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IT SPLATTERS!

A RECIPE TO CODESIGN THE WORLD FROM OUR INSIDES, EXPANDING RELATIONAL PRACTICES IN PARTICIPATORY DESIGN RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the relationship between sustenance labour and Participatory Design (PD), focusing on cooking, eating, and digesting with the aim of contributing to the significant shift PD is going through towards more relational approaches. We discuss how the first author's design and research practice evolve as she engages with her fieldwork as an *eater*. By tracing the intimate connections between bodies, materials, stories, and environments in making a recipe—*caraotas en coco*—we highlight how the recipe expands our ways of relating, becoming response-able from within.

The recipe acts as a medium of translation, taking the form of a participatory design workshop where we explore cooking, eating, and digesting as sites for ideation and serious inquiry. As participants engage whole-bodily with sustenance labour, they uncover the relational qualities inherent in these actions. These *descriptive revelations* enable careful reassessments—tuning into their insides to work with difference, instantiate interrelations and develop relational sensitivities. And, as these *splatter*, we trace their potential to inform and reshape designers' participatory approaches.

INTRODUCTION

This article is an exploration of learning from what leaves almost no trace, learning from what is cooked and eaten. This entails learning from what might seem, at times, superfluous, at others, intangible. It also involves learning from what sustains and transforms us, nurturing our relationships through its constant, repetitive nature, and learning to acknowledge the brilliance of sustenance labour, which is constantly undermined, taken for granted and diminished. Activities related to cooking and eating are performed mainly by women who, we dare say, spend a lot of time dedicated to body sustenance labour, caring for themselves and others (Carrasco, 2001; Muxí, 2019; Groys, 2022; Arranz, 2024). *How might our inquiries change if we approached Participatory Design (PD) from this often intangible and downplayed perspective? Would our understanding of PD be any different?*

This paper describes a process of connecting sustenance labour to design and research. It aims to bring together cooking, eating, and digesting, along with all that accompanies it—its processes, materiality, and intertwined socio-political, cultural, and ecological dimensions (Steel, 2020; Mol, 2021; Shotwell, 2021; Law & Mol, 2008)—to Participatory Design (PD) and thinking. To better taste and relate to us, the authors, and this paper, we strongly recommend grabbing a hot cup of tea or coffee, something that activates your sense of smell and taste and warms you from within. We feel, think, and design differently; we relate to the body and mind differently, to self and others, when we allow all our senses to engage (Höök et al., 2019; Wilde, 2020; Lindegren et al., 2023). We invite you to enable cooking, eating, and digesting into the design space and be transformed by it.

Our intention in allowing sustenance activities within the design space is to contribute to a significant ontological shift currently taking place in PD, which



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opens new fields of study and expands the repertoire of tools and processes towards more relational research approaches (Huybrechts et al., 2022; Heitlinger et al., 2024; Rodríguez Alfonzo & Huybrechts, 2025a; Hayes-Conroy & Hayes-Conroy, 2010; Rodríguez Alfonzo et al., 2024). And explore how incorporating bodily experiences—particularly those centred on the process of digestion—can facilitate deeper connections and more intimate relations between human and more-than-human participants (Akama et al., 2020; Akama & Yee, 2016; Kasulis, 2002).

This shift reorients design discourses from a primary focus on methods to reflections by designers on their attitudes and the embodied knowledge involved in the act of design (Agid & Akama, 2020; Baek et al., 2018; Light & Akama, 2014; Light & Akama, 2012). In our research, we do so by exploring how to bring ourselves and the people we work with closer to our bodies as a way to avoid distant perspectives, forefront socio-ecological relations, stimulate acting, and enable inhabiting among compromised worlds (Braidotti et al., 2018; Rodríguez Alfonzo, 2024). As Gottlieb (2022) states: “Relational sensitivities are integral for participating in flexible and evolving conditions of designing with others,” and connecting with these sensitivities is fundamental in the process of becoming relational designers (Heitlinger et al., 2024).

This paper discusses the transformation of the first author’s design and research practice during her fieldwork experience: making *caraotas en coco* (black beans in coconut milk), cooking, eating and digesting with five women from a Community Kitchen in *El Sinai*, a precarious self-built settlement in Caracas, Venezuela. To do so, we will use a recipe and approach fieldwork as *eaters* (Mol, 2021). Through the recipe, we lean into mapping (Stender, 2017; Braidotti et al., 2018) to trace the intimate connections between bodies, materials, stories, and environments in making *caraotas en coco*, following the recipe as a way of knowing and relating to these women’s experiences, allowing the recipe to expand our ways of relating, becoming *response-able*¹ (Barad, 2006; Haraway, 2016) starting from our insides.

