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An instant, a city

Jado Calvino writes in his book “The Invisible Cities.” Upon arriving to each new city the traveller finds a past that he still didn’t know that he had: the strangeness of what you no longer are or no longer poses awaits for you in strange and non-possessed places. Each new city, Calvino says, invites us to conceive new beginnings. The students who travel each year to our cities are certain to be living in them a memorable moment of their lives. Though no matter how hard we try, it will never be possible for us to transmit or for them to experience, in the short span of a few weeks or a few months, all that the city is. This issue of más+menos, together with the one that will follow next Fall, is an effort to understand our city a bit better through some of the experiences that our contributors have had in close contact with its inhabitants.

The poet Luis Cernuda gathered his own experiences from Seville in one of the most beautiful books ever written about the city, “Ocnos,” which he published in 1942. Calvino would Cernuda write the city’s name; his book will not be added to its long list of literary embellishments: his Seville will be the city that each one of us misses from childhood, the paradise that we lost: “Since childhood, as far as one can trace back my memories, I’ve always searched for that which does not change, I’ve longed for eternity. (…) But childhood ended and I fell into the world”, he writes.

Beyond the illusions of memory, cities are also the geography of all ordinary things. Auggie Wren, the character created by Paul Auster in 1990 for his “Christmas Story” is an accomplished narrator of stories, which always start and end in the same city. Auggie, who understands that all places are some place, has been photographing each day for the last 17 years, at exactly seven o’clock in the morning, the same street corner of Brooklyn of the cigar store where he works. He knows that nothing is as important as all the small things that we take for granted. The city that he knows is made out of an infinitude of changes intimately interconnected: “Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow, Creeps in this petty pace from day to day, To the last syllable of recorded time,” he quotes from Macbeth.

The urban stories in this magazine contain fiction and reality, past and present, the usual and the unusual, the joys and the hardships of everyday life. Seville, like all cities, is ultimately an Itaca, the origin and end of our life, the center of our experience. One of the most celebrated anecdotes about the famous, though often unsuccessful bullfighter Rafael el Gallo, tells how one afternoon, after a bad performance in the northern city of Bilbao, one of his assistants whispered to him: “Maestro, Can you believe how far we’re from Seville right now?” to which he replied: “Seville is where it ought to be, what’s far is Bilbao.”
Rebuilding a Home, Reshaping a City

When natural disasters force reconstruction of housing, the city and its people adapt to new styles of living. Four citizens of Seville reflect on how an earthquake and a flood in their youth affected their neighborhoods of Macarena, La Calzada, Los Pajaritos and Polígono Sur.

Manuel Losada remembers the disaster that displaced his family when he was 5 years old. He was living in Macarena, a neighborhood just outside the city center in the north of Seville. “In March of 1969, there was an earthquake that ran through the streets. I lived in a typical patio de vecinos.” The construction of this communal house did not withstand the tremors.

Eight years earlier, during the afternoon of Nov. 25, 1961, the Tamarguillo flood (which currently runs underground the Ronda del Tamarguillo, a major boulevard outside the center of Seville to the east), became a wild river and overflowed after heavy rains. The flood killed 20 people and caused damage to the housing of more than 125,000 residents.

“The water was up to the first floor,” Inocencio says of his childhood home while tending to plants that line a street of Los Pajaritos, the same neighborhood where he lives today, on the east periphery of Seville.

José Luis, of Huerto de Santa Teresa, a neighborhood that borders Los Pajaritos, also witnessed the flood when he was 6 or 7 years old. “I remember that goats were floating through the water,” he says while taking the bus to his librarian job in the city center.

Antonio Zarco explains that before the flood, much of the housing outside of Seville consisted of single or several floor living spaces “constructed on their own,” but after that many of the affected areas focused on building upward, in apartment blocks, to prevent further water damage. However, much of the housing farther outside to the east of Seville remains handmade and close to ground level.

