activities, which remained closed due to the mudslide. The embroiderers claim that, before the Fundão dam collapse, they had participated in other craft projects and exhibitions, which earned them money to buy materials for ABBA.

We did the project, we even got some money from them, we went to do an exhibition there.... This was before the collapse. And he helped us, he gave us some money that we later used to buy materials for ABBA, right? This was before the collapse (MCP).

We have ABBA, which is closed there. But it remained closed for more than a year (MCP).

Oh, we participated in a trade fair in Brasília last year, which Renova took us to. I didn't go; there were two representatives from the group. That's how it works, of course, sometimes it's not possible to take the whole group. Some representatives are going. We were at the fair in Vitória, Espírito Santo, I went there, it was very good. And others, let's say, at Expominas, we've already participated twice (AMP).

Of the nine embroiderers interviewed, all consider their embroidery to be important, their skills evident in each stitch applied to the fabrics, and they reproduce their specific knowledge and expertise in this art. For Sousa (2019, p. 36), “embroidery is expressing affection through needles and, despite academic writing, which attempts to get closer and closer to human singularities, it is necessary to share this study with personal stories and experiences”. Embroidery is considered a natural part of many women's lives. Malta (2015) contributes data on the existence of this culture, including in girls' schools.

Learning at home and in girls' schools reinforced the idea of the naturalization of needlework in the life of nineteenth-century women, almost as something atavistic to the feminine. Every young girl received her piece of cloth, where she learned her first stitches, with her mother or an instructor, and stored her favorite patterns in a kind of display case and proof of progress. Many of these cloths were transformed into pictures and adorned sewing and bedroom rooms or were kept as souvenirs, as an emblem of youthful inclinations (Malta, 2015, p. 7).

The model of education for girls in boarding schools also offered manual work, in order to prepare them for household activities, and thus produce accomplished young women (Chagas, 2007). For AMP, the boarding school was the only available means to envision a possible path greater than what her reality allowed—that is, a reality without resources. Even this was denied to AMP, and she had to fight, learning with the leftover threads she picked up from the floor or that were donated by *aduladeiras* [women who wound thread].

I... always embroidered something, there wasn't much to embroider, because we didn't have many resources... in fact, we didn't have any resources at all. Then, when I was ten years old, I went to school. There at the orphanage, because I wanted to study and there wasn't a school in the countryside, I had a cousin who studied at that school and she got me a place. I was very little, and there the girls had a schedule for arts and crafts. But I was so pesky, so little, that no one paid any attention to me. It was no use, nobody there trusted me enough to put a needle and thread in my hand. So what did I do? I would get hold of a needle, and sometimes an aduladeira would show up and give me a little needle; I would pick up the threads they threw on the floor from their embroidery, take little cloths or doll clothes, and embroider them. It was the only resource I had; I didn't have money, I couldn't buy materials to embroider anything, so that was my only option, you know? She was

embroidering. My little dolls had a tiny trousseau all embroidered. All with tiny bits of thread, and that's how I did it... (AMP).

In academic circles throughout history, the art of embroidery and other craft practices have been marginalized in relation to other arts, such as painting and sculpture, and therefore, they were little studied and recognized. The lack of study of this art in academia is associated with “[...] the stigmas of class, gender and race in Western culture” (Dias, 2019, p. 52). In the weaving of life, images and recollections form memories, intertwining the past with the present and connecting ancestors and descendants in the shaping of individuals. Self-construction is based on acquired knowledge and objects that belong to the space of knowledge (Sousa, 2019).

According to the research participants, embroidery is an activity that begins in childhood and is passed down through generations, from grandmothers to mothers and daughters, a legacy that brings diverse ways of embroidering, meanings, and values. Thus, these women acquired a taste for and pleasure in embroidery. The ideal space for embroidery is the home, where something invisible and surprising is revealed, considered a place of creative freedom. In the community, these women embroider, and it is there that exchanges of knowledge and overcoming challenges occur, as AMP tells us, who did not accept being seen as an underdog at the boarding school, because, with scraps of cloth and leftover threads, she was able to create her own designs.