Subsequently, we explore cooking, eating, and digesting as a space for ideation and serious inquiry in the form of an experimental and participative workshop (Rodríguez

Alfonzo & Huybrechts, 2024). Our exploration became a designerly translation of making *caraotas en coco* in *El Sinai*, this time engaging 18 architects, designers and researchers. This translation uses the recipe, a form of knowledge largely unacknowledged (May Johnson, 2022; Arranz, 2024), to shift from an individual fieldwork experience to a collective inquiring workshop. Drawing on recent food-centric experimental engagement processes in PD and artistic research (for example, see: Lindström et al., 2024; Jönsson et al., 2021; Wilde, 2022; Wilde et al., 2021; Lenskjold & Wilde, 2022; Donati, 2014; Haider & van Oudenhoven, 2018; Kelley, 2023a; Kelley, 2023b; Yee et al., 2024), the communal cooking, eating, and digesting workshop is envisioned as a space to reflect, through a recipe, on our design practices. Here, we ground ourselves in May Johnson’s (2022) definition of a recipe understood “as instructions for the transformation of matter to which we are participants” and its capacity to “change [our bodies and] how we see things not [only] with our eyes but our tongues.” We will further reflect on the embodiment of the recipe and its multiple translations as a form of inquiry later on, but first, let us start with the first author’s² account of making *caraotas en coco*.

CARAOTAS EN COCO EN EL SINAI

From 2018 to 2020, I worked as an architect with *Alimenta la Solidaridad*, a local NGO focused on addressing food security in children within homes where mothers play central roles in supporting and transforming their community in Caracas, Venezuela. After four years of living abroad, I came back, this time as a researcher. As part of my fieldwork, I became involved with *El Sinai*’s community kitchen, a space where five women prepare lunch every weekday for 60 local children. My first encounter with the site was challenging and uncomfortable; I struggled to understand how a community kitchen operated under such precarious material conditions in a small self-built dwelling left behind by a family that migrated to Colombia—a poorly ventilated 35m² space without tap water, where vegetable peels and waste are discarded over a cliff nearby. The exercise of *making sense* brings you and your experiences to the forefront, and what my mind was not able to process, my body tried to: *I had site indigestion*.³

¹ The term response-able is a reconceptualization of responsibility, moving away from its individual condition and becoming able to respond to broader and complex issues.

² The sections of the article written in the first person—using “I” and “me”—provide insight into the author’s position and experiences. The author’s choice to write this way emphasizes the significance of personal experiences and sensitivities in the process of sense-making.

This approach aligns with the suggestions of Ballesterio, Winthereik (2021) and Pink (2021) who advocate for incorporating diverse ways of knowing into research.

³ The term was further developed after relating with indigestion as explored by De Gaetano, Gatello and Susanna in the DAAS Academy glossary <https://www.daas.academy/research/in-digestion/>

INDIGESTION IS AN INTIMATE AND RELATIONAL APPROACH TO OTHERNESS

Indigestion feels like a deep, visceral, unsettling sensation that forces me to reconsider something I haven't fully digested, a guttural intuition and recognition that something is amiss within me. Indigestion, this very physical reaction, served as a means for my body to hold me accountable—responsible for the positionalities I embody and shape me, as discourses are both material and performative (Barad, 2006; Braidotti, 2006; Braidotti et al., 2018). My body required me to digest my specific position in relation to *El Sinai*, sitting in the discomfort of my body to overcome it. I needed to slow down and situate myself to *become with* (Haraway, 2010) the group of mothers, the setting, and the myriad ways of carrying out and caring in their daily lives. My insides transformed into a tool of accountability and, as Barad (2003) articulates, a means to perceive myself “as entangled and part of the world as well as being obligated, bound to, and indebted to the other.”

My fieldwork in El Sinai consisted of days filled with cooking, eating, and digesting together, extenuating and joyful days overflowing with food and labour repeated over and over again, day after day. Bending myself as my insides tried to *make sense* in other ways. As my body adjusted, my mind followed, moving away from the normative *common sense*—as a social and cultural construct with its built-in biases and preconceptions—towards making sense with [my] senses, engaging deeply in experiencing and sensing as a way to access what [my] insides want [me] to consider about this particular context and its dynamics (Shotwell, 2021).

Following my insides and Mol's (2021; 2008), Probyn's (2004; 2015) and Heldke's (2018; 2012) ontological reflections about cooking, eating and digesting, food became central in the process of relating with each other and the site. One day, eating beans with rice, Elvia shared her recipe for *caraotas en coco*. As we followed it, the recipe became a way of knowing and tracing the mothers' experiences, a story containing many stories:

“I'm not from here; none of us is from here. I am from the coast, close to the Orinoco River's Delta. The Delta is filled with coconut trees, and we use coconut in most of our cooking, not the young and green coconut, the brown one; we let it ripen on the tree, and the taste is much more intense. My family likes to eat lowland paca in coconut milk, rabbit in coconut milk, iguana in coconut milk, coconut milk rice and black beans in coconut milk—caraotas en coco.”

[Elvia, mother from the community kitchen]



Figure 1: (a) Elvia and her son shelling the coconuts. (b) Elvia grates the coconut flesh—photos by the author.

