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Imágenes de este volumen

Las imágenes generales (tapa, c/tapa y secciones) de este número cinco de la revista nos acercan a los hongos, un reino tan bello como misterioso. La seta como fruto de una especie que no es ni planta, ni animal y que tiene tanta agencia en las funciones vitales y ciclos de la biosfera, y que se ha puesto en la mesa alimentaria como nueva frontera de investigación y creación. Siguiendo el espíritu de estos años acompañando a esta publicación con imágenes sutiles e inesperadas de alimentos vistos (literalmente) desde distintos enfoques visuales, estas imágenes pintan “paisajes” que nos invitan a seguir sorprendiéndonos con la inmensa belleza de la escena comestible.

[Matilde Lombardi](#), septiembre 2024

Índice

Editoriales:

13. Territorios gastronómicos: entramados que fomentan la custodia de la vida

Silvana Juri

31. Co-Custodias de los Territorios Alimentarios. Retos y Compromisos de todos los DyAs*

Andrés Sicard Correa

Investigación:

57. Típicos, tradicionales y locales: degustando sistemas alimentarios más sostenibles

Marina Vianna Ferreira, Mayra Jankowsky

84. Plantas Alimenticias Nativas No Convencionales, para la seguridad alimentaria en Colombia

Adriana Bolaños-Mora, Laura Díaz Zamudio

104. Sistemas Gastronómicos Territoriales: un modelo para el diseño de experiencias turísticas sostenibles

Daniel De Jesús Contreras

120. Las plazas de mercado de Bogotá: tensiones entre preservación e innovación desde el diseño invisible de servicios y experiencias

Angell Sue Valencia Rodríguez

155. Co-diseñando entre territorios alimentarios: La yuca y las mujeres de la Amazonía colombiana en Bogotá

Camila Pacheco Bejarano, Genoveva López Cheicono

168. Elaboración del Sispolá a través de la tradición oral de maestras comideras

Paulina Ayvar Ramos, Susana del Carmen Bolom Martínez, Mariana Mendoza Espinosa

186. Pop-up food design research: A mobile university lab to explore situated knowledge and foster creativity about food

Cristian Campagnaro, Sara Ceraolo, Raffaele Passaro

Reflexión

216. Saber nutrirse del Monte: Experiencias sobre Alimentos y Nutrición en territorio Indígena Lhaka Honhat, Argentina

Malena Pasin, Catalina Agudin, Lorena Leonhardt

244. Sunday's lunch at nonni's: Thoughts on the foodscape of return

Pietro Pagella

259. The Land and Transversalities Between Food and Territory

Ellen Gonzalez

COMES LO QUE ERES

The Land and Transversalities Between Food and Territory.



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Resumen

Este artículo tiene como objetivo principal relatar y analizar las reflexiones resultantes de una clase sobre las múltiples transversalidades entre comida y territorio, y las disciplinas de diseño, reflexionando sobre las complejidades de los paisajes alimentarios contemporáneos y los desafíos enfrentados en la promoción de sistemas alimentarios justos, inclusivos y accesibles. La clase impartida en la Escola da Cidade adoptó un enfoque multidisciplinario, con lecturas previas a la clase, debate y un taller gastronómico seguido de degustación. Los estudiantes, en el corazón de este viaje de aprendizaje, participaron activamente durante el debate sobre la relación entre sociedad, cultura y espacio, atravesado por el contexto de la comida, para comprender las dimensiones éticas y estéticas de las elecciones alimentarias. El análisis final reveló cómo la interdisciplinariedad es fundamental para una comprensión más profunda de las interacciones entre comida y territorio, destacando desafíos y oportunidades relacionados con la vida urbana. Los estudiantes también desarrollaron una apreciación por la importancia de preservar el patrimonio cultural y promover sistemas alimentarios locales para garantizar la sostenibilidad social y ambiental. Este estudio enfatiza el papel del diseño en la construcción de sistemas alimentarios más equitativos y sostenibles, haciendo hincapié en la necesidad de enfoques colaborativos y orientados a la comunidad para abordar los desafíos del acceso a la comida y la preservación de la cultura local en un contexto globalizado.

Palabras clave: comida, territorio, paisajes alimentarios, cultura alimentaria, food design.