Losada calculates that another 300 to 400 families went there. His family stayed at the camp from 1969 to 1974. Conditions were tough. In the absence of running water they had to drag water into their barrack from a large tank outside. Many families had even worse luck and were logged in the old stables of the camp. Losada believes marginalization is a myth. Living out of bounds is not a matter of exclusion, but a matter of preference. “Neighborhoods like mine, like Los Pajaritos… are another way of living. It is not marginality. This is my opinion as an anthropologist and as a neighbor,” he says.

Inocencio says of his childhood home, “Carmen and her sister were gone shopping for the afternoon. When they returned, they could not enter. They slept at my house,” he explains. The community joined the effort by providing meals for affected families and helping them gain access to their homes. “There were charity boats that gave services to the people,” he adds.

Antonio Zarco explains that before the flood, much of the housing outside of Seville consisted of single or several floor living spaces “constructed on their own,” but after that many of the affected areas focused on building upward, in apartment blocks, to prevent further water damage. However, much of the housing farther outside to the east of Seville remains handmade and close to ground level.

The majority of Seville’s citizens currently live outside of what used to be the walled town. There, the cityscape consists more of what takes place in the streets than in central Seville where the statue of the woman on the top of the Giraldilla tower overlooks a sprawl of adorned rooftop terraces.

“You imagine Seville as the Giraldilla and the cathedral. It is a lie,” Manuel Losada says. “Look, Seville had 400,000 citizens in 1979. Since then, it has grown very little [it has now approximately 700,000], and the greater part of them lives in neighborhoods like mine.”

He adds that living at street level fosters a sense of belonging. “It is part of your place... There is no sensation of estrangement. The street is yours.”

He reminisces about neighbors lounging around the heat of a bonfire; a social activity distinct from those of central Seville. “There is a saying that the fire is the sun of the poor.”

This makes me very nostalgic. Afterward, your shirt smells of smoke,” he says, bringing his jacket to greet his nose.

Accordingly, Losada wonders if social and geographic isolation create a sense of exclusion between the old city and its outskirts. He provides an example: “My mother comes to the city center and does not know the names of the streets. In a way, she feels marginalized,” he says.

However, after studying geography and history at the University of Seville, and living in Polígono Sur, Losada believes marginalization is a myth. Living out of bounds is not a matter of exclusion, but a matter of preference. “Neighborhoods like mine, like Los Pajaritos… are another way of living. It is not marginality. This is my opinion as an anthropologist and as a neighbor,” he says.

For this reason, he hasn’t moved. He identifies more with the culture of Polígono Sur than that of central Seville. “I live on the same block as my father. I have not left. I am accustomed to the way of living.”

Ignacio also lives in the same neighborhood in which his family resided when the river breached their front door. However, he clarifies that Los Pajaritos looks differently than it did in 1961. “These are newly constructed houses,” he says, pointing to the four-story, red and white apartment building to his left.

By adapting to acts of nature, people re-shape where and how they live. As citizens change, so does the city. During Losada’s time as a university student, one of his geography professors commented on the urban growth. What he said impressed him: “Seville is never finished.”

When Antonio Zarco’s girlfriend came to visit him, there was just one tap with running water for a whole floor and our only bathroom was a hole on the ground that everyone shared, and now we had three rooms and a bathroom all to ourselves,” Losada explains.

“Other neighborhoods were flooded, but we made do,” he adds.

Losada believes that the Tamarguillo flood affected the families’ futures and homes differently. Manuel Losada, his brother and his parents were relocated as refugees in one of the old barracks of Los Merinales, a former labor camp used by the prisoners of the Spanish Civil War who dug the irrigation canal of Seville’s city center.

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Waves of Change

Within Sevilla, one of the two prisons of the city, lies a penitentiary psychiatric hospital housing 180 mentally ill inmates. This is the story of the patients’ struggle with disease in daily life and the staff members who try to help them along the way. Onda Cerebral, or Brain Wave radio station, provides a place for inmates to express themselves.

They say that every day is a second chance, if you want it, yeah? If someone wants a second chance, do they deserve it? Does everyone get a second chance?