CARAOTAS EN COCO. A RECIPE TOWARDS RELATIONALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

I brought six coconuts a week later, and we made *caraotas en coco* (Figure 1). This recipe, the process of cooking and eating it, became an assemblage of forces and intensities, a process of *becoming with* Elvia, *with* the coconuts, *with* the grater, *with* the bowl, *with* the water, *with* the pot, *with* the heat, *with* other ways of relating *with* palm trees, *with* the smell transporting us to the Orinoco River and back, to current struggles and possible futures of the Community Kitchen where these women and their past lives have space to flourish.

Following the *strings of withs* of the recipe became a means of engaging relationally and reorienting towards the interdependency inherent in food (Boisvert, 2010). As Elvia shared her story, which was deeply intertwined with her recipe, we could trace the intimate connections among bodies, materials, stories, and environments while cooking and eating *caraotas en coco*. Here, it is important to note that the recipe was first written by the body; it was first cooked and eaten. The recipe, passed down orally and enacted, was later translated into its written form as an attempt to represent the network of relations involved in its making. It does so by presenting the ingredients and tools alongside the person and the type of relationship established with the Community Kitchen and the recipe itself.

Ingredients:

- 2 heads of finely cut garlic (contribution/mother)
- 1 kg finely cut onions (donation/NGO)
- 1 kg finely cut creole sweet pepper (donation/NGO)
- 1 bunch of parsley (contribution/mother's garden)
- 4 spoons powdered chicken bouillon (contribution/mother)
- 6 kilos of black beans (donation/NGO)
- 1/2 cup of vegetable oil (myself)
- 6 ripe coconuts (contribution/myself)

- 6 litres of water (contribution/mothers)
- Salt and sugar (contribution/mothers)

Tools (Figure 2):

- Stove (loaned/neighbour; she is asking back for it, but there is no replacement)
- Large pot (all the mothers chipped in to buy it)
- Large bowl (loaned/neighbour)
- Knives (loaned/mothers)
- Cutting tables (loaned/mother)
- Machete (loaned/Elvia)
- Pricker (loaned/Elvia)
- Stone (loaned/Elvia's most used tool)
- Grater (loaned/mother)
- Strainer (loaned/mother)

Preparation: Leida leaves the beans soaking in water overnight. The following day, already heated after going 136 steps from El Sinai main street to the community kitchen, Leida attempts to ignite the stove's pilot, but it's not working. Elvia arrives with her children. An hour later, Las Morochas (the twins) start the stove's pilot. We cook the black beans in salted water and chicken bouillon. Elvia breastfeeds her youngest and puts her to bed. In the kitchen, she takes a pricker and a stone, perforates the coconuts, and saves the water. We all drink from it. It is sweet and refreshing, perfect for a hot day. Later, she takes the stool, machete, and bowl and sits outside to break the coconuts apart. We all join her as she recounts stories about where she grew up, her father's vegetable garden, and different coconut preparations in El Delta. We return inside, grate the coconut flesh, and chop the garlic, cilantro, and ají dulce into fine pieces. As we grate, slice, peel, and cut, we discuss our relationship with food and the places where we grew up. Elvia adds water to the grated coconut flesh and kneads it to make the milk. She strains the mixture and repeats the process twice. Two-thirds of the coconut milk is added to the other ingredients. Caraotas take their time; they are continuously stirred to create a creamy consistency. They will be ready when they are; there's no need to rush them. The coconut pulp and remaining milk are cooked with rice as a side dish.

By tracing the recipe's edible and non-edible matter from various households, we map the territories, practices, and bodies involved in the constellation of this community kitchen—a map of hybrid assemblages endowed with relational agency. These assemblages meet to ensure the very physical substance of the children and the mothers themselves, achievable through this continuous, collective and highly interdependent endeavour. Cooking, eating and digesting, as well as the string of efforts and commitments it entails, is an act of resistance in the current Venezuelan context marked by forced

displacement and an acute multidimensional humanitarian crisis with 50% of the population living in extreme poverty and 50% of children under 5 years old at risk of severe malnutrition (UCAB, 2021).

By approaching fieldwork as eaters, we engage with the community kitchen's current material scarcity and its relationships, which are interwoven daily by and through food (Figure 3). By tracing relations with our insides, making a meal becomes an ethnographic fragment aiding *sense-making*. Through this process, we uncover a complex past-present landscape of relations, allowing a thicker reading of the site and feeding reflections of its future. The embodied learning within the making of *caraotas en coco* “brings together various forms of knowledge—past, present, cellular, felt, smelled, moved with, etc.” (Probyn, 2015) and enhances our understanding and care for the territory, its processes and all its agents: the cliff, soil, coconut milk, vegetable peels, machete, tasting mouths and fingers.

We see the recipe as a “method for navigation, a method for seeing or seeking what is beyond [us]” (May Johnson, 2022)—a knowledge-making tool giving space to all our senses to engage whole-bodily with others. We also see the above-written form of *caraotas en coco* as instructions—or more like encouragements—to tend to coconut and beans, responding to their potential for transformation while also deriving pleasure from it, engaging with the liveliness of the processes it describes, trespassing its written boundaries. The recipe as a method is also “capacious and roomy and allows those who enter it to change it” (May Johnson, 2022)—allowing multiple others in. The recipe's expanded way of relating and its capacity to hold and deepen vulnerability, intimacy and accountability is what we wanted to explore with other designers. Therefore, we translated the making of *caraotas en coco* from a fieldwork experience to a participatory design workshop with the intention of expanding design language and practices.

