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## **250 Thousand Families Campaign: The Existence of Flavor and Taste**

Stephen Sherwood, Ana Deaconu and Myriam Paredes

### **Introduction**

Gilles Deleuze's (2003) provocative, if controversial book, "The Logic of Sensation," celebrates the raw, emotionally charged work of the Irish-born painter, Francis Bacon. An appreciation for Bacon's work led Deleuze to a sharp criticism of representation in art, but also of representation in broader social life (ibid: 87):

"We are besieged by photographs that are illustrations, by newspapers that are narrations, by cinema-images, by television-images. There are psychic clichés just as there are physical clichés - ready-made perceptions, memories, phantasms. There is a very important experience here for the painter: a whole category of things that could be termed 'clichés' already fills the canvas, before the beginning."

Deleuze argued that an artist's greatest struggle was to overcome the "figure" and to avoid the obvious shapes and contours of the object and capture the underlying primal "accident" of sensation.

Here, we join Deleuze in seeking to depart from a highly representational perspective of reality in food studies where we are confronted with a dominant and popular figuration: food movements as "resistance". The academic literature and activist movements alike summarize food activism as a "fight" that involves historically marginalized peoples (especially, the indigenous and peasant farmers) and their enlightened, sometimes self-assigned representatives against the avarice of global capitalism in industry, the state and science (see for example, Petras and Veltmeyer, 2011). While we do not doubt that this imagery represents a particular aspect of food movements, resistance thinking is strongly founded in an abstract understanding of social change as primarily an issue of struggle and the occupation of formalized institutions.

We find that the resistance orientation in Latin America dramatically obscures certain actualities of food activism through the blinding clarity of a series of little questioned dichotomies: e.g., global-local, North-South, rich-poor, and consumer-producer. As summarized in the introduction to this book, in viewing people, their families and social networks as dependent on or somehow not complicit in institutions, resistance ultimately portrays development as disembodied and people as merely victims of mysteriously disconnected, out-of-control forces.

For us, food activism, while not necessarily independent of resistance, is also about a dynamic that is far more emergent and visceral and therefore rooted in Deleuze's sensation. As summarized in Arce et al. (2015), social change in food is highly nuanced, contingent, and dependent on people's encounters and ability to open up new possibilities. The realities of food movements in Ecuador, as elsewhere, are increasingly cosmopolitan and cosmopolitical - i.e., circumscribed not by gerrymandering or supply and demand, but rather through embodiments. Similarly, activism is largely a socially messy experience where one's boundaries are not simply determined by gender, race, nationality, class or title, but also through food practice.

The image of social movements as chiefly reactionary or defensive does not capture the emotion or energy that we, as activists, have undergone in and through food movements. For us, social change is arguably less about *fighting against* an essentially abstract and unknowable “global industrial food system”, than it is about *fighting for* highly pragmatic interests, such as certain desired ways of planting, procuring, cooking or eating.

In this chapter, we draw on Deleuze’s criticism of representation in art in hopes of overcoming the modern “cliché” of resistance. In its place, we wish to capture the “sensation” of food movements by shedding light on the pre-representational moment of Deleuze’s “accident”. Thus, we adopt the view that food is part of an endless process of socio-material embodiment that is best explained through people’s feelings, practices and performances. We summarize this perspective through the metaphor of “existence”, and we argue that existence underlays the potential of food movements to overcome the distracting imaginary that the desired future is largely a question of “fixing” institutions of science, the state, and the market.

In so doing, we examine two influential actors in the food movement scene in Ecuador that have become champions of social change in agriculture and food primarily through means of existence: 1) the *Colectivo Agroecológico* (from now on the Colectivo), an informal collection of some 400 individuals and collectives dedicated to alternative, “non-violent” means of agriculture and food, 2) the *Movimiento de Economía Social y Solidaria del Ecuador* (MESSE), a network of largely urban-based activists engaged in food circulation, creative marketing and alternative currencies. These networks include a lively assortment of food activists working in seed saving, urban-based consumer wholesale markets, progressive gastronomy, upstart food fairs and business enterprises, as well as individual farms and urban households. In particular, we draw on the activity of the Colectivo and MESSE’s ongoing “250 Thousand Families” Campaign (heretofore the Campaign).

