

## CITY AND FOOD

The 20<sup>th</sup> century city model is a failure. There is a pressing need to consider and create another city model, a “city in transition”, which positions territory, lives and common space at the core of any action. In this regard, we view it as an opportunity to incorporate food into urban, political and citizen thinking. The modern diet, scientists tell us, is one of the causes of the deterioration of our ecosystem, yet we believe it can likewise be a great opportunity to bring about change.

Food shapes the city, the landscape and the way we interact with each other. Therefore, it offers a unique framework for proposing policies, projects, local research, strategic plans, artistic proposals and utopias which entail a transformative impact and contribute to the well-being and innovation of our eco-social fabric.

**Ciudades Alimentadas** (Fed Cities) is the framework which encompasses the various projects that La Plasita conceives to address the relationship between cities, food, people and biodiversity through art and urban planning. This research arose as a result of the transport strike in 2008, mainly supported by lorry drivers and fishermen, which led to supermarket shelves being out of stock within a few days.

We were made aware at that moment that **the cities where we live are food deserts** and that citizens live their lives very disconnected from food production.

That initial concern, which we analysed as architects, urban planners and landscape architects, deferred to other concerns such as *Gastrósofos* (*Gastrophiles*).

Ciudades Alimentadas is an action-research which analyses three issues:

- Cities are food deserts
- The current global industrial food system is harmful to one's own health, that of the community and of the environment
- The city-countryside relationship is not fair, it is out of balance, in a dichotomous relationship in which cities do not acknowledge the values of the countryside beyond understanding it as its larder.

Our artistic manifesto is of a **political-poetic** nature and the key concept in each of our works is **Gastrosophy**, a reclaimed term (19<sup>th</sup> century) and redefined as “the food care theory or theory around the food”. *Gastrosophy* enables a holistic thought-action as regards food and the entire value chain: from the landscapes which have constructed the knowledge, agriculture and production areas, landscape and city planning, seats of power and forms of social organisation that feed us, to after-dinner conversation and waste management. The *gastrosophical* perspective surveys the different aspects of food.

**Art and utopia are powerful mechanisms** to reflect and bring science closer to issues dearest and nearest to society. Through art, we can imagine present and potential scenarios, likewise foster collective reflection with special attention to how we feed our cities.

As a tool and compendium of results obtained from the Ciudades Alimentadas (Fed Cities) research, La Plasita designs cultural projects as well as urban and territorial planning projects. Because La Plasita considers that food plays a major role in raising public awareness, **the ultimate goal of the project is to move towards a more sustainable and fair, play-oriented and intense city.** Food has cultural, social and economic values and the collective reflection on our eating habits can be a vehicle for reflection as regards other aspects of urban life.

Introducing agro-ecological practices into the urban food chain, diversifying both the concept of economics to affective economies and libidinal economies that are not only effective but likewise take into account community care and celebration, and the concept of *gastrosophy*, which develops a holistic perspective as regards food, we can design projects and policies which place the citizen at the heart of their approach.

Our two lines of work are interconnected in Ciudades Alimentadas, i.e. architecture + urban planning and cultural projects. In the first line of work, we seek **to introduce the food perspective in urban planning**, just as it was introduced into the perspective of mobility, sustainability and gender. On the other hand, in terms of cultural projects, we design activities in which we apply art as a mediator to foster **collective reflection on our eating habits** and their impact on our living environments, on one's own health, on the health of the community and that of the planet.

How to feed the city we want? We foster the ability to envision both a possible and impossible, fair, sustainable and better today and tomorrow. And we do so through cooking, pondering on how we eat and feed ourselves in cities, what our food systems are like and what our relationship with the countryside is, for we all have a relationship with food. In our daily lives (almost) everyone eats, many of us shop, some of us cook and very few of us produce. In this way, by reflecting **on food sovereignty**, we can all participate, democratize utopian thought, and raise awareness of how we live and take responsibility for our own lives.

