



Found In Translation 2024

I am seed

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Since leaving my home country in 2018, my migration process has become a transformative learning journey for me. It has been full of challenges, such as integrating and assimilating into new labour markets, learning, practising and speaking new languages, and adopting new cultures and ways of being. I believe that cultivating resilience and adapting are essential to remaining whole, and I have acquired everything I could learn about this from nature, my most significant source of inspiration.

Driven by my curiosity to explore and learn about the world, my imagination had begun to travel some years ago. I grew up in my grandparents' house in Costa Rica. There I had a globe. It was big and sepia-colored. I spent hours playing with it, tracing the shape of each continent and learning the name of each country. In addition, I began to learn the languages of the world by attending French school for twelve years. I was more inclined to science than literature and was always very shy about speaking the language. I have always been shy with languages; I notice it now as I learn German.

With English, the process has been easier. At home I could practice it with one of my cousins when I was a teenager and, later, I used it when I worked as an architect for an American firm. I really liked my job. I felt empowered as a woman. I could practice English, although always with a little bit of embarrassment. It took me a while to get used to it, it wasn't immediate either. However, my determination with the language allowed me to apply for a transfer to Sydney, Australia, in 2018 and thanks to almost two years of immersion there, I learned to incorporate the language into the everyday.

But the pandemic interrupted our new every day and with it my story as an architect. I lost my job, my visa and the safety net I had built in Costa Rica since 2009. It was like falling into the void in an unexpected descent. I found myself in limbo. The fires of November 2019 had already given us a warning and farewell sign. Moving to Switzerland was a real leap of faith. But I like to believe that the universe and life puts you in places and situations with a purpose that you slowly discover as time goes by. At least that's how I see it now. Thus began my relationship with the German language and the Swiss German dialect.

I think the equivalent of the dialect would be the Spanish we speak in Latin America, at least that's how I interpret it. Amusingly enough, there is a similarity between the dialect and the way we speak in Tiquicia. I don't know if others have noticed it. We both use the diminutive to refer to things. Pan, pancito, café, cafecito and so on... It is a detail that connects me with the local in secret.



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But there is also another language that I have been learning since I was a child. I speak it through my love for seeds and for having grown up among mandarin, guava and mango fruit trees, for having played among robes de sabana and corteza amarilla, and for having climbed them and fallen from them many times. I remember a homework assignment we were given in natural science classes in elementary school. We had to document the growth of a bean seed and draw it while describing the process. That is my first memory of fascination with nature. A great lesson was being learned - change was constant every day!

Back in my new home, in the permaculture garden of Dietlimoos, near Leimbach, where I volunteer, I harvested beans for the first time. I brought home my leftover seeds and planted them in the pots I had on the balcony. Watching them grow triggered old memories.

This garden has become the facilitator of my integration process here in Zurich. During this process, the garden has been my refuge, my handkerchief of tears and laughter, my mirror for self-knowledge and regeneration. Here, the air smells of mint and lavender. Here, I shed my skin and change my feathers. Here, mangoes and tangerines become cherries and artichokes. There I let go and let out. Here I align with my new seasons and understand that life has cycles. Here I am a seed. Here, I am a woman who nurtures the earth, the plants and remembers her grandparents. Here, I understand that some things have to die to let others be born, and that we must adapt to changing conditions to evolve and survive. Here my senses are reactivated. Here, I feel that I belong, I feel included and useful and that I can contribute to nurture a new fertile soil to rebuild my new roots. In this garden I found my place.

I often cycle home from the garden. It is a moment of absolute happiness. I ride through the little forest and feel free and fulfilled. I listen to the water flowing down the river, I see ducks flying by, defying gravity and grey herons looking for their next prey, moving stealthily as if they were a jaguar. As I pedal, I see raspberries and dahlias in little fields. I reserve the Spanish language for these moments.

French, English, German, Swiss German and Spanish. I get my wires crossed from time to time and make a short circuit. Could it be that we better speak the language of bean seeds, mangoes and dahlias? I know that language well, it's in my DNA. It is my root. It is the language I connect with in this new experience in Switzerland. It is the mycelium that connects us all. It is the language of nature. It is something that transcends words, it is the red thread of connectivity and the language of patterns. It is the language of life, of creativity, of the feminine, of intuition, of flexibility, of collaboration and empowerment, of synergies and interconnection. It is the language of unity, inclusion and diversity. It is the language of peace, kindness and love. It is a Latin American hug, a hello with a Quiubo! or with a ¡Pura Vida! and a see you later with a kiss on the cheek.