### **The Campaign’s “sensation”: flavor and taste**

In 2014, the Colectivo and MESSE ambitiously proposed to recruit a critical mass of five percent of Ecuadorian households, roughly 250 Thousand Families, to a self-determined and organized agenda of “responsible consumption” (Sherwood et al., 2013). In concept, the campaign is open to anyone who eats and loosely led through self-initiative and democratic appropriation. Proponents of the Campaign include people from all classes and creeds, such as housewives, school children, farmers, urban “foodies”, chefs, and development practitioners of every province in Ecuador. Since the campaign does not organize by nation-state, it also has a number of cross-border initiatives, such as the ones in Colombia presented in this chapter.

While consumption is understood as the moment in which something is procured, for the Campaign, responsible consumption is an endlessly ambitious, vague and highly contestable concept. For some, responsible consumption may emphasize direct or non-currency purchasing, locally produced food, organic or agroecological production or the use of traditional Andean crops and gastronomy (Jacobs, 2016). Understanding its objective as identifying and linking people around common or complementary practices, rather than seeking consensus, the Colectivo has been strategic in keeping the Campaign conceptually open and subject to debate.

Rather than seek pre-determined learning through highly designed and orchestrated “capacity-building”, the Campaign employs open-ended, independent discovery, as espoused by John Dewey (1938). In particular, the Campaign seeks to recruit new practitioners through experiential learning in two fundamental entry points: flavor and taste.<sup>1</sup> Following Mouritsen (2015), *flavor* is understood as a sensation that encompasses the physical, chemical and neurophysiological aspects of food. According to Deleuze (2003: 42), sensation has an immediate status in experience and indicates a pre-conscious form of being in direct contact with the world. As such, sensation is the level of “pure presence” (and potentially absence) and is conceived as the condition for sensational differences, such as vision, touch, hearing and smell. Deleuze explains that while operating at the molecular level, sensations such as flavor do not merely question the relevance of scale, they suggest a difference in “kind”. Or as he asserts (ibid: 45), “Sensation is not qualitative and qualified, but has only an intensive reality, which no longer determines within itself representative elements, but allotropic variations.”

Meanwhile, we refer to Gronow (1997) in viewing *taste* as an “aesthetic sociology” (in contrast to a sociology of aesthetics), a relatively robust, social concept that encompasses tradition, geography and culture and, as per the thesis of Deleuze (2003), potentially human-nonhuman relations. In contrast to flavor, we view taste as a more multimodal and multifaceted concept, which may include how people come to perceive, value, and identify with certain food practices.

While the 250 Thousand Families Campaign is “faithful”, in the sense of sharing an aspiration to unite people and their common interest in health, equity and sustainability, if not survivability, the Campaign is something that cannot be heavily pre-designed or predetermined. In order to take social hold, responsibility, however practiced, must somehow become both primal and “tasteful”. It must, through the biochemical vibrations of flavor and social commitment of taste, become a socio-material “fact”.

## **Methodology**

Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) pragmatic approach to embodiment, here we are not interested in food as an object to be commoditized or governed in isolation from bodies, but as embodied. Deleuze and Guattari define a “body” as a sensorial, affective and intensive set of associations that necessarily work both within and across a spectrum of scales, including a single organ and a human body as well as institutions of politics and law. As such, a body is not merely biological, material or social but simultaneously each. Assembled bodies are both different and interdependent, and they both define and are defined by circumstance.

An embodied approach to food studies demands study of people’s reality as it unfolds. As per Deleuze’s (2003) philosophy of art, painting the sensation is equivalent to recording the fact. It necessarily takes into account relationships as they are encountered and felt, rather than how one might imagine or wish them to be, thereby collapsing *a priori* representations of human experience and social organization.