Look... since we were almost babies, because embroidery... we're born seeing embroidery. I learned the first embroidery stitches when I was very little. I remember my mother teaching a girl, a pre-teen, or a girl who was much older than me. And when I saw my mother teaching the girl, I opened my mouth to cry, I cried until she gave me a needle, thread and a piece of cloth, because I wanted to embroider. That's how I started. I learned the first few embroidery stitches, imagine how wonderful it turned out, right? It's impossible to even imagine... But that's how it was... (AMP).

Ah... I don't know, it's been many years. My mother used to embroider, so I learned to embroider from my mother. I must have been around nine or ten years old when my mother started teaching me. My sisters still embroider there to this day, one of them has even passed away. But I have two more sisters who also do a lot of embroidery (RBFF).

I started with my mother, right? My grandmother used to embroider, my aunt too, and my grandmother would spin with those spindles<sup>4</sup>, you know, the ones they call them, right? So, she made the cloth, the fabric, and on that fabric she embroidered the crivo,<sup>5</sup> she made towels, she made everything. And it was passed down from great-grandmother to grandmother, from grandmother to mother, and my mother taught me as well. Then I would start learning how to hem,<sup>6</sup> how to do embroidery shading,<sup>7</sup> how to do everything (MCP)

I was born in Ponte Nova, but I've always lived in Barra Longa. So, I saw my mother doing embroidery and I learned from her. Ah... I was like that when I was about ten years old. She would set up the fence and I would close it. She would do the sewing, and I would embroider the finishing touches. The border is actually embroidered. You embroider the branch and make border<sup>8</sup> (LGR).

The accounts of the embroiderers' life trajectories, which began in childhood, provided an opportunity for the exchange of knowledge and learning among them. IFL also reports that she started embroidering with her older sisters, who learned from their mother and passed the techniques on to their younger sisters.

For nine years, I embroidered, then I got married, came to Barra Longa, and started working embroidering for others. My mother used to embroider, but the children wouldn't let her. There are seven of us, so I'm the oldest. There was no way around it, right? She is a housewife and mother of a large family.... Then I started embroidering in Barra Longa and said, "I'm going to start working on myself". I was embroidering a tablecloth for the house; there were four of us women. My mother never allowed me to sell anything. The older sisters taught the younger ones. My mother taught me, so I could teach my sisters. So, they live in Dom Silvério. They embroider and crochet very well! (IFL).

The true value of embroidery in simpler life contexts was for decorating homes, symbolizing grace and adding beauty to those dwellings.

My mother wasn't an embroiderer, my mother was a farmer. She worked in the fields to take care of us, but some people had a habit of possessing things, although everyone knew how to embroider. Because each one embroidered things for her own home. My mother used to make embroidered little dresses for me. I had several embroidered dresses (AMP).

My house was a small thatched-roof house, a mud-walled house, but I remember a wooden shelf, made by the carpenter who lived in our community; incidentally, he was my great-uncle. He made all sorts of wooden things for the people in the community. She had that pretty little shelf, with a frame and boards forming the shelves, and on those shelves, my mother didn't put the little dishes on the bare board; she used to cover them

with white cloth, sackcloth, but it was all embroidered with hems, all very pretty. And I, for as long as I can remember, I've seen it all there, all pretty, all embroidered. And she would place the little pots, the little things, on that shelf, and every week she would change those cloths. She would decorate the clothesline with the embroidered cloths and put different ones there, but always — as far as I remember — they were all made from flour sacks, from white flour sacks, all embroidered (AMP).

These accounts take us back to a time when embroidery provided aesthetic enjoyment in homes, even the simplest ones; there were embroidered lace tablecloths, embroidered cloths on shelves, tables, and furniture. These pieces, as Malta (2015, p. 1) tells us, “[...] supported forms of behavior, participated in the construction of identities and gender, and helped develop a kind of visual perception, a taste for details and ornaments”.

