

# FOODWAYS IN THE CHIHUAHUAN DESERT: SENSORY ETHNOGRAPHY & SOCIAL MAPPING

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## INTRODUCTION

THIS RESEARCH UTILIZES ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH METHODS TO IDENTIFY TRADITIONAL WAYS OF EATING OF THE CHIHUAHUAN DESERT. INTERVIEWS WERE CONDUCTED WITH ABUELAS, GRANDMOTHERS, WHO HAVE MOVED FROM MEXICO TO THE US, BUT REMAINED WITHIN THE CHIHUAHUAN DESERT. ABUELAS ARE REGARDED AS KNOWLEDGE HOLDERS OF TRADITIONAL FOODWAYS. THIS RESEARCH ANALYZES DIFFERENCES OVER SPACE AND TIME THAT HAVE IMPACTED FOOD PRACTICES ACROSS THE LIFE HISTORIES OF THESE ABUELAS, PARTICULARLY CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS TO THE TRANSMISSION OF FOOD PRACTICES ACROSS GENERATIONS.

FIGURE 1: MAP OF THE CHIHUAHUAN DESERT (HENRICKSON, 1985)



## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- WHAT ARE TRADITIONAL WAYS OF EATING IN THE CHIHUAHUAN DESERT?
- WHAT FOOD PRACTICES ARE MAINTAINED ACROSS THE US-MEXICO BORDER IN THIS SPACE?

## METHODOLOGY

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS WITH 10 ABUELAS COLLECTING THEIR FOOD-CENTERED LIFE HISTORIES

### SENSORY ETHNOGRAPHY

- ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH THAT GIVES ANOTHER ROUTE TO EXPLORE PEOPLE'S LIVES, EXPERIENCES, VALUES, SOCIAL WORLD, & MORE<sup>4</sup>
- "SENSORY QUESTIONS CAN ENRICH INTERVIEW"<sup>1</sup>
- WHAT IS YOUR EARLIEST MEMORY OF FOOD?/ CUAL ES SU PRIMER RECUERDO DE LA COMIDA?

### SOCIAL MAPPING<sup>6</sup>

- HAND DRAWN MAPS BY PARTICIPANTS
- MEDIUM TO ELICIT INFORMATION AND SUPPORT MEMORY RECALL
- INSTRUMENTAL TOOL TO LEARN ABOUT INDIVIDUAL'S CONNECTION AND PERCEPTION OF PLACE