We present three ethnographic accounts that are based on Deaconu and Sherwood’s participation in the Campaign. When necessary, we change names of individuals to provide anonymity. We do not address the Campaign as it is publicly proposed or designed (e.g., its particular goals, objectives or ambition of recruiting the 250 Thousand Families), but rather

we study how it was experienced during three events over 2015-2016. As such, we place qualitative attention on its real-time activity, as forged through myriad emotions, intentions, contingencies and flair. In particular we study: 1) the Madre Tierra Festival, held in the city of Tarqui in Southern Ecuador between 2-4 October 2015, involving some 1,500 people from over 20 countries, 2) the *Aula Viva* (in Spanish, “Living Classroom”) in the Amazon on the border of Ecuador and Colombia, (19-20 November, 2015, involving 25 community representatives and organizers from Colombia, Ecuador, Perú and Brazil), and 3) a “Healthy Food” workshop that took place at *La Cosmopolitana* Farm in the Rio Meta Watershed, Colombia (2-5 February 2016, involving 45 community organizers). As participants, we present these events in first person narrative.

### **Three campaign events**

#### *Madre Tierra: regeneration of the planet*

The Madre Tierra Festival, which took place in October 2015 and was organized by Ecuador’s lively Seed Savers Network, brought together 1,500 individuals from over 20 countries for three days. The festival was grounded in 43 workshops on subjects as diverse as solar ovens, the history of agriculture, alternative currency, composting, bioconstruction, and more. Participants came independently or as representatives of a diversity of groupings, including community-based organizations, the provincial government, Slow Food, MESSE, the Colectivo and many others. Based on Deaconu’s fieldnotes, this account illustrates a typical campaign encounter.

The interactive sensorial workshop on responsible consumption from the Campaign displays different fruits and vegetables in boxes. The participants feel the products with their hands and identified them through touch. Two volunteers from an audience of about 100 people, an indigenous Kichwa woman and a European-looking child with an Ecuadorian accent are the first to enter the task. They squeal and giggle when they cannot identify what is inside. Upon pulling out the object -- an achiote, they sing out with a collective laugh and move on to the next module, which involves the challenge of having to identify items without the aid of sight or touch, but rather just the tongue.

Next, volunteers interact with an oversized “nutritional plate”, brimming with locally available grains, legumes, fruits, vegetables and herbs as well as instant noodles, cookie packages, a bag of household monosodium glutamate, and artificially flavored yogurt. The group is asked to identify what products they want to eat, and they put the others in a trash bin. The volunteers unanimously agree to toss the processed foods, but one teenage girl is left unsettled. She begins to gather the white rice from the plate with the intention of throwing it out. Met with surprise from the audience and the other volunteers, the young woman explains, “Here in Ecuador, we eat a Chimborazo [Ecuador’s largest mountain] of rice for breakfast, a Chimborazo of rice for lunch, and a Chimborazo of rice for dinner....”

The girl goes on to explain that this amount of white rice lead to obesity and diabetes and that the problem isn’t rice itself, but the poor nutritional quality of white rice and the high quantity consumed. She picks up a grain of brown rice from the plate and explains the difference: “This here, this is real food, and it tastes good. This we should eat.” The activity continues into a tangential conversation in which the teenager fields the audience’s questions on the different taste and texture of brown rice, where to buy it, and how long it takes to prepare.

The volunteers then select particular products with which they feel identified from an assorted variety of foodstuffs on a large cut-out nutritional plate. An highland Kichwa woman gravitates towards the different colors of corn and explains how each has a particular importance for her community. A Belgian man living in Ecuador and his preteen daughter focus on quinoa, highlighting its nutritional qualities and good taste. When asked before the audience about her personal favorite, the daughter looks befuddled, before speaking into the microphone with conviction, “What choice? We eat quinoa.”

The final workshop activity involves a “sugar display”: an assortment of about 12 commercial beverage products from the local store, including juices, sodas, and power drinks. These are exhibited with a small bag full of a measured amount of table sugar. The facilitator explains that each bag of sugar represents the precise amount of sweetener found in each bottle of drink, as per the indications on its label. Volunteers are called on to act out the expected reaction of a particular character to the sugar display. The first man chooses to be an incredulous politician, who is not willing to give up his beverage of choice, even fully knowing that it is “bad” for him. He explains that the immediacy of good flavor in the moment outweighs the potential menace of negative impacts in a far away future, jokingly referring to “beyond my immediate political term”. Acting in opposition to the politician, a woman adopts the role of a concerned parent that is surprised to see the amount of sugar contained in a vitamin-fortified fruit drink that she regularly purchases for her child. “The advertising told me that this was health... I want my money back!”