This is one of the many questions posed by the inmates who run the morning program of Onda Cerebral, or Brain Wave, the radio station broadcast out of the psychiatric hospital of Sevilla 1, a prison in Sevilla. The radio’s morning programs—which consist of debates, poetry readings, rock shows and interviews, among other things—are being broadcast in real time to the rest of the penitentiary hospital. Two other American students and I are being interviewed and using our best, imperfect Spanish as we try to satisfy the inmates’ curiosity about our foreign-seeming lives. Finally, we’re down to the last 10 minutes of the hour-long show.

Julián Vicente, an enthusiastic psychologist and educator who works at the prison for 20 years, grabs a microphone and addresses our listeners: “If anyone listening to the program would like to come down and participate or ask one of our American visitors a question, now’s your chance!”

A few minutes later, a dark-haired man in his early thirties named Paco González comes bounding into the room, wide-eyed and short of breath. “I have a question for the psychologist. He takes a seat right next to me, and moves in just inches from my face as he hastily asks his question about...”

“Are we here to condemn,” he murmurs in a moment of seriousness. “We have already condemned them by putting them here. Further punishment is too toxic for a rehabilitative environment. Paco cuts the song short and Antonio puts down his microphone heavily and drags his feet off to a corner of the room. Julián approaches him, arms wide for a hug, which Antonio resists fiercely. Laughing, Julián keeps trying, but Antonio’s resistance is strong and Julián good-naturedly lets him go.”

The hospital is intended for criminals who did not understand the nature of their crimes at the time they were committed and who cannot live within the general prison population due to their psychological conditions.

Of its 180 patients, about 20 percent are incarcerated for violent crimes like rape and murder. According to Julián, the majority of crimes committed by the inmates are related to drug and alcohol abuse, as mentally ill populations are at much greater risk for substance addiction. Increasingly, crimes of domestic violence are an issue. Though the patients have many opportunities for visitation with family members, those that were caught in a domestic violence struggle cannot visit with their victims. The dynamic is too toxic for a rehabilitative environment.

The hospital offers music therapy, among other programs, which we as a group witness as a patient-tended garden of fruits, vegetables and flowers, outdoor basketball courts, a small workout room, a music room that includes the radio station’s studio and doghouses for the hospital’s pets—two lazy Labrador Retrievers.

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Life on the Roof

Traditional and modern cultures collide on the azoteas, which are urban sanctuaries on top of houses and buildings that may be used to grow vegetables, sleep under the stars on a hot summer night and now, with a new cultural program in Seville, to enjoy a movie or a concert, live and free.

“It was my first summer here,” Angel remembers, “and that summer was the hottest it had ever been. We brought the sofa up to our terraza and the television, too. We spent the whole day as a family watching the television until 1 a.m.”

The culture of azoteas started to wind down as bars and discos gained ground as meeting places. It was a comfort in her; she saw it as her main contribution to the household. The fresh vegetables never disappeared. He recalls how they used to pick the fresh tomatoes and wash and cut them right on the roof. When it was warm enough, the family would congregate under the stars. “Many times we shared a dinner on the roof that consisted of my mother’s vegetables and food bought at a fresh market in the center of our town. We usually could see other families on their azoteos doing the same thing. My father used to wave to our neighbors and then maybe go and have a beer and cigar with them after dinner.”

The goal is to raise awareness of Andalusian rooftop culture and increase citizen participation in artistic activities. The first Estréjitas event was held March 30 at CÍCUS cultural center (on Madre de Dios street, very close to CIEE). It consisted of two separate film festivals preceded by an electronic music and light show. Like all the shows, this successful kickoff party was free and open to the public.

The second program formed by La Matraka in Redesazos, a network of small public spaces on different private terraces throughout the city. It is a way for citizens to open up and volunteer their terraces to events they wish to hold. It is a nonprofit program so there is no financial benefit for La Matraka; the group essentially seeks to build cultural events.