These practices can be as simple as rediscovering ingredients or as intricate as proposing a change of perspective in urban planning. Cooking and food enable us to anchor the future to the past, to rediscover, reshape and reuse things, tools, solutions, methodologies, narratives which were useful in the past, adapting them to this possible and impossible better future we wish to envision. Through cooking, not only do we eat and provide solutions to this physical need, we likewise foster a better type of relationship through **commensality**. Celebrating around a table of food is always a good way to connect with others and celebrate the diversity of the community.

We use **art as a mediator** to raise awareness and propose necessary changes in our habits, aimed at improving our quality of life and **curb climate change**. Through different actions and projects, the debate is opened on how we feed ourselves in cities and what our consumption habits are, and therefore, **how we take care of the planet**.

The immediate effect of art enables addressing issues and topics in a flexible and entertaining manner, which facilitates the connection of areas that at first glance are poles apart. Art enables us to present imaginary scenarios which provoke defamiliarization and contemplation. Art is immediate and radical. It enables one to imagine possible and impossible tomorrows, better futures.

Some of the artistic-cultural projects of Ciudades Alimentadas are as follows:

- **El Gran Textil** is a participatory textile artwork which represents the metropolitan area of Seville from a utopian perspective of food. It is a project and object which serve as a means of communication of the Ciudades Alimentadas research and a way of raising awareness and collective reflection.
- **Ágapes de Saberes** are propositional creative meetings that take place sitting at a table, aimed at fostering collective reflection on how to feed ourselves better. We sit down for 4 hours of purposeful reflection to come up with proposals regarding the fed bio-region of Seville, and then we have lunch together.
- **Bormujos Alimentado** is a strategic review of urban planning and actions related to improving access to healthy food in the city.

**We like to think with our heads, think with our hands, think on our feet.** Each way of thinking has its own times and strategies.

In the El Gran Textil all three systems are applied.

### El Gran Textil.

Our artistic practice started by cooking in a public space (Berlin 1997) as a celebration and domestication thereof. We are aware that more intense, organic and subtle spaces for interaction are generated through food and cooking. From then on, we have been exploring other fields.

**El Gran Textil** is a map which represents the bioregion of the metropolitan area of Seville from a utopian vision of the production, distribution and consumption of food in this urbanised territory. It is a collaborative work of art which we are gradually developing with the involvement and participation of diverse collectives and people. **Textile is culture.** Gastronomy and sewing times are slow and leisurely. They allow us to foster this collective reflection according to which our way of eating and diet affects our living environments and our communities, allowing us to propose changes in our consumption habits to move towards a city in transition which is more sustainable, fair and caring. By reflecting on food, we can all participate. Cooking a better city.

The creation of the **El Gran Textil** began as the core of a **teaching innovation - Project Based Learning** – project with the Pablo Picasso Vocational Training Institute in the textile sector in Seville. During the 2019-20 academic year, we made patterns, designed and sewed the over 30 municipalities which make up the metropolitan area of Seville with the students of two classes of intermediate and advanced level of pattern making and sewing course. Following the system of the textile design industry, the patterns of the towns and rivers of the bioregion were printed, and the prints of the five agro-food landscapes, i.e. meadows, vegetable garden, river plains, countryside and marshlands, were artistically designed. During the sewing periods, questions were asked as regards our eating habits, uncovering inconsistencies, good and bad practices, pleasures and family memories. Food has a great evocative power.

The only constraint was the materials caption which specified what type of space it was: gold fabrics for historic centres, silver for industrial areas, plaid for residential areas, green for parks, blue for waters. And countless other types for the different zoning into which the towns and cities were divided into. We cared more about the process than the result, and certainly with no expectations in that regard, the aesthetics turned out to be gorgeous.

During the year of work, cut short by the COVID confinement, we interacted with the city of Reims (France) where we contacted with another sewing institute, exchanging knowledge and experience as much as we could. And now (2023) contacts are being resumed. The shape of the Grand Textile is the shape of the window of the food market of the city of Reims.

El Gran Textil has been exhibited during this time. New conversations and narratives have been proposed as the work has taken on a life of its own. It was presented and was the subject of the exhibition at the Royal Artillery Factory of Seville (May 2021) organised by the Seville City Council and was the venue for the first *Gastrosophy* conference (June 2021).