After the workshop, a crowd from the audience eagerly approaches the sugar display to examine it in further detail. One man holds up in amazement a bag full of 42 grams of sugar - the amount found in a 300 ml bottle of Coca Cola. An elderly Ecuadorian woman says in disbelief, “Is this amount really true?” Then, she asks advice on how to read and interpret the sugar identified in the label. An Argentinian man jumps in with an explanation, while an oversized businessman says, “I no longer drink sweet beverages, because I have diabetes. I used to bring a two liter soda bottle to work every day, in lieu of lunch.” This leads to a collective call to stop drinking sodas, and the group discusses a number of alternative beverages, such as fresh fruit juice, lemongrass tea sweetened with honey, and *agua de panela* (water sweetened with raw cane sugar). One woman declares, “These taste better anyway. I really don’t even know why we drink soda...”

### *Aula Viva: transforming dangerous food*

Following the Madre Tierra Festival, Michelle O., an Ecuadorian nutritionist, popular cook and cookbook author, and member of the Colectivo, was invited to provide an introduction of the 250 Thousand Families Campaign for the Aula Viva -- an Amazonian initiative, organized with the Pan-Amazonian Ecclesial Network (REDPAM) and the Provincial Jesuits Conference of Latin America (CPAL), with the purpose of “transforming the growing violence in the region into a force for peace and abundance<sup>2</sup>.” Michelle is an elderly nutritionist who, while born in the United States, has lived in Ecuador for over 40 years. Through her books, Michelle has become an influential actor in the Colectivo and a champion of its 250 Thousand Families campaign. Michelle works with other members of the Campaign to hold a half-day experiential course on flavor and taste. Based on Sherwood’s field notes, we provide an account of a field visit on both sides of the San Miguel River, dividing Ecuador and Colombia.

Sandra, a community organizer from the Catholic Church's Pastoral Social and co-organizer of the Aula Viva, picks us up outside of our hotel in the Ecuadorian oil town of Lago Agrio, so that we can join the other participants of the Aula Viva. She explains that the group comes from different part of the Amazon, but it is not made up of just ordinary people. Many are "masters" in managing the traditional Amazonian *chakra* -- a form of agroforestry and permaculture that emphasizes multi-story sunlight/shade management and the cultivation of multipurpose crops, trees, and even animals. "It basically resembles a jungle," she says, as she points out a densely populated, highly diverse plot of trees and bushes alongside the roadway. She adds, "We think of this agroforestry system as an edible forest."

The group meets at the homestead of a Colombian born couple that arrived in rural Lago Agrio some eight years earlier. Standing alongside his wife and surrounded by a collection of ragged looking *campo* dogs, the husband explains that after a violent incident in their community, he decided it was time to leave. In coming to Ecuador, he explains, "We did not want any gifts or giveaways. We came in search of peace and the opportunity to work the land with dignity." Recently, the couple sought help from the Pastoral Social to obtain a land title and to "technify" their farm, which according to Sandra, involves "the installation of a traditional *chakra*, a transition from annual to perennial crops and the introduction of multipurpose trees."

Following a walk around their 12 hectares of largely barren land, Martha, a colleague from the FUCAI who works with the Sikuani people of the Orinoco, previously had asked each visitor to arrive with a favorite Amazonian plant for donation. We form a circle around a large collection of seeds and plants of different colors, shapes and sizes. There are different types of palm, what look like a mahogany as well as a citrus, cacao and a number of exotic fruit trees. With the visitors bowing their heads and cupping their hands and pointing towards the offering, Martha conducts an impromptu ceremony directed at the couple, during which she regularly pauses for the visitors to repeat after her:

"I have arrived with a seed from the hearth of my home to honor you for receiving me today. This seed comes from a plant that my family and I nurture as a vital part of our *chakra*. In return, each plant harvests the sunlight and provides my family energy in the form of the wood that cooks our food and heats our home; this plant provides shade, fresh air, and fruit. As this seed comes from a plant that provides nourishment for my family, I too bring nourishment to your *chakra*. This is my gift, our gift, of sustenance and life for you and your family..."