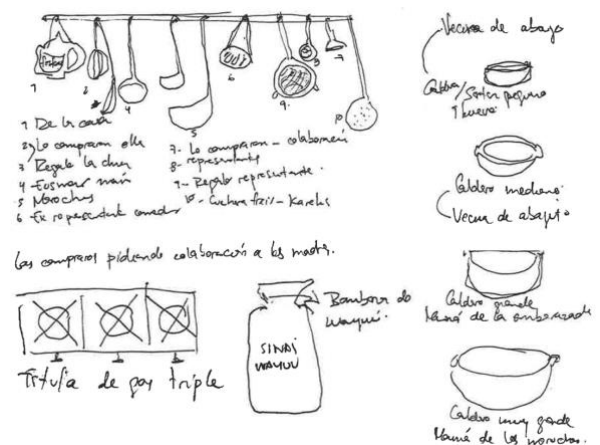


Figure 2: Tools used in the Community Kitchen with notes related to its previous location and user. Sketch by the author during her fieldwork.



Figure 3: (a) Eating *caraotas en coco* outdoors. (b) Mother threw the vegetable peels off the cliff from the day's cooking activity.

TRANSLATING THE RECIPE FROM FIELDWORK TO WORKSHOP

May Johnson (2022) defines a recipe as a “set of instructions for the transformation of matter to which I am participant”. She situates the one enacting the recipe in the same plane as the ingredients, making the recipe come to life. A recipe is an act of translation in which one understands others as well as oneself. It is a material act acknowledging the radical interdependence binding us all together (Huybrechts et al., 2022). Furthermore, as an act of translation, a recipe is never the same, as the ones participating in each enactment are always different. Here, we align with Evan’s (1997) interpretation of “translation as a translatory motion with no requisite of evenness and continuity; things can get bent, broken or lost on the way” as they move through different spaces, contexts, worlds and tongues (Rodríguez Alfonzo & Huybrechts, 2025b).

SENTIPENSAR CON LAS TRIPAS⁴

In July 2024, during my second fieldwork visit to Caracas, we carried out “*Sentipensar con las Tripas: An Edible Exploration of Participatory Design*”. Along with 18 designers, we cooked, ate, and digested a meal together. The workshop was informed by the recipe and the making of *caraotas en coco* in *El Sinai*, its materiality, environment, and relational abundance, as well as the small-gestured, sensorial collective engagements from our experience there. The recipe became a compass to engage in the act of translation, in this case, from *El Sinai* Community Kitchen to *La Casa*

de Todos, a community space open to the sky in close relation to a vegetable garden.

Designing the workshop as an act of translation involved shaping parts of myself and my fieldwork experience into a three-hour encounter with designers and researchers from diverse fields and backgrounds. The making of *caraotas en coco* in *El Sinai* was translated into the collective cooking, eating, and digesting of a soup made with fresh green beans, creole sweet peppers, and coconut milk, along with a grated coconut milk ice dessert topped with toasted cacao bean paste and jackfruit. This process revealed how, even in its preparation, the translation from fieldwork to workshop entailed a relational expansion—bringing in local actors, markets, and venues and transforming the recipe itself along the way.

The workshop aimed to bring the bodies and positions of the participants to the table as they chewed together, literally and metaphorically, on materials and meanings concerning their design practices. To foster trust among participants, we began by washing each other’s hands⁵—an act of collective accountability grounded in shared experience. Afterwards, the designers gathered on the floor around a long, ground-level soil table. At the same time, I narrated the story of the recipe we would be preparing together, including the story of Elvia and the mothers of the Community Kitchen.

Furthermore, as part of this introduction, participants were offered a small glass of “dirty water” (a combination of coconut water and molasses) from *El Sinai*; by drinking it, they could choose to engage with it from within. This act of translation was intended to convey my fieldwork experience of *site indigestion*, facilitating a visceral understanding of otherness and difference, ultimately cultivating awareness of the diversity of bodies, positions, and biases involved, bending ourselves, prompting us to embrace the discomfort in mind and body (Wilde et al., 2017) to nurture a shared space of availability and vulnerability.

DOING AND BEING OVER A SOIL TABLE

The workshop brought the Community Kitchen to a different space and audience, particularly emphasising the experience of cooking, eating, and digesting in close proximity to the soil. Every morning in *El Sinai*, the mothers begin their day by clearing soil particles from

⁴ Translation: Thinking-feeling with our guts. Sentipensar is a term coined by Sociologist Orlando Fals-Borda to represent a way of engaging with the world that integrates both emotions and intellect.

⁵ Washing hands represents an act of translation on its own. In previous workshops cooking and eating with participants (Genk,

Belgium), we assumed everyone had already wash their hands but it was not necessarily true and this had a negative effect in their willingness to engage and eat what we were cooking together. It became important for us in our workshops for all participants to witness and partake in the process of washing our hands.