This piece, which began with the intention of being created within a year, is still under construction. It is gradually covering the imaginary territory of recycled textiles. Once the municipalities have been completed, we are currently (2023) sewing the productive landscapes through neighbourhood sewing workshops. We already have the marshlands and the vegetable gardens underway. We will continue with the meadow, the countryside and river plains.

Each creative sewing workshop ends with a communal meal around a table where we partake of a menu from that productive landscape. In the case of the marshlands, the appetiser served was a dish conceived in the 80s in Puebla del Rio consisting of a “salad” of roasted peppers, with sautéed prawns and fried eggs, incredible! The first course was red Cajun style (EEUU) cooked crabs from the Guadalquivir, as those crabs are originally from this place, served as a crab, corn and potato stew. The second course was the typical creamy rice with duck from the marshlands.

We are now working on the countryside.

The construction of an artistic work enables us to have an immediate channel of communication, awareness and representation, which is also more intense, visual and poetic. El Gran Textil is therefore an artistic work, but it is likewise a participatory and critical research into the urban landscape from the perspective of food in cities.

Lilian Weikert



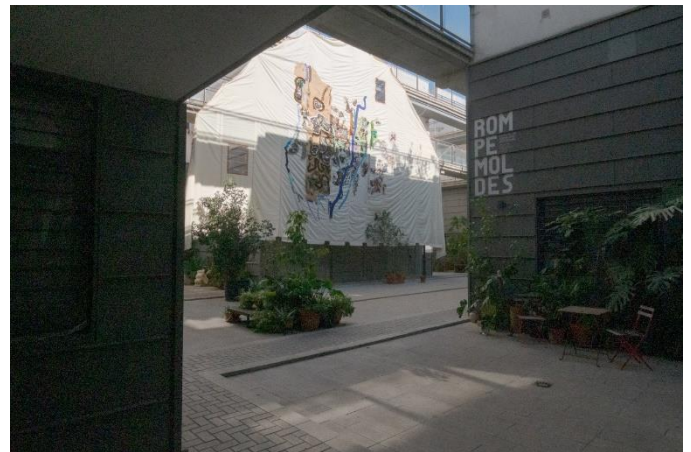
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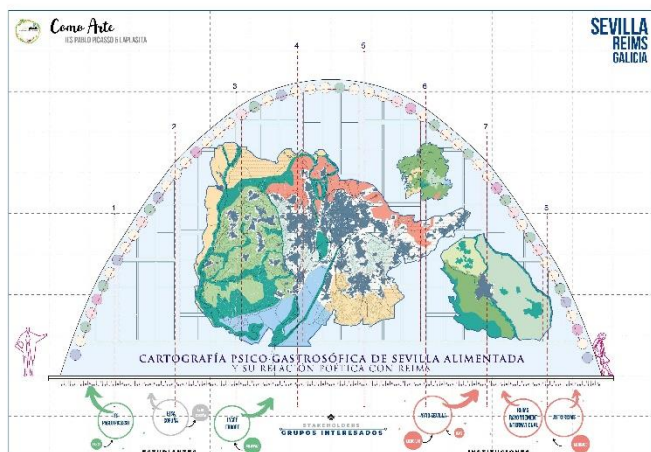
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El Gran Textil



El Gran Textil



El Gran Textil. Map



El Gran Textil. Process

LILIAN WEIKERT:



**Lilian Weikert** is a member of La Plasita, a Seville architecture and cultural projects studio and a meeting point for both public as well as private artistic and business projects.

Lilian earned a Bachelor's Degree in Mathematics from the Berlin Technical University, Germany, and also holds a Master's Degree in Landscape Protection, Management and Planning from the University of Seville. During her training as a landscape architect, she was particularly interested in studying the processes of perception as well as the importance of the senses in the acquisition of knowledge of the living environment. She understands landscape as an excellent education medium, not only in environmental terms, but similarly in values. She has collaborated in the drafting of Good Landscaping Practices catalogues for the Department of Public Works and the Ministry of the Environment.