When asked where best to plant the trees, Martha responds that there is no one "right way" to plant a *chakra*, before adding, "It's about connection and feel." A young indigenous man from Brazil adds, "A *chakra* is a living organism through which we simply flow." With that, the group uses sticks to trace a picture of the layout of the land on the ground, and the couple works with the group to identify where to place each species.

After planting the trees, we gather to say goodbye, so that we can move on to our next destination in nearby Colombia. The couple is noticeably touched, with the wife saying, "Our life is very hard, and sometimes all we think about is work. We've never received such kindness." We drive a brief stretch of difficult, pot-holed road, which carries us across the San Miguel River into Colombia's Putumayo. One hour later we arrive at the town of La Dorada, Parish of San Miguel, where we meet Father Arturo, a Jesuit Priest to start a workshop on traditional Amazonian cuisine, as per the histories of the participants.

At midday we took a break to have lunch at a local restaurant. As the soup was served, stories began to emerge about the history of San Miguel, in particular with regard to the danger of fishing in the rivers and farming. Over the last two decades, the region had been a site of unspeakable violence, with all kinds of stories intermingled with the travails of gaining access to food during the civil war. According to the church representative, “So many people were murdered that we stopped keeping records. I only had direct knowledge of the names and cause of death of people who had received a proper Catholic burial. In my case, it’s easy: the leading cause of death is murder, be it by paramilitary, the FARC or the state.”

As a consequence of the forced general strikes, thousands of families living in the otherwise lush and abundant forest of the lower Putumayo frequently face a crisis of food scarcity and hunger. One of the participants, a leader from a village near La Dorada, explains that for farmers and indigenous groups, the daily search for food has become a dangerous game of chance. “Going out to hunt or farm means facing the demands and abuses of the armed groups - both formal and informal. We face death through combat, fights, kidnappings, extortion or plain murder.” She goes on to explain how even breathing in the Amazon has come to mean sickness:

“Some places in our department are strategic for hunting animals or for farmers to get their products to market. But those are also strategic points for the militaries. Movement on the river was restricted. Bridges were destroyed. Then the airplanes started to spray the coca plants with the poisons, though they usually missed and only hit our trees and crops. If you don’t get shot, then working to produce food means getting sick. Every child on this side of the river has burns and sores from the chemicals. Our eyes burn, and we all suffer from the breathing sickness.”

*La Cosmopolitana: “flavor lasts a lifetime”*

As a result of his experiences with the Campaign in Madre Tierra and at the workshop in the Putumayo, Roberto Rodriguez, founder of *La Cosmopolitana*, a natural reserve and learning farm located in the Meta River watershed, in the Orinoco, Colombia and a massive upland catchment area for the Amazon, decided to bring the experiential approach closer to home -- to the families working with his foundation. In February 2016, he invited Michelle to lead a set of workshops under the title of “healthy eating”. Taking the example from the Campaign, he expressed the goal of the workshops to promote healthy eating in a broad sense, involving nutritional health, health of producers, of the environment and of local economies. The following is based on Deaconu’s notes.

The Orinoco region is hot and humid. During an introductory walk upon our arrival, a guide stopped the group at the base of a large taro plant, locally known as *bore* and appreciated for its value as pig feed. Michelle, who has a broad food knowledge of edible plants, said, “How wonderful to find you growing taro!” She spoke of its renowned nutritional value in the South Pacific, especially for the protein content of its young leaves. One of the staff members reflected, “I can’t believe that we’ve been using such a nutritious plant to feed the pigs and not ourselves!”

The next morning the remainder of the workshop participants arrive. They include La Cosmopolitana’s core staff, volunteer promoters from the surrounding valley and mountainsides and their family members as well as farmers, housewives, a few doctors, a

linguist, a woman displaced from the Putumayo region and others. In all, we are 45 participants. The workshop activities brings into focus different relationships with food - encounters of the nose and the tongue, childhood memories, ceremonies, understandings of the question, “what is good for you?” and each person’s food history, taking into account the “body”, family, and community.

Michelle provided an account of a recent trip to see her daughter in Senegal, where she had been a Peace Corps volunteer forty years earlier:

“Flavor is something that finds the soul and lasts a lifetime.... I remember when I walked off the airplane onto the tarmac in Senegal, and I smelled a familiar peanut sauce. I unexpectedly and uncontrollably broke into tears. Over four decades had passed [since I was in Senegal], and I had never forgotten those intimate sensations that so marked an expansive moment of my youth and life!”