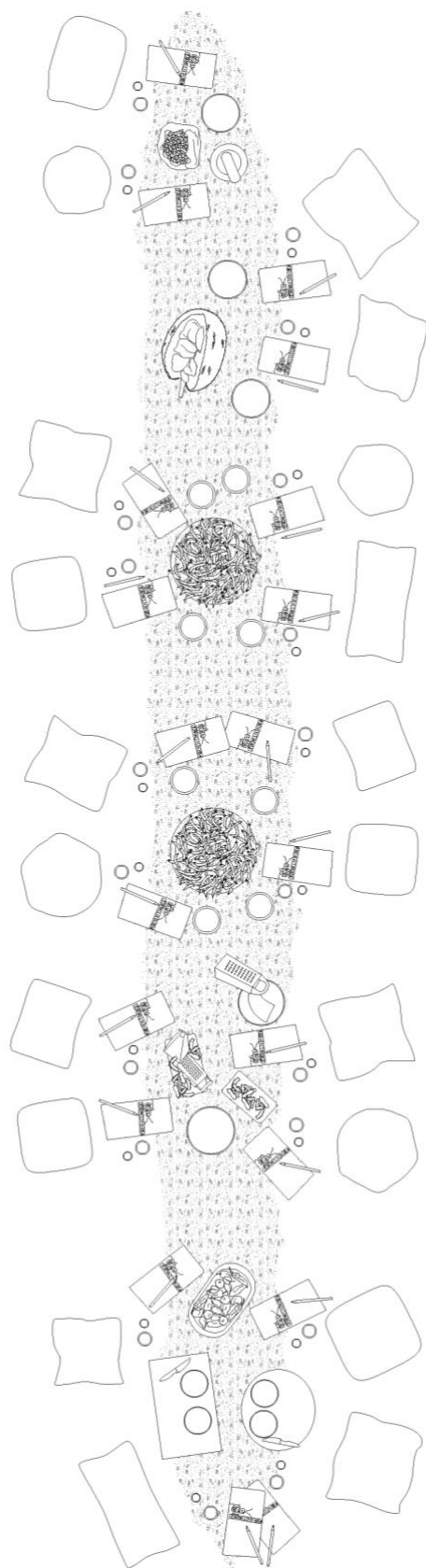


Figure 4: Plan drawing of the soil table set-up in *La Casa de Todos*. Drawing by Liisalota Kroon and Josymar Rodríguez Alfonso.

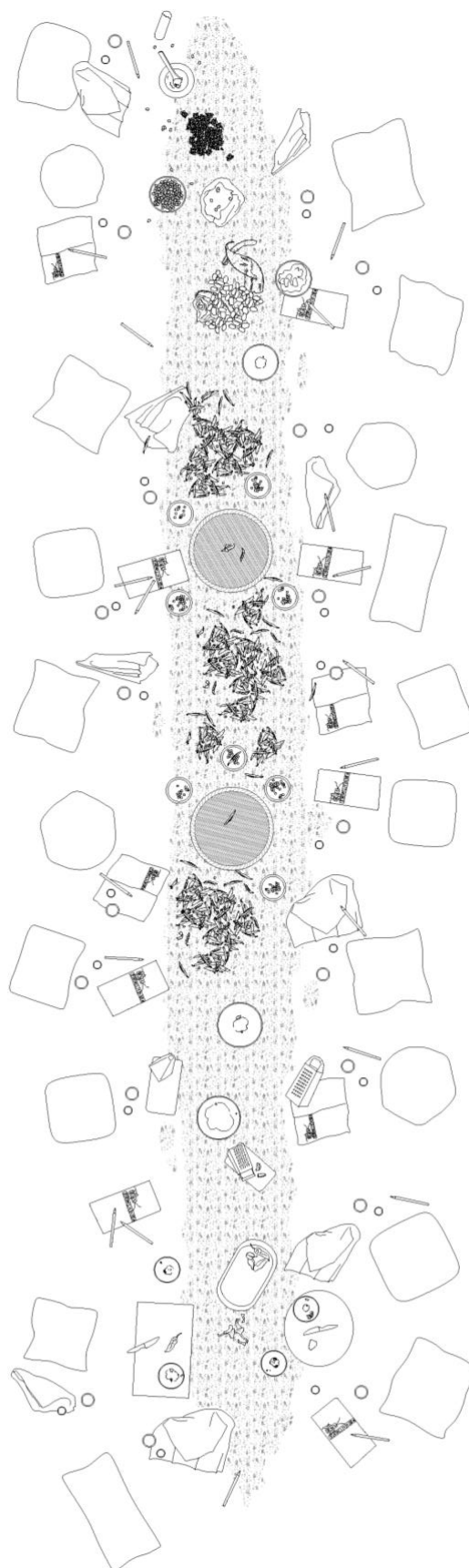


Figure 5: Plan drawing of the soil table and the messy aftermath of all the interactions. Drawing by Liisalota Kroon and Josymar Rodríguez Alfonso.

the floor, as heavy rain has caused its retaining wall to collapse (Figure 6). They also dispose of vegetable peels and other residues over a cliff to slowly decompose, and each day, when it is not raining, they eat outdoors, sitting on low stools and spare concrete blocks. We aimed to translate the experience of being near the soil into the workshop. This decision presented an opportunity to engage participants in a different way to eating, remove learned etiquette and table manners, overcome cultural biases, and foster connections with all involved actors, including food and soil.