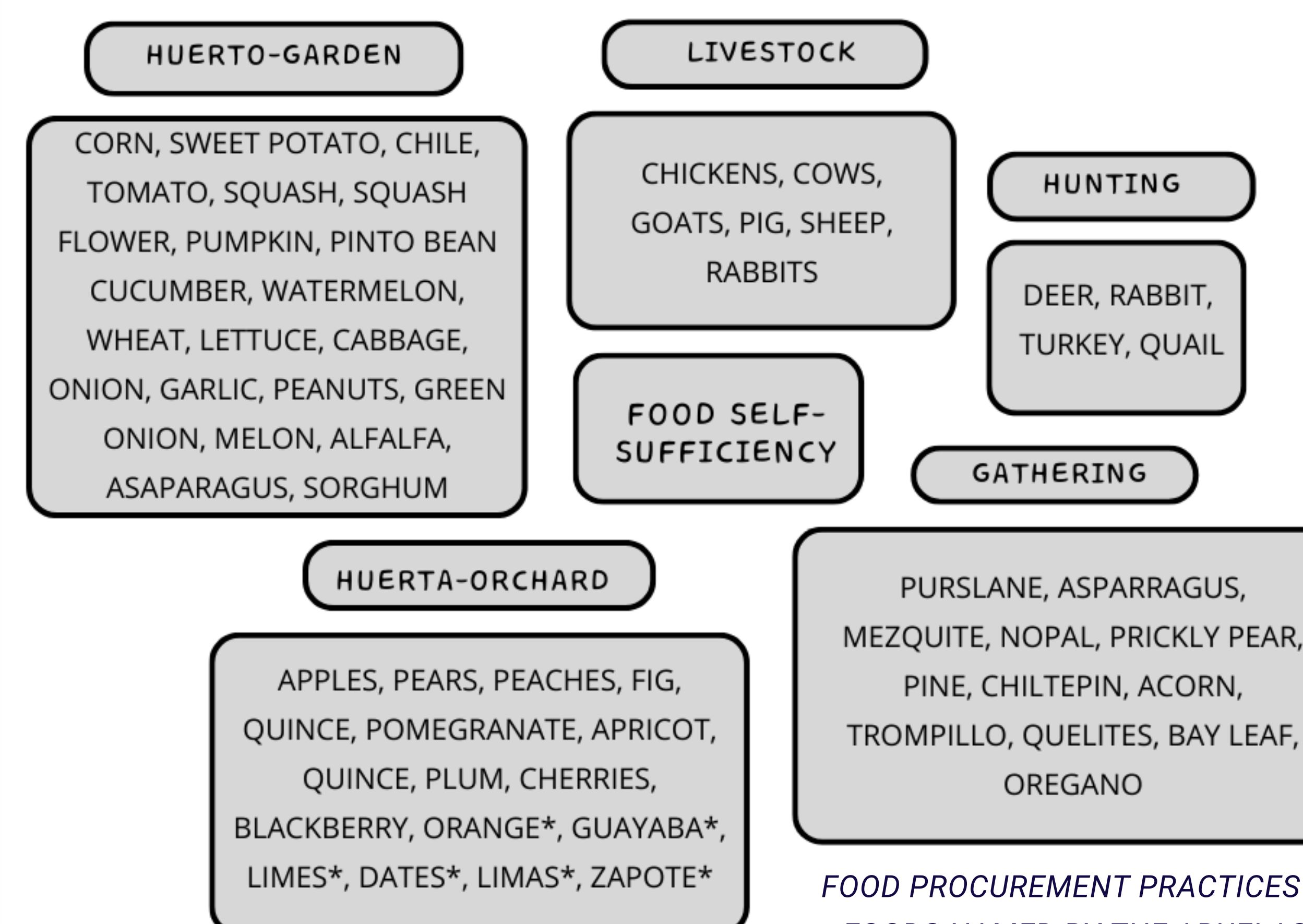
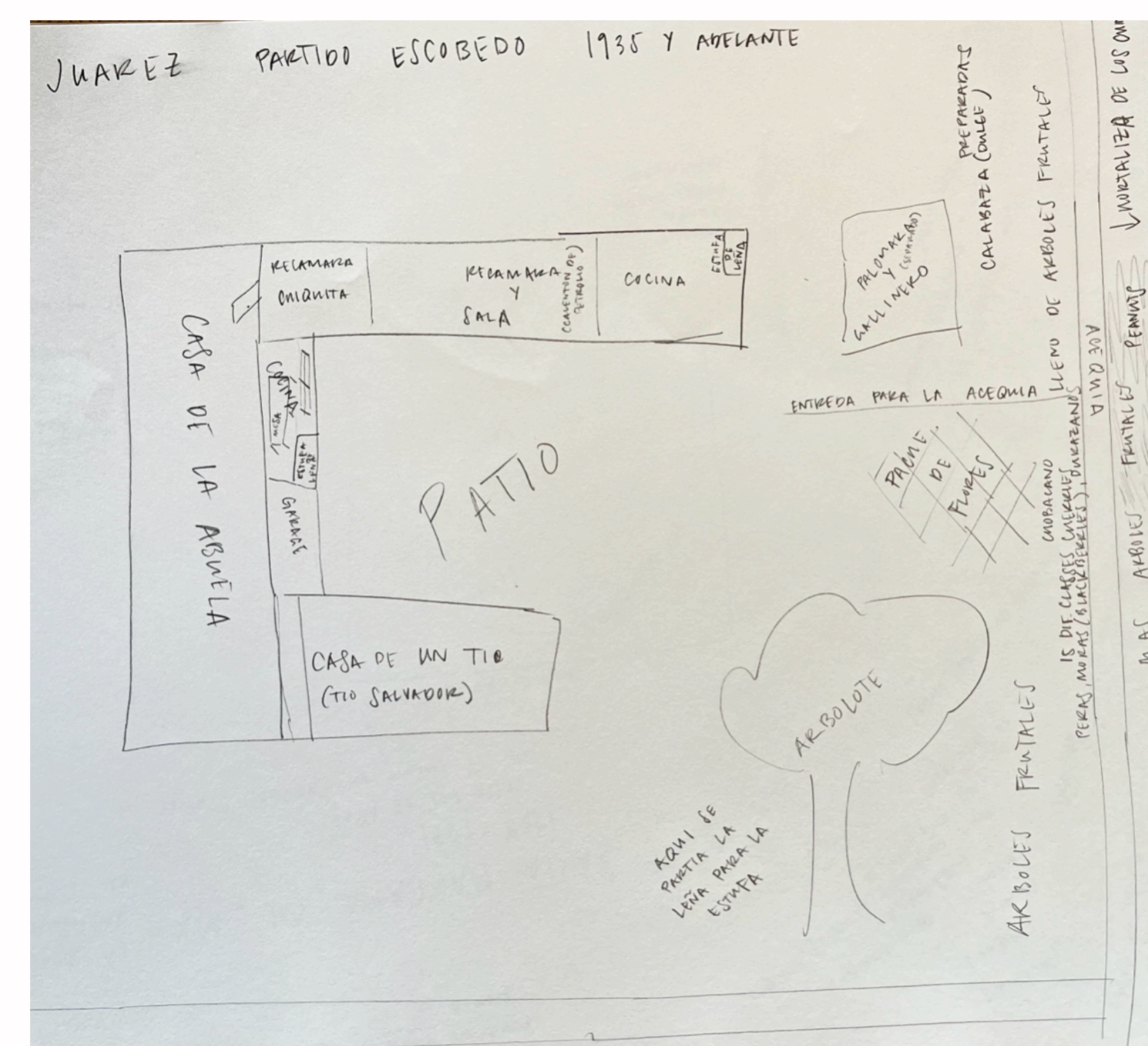
## RESULTS