Each evening, Michelle leads the group in cooking a meal together using local ingredients that the participants bring with them or that grow on the La Cosmopolitana farm. One person pulls out a *ñame*, a fibrous yam that is commonly eaten in coastal Colombia, and grows easily in this region, but whose culinary uses are largely unknown. In the Orinoco, most farmers grow *ñame* only for animal food. Michelle sought the group’s suggestions for how to prepare the food. Mireya, an outgoing school teacher, observed, “It looks, feels, and almost tastes like a potato, *ñame* would be a good for a mashed-potato-style dish.” She then volunteers her recipe for an onion-cheese sauce to accompany it. The flavor is delicate and delightful, and everyone dug in for more until the bowl is left clean. While many express their joy in being able to finally *eat* a crop that they have been producing just for sale, Ninfa, a leader from Las Leonas community, finds the taste of this unexpected recipe so agreeable that she is going to procure *ñame* for the workshop to be held later in the week in her community.

Although it has not been planned as part of the workshop, circumstances on the farm have brought up the aspect of multi-species in food and “energies” when raising an animal. The workshop facilitators and participants are captivated by a sow that has just given birth to a litter of 18 piglets. Having limited experience with pigs, many individuals from the group gather around the mother each morning and each night, marveling at the size of the litter, at how cute the piglets are, and at how much food the animals will become when they grow up. Jokingly, people name the piglets according to the different pork preparations that they would someday become. On the last day of the workshop, the sow dies, and La Cosmopolitana staff are left the interminable task of bottle-feeding the piglets every two hours. When asked why she died, the caretaker explains matter-of-factly: “Because sometimes, when there are a lot of people around after they give birth, the sow gets stressed. We say it has something to do with the energies and *espanto* [an illness coming from intense fear or from negative energy].”

### **Discussion: fresh sensations**

“It is not I who attempts to escape from the body, it is the body that attempts to escape from itself by means of . . . in short, a spasm.” -- Deleuze (2003: 15)

Connected to different expressions of unfolding life (and death) in food, each Campaign experience follows its own pathway. In the case of the Madre Tierra Festival, the 250 Thousand Families Campaign worked with an open-ended sensorial experience to explore

taste and flavor, hoping to bring new energy to “existence”. This happened through a public exploration of the range of flavors and pleasures in food as well as a discussion on food alternatives and the use of sweetener in purchased drinks. In San Miguel, embodiments of food sensations had come to include the different effects and affects of long-standing civil war, petroleum extraction, coca production and drug trafficking as well as broadscale aerial spraying herbicides. In part, this inspired a movement to “rescue” the chakra and promote agroforestry and permaculture and a pursuit of “abundance”. At La Cosmopolitana the “healthy eating” workshop explored traditional foods and surrounding alternatives, the production of flavor through recipes as well as a brief, but perhaps significant interspecies encounter between humans and pigs. Each of the three events utilized flavor and taste to spark different degrees of energy, fear and reflection as well as hopes and aspirations for continued or new embodiments.

Deleuze (2003) describes sensation as a form of “spasm” -- i.e., the vibration or rhythm involved in creative discovery and as such, a movement in the body, not between bodies. Accordingly, flavor is a chaotic, bodily materiality, before the body becomes ordered through intentionality and movement, such as the spasm that brought tears to Michelle upon arriving in Senegal and rediscovering the smell of a long “forgotten” peanut sauce. As another example, we find the visceral fear of looking for food in the war zone of San Miguel. The spasm, while seemingly singular, can also be residual. Rather than being part of a global narrative on what a return to West Africa or living in the Amazon should be, existence is rooted in the particularities of doings and their residual materialities -- a coupling between sensation and life’s embodiments that leads to what Deleuze (2003: 67) calls “involuntary memory”. As experienced in the discovery sensorial workshop, the local food explorations or the pursuit of permaculture, this experience was potentially a sensation of lasting consequence.