Resumo

O objetivo principal deste artigo é relatar e analisar as reflexões de uma aula sobre as múltiplas transversalidades entre alimentação e território e disciplinas de design, refletindo sobre as complexidades das paisagens alimentares contemporâneas e os desafios enfrentados na promoção de sistemas alimentares justos, inclusivos e acessíveis. A aula ministrada na Escola da Cidade adotou uma abordagem multidisciplinar, com leituras pré-aula, debate e uma oficina gastronômica seguida de degustação. No cerne dessa jornada de aprendizagem, os alunos participaram ativamente da discussão sobre a relação entre sociedade, cultura e espaço, atravessada pelo contexto da alimentação, para compreender as dimensões éticas e estéticas das escolhas alimentares. A análise final revelou como a interdisciplinaridade é fundamental para uma compreensão mais profunda das interações entre alimentação e território, destacando desafios e oportunidades relacionados à vida urbana. Os alunos também puderam perceber como a preservação do patrimônio cultural e a promoção de sistemas alimentares locais são relevantes para garantir a sustentabilidade social e ambiental. Este estudo enfatiza o papel do design na construção de sistemas alimentares mais equitativos e sustentáveis, enfatizando a necessidade de abordagens colaborativas e orientadas para a comunidade para enfrentar os

desafios do acesso à alimentação e a preservação da cultura local em um contexto globalizado.

Palavras-chave: comida, território, paisagens alimentares, cultura alimentar, food design

Abstract

The main objective of this article is to relate and analyze the reflections from a lecture on the multiple transversalities between food and territory and design disciplines, reflecting on the complexities of contemporary food landscapes and the challenges faced in promoting fair, inclusive, and accessible food systems. The lecture taught at the Escola da Cidade adopted a multidisciplinary approach, with pre-lecture readings, debate, and a gastronomic workshop followed by a tasting. At the heart of this learning journey, the students actively participated in the discussion on the relationship between society, culture, and space, crossed by the context of food, to understand the ethical and aesthetic dimensions of food choices. The final analysis revealed how interdisciplinarity is fundamental for a deeper understanding of the interactions between food and territory, highlighting challenges and opportunities related to urban life. Students also appreciated preserving cultural heritage and promoting local food systems to ensure social and environmental sustainability. This study emphasizes the role of design in

building more equitable and sustainable food systems, stressing the need for collaborative and community-oriented approaches to address the challenges of food access and the preservation of local culture in a globalized context.

Keywords: food, territory, food landscapes, food culture, food design

Food, a transversal subject

This article explores the practical application of the lecture content, which explores the interconnections between food, territory, and design. The lecture, held in March 2023, is part of the *Contemporary City* discipline at the Escola da Cidade in São Paulo, aimed to tackle urban planning, design, and food culture to comprehensively understand food systems in urban settings. The main argument is that interdisciplinary approaches are vital for understanding the interactions between food and territory. Design plays a significant role in fostering equitable and sustainable food systems, and anyone working towards a respectful social, economic, and ecological approach to this system can be seen as a food planner and food designer (Morgan, 2009).

Urban planners have long evaded the topic of the food system, considering

it a rural issue. However, the food system is a highly transversal subject, touching and interfering with urban systems, including land, energy and water supplies, public health, transport and logistics, and economic and social welfare (Viljoen, 2005). These factors have become a matter of public concern, especially during supply crises involving staple crops like rice and wheat, which push disadvantaged groups into food insecurity. Moreover, land conflicts over fertile areas to prevent food scarcity increasingly affect global politics and economies. Food shortage is not the only consequence of how food systems impact urban areas; they are also tied to climate change effects like rising sea levels, floods, storms, and other natural disasters exacerbated by global warming (Morgan, 2009).

Carolyn Steel points out that the food system might not be seen as this potentially expansive, interconnected system because it is too vast to be easily perceived or comprehended. It must be included in public policy agendas, treated ethically and sustainably, and given its due cultural relevance (Steel, 2008). This updated debate and application of this learning should inspire and excite students as they see the real-world implications of their design studies.

The lecture, targeting 7th-semester Architecture and Urban Planning students, was conceptualized in tandem with Professor Pedro Vada. Combining the author's knowledge as a former urban planner, cook, and sustainable food systems designer, this lecture offered the audience a unique perspective. The event, in March 2023, also featured Leonardo Andrade, Designer and co-founder of Cia dos Fermentados. Leonardo is an expert in applying fermentation to Brazilian ingredients to create innovative and flavorful products, adding yet another dimension to the lecture.