It's because my whole family, my grandmother, my aunts, my mother, I was raised in that way. Embroidery has always been useful for everything for me. Because I was raised in a family of seamstresses, my grandmother too, so everyone was involved in that, and I developed a love for it. So much so that I trained as a teacher, always embroidering and studying, I started teaching, and I didn't want to. I realized that my true calling was to leave the classroom and continue with my embroidery. I ended up teaching for a month. I've always enjoyed having this love for embroidery, it made me feel good (DFFB).

With great pride, RBFF shows us the embroidery left by her mother as a keepsake. The perfection is evident in the details and finishes. She states that these pieces are only worn on very special occasions, such as Christmas and family birthdays.

My mother was very good at shading, she was very good at satin stitch embroidery. In Ponte Nova, she did a lot of embroidery for other people; a sister of mine, whom I lost when she was young, had such talented hands.... They didn't even compare to mine. We used to stay home with Mom, embroidering (RBFF).

You know those embroideries that are on the wall? Go over there and take a look at that picture on the wall. It has my mother's name on it, she was also called Raimunda, that painting was embroidered by my mother, my mother has already passed away. It has the date and everything on the board there, and her name. I also have a very beautiful painting up there that she embroidered (RBFF).

Embroidery acts as a form of control and power in the lives of the embroiderers, as they use it as an element of socialization in embroidery circles and also as solitary work in their homes, places where their own autonomous creations take place. These are moments of sharing stories among women, away from the presence of men (Malta, 2015).

The strengthening of bonds through the transmission of needlework skills characterizes the practice of embroidery, confined to a domestic space, shared through generations, and bringing a different dynamic to family life. Despite establishing the domestication of women, confining them to the domestic space, this practice ended up reinforcing collectivity among women who spent the day together, weaving together, away from men, telling stories, assuming power over their own productivity and creative autonomy (Sousa, 2019, p. 36).

Considered to lack intellectual gifts and incapable of creating and producing great art, women were deprived of access to other types of skills, often seen as associated with the stigma of women's work. Suffered throughout history, the devaluation not only of women, but also of art, is linked both to stylistic phenomena and to gender issues, as well as to political, environmental, and hierarchical orders, socially constructed (Sampaio *et al.* 2011).

Cultural power structures between men and women are not exclusive to this time and place; they are present in all spheres of life, including what and how to do things, such as activities involving art. In this article, gender issues in art will not be explored in depth; however, as a matter of curiosity, some embroiderers state that the men of Barra Longa are very sexist and would never be willing to embroider. Nevertheless, according to Sampaio *et al.* (2011), art issues can be culturalized.

Studies mediated by the category of gender highlight processes of knowledge construction aimed at denaturalizing what is culturally and socially constructed. The gender matrices ingrained in cultures are one example that has the power to imprint something on bodies that transcends their anatomy. Studies of masculinities and femininities attest that there is no biological

makeup that is not culturally shaped, and vice versa. (Sampaio *et al.* 2011, p. 32).

Modernity has brought with it rampant consumerism, and within it lies mineral exploitation, which carries negative consequences often neglected by public authorities and companies in the sector, in favor of greater profit and income.

The mining waste left a trail of destruction in Barra Longa, and the embroiderers claim to have experienced this forced scenario intensely and uniquely, with painful and striking impacts that even influenced their embroidery styles. They recount the episode from the perspective of what happened before, during, and after the tragedy, whose effects continue to this day. Lives were profoundly affected. The statement of MAL reaffirms that the city's history is divided into periods before and after the dam collapse.

I say that Barra Longa is before the mud and Barra Longa is after the mud. I thought it got much worse. We had this habit of talking. After being stuck at home for a year, having difficulty seeing friends and neighbors, it becomes very restrictive. You end up not doing more, or doing less, so this was greatly affected here in Barra Longa (MAL).

Some customs related to the places where embroidery was done, such as on the doors of houses, in the town square, and public places in general, where informal conversations took place between friends, considered by them to be forms of leisure, were abandoned.