The Campaign as well as its partners at FUCAI and the La Cosmopolitana had made a social commitment to the notion that human food encounters were capable of generating endless ways to sense, eat or farm as well as to live and be. During workshops there was no discernable prescription of what an ideal meal should contain or an edible forest should look like, opening up space for experimentation. Finding herself among opposing parties of violent conflict in the Amazon, instead of analyzing the histories, the FUCAI leader opted for the creation of an edible forest, thereby creating the possibility for a new existence.

Arguably, the promotion of sensation through human-food encounters was not enough in and of itself to explain social change around food. It was flavor linked to the socio-material organization in the practice of taste that led to new associations and the materialization of food embodiments. These embodiments did not begin with a blank canvas. Fields, animals and food products are full of a residual history or memory in which the cook, the eater or the farmer assembles and is assembled, as a “painter”, paints -- even before a sensation is fully understood. The spasmodic sensation of flavor and the material act of taste is central to bringing canvas to life.

### **Conclusion: “Faith in life”**

“Bacon tries to eliminate the sensational...., when he said, ‘I wanted to paint the scream more than the horror.’” -- Deleuze (2003: 28)

The experience of the Campaign aligns with Deleuze and Guattari for whom being depends on human-material relations that embrace context, material and people and involves an assemblage of extensive-intensive capacities. Change in food is born in the constitution of embodiments, enabled through common (and not-so-common) practice -- what we summarize through the metaphor of existence. The boundaries of space are not drawn just by legal documents or the scriptures of a formalized institution, but more so they are inscribed through the “memory” of practice. In this sense, we argue that the Campaign’s influence is largely bound by the socio-material and biological potentials of flavor and taste.

In its work, the Campaign foments sensation around food that is not merely experienced as a rational explanation of health, environment or economy, but rather it is also lived through laughter, surprise, sadness and delight. Food becomes a common site for social commitments -- sometimes among people and objects who otherwise might not find common ground -- for unique co-creations of a “tastier” world, beginning with their own moments of consumption and bodies. In the Aula Viva, flavor and taste has created a space for identity making, which in turn reshapes and displaces coexisting or competing senses of place, bounded not merely by geography or institutions but also experience and practice. Ultimately, flavor becomes a transformative moment and taste a transformative space, working in solution and precipitating in practice seeming binaries of conception/action, theory/practice, mind/body.

Deleuze (2003: 67) said, “There are two violences: that of spectacle and that of sensation. The first has to be renounced to reach the second. It is a kind of declaration of faith in life.” People who had experienced different forms of disembodiment, as expressed at the Madre Tierra, the Aula Viva or La Cosmopolitana, were not unaware of the history of environmental degradation, inequity, or cruelty and hurt in their family and neighborhood. Instead, they chose to “destroy” one clarity with a new clarity: the reproduction of a flavor, the recuperation of the chakra, or the pursuit of abundance. We could say that in addressing the different forms of violence associated with food, the Campaign's initial response was, “Savor this!”

In escaping the temptation to narrate a single representation of the multiplicities of food, the Campaign seeks to supplant it with primal flavor and emergent associations and embodiments such as a new dish, a new fruit, agroforestry and permaculture or an emergent form of organization, encounter or exchange. The Campaign focused on the primal energy of food that sometimes is embedded in stories of violence, rather than on the violence itself. The participants utilized this energy for new purposes, namely a plethora of sensations and other potentialities tied to (re)constituting “faith in life”.

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## **Notes**

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<sup>1</sup> One good example of the Campaign’s open-ended, discovery-learning approach to learning is: Keely McCaskie (ed.). 2013. *Nutrición y Alimentación en la Sierra Norte del Ecuador: Guía para Facilitadores Comunitarios*. Quito, Ecuador: Fundación EkoRural.

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<sup>2</sup> The founder of La Cosmopolitana, Roberto Rodriguez, defines “abundance” as the energy and life sustained through the Amazon’s unique material and biological “wealth”, with specific reference to the region’s genetic and biological diversity as well as its rich natural resource base (titanium, gold, uranium, cobalt, bauxite, magnesium, silver, diamonds, water) and fossil fuel reserves (oil). He argues, “Abundance is not something that one can acquire, but rather it is something with which one must connect” (Field notes, 19 November 2015).

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