The goal was to share each of our own individual experiences, offering a broader perspective on food design and urban design. This awareness is not just relevant but crucial as students begin to understand why we eat what we eat and how our food choices are influenced by the urban environment, particularly in large cities like São Paulo. This reassurance about the value of their learning should make the students reflect upon possible academic and professional journeys.

Throughout the semester, students hone their skills to discuss the transition from modern to contemporary cities, developing critical thinking. The course also aims to elicit their ability to consolidate a critical-creative perspective on the learned theory, further reflecting on

their professional development and practice. We designed this experience to encourage consideration of urban dynamics, relationships, and the Anthropocene in cities, bringing testimonials from two food and beverage professionals to enrich their understanding and discourse. The professor provided students with pre-reading material to stimulate discussion during the event, transmitted live on Instagram.

During this talk and reflection, we illustrated how the systemic approaches to Food Design and Urban Planning can jointly act to address the importance of social, cultural, and economic implications of food choices and how they are intertwined in the city, modifying the landscape, food access, and eating habits. These connections arose from the lecture as students were encouraged to consider how urban design and food systems intersect. For example, the discussion highlighted how certain urban planning decisions can enhance or limit access to fresh, local food.

By examining the preservation of food culture and its ties to the land, students explored the broader implications of how food systems are designed and managed within urban environments. This reflective process allowed them to understand the complex relationship between urban planning and food access, stressing the

need for an interdisciplinary approach to addressing these challenges.



Image 1. Students at Contemporary City lecture—source: author's repository.

Food Culture and Preservation

Often, a territory's food cultures are lost due to a lack of documentation, with traditions passed down orally. A wealth of knowledge can be lost when a family member moves away from the

territory or abandons these practices. Krucken, Mol, and Luz (2017) discuss the importance of preserving gastronomic regional practices to protect heritage. In this context, heritage refers not only to the tangible elements, such as traditional recipes and specific ingredients, but also to the intangible cultural practices, knowledge, and skills passed down through generations. These elements are deeply intertwined with the territory and the people who inhabit it, creating a unique cultural identity expressed through food.

For instance, though not indigenous to Brazil, wheat and bread have become integral to Brazilian food culture due to colonization. Broadly explained when approaching the Slow Bakery case, the introduction of wheat cultivation and bread consumption directly results from the influence of the northern hemisphere. This connection between wheat and the territory, exemplified in our lecture's practical session, highlights the complexities of cultural heritage as both a product of history and a living tradition that continues to evolve (Fitzgerald, 2003).

Leonardo explained how fermentation is a worldwide traditional method used for preserving food and creating unique flavors, exemplified by the work developed at Cia dos Fermentados. Besides applying and

rescuing traditional methods, the company sources local, abundant, and often redundant ingredients such as jackfruit, jabuticaba, and cashew to produce beverages and condiments.

Emphasizing the importance of utilizing and valuing local resources rather than market-driven monocultures or imported ingredients like grapes and malt, they make alcoholic beverages like fruit wines or ciders, fruit vermouth and beer (which cannot be technically named wine, vermouth, or beer because these beverages are not made from alleged traditional ingredients, although indigenous Brazilian population had a long-established habit of fermenting all sorts of fruits).

Colonization and imposed taste standards have often overshadowed local cultures, leading to a loss of native culinary knowledge (Nestlé, 2015). Understanding why we eat certain foods and where they come from is crucial. Back to how wheat and bread have been incorporated into the Brazilian diet, a clear example of how European colonization reshaped local food systems and cultural preferences. This trend was further reinforced in the 20th century by the American economic push for white flour, marketed as a symbol of modernity and hygiene. The global promotion of white flour transformed dietary patterns in Brazil and contributed to

the marginalization of local grains and traditional food practices (Fitzgerald, 2003).

Similarly, while many in Brazil are familiar with imported fruits like apples, cherries, and blueberries, they know little about native fruits like cambuci or grumixama from the Atlantic Forest, which hold significant cultural and ecological value. The shift towards imported ingredients and the dominance of products like white flour highlight the complex interplay between economic forces and cultural identity, often leading to the erosion of local food heritage.