Oh, and before the mud came along, it was also a custom of the women of Barra Longa, I myself did it a lot, to sew in the town square, you know, in conversation circles, at doorways, putting out your chair and everything, doing crochet, hand embroidery, you know, the drawn thread work itself, so we would get together a lot to do these embroideries. After the mudslide, that was lost in history, you know, in our history. Today it's very rare to see someone sewing in the square, in the streets, because our squares have all been taken over by mud, and today we don't have a single tree to provide shade in the square. Today you can't stay in the square or by the doors either, there's still too much dust, that's also been lost (MAL).

The embroiderers revealed that they use embroidery as a way to give meaning and significance to their lives, with the power to reframe their experiences after the Fundão disaster, bringing pleasure to moments of anguish and pain they have lived through. Reports indicate that the embroideries left as maternal heirlooms, considered reliques, were covered in mud. “Their lives changed from water to mud”. (Ferreira, 2018, p. 102). When referring to her embroideries, IFL emphasizes their value, as if they were loved ones placed at risk of death and in need of rescue.

I was home around 4 p.m. When it (the mud) arrived in Barra Longa, it was already past one o'clock in the morning. They talked about leaving, but nobody believed it would reach the level it did. And when it was time to leave the house, I was trying to move my embroidery, my machines, trying to take things from one place and put them in another, but it didn't help at all (IFL).

In the face of so many losses, the ensuing chaos, and the need to overcome adversity, the embroiderers, on several occasions, demonstrated resilience and a desire to reclaim their lives through their words. Embroidery is configured in the transit of dualities: reverse and right side, visible and invisible, macro and micro, and brings an affective cartography (Dias, 2019). The reverse side, as an essential part of the embroidery, says a lot about the unique subjectivity of these women. This unique feature was altered by the mud. Their stories, memories, silence, and suffering become visible, growing in this unexpected, reverse side of life. The overflowing of the river turned their lives upside down, bringing much dirt and foul-smelling mud, changing the color of the fabrics, turning what was once colorful brown. Embroidery gave way to suffering and pain. With the dam's collapse, the perfection of the reverse side of its embroidery was lost. Fortunately, even if the embroidery has been placed on the edge, it survives even on the edge and holds on to life.

Embroidery helped us a lot there. At least it helps to recover self-esteem, right? ... because it gets kind of low, since, well, you used to do everything with such joy, didn't you? And then, suddenly, to see it all go away... (MCP)

When I do my embroidery and crafts, I forget about that suffering! I'm going far! (ALTV).

As an image of the unraveling and weaving of a poetic act, the art of embroidery brings to light the need to see the other side of the fabric, as a source of rescue and overcoming (Padilha, 2018). The weaving of life is not linear and sometimes offers tortuous lines blurred with mud, and these women have appropriated these lines to tell their stories, in the simplicity of embroidery.

### **Where and how did I like to embroider before the collapse?**

The embroiderers use embroidery as a tool for sharing their private lives, in a desire to intertwine lives and threads, strengthen ties, improve and share the practical knowledge of how to embroider, in a connection where embroidery serves to unite art, leisure, pleasure and work (Sousa, 2019).

Due to the constant presence of Samarco workers and other strangers in the city after the dam collapse, the practice of embroidering as a form of leisure in the square, on the doors of houses, and in places offered by others, was abandoned.

I used to embroider in the town square. I used to make my crafts at my front door because I lived in the town square, you know? To put it simply, in the square, on the balcony of my house (ALTV).

I wasn't used to embroidering in the little square, but I saw Denise from Zizinha. She used to do a lot of embroidery in the town square. Pici also used to embroider, before the collapse. After the collapse... (IFL).