Figure 6: The Community Kitchen collapsed back wall. Soil coming into the space—photo by the author.

“Food makes people reach intimacy almost immediately with each other and, today, with soil. What draws my attention is the naturalness with which we sit in front of the soil as a table. It’s unusual for us to assume that the earth is a table. It is not common sense. Being over a soil table made me think differently about the ground because if some seeds fell on it, I would just pick them up and eat them or throw them here, in this little pot, with the others that did not fall. I thought, “How bad can it be, right? Soil and beans are both natural. A little soil particle in the soup will not do any harm. I am more scrupulous in my house.”

[Cheo, workshop participant]

The participants recognised the relevance of being and doing, especially cooking and eating, over a soil table. Cheo, one of the participants, acknowledged how “unusual” and distant from their notion of *common sense* the experience was, different from how they usually cook, standing up and over clean surfaces. This translation allowed them to connect with a more grounded, earthy, messy and precarious reality and, simultaneously, with another version of themselves, able to relate with soil deeply and, therefore, with others. The experience was an opportunity to expand their ways of eating. As a relational process, eating became a space to bring our insides, minds, food, and

soil together in other, more intimate ways. Sitting and eating on the ground, they physically bend, making themselves uncomfortable, to acknowledge and engage with something different (Figures 4,5 and 7).



Figure 7: Participants working with peas over a ground-level soil table—photo by the author.

DESCRIPTIVE REVELATIONS

In order to explore recipe writing as an act of translation that can bring substance labour to the design discourse, we invited the workshop participants to cook and transform food while descriptively writing about each other’s recipe enactments. We specifically asked them to engage with their senses⁶ in a moment for collectively cutting and smashing creole sweet peppers, grating and massaging coconut, and splitting and squeezing fresh green bean pods. In carefully describing their bodily engagements with mundane sustenance labour, the designers began to uncover relational qualities inherent in the actions themselves, which could inform and reshape their design processes. To clarify our findings, we termed these discoveries *descriptive revelations*. This section will analyse four participants’ descriptions of their recipe enactments and how they inform their process of becoming relational designers.

THE PEAS AND CECILIA ARE COMPLICIT; THEY ARE ALWAYS INTERCONNECTED, AND IT FEELS SO NICE

“Cecilia is discovering the pea. At first, she looks for the best way to open them. She is getting to know them and smells them. Touches the inside of the pod, enjoying the softness. Freshness. After a few minutes, after overcoming the initial difference, she feels comfortable and peels them with dexterity; she got the hang of it.”

[Ricardo’s written account of peeling fresh green beans]

Ricardo describes how Cecilia and the peas get acquainted. He remarks on the passing of time and

⁶ Participants responded to this prompt: “Feel, taste, listen and observe your companions and their doings. Write to describe their actions,

sensations, emotions, and relations in the digestion process you perform together.”

repetition in their process of getting to know each other and growing into each other, overcoming differences through overexposure. He also emphasises the pleasure of this deeply felt, intimate and sensorial engagement. On the side of the one who writes and describes, it's worth noting his attention to peas as much as to Cecilia; there is no leading actor, the peas are also discovering Cecilia. **Descriptive revelation:** They work together, over and over again, and become complicit in the process of transforming each other; they are interconnected, and it feels so nice.

SMELLS MIX; IDEAS AND STORIES, TOO

She squeezes and slides with her fingers—press and open, pop! The pod is moist, crunchy, green and fresh. We take out the peas and find that some are ready and pop, and others want to stay in longer. We share sensations and tastes together. We smell the work of others, and they mix with our own: citrus, bitter, sweet and earth. We share anecdotes and experiences that surface from being and doing close to each other. We found beans with roots and a pod with nine seeds, and the sounds captivated us—the exchange of smells and knowledge.

[Ana's written account of peeling fresh green beans]

Ana describes actions, translating into words what their bodies are doing, human and pea bodies. They recognise and learn from each other: their smell, texture, flavour and trajectories. They recognise differences and work with them, building up trust and intimacy between participants. Relationality transcends through smells. Their noses make way to extend their connections beyond human-pea. As smells mix, they share stories of other times cooking together with peas, sweet peppers and coconut. **Descriptive revelation:** Smells mix; ideas and stories, too.

The pea also wants things; some want to stay in longer, and others want to come out. They vary in readiness (Akama & Light, 2018). Humans can listen and respond to differing readiness states and their needs if we are close enough to hear them 'pop'. Peas have agency, stories, and networks of labour and materials trailing behind them. "Once part of the recipe, they become part of a more complex and messier 'thing'" (May Johnson, 2022), a meal travelling through my and others' insides. **Descriptive revelation:** The pea is an ingredient that is always different, and in May Johnson's (2022) words, "the recipe encourages [us] to tend to ingredients responding to their qualities and potential for transformation" (Figure 7).