The urbanization and industrialization of food systems have led to significant consequences, including the loss of agrobiodiversity and traditional food practices (Steel, 2008). In a deeper analysis, monoculture is not only in cultivation fields but in every aspect linked to the homogenization of taste, which benefits those who profit from standardization.

This leads to diversity-depleting cultivation practices and the erosion of diverse culinary traditions (Pollan, 2009). It is more than just a matter of preserving recipes; safeguarding ancestral ingredients and know-how means protecting the cultural identity and diversity embedded in these practices. Our collective responsibility is to ensure that these cultural

treasures are not lost but passed on to future generations (Fitzgerald, 2003).



Image 2. Leonardo, in his talk about fermentation. —source: author's repository.

The fermentation process, which is key to changing a range of ingredients into more tasty, edible, nutritious, or safe foods (Sethi, 2017), was also discussed regarding bread-making. We evoked the importance of importing ingredients and abilities to work them,

explicitly explaining how wheat is a foreign crop to a continent home to corn and manioc flours. To illustrate, the author told the audience about her professional experience at The Slow Bakery in Rio de Janeiro, highlighting the bakery's path to achieving its bread recipe, using locally grown, unbleached, high quality flour.

Zoom out to wheat production, the most widely planted crop globally, covering 217 million hectares, equivalent to Greenland. Its large-scale production relies heavily on synthetic fertilizers, which significantly impact climate change, cause algae blooms, and create oceanic "dead zones" due to nutrient runoff. A 2017 study identified synthetic fertilizer as bread production's most significant environmental impact. Additionally, intensive wheat production requires substantial water usage and involves heavy pesticide application, which harms biodiversity (Mongabay, 2023).

The environmental impact is not the single concern with grain commodities. Wheat, rice, corn, and soybeans have become indispensable in today's global food supply, serving as primary sources of calories and protein for humans and animals. Brazil's prominence in producing and exporting these crops is notable; however, the country still imports certain grains and subproducts, such as

wheat and flour, posing risks to food sovereignty (Nóia Júnior et al., 2021).

The Slow Bakery bread starts at Fazenda Vargem, a local farm, instead of importing Italian or French flours, privileging regional produce. The other characteristic of their bread is the respect for each step of the long fermentation process, which helps break the gluten; it is full of natural yeast, which acts as probiotics, balancing the digestive system and enhancing micronutrient absorption. The long process (from 24h to 72h) also has excellent sensorial aspects, resulting in loaves with a crunchier crust, spongy texture, and subtle acidity (also responsible for a complete enzymatic digestive process).



Image 3. The resulting bread at The Slow Bakery —source: Maria Carolina Castro.

Fazenda Vargem is the leading wheat flour supplier for The Slow Bakery, and

their jointly developed whole wheat flour offers a stark contrast to the industrial agribusiness model by focusing on sustainable, environmentally friendly practices. The production of stone-ground whole wheat flour has several key advantages: while the agribusiness model focuses on maximizing yield and efficiency, often at the expense of environmental health and biodiversity, Fazenda Vargem's approach prioritizes sustainability, environmental respect, and product quality. Their final product is free from bleaching chemicals and additives. The flour is produced on demand, ensuring freshness and nutrition, resulting in incomparable quality against industrialized flours, with the added benefit of being local and thus cheaper (as a final product and in “hidden” costs”).

During the debate, we highlighted how agricultural practices change the territory, particularly the extensive monocultures, which are robust in Brazilian crops. Brazil's expansive arable land and potential to increase agricultural productivity have positioned it as a leading producer of agricultural commodities and related food products, making it a top supplier to international markets. The Amazonia and Cerrado regions account for a significant portion of this productivity, producing large quantities of soybeans, wheat, corn,

and sugarcane. However, this has led to substantial deforestation, mainly for cattle grazing and agricultural expansion, impacting biodiversity and contributing to climate change (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2022).

Tasting the Local

In a country where 80% of the population lives in urban areas, equivalent to developed countries' urbanization levels, getting food into the cities to feed this ever-consuming population has significant environmental impacts. This urbanization process, driven by industrialization, has significantly altered natural landscapes, leading to vegetation loss, isolation, and fragmentation due to anthropic actions (Steel, 2008). These negative impacts compromise environmental structures and ecosystem services, affecting biodiversity, water resources, climate regulation, and soil quality. This degradation represents significant ecosystemic component and function losses, essential for maintaining urban and agricultural activities (Peruchi Trevisan et al., 2021).