Oh, very difficult! We used to stroll around the little square like that, sometimes meeting up with some of the embroiderers. Sometimes we'd get together, that group of us, and we'd do some embroidery, but it was mostly here at the bar, over here, on this rock. My colleagues would come to the door next to the bakery, our bar, the restaurant; there was a small table outside, and I would also keep watch over the bar, embroidering. I used to sew here by the door next to the restaurant. And people from outside would come, see, and many people who frequented the bar also bought the embroidery from me, and on top of everything, I would also go out, I had a day of the week that I would go out, Wednesday, according to the orders, to

sell and to deliver the orders. I used to spend a lot of time here at the bar, and after we closed, I'd hang out by the church, right by the door. The others would say things like, "You're keeping an eye on the church, Denise, aren't you?" - Ask around and see what happens in Barra Longa. Oh, I liked it! (DFFB).

There was this group of embroiderers who used to go out, but I wasn't part of the group. Well, they used to embroider like this; the embroidery was always done at home, they didn't have a place to work. Then they got a space that a kind-hearted person gave them, because they didn't have to pay rent or anything, right? A man named Mirim, who provided a space where they displayed their work, was part of the group. I didn't embroider there in the little square, but there were people who did (AMP).

After the restaurant closed, I would stand there at my front door embroidering, and everyone who came from outside would see me. I had some colleagues who would come over; there was a little table here at the bar, and we would sit there sewing. Ask everyone in Barra Longa and you'll see (DBBF).

I started embroidering at my sister-in-law's house, I embroidered a lot for Pici, I got embroidery directly from her (SRC).

I wasn't used to embroidering in the square, sometimes, when we met someone sitting in the square, we'd go there and sit down, but I never had the habit of sitting in the square (MAL).

All the embroiderers, in some way, had their customs and leisure gatherings for embroidery, among other practices, including religious ones, abandoned after the collapse.

Every year we held our Christmas novena, which was very beautiful in our neighborhood. After the mudslide, we didn't do anything else, I don't know why. Lots of dust, the place we used to meet got really muddy, now that it's normalized, they've redone everything, but people were kind of lost in the city, the dust is still very strong (IFL).

After the collapse, it was all over, nobody embroiders anymore, it's no fun at all (SRC).

That doesn't happen anymore! I no longer embroider in the town square or in front of my house. Cable! (ALTV).

According to AMP, the priority was cleaning up the city's mess, and their routine was supplemented with a community effort to serve everything from breakfast to dinner for the volunteers, in a non-stop job for both sides, leaving no time left to dedicate to embroidery.

And after the collapse, how would these embroidery practices continue? There was no way around it! I stopped because I no longer had time to embroider, and when the volunteers arrived, we had to stop everything. Because I and a group of other people, and a whole bunch of others, came to the kitchen to make food, I couldn't let people starve to death. A large group of volunteers came to help clean up the mud in the city, so we came to the parish hall, the church hall, the church that's always helping, and since we have a good space here, we helped to give out food, to prepare the food. We worked from seven in the morning until eight at night, starting with breakfast. We even served the workers dinner, because we couldn't let them work in that mud while they were hungry, it just wasn't possible, right? So, I wanted to come and help, and then I stopped everything, you know, I didn't look at embroidery or anything anymore, my house was practically abandoned. I would go home just to sleep, and that was it, and we... and we spent a long time doing that (AMP).

All efforts were focused on removing the mud, and there was no way to sew or embroider because the house was completely wrecked and full of rubble, just like their emotions, DFFB pointed out.

After the mudslide, there was no way around it; the doors were packed with people, there was no way to even get out. People from outside the area came to help remove the mud, companies were already hiring, the volunteers in yellow uniforms, those evangelicals from the Baptist Church came to help remove the mud. A lot of people gathered here at my house, and the Samarco personnel started... (DFFB).

There was no way to sew here, everything was piled up, torn apart, there was no way you could even go to the supermarket, there was no way you could go out on the street. I didn't go shopping. And it was the end-of-year period. Girl! That situation was impossible; my car was parked right here in the middle of the street, and even delivering my packages in Ouro Preto was difficult. Because you have to leave a house covered in mud, look at the kind of mindset you have, and the difficulty of even leaving the city, there was no way around it, our mental state... (DFFB).

Relationships between residents no longer exist, and if they do, very few people interact with each other. The threads of their lives no longer follow the same paths. LGR states that the problems go beyond simply restoring a habitable environment to the city.

