

## We Weave We Design

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Workshop Session - Day 3

**We Weave We Design** is a project that began with a participatory research workshop conducted in Guatemala to hear the voices of artisans. In partnership with a nonprofit organization that works with indigenous Guatemalan artisans, we explored cultural aspects of the artisan communities, as their textile tradition, creative processes, daily lives, short-term and long-term goals, etc. By comparing the organization's current approach to collaboration and artisan's voices, a problem was revealed: the organization's overall model of globalized employment both exploits artisan ability to weave quality products while also erasing indigenous traditions of textile design and storytelling. Artisans' creativity is stagnant as the result of not being directly involved in the design stage of the production process.

To address this issue, we co-designed with a member from the artisan community a 4-section workshop that aimed to create a space for artisans to design and weave textile products through cultural identification and storytelling. The workshop was intended to provide tools for the organization that was tested in early 2019.



Process and Final Product



Santiago Atitlan & San Antonio Community



Final Bracelets from each Artisans

Seven bracelets and a belt were designed and woven by artisans during the workshop. All accompanied by demonstrations of rich cultural stories.

Survey conducted after the workshop showed that artisans felt empowered in several ways. Most artisans became more confident in communicating their designs to outsiders. They also reported feeling empowered from an authentic introduction of the historical context of Guatemalan weaving culture. Some expressed the enjoyment of sharing their cultural stories with the facilitators since they themselves rarely have opportunities to introduce the richness of their culture to a foreign audience. When unexpected challenges arose throughout the week, artisans actively worked together independently to find solutions, something that leadership from the partner organization said was not normal and difficult to encourage. Artisans also showed curiosity and interest in techniques, patterns, and color usage of other cultures' textile products.