The program originated on May 24, with discussions about the legality of using azoteas for cultural events. The lawyer José Ignacio Aguilar, along with other interested citizens, hosted a workshop. Also in attendance were the architect Juan José Olmo and Juan Diego Carmona of Civil Protection. Together with La Matraka, they created the manual for the recommended use of azoteas in the Redesazos program. This manual is available on LaMatraka.es.

Many families will always cherish the memories they created on the azotea. “It was my first summer here,” Angel remembers, “and that summer was the hottest it had ever been. We brought the sofa up to our terraza and the television, too. We spent the whole day as a family watching the television until 1 or 2 a.m.”
Lawrence of Seville and Other Fictions

Hollywood cinema and romantic 19th century travel literature have helped shape Seville’s image into a mix of reality and fiction. We talk about the ideal city with an architect, an art professor and an extra from the legendary David Lean film staged here in 1961.

It is springtime in southern Spain in 1961. A large group of young men are relaxing in the Plaza de España square, reading the newspaper under the legendary strength of Seville’s sunshine. Their hang-out was originally constructed for the Iberian-American Exposition of 1929, its curved shape symbolizing Spain reaching out its arms to embrace its former American colonies. Seduced by springtime and a vacation from work, these natives are spending a ordinary afternoon at one of their city’s most iconic works of architecture, a monument long since transformed by the passage of time into not just a staple of the.gridy Sunday but also a casual corner in a day in the life of the locals. Drawn by inexpensive production costs, the American film industry is ready to return Spain’s hug. One of the young men, Antonio González Sánchez, is about to be swept out of the script of his normal day and into a Seville disguised as Cairo and Damascus.

When the production team of “Lawrence of Arabia” arrived in Seville 30 years ago, Sánchez was a tall, thin, 20-year-old man with great presence. Thanks to his good genes and a bit of good luck, he was one of about 800 Sevillian citizens chosen to be extras in the legendary film directed by David Lean. Not so unlike the 19th century European university students who enlisted in the Grand Tour, an academic journey of three to four years that provided the opportunity to study firsthand the faraway, exotic places and cultures of the faraway, exotic places and cultures of the 19th century European university.

He points out a paradox. “At that time, the Eiffel Tower was rejected by Parisians because they thought it looked ugly and didn’t belong to the ‘true Paris’. Later on, it became the symbol of Paris. True or false are words which lead to deception, because today one may think that Paris is well represented by the Eiffel Tower, but when it was constructed, that wasn’t the case.”

It is as if the world has agreed to a pact of daytime delusion, agreed to close its collective eyes to the irony of the industrial Eiffel Tower as a symbol of love. Just as there are always alternative visions, there is inevitably an image that epiphanizes a people and a place. Although Seville has been used numerous times as a neutral stage for film, on the other hand, there is an unavoidable part of its identity that has been historically and consistently propagated through the arts and popular culture.

“When you speak about a city’s image and which parts of it are fiction or reality, I would say that the relation isn’t so clear. Reality has bits of fiction and fiction has bits of reality,” says architect Paco González. However arbitrary and complex these judgments of veracity may be, a city’s image holds an undeniable power of propaganda —a vital commercial and emotional value—for both residents and visitors alike. “The ideal city,” he adds, “in contrast with narrativeness, and a part of these texts, but in the contemporary age, the biggest producer of stories is cinema.”

Paris is perhaps the paragon of this cinematic construction of a city’s image. It is hard to imagine a Paris without an Eiffel Tower, or an Eiffel Tower without Paris. The Eiffel Tower is the only context a movie scene needs to reveal its setting, and to enchant an audience with this shimmering, towering, iconic iron structure. But the story of this engineering feat’s rise to symbolic stardom is slightly less romantic than its lightning daily life of this era through travel books, a more literary genre than the pocket guides we buy today to make the most of four tourist destinations.

The travel books “have created the image of the city and the most cliché vision of Andalusia that still is the one that many people around the world know.”

According to the architect Paco González, “there’s the ideal city that citizens of Seville have, but there’s also