The relationships between the people here in Barra Longa have changed in the sense that they are not the same as they used to be. There used to be embroidery activity, but now it's all gone. There's little movement, it's over. People were leaving the street, it took a long time! (LGR).

According to LGR and SRC, in addition to all the hardships experienced by the embroiderers after the dam collapse, the demand for their embroidery practically disappeared. However, activities are gradually resuming, with an increase in purchase demand, even with the arrival of the pandemic.

At first, we went four years without embroidering or embroidering very little. Now the demand is coming back. Even with the pandemic, there is demand. Okay, it's improved, but it's not the same as it used to be (LGR).

I used to embroider a lot, you know. She used to go out on the streets, selling embroidery door-to-door, dish towels, that kind of thing, you know. That's what my life was like. I was very involved with that Natura and Avon business, which I sold. Then I stopped too, I also took on a lot of debt, I ended up getting into debt (SRC).

Before the dam burst, I had a lot of work, but it decreased afterwards. She (Margarida) is receiving orders, but it's not quite the same as before. I don't know why it decreased. Like they say, right... (LGR).

## **Leisure and Embroidery**

The reflections brought about by our Constitution in 1988 reveal a strengthening of segments that lack the objective conditions to confront realities with equal rights, including leisure. Citizenship can find fertile ground when leisure is included in life plans, as it can exist as a critical and creative educational process in people's lives, considering the distance many communities have from their constitutional rights (Sampaio et al., 2011).

Leisure, due to its inclusion in the broad cultural dimension inherent to human societies, can provide both rest and entertainment, as well as individual and social development, empowering people to engage with cultural symbols and not merely become consumers, as if it were just another commodity (Sampaio et al., 2011, p. 10). 19).

Leisure activities, if considered a fundamental dimension of human life, include cultural, manual, artistic, and social content, among others. Therefore, embroidery is present in this dimension and, yes, it is considered by the embroiderers of Barra Longa as a source of leisure.

For me, embroidery is a hobby, because I spend all my time embroidering. I feel good when I'm embroidering (LGR).

It's a hobby, actually it's something that makes me feel good, feel happy, because, in fact, I'm a cheerful fool, I embroider myself, I think it's beautiful, I'm enchanted by what I do, it's a real passion (AMP).

The subjectivity of leisure allows for diverse cultural experiences and practices, in its own way, time and space, and also in the spaces of others. Experiencing leisure time as a manual activity, among other things, has a specific stimulating character, helping to build fundamental values that promote the autonomy of the individuals involved and highlighting the sustainability of the ecosystem and its multifaceted nature (Sampaio et al., 2011).

Leisure? My leisure time is my work; I really enjoy what I do. So, I don't have any other leisure activities because I spend my time embroidering, you know? (LGR).

Embroidery is my hobby. The only thing I wish we had here in Barra Longa, if I could really have it, is a little place for me to sell my embroidery. Opening a small shop, because things are really tough. The Casa das Artes doesn't meet my needs for that (SRC).

Yes, I go boarding for leisure. Embroidery is everything, isn't it? It does, as they say, relieve stress, ease our minds a bit (SCR).

For the leisure experience to be complete for the individual, it is necessary to situate leisure socially and historically, which may or may not depend on material conditions, making it immutable when correlating subject and culture (Pessoa, 2020).

By stating that embroidery is both leisure and work, and that they cannot live without embroidering, the embroiderers contradict various interpretations by authors such as Dumazedier (1976), who claims that there is a dichotomy between these two dimensions, where there is work time and leisure time, including work being seen as a source of torture. Established within urban contexts, the dichotomization of leisure points to an evolutionary and linear logic that renders leisure invisible in diverse contexts (Gomes, 2014). With imperceptible boundaries, the relationship between

embroidery, work, and leisure for these embroiderers challenges Dumazedier's understanding of the concept of leisure, which neglects the issue of territoriality and emphasizes time as static (Costa; Soares; Debortoli, 2016).