- RESEARCH METHODS ELICITED RICH MEMORIES WITH DETAILS OF THE SPACE AND RELATIONSHIP TO THEIR ENVIRONMENT
- ABUELAS OFTEN SAID "MIRA COMO ME HICISTE RECORDAR"/"LOOK HOW YOU MADE ME REMEMBER"
- RECOLLECTIONS & MAPS REVEALED MISSING STRUCTURAL FEATURES THAT ENABLED SUBSISTENCE ACTIVITIES
  - SPACE TO GARDEN, BODEGAS (STORAGE ROOM), ACEQUIAS/CANAL

### ACEQUIAS

- CANAL/IRRIGATION SYSTEM
- ARABIC FOR "THAT WHICH CARRIES WATER"<sup>3</sup>
- GRAVITY FED DENDRITIC NETWORKS OF EARTHEN WORK
- POLITICAL STRUCTURE GOVERNED COMMUNALLY
- HABITAT & BIOLOGICAL CORRIDORS: FILTERS POLLUTANTS, DEPOSITS FRESH SOIL, & WILD PLANTS CONSUMED BY HUMANS & WILDLIFE<sup>3</sup>
- ECOLOGICAL & SOCIAL BENEFITS HAVE COME INTO CONFLICT WITH US LAW ON WATER RIGHTS

FIGURE 2: HAND DRAWN MAP OF AN ABUELA'S CHILDHOOD HOME IN CIUDAD JUAREZ, CHIHUAHUA



## RESULTS

- LOSS OF TRADITIONAL ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE ACROSS GENERATIONS
- REDUCED TO NONEXISTENT SUBSISTENCE GARDENING, HUNTING, FORAGING PRACTICES
- BARRIERS TO CONTINUE SAME FOOD PRACTICES & TRANSMISSION OF GENERATIONAL KNOWLEDGE



FIGURE 3: ILLUSTRATION OF PURSLANE, A WILD EDIBLE GREEN (RAMOS DE ROBLES, 2017)

## CONCLUSION

- IMPORTANTLY IDENTIFIED FOODS OF TRADITIONAL WAYS OF EATING WITHIN THE CHIHUAHUAN DESERT AND PASO DEL NORTE BORDERLAND REGION THAT ARE PLACE-BASED AND SUSTAINABLY GROWN
- HISTORICAL ANALYSIS POINTS TO CHANGES IN ACCESS TO LAND AND WATER THAT SUPPORTED SELF SUFFICIENCY THROUGH SUBSISTENCE ACTIVITIES
- FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS TO ANALYZE THE NATURE OF ACEQUIAS IN THE PASO DEL NORTE REGION

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