REPETITION IS RELATIONAL ACROSS TIME

As she grates the coconut, the tension in her hand announces the tension in her whole body. It changes as she goes on. She remembers grating coconut, cassava, and carrots. She is not tense anymore. Her memory tries to remember previous

gratings, bringing out anecdotes. A whole universe of different possibilities opens up. We eat and grate together. After grating, she finds massaging the coconut satisfying, although you can cut yourself and cover your hands with blood.

[Gerardo's written account of making coconut milk]

There is a building of trust through constant exposure through repetition. In the beginning, it feels strange and challenging, but in doing it over and over again, you gain confidence, it becomes comfortable, and repetition becomes a space to travel to other moments performing a similar action. All the relations that come with that memory, *a whole universe of different possibilities*, open up and become part of others' stories as they are shared across the table—**descriptive revelation:** Repetition builds relationships and is relational across time (Figure 8).

The grater reminds you not to drift so far as the grater grates all flesh that is pushed against it. For the grater, coconut flesh and human flesh are the same. Here is something to learn from grating flesh as relational designers about not letting our minds drift too far away, staying put and in connection with the materials and actors you are working with. Situated. **Descriptive revelation:** Yes, drift, look for other knots in the web of relations, and create a new, but always come back.

IT IS EXPANSIVE. IT SPLATTERS. IT GOES BEYOND ITS LIMITS AND MESSES WITH OTHERS

Elisa: Massaging and squeezing are skills. You must do it carefully; I squeezed too hard, and everything came out.

Gerardo: It splattered all over us (laughs).

Elisa: I had to squeeze softly, like that (enacts squeezing). And then we realised that our hands were very soft because of the coconut milk.

Mayra: It was delicious.

Veronica: Yes, I even spread it all over my face.

[Conversation between participants]

Massaging and squeezing, Elisa realises the complexity of a simple action as her lack of experience with making coconut milk crosses the container's boundary and splatters others. **Descriptive revelation:** The expansiveness of making coconut milk trespasses the limits of the vessel and the boundaries of the human body as it is absorbed by its skin, transforming it. *It splatters!*

Elisa also realises she must be careful of herself and thorough with her hands' strength as she squishes coconut and water together. Hand, water, coconut, and vessel are always related. **Descriptive revelation:** Her hands always affect others beyond what she can predict, as her actions (squishing with varying strengths) *splatter* and mess with many others.

These descriptive revelations, informed mainly by cooking, start threading connections towards why, as designers, we should pay attention to the relationality embedded in the everyday sustenance processes and how it can positively impact our trajectory as we become relational designers. In the next section, we discuss the designers' reflections after eating.



Figure 8: Participant squeezes to make coconut milk while his partner writes to describe the recipe enactments—photo by the author.

IT SPLATTERS! REFLECTIONS ON RELATIONAL PRACTICES IN PARTICIPATORY DESIGN RESEARCH

After eating, designers were asked to reflect on similarities and differences between digestion and their practices as designers and researchers. The experience, collectively cooking, eating and digesting over a soil table, supported careful reassessments, tuning to their insides to work within differences and instantiate interrelations.

RECOGNISING ONESELF AND OTHERS

"I think there is something to learn about positioning as a researcher concerning being conscious in eating and digesting. How do I feel? Do I feel bloated? Does it sit well with me? There is something about being connected, listening to your body, and being attentive to what makes you uncomfortable. Our immediate reaction is to suppress it, right? But if you listen to your body, you should be very aware and respectful of the discomfort you are feeling. A discomfort that helps you see things differently and maybe become aware of the flaws of your research approach and methods."

[Ricardo's comment after eating]

(...) At the moment of eating, one recognises the others. One recognises in the peas those who were peeling them, in the sweet pepper those who were cutting them, and in the coconut milk those who were there. The fact that one recognises the others in what one is eating and digesting makes one somehow become aware of the other. And somehow related to the idea of recognising oneself in food, I think that (in codesign) when the decision is shared, it is everyone's, and therefore, it is no

one's fault if things go wrong. Responsibility is shared, and it is impossible to point fingers if we are all responsible. That is how design should be."

[Ricardo's comment after eating]

In the first reflection, we recognise a compelling relation between being accountable for oneself, positioning and attuning to *indigestion*, our insides, and their capacity for knowledge-making. We need to strengthen our capacity for a different way of "sense-making" and move away from the idea of "common sense"—commonly understood as a social and cultural construct with its built-in biases. **It splatters!** We take in the idea that design needs to move towards "what makes more *sense*", meaning what makes us use our senses and engage in sensing deeply to access what our bodies and insides want us to consider.

The participant also reflects on trust and respect, about not suppressing but listening to those often not heard, in this case, your own body trying to communicate through indigestion and discomfort, your differences, helping you become aware of your flaws, biases and position. He extends his reflection about trust and respect from an individual standpoint to a collective one. The participant recognises eating as a moment to acknowledge others, human and more-than-human, as they are part of the making of that meal, sustaining us all and endowed with trust and respect. When eating, they, all those who were part of the meal at any point along the way, travel through your body and transform you from the inside. **It splatters!** We understand that eating is a process with no precise agential cuts, and all participants are interrelated and response-able. Are we capable of approaching design this way?