On a daily basis, the embroiderers of Barra Longa, in a visceral symbiosis, make it difficult to differentiate between moments of leisure and work, as they intertwine, respecting the subjectivity of the individual due to their natural relationships. The relationship between playfulness and creativity, now associated with leisure, present in their work processes, denotes the importance of non-interference from industrial hegemony (Aquino; Martins, 2007, p. 485).

I don't know if I can call it leisure, you know, because I've always taken this as a profession, but I think it becomes leisure for me, because I enjoy it so much, I have such a strong desire to do it, I have so much love for it, and also dedication, I never get tired. For me, it's both leisure and profession (DFFB).

I don't have much leisure time. Sometimes I go for a walk, but it's very difficult. Then I'm like this: Oh no, I'm going to get my embroidery, you know, I'm going to get my embroidery! I prefer to stick with embroidery; I feel so good doing it, you know? So, for me, embroidery is really great! I consider embroidery both a hobby and a job (RBFF)

So, I think I miss it, both in terms of earning money and because I really enjoy it. Do you know what it's like to have love for something? Denise even says to me, "Stop for a bit, Mom!" – I can't, girl! I'm on television embroidering, I only stop to pray the rosary. I just finished praying the rosary, I'm doing embroidery. There are days when I stay up until nine or ten o'clock at night. It's leisure time because I have love. Everything I do, thank God, I love (RBFF).

Furthermore, in a therapeutic process, DFFB states that leisure in the form of embroidery and work have been intertwined since her childhood.

I'll tell you, I've always been raised working so hard! (With embroidery)  
Talking to you for leisure is like therapy, embroidery (DFFB).

In the borderland relationship between the dimensions of work, embroidery, and leisure, DFFB's account includes the dimension of "therapy" as a fourth element, which further broadens the possibilities for concepts of leisure and brings forth contradictions, complexities, and ambiguities within these concepts, especially in minority contexts.

Considering playful experiences in various cultural manifestations and in social life highlights the need for this expansion and diversification of leisure possibilities. With their own meanings and richness, leisure activities need to be problematized as social practices, not merely subject to the emptiness of non-work or free time, where the enjoyment of life is implicit, with increased understanding of the world around them and with enormous potential for cultural mediation (MCP assesses that embroidery as a traditional practice is also considered leisure, since, since her grandmother's time, it was used to mediate family relationships, as well as to strengthen bonds of friendship with the neighborhood and promote moments of encounters on weekends).

Back in my grandmother's day, embroidery was a hobby because it didn't exist; nobody bought it, nobody made anything like that to sell! So I learned by doing things at home. I had a neighbor who did a lot of drawn thread work; she made her living solely from embroidering drawn thread work for people from outside the area. Then she called me to help her. She would sew the yarn, unravel the thread, create the design, and the rest was up to me. She would sew the stitches together, making the little sticks, and then hand over the towel, all stitched together, all ready. I had nothing to do this weekend, so I decided to do (embroidery). I was learning how to hem, how to do it in shades, how to do everything. Towel, bedspread, children's socks, children's hat, you know, with fine thread (MCP).

Going to squares, to bars, and taking walks, after the dam collapse, was no longer part of the routine of some of them, since the event interrupted this everyday process of leisure. These activities are now being gradually resumed, as well as trips to nearby towns around Barra Longa, which they also consider leisure options.

I used to live in the square. I used to sit there in the square watching my son play, I'd take a walk there, I'd go to the little bar that was near our place in the square. But then all that ended, basically here in Barra Longa. Today, we can say that things are returning to the way they were before, slowly, very slowly. I like it! I like to embroider. Embroidery is a hobby for me because it's a way to distract myself, to pass the time. I also enjoy traveling to another city with my family. I'm going to Ouro Preto, I'm going to Mariana, to travel, to stroll, to go out for a day. Because right here in Barra Longa there were other types of leisure activities, we used to go to bars, things like that, but after the mudslide... (ATLV).