Territory, defined by social relationships, cycles of civilization, and collective expression, cannot exist without the land that a community occupies. Consequently, the food habits of this population, rooted in local culture, play a pivotal role in

either developing or dismantling that same territory (Krucken et al., 2017). Milton Santos emphasizes the profound technical, social, and political transformations led by food and the resulting consequences of human interactions with the natural environment—this defines territory (Santos, 1967).

Building on the earlier discussion of food culture and its connection to the land, the lecture included a hands-on cooking demonstration focused on a local interpretation of ceviche, utilizing fresh coconut and plantain. This approach aimed to illustrate how a traditional technique like ceviche can be adapted to local ingredients, highlighting the importance of leveraging the resources available within the territory (Waters, 2007). Instead of discarding the coconut shells after drinking the water, students were encouraged to bring them to lecture, transforming a typically wasteful practice into an opportunity for culinary creativity. The plantain provided texture and flavor, enhanced by the acidity of lime and lemon juices. This tasting experience reinforced the value of using simple, local, and seasonal ingredients to create complex flavors, demonstrating how these practices can be integrated into everyday routines.

Ceviche, a Nipo-Peruvian dish with a rich history tied to the freshest

available fish and local seasonings, was highlighted as a prime example of how local and seasonal ingredients can create sophisticated flavors. The dish's connection to Japanese immigration in Peru and Brazil underscores the blending of culinary traditions. Unlike what often happens in restaurants all over São Paulo and Brazil, serving frozen, long cold-chain fish for traditionally fresh fish preparations, we pointed out the importance of sourcing ingredients for raw fish dishes like ceviche and sushi, whose flavors are only as good as the freshness of the fish and seasonings used. The recipe choice intentionally showed the students how this simplicity can be replicated, transforming local resources into a great meal.

Serving the ceviche in coconut shells further demonstrated a commitment to reducing waste and aligning with sustainable practices.

Seven different fermented beverages from Cia dos Fermentados complemented the tasting, enlarging the students' knowledge of local fruit flavors, some of which were unknown.



Image 4. Plantain and coconut ceviche preparation—source: author's repository.



Image 5. Plantain and coconut ceviche served in coconut shells —source: author’s repository.

Findings and Reflections

The lecture underscored the importance of interdisciplinary approaches in understanding the relationship between food, territory, and design.

By combining perspectives from urban planning, design, and culinary arts, students explored the transversality of these fields, intersecting to address the complexities of urban food systems. Discussions underlined food choices' ethical and aesthetic aspects, considering their impact on social and environmental sustainability.

The practical demonstration and tasting session allowed students to experience firsthand how local ingredients and traditional techniques can create sustainable and flavorful dishes.



Image 6. Cia dos Fermentados beverages for tasting —source: author’s repository.

Our insights from this experience confirm that interdisciplinary approaches are essential for a comprehensive understanding of food

and territory interactions. The lecture revealed that urban life presents unique challenges and opportunities for food systems, including food access, cultural preservation, and sustainability issues. Preserving cultural heritage and promoting local food systems are crucial for social and environmental sustainability (Sethi, 2016). The role of design in these processes is significant, as it can help build equitable and sustainable food systems by integrating local resources and cultural practices (Krucken et al., 2017). Collaborative and community-oriented approaches are necessary to address food access and cultural preservation in urban contexts.

Implications for Food Design

There is a close connection between gastronomy and design: both are creative processes. Combining these processes using co-creative methods referencing the territory to bring producers, consumers, designers, cooks, and other professionals together can be a powerful tool for good local gastronomy. Design is pivotal in building equitable and sustainable food systems by integrating local resources and cultural practices. The lecture demonstrated how projectual disciplines can contribute to developing food systems that honor cultural heritage and promote social equity. Collaborative and community-oriented approaches are essential to addressing food access

and cultural preservation, particularly in urban areas where the disconnect between food and its origins is often most pronounced.