GIVING SPACE TO TIME, ALLOWING DIGRESSION AND REVELLING AGAINST EFFICIENCY

"When we were cooking, sharing tasks and making something together was easy. But it is not time-efficient. It allows digression. It allows you to wander. It allows you to drift. In our market-governed culture, we are always producing, consuming and being measured. It doesn't leave space or time for digression. And I feel that cooking together, no matter what, gives us time to live again. This act could be understood as a form of resistance, a rebellion, an exploration of other ways of being, in contrast to the productivity inertia we are part of."

[Elisa's comment after eating]

The workshop was a space to slow down and take time, collectively, for the mundane. In this space, the participant pointed out a contradiction between our aim to facilitate shared decision-making in codesign processes, which require time and trust building and the fast-paced rhythm of the participation processes we design. Cooking and eating together is a space where we can taste and practice other, slower, freer, pleasant ways

of living away from our productivity culture, giving space to digression, having space to drift, making time to build affections and generate affinities. **It splatters!** We realise that cooking together is a very felt and needed rebellious act, and design can also be if we dare to give value to living. We need to bring life to design.

“The rituals, recurring activities, like gardening or cooking, never have an ending; they are not commercial transactions. They are designed to be continuous and repetitive. For me, our praxis must go towards continuous processes and involvement without an expiration date.”

[Elisa’s comment after eating]

Elisa reflects on the continuity and recurrence of sustenance activities. She compares it to a ritual: a ceremonial series of actions sustained in time without a one-time goal, a practice that focuses on the process, an act of resistance to the product-driven design culture we are embedded in, primarily based on projects and contained in specific time brackets that constrains the expansion of the designer’s relation with the context the project is embedded in. **It splatters!** She clearly and loudly calls fellow designers to transform their practices to be more like life itself: deeply relational, continued, embodied, and intimate.

CONCLUSION. RELATIONAL PRACTICES AND THEIR EXPANSIVENESS COMING TO BE FROM DIGESTING TOGETHER

The *caraotas en coco* recipe traversed diverse landscapes, cities, mouths, tongues, and minds. By extensively documenting the recipe, the researcher held herself accountable in a context where the process of *indigestion* created a space for her to relate and situate differently. Following the *string of withs* of the recipe—reorienting towards the interdependence embedded in food (Heldke, 2012)—became a means to trace the territories, practices, and bodies that are part of El Sinai’s Community Kitchen constellation. The recipe became a map of hybrid assemblages, interdependent and endowed with relational agency.

However, “the recipe in its written form could not anticipate the liveliness of the process it described” (May Johnson, 2024). In this sense, an act of anticipation is quite similar to a design project, as both prescribe instructions for future transformation. The distinction lies in the openness and expansiveness of the recipe as an act of translation, alongside all the differences it can embody. “The recipe is capacious and roomy, allowing those who engage with it to modify it” (May Johnson, 2024). In its translation from the individual to the collective, from fieldwork to the workshop, Elvia’s story, the Orinoco River and its palm trees, the soil from El Sinai, coconuts, and fresh beans all contribute to the expansion of designers’ practices as they enacted and described the making of *caraotas en*

coco. Through the workshop, participants created a space for sustenance labour to have a voice in their design processes. We believe this matters: “As researchers, through our choices of methods, interests, concepts, and various other factors, we make ‘agential cuts’ and, through them, partake in some things coming to matter more than others (Pihkala & Karasti, 2022)”.

By allowing space for cooking, eating and digesting, participants “changed how [they] see things not with their eyes but with their tongues” (May Johnson, 2024). Attending to sensations with their entire bodies fostered an expansiveness beyond the experience itself; new connections emerged, bringing with them *descriptive revelations*: this encompassed (1) recognising the significance of being attuned to bodily sensations and experiences, (2) acknowledging and embracing difference and discomfort during the research journey, (3) deepening interpersonal and intimate relationships through collective explorations, and (4) adopting a perspective of reality as inherently interconnected and co-constructed.

The experience of collectively cooking, eating, and digesting over a soil table encouraged thoughtful reassessments, enabling participants to attune to their insides and navigate differences. The *descriptive revelations* expanded; they *splattered* and directly informed the designers’ practices as they reflected on (1) the idea of being accountable of oneself and taking a pronounced self-reflective stance (Heitlinger et al., 2024), (2) that design should evolve towards “what makes more sense” (Boisvert, 2010), as in developing relational sensitivity, tuning in to comprehend and embrace what our bodies and insides want us to consider, (3) understanding design as akin to eating: a process entangled in nature and without precise agential cuts, where all participants are interconnected and response-able, (4) recognising that design can be a rebellious act if we dare to give value to living, and (5) transforming our practices to reflect life itself: deeply relational, ongoing, embodied, and intimate.

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