According to MCP, the change in commuting habits in the city after the dam collapse brought disillusionment. She stated that the leisure activities and lives of the

embroiderers were significantly altered, and embroidery served as a source of distraction and pleasure amidst the disaster.

After the mudslide, people became somewhat disillusioned, they don't leave their homes anymore, it feels like a curfew. Before the collapse, we used to lose everything we had, you know! For example, there used to be a dance, we'd go, a pizza place, now there's nothing to go to, the city has stopped (MCP).

The disaster definitely affected me, because I missed out on earning some extra money, you know? So, we failed financially, but the fun continues. I used to embroider things for my house, for my sister, you know? As a distraction. And you can't lower your head, because if you do, we'll go down with the mud, right? (MCP).

In everyday life, just like an embroidery that did not turn out well and needs to be undone and redone, we are often forced to let go of elements that make up our history and to resume the cycle through a new path. Lives were shattered by the tragedy that swept through and flooded the city of Barra Longa after the collapse of the Fundão dam. Embroidery, used by the embroiderers as a tool to keep their heads and bodies upright amidst so much mud, allows for a new beginning through overcoming losses and finding new pleasures in life.

## **Final Considerations**

The tragedy in Barra Longa highlighted the importance of embroidery in weaving life itself, transforming mud-colored brown threads into colorful threads of hope. Revealed through the testimonies of the embroiderers interviewed in this research, it was possible to describe, albeit minimally, the suffering of these people and the strategies they used in the process of recovering life stories after the collapse of the Fundão dam, among them, embroidery.

Therefore, this paper does not intend to definitively resolve issues in this regard, but rather to offer contributions to the understanding of the facts and the importance of embroidery as a source of leisure and cultural preservation. To achieve this, we set

objectives and chose a methodological approach that enabled us to uncover the stories of these women embroiderers.

The accounts were surprising and revealing. Throughout the interviews, it was important to heed the demands and reactions of the interviewees, and especially to respect their need to reveal their experiences with the mudslide and the marks left along each individual and collective journey.

In order to understand the transformations that have occurred in the history of embroidery, it was necessary to provide a brief account of the historical context of this art form, which appeared 30 thousand years b.C, and whose significance lies in its invaluable heritage passed down through generations. Furthermore, it was important to hear the memories they shared, related to embroidery, before and after the dam collapse and the impacts of this tragedy, not only on the embroiderers' routine activities, but mainly due to the interruption of leisure time inherent in the act of embroidering.

The results clearly demonstrate the value of embroidery, which appears as a force for overcoming challenges and maintaining the psychic and physical well-being of these embroiderers. Furthermore, it emerges as a vital element for navigating life with a minimum of pleasure. This power of embroidery also emerges as a transformative element, fundamental to the aesthetic experience, the recovery of memories, and the strengthening of the common and cultural sense of the city of Barra Longa, which has survived for generations.

Embroidery, as a representation of identity traits, is prominently featured in the female figure, whose discrimination against this art is veiled and invites us to reflect on tradition and modernity, simply because embroidery still remains solely in women's hands. The woman, idealized for her delicacy and perfect finishing touches, clashes

with the woman who does not conform to domestication and who is always seeking to find her place in society.

The Fundão disaster pushed embroidery to the margins, but little by little it became an important instrument for restoring this group's identity and sense of belonging—something they had built over several decades. The embroiderers acknowledge the losses suffered during and after the dam collapse, including emotional, health, and dignity losses. However, regarding material losses, there are the common spaces where they enjoyed embroidering and which served as leisure spaces for them, compromising even their social relationships.

Before Fundão, in Barra Longa, nature coexisted with the local culture, allowing for socialization and leisure activities, in an integration of human beings and nature, in search of territorial autonomy with their identities. After the incident, this community was denied the right to belong, which seriously compromised their lives, life stories, and everything contained within them, including leisure. When evaluating the accounts of the embroiderers, it is possible to conclude that it will be difficult to return to them the territory and environment they have lost, individually and collectively, and thus have their customs, their roots, their embroidery, and their leisure activities fully restored.

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