This lecture at Escola da Cidade has embedded in future experts the combined perspectives from urban planning, design, and culinary arts that can address the complexities of urban food systems. Enlightened professionals can design to promote equitable and sustainable food systems. Integrating food, territory, and design is essential for building sustainable urban food systems that honor cultural heritage and promote social equity.

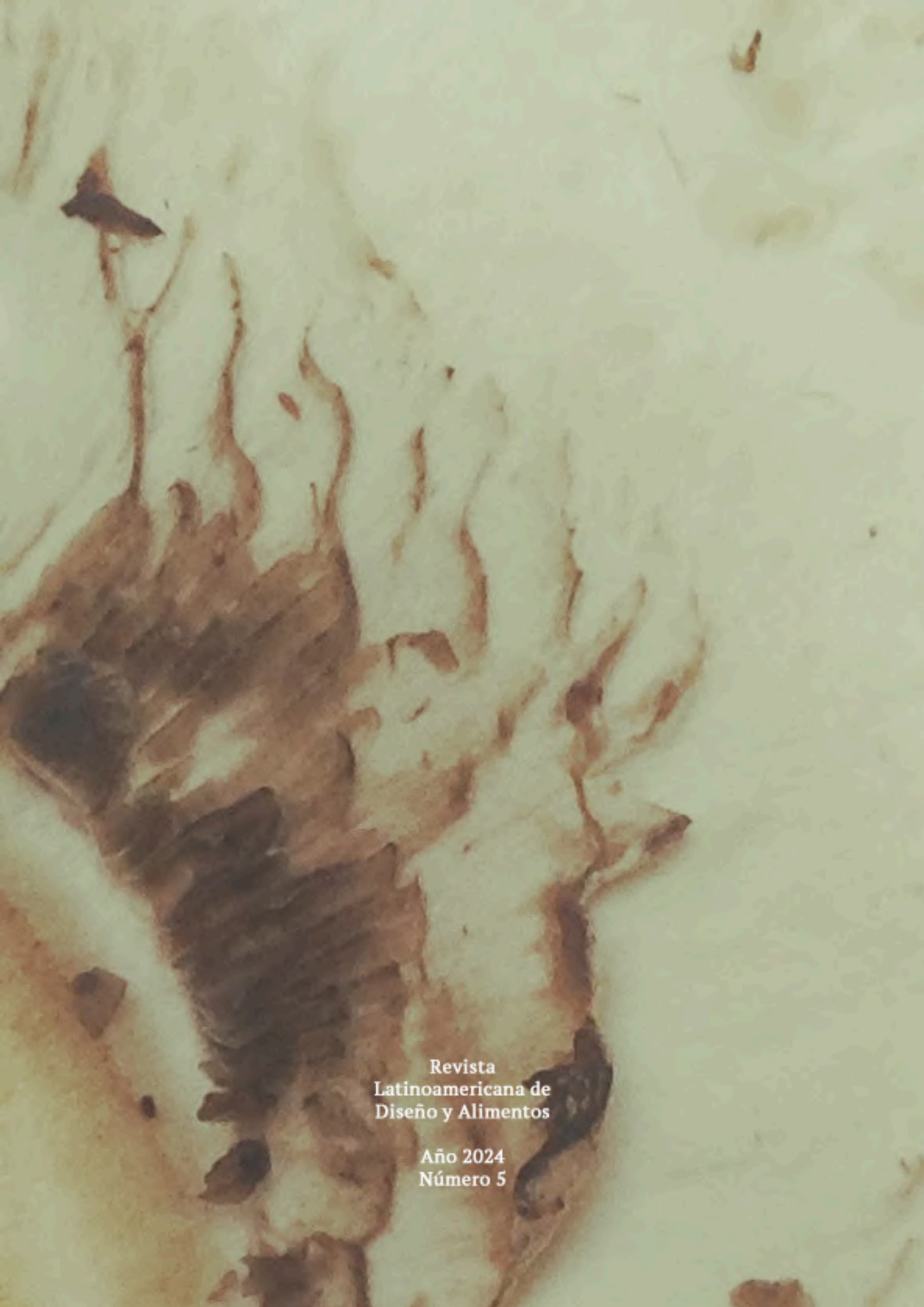
I heartily thank Pedro Vada and Leo Andrade for sharing this moment and allowing me to share and enhance my knowledge on such an important subject as the interconnections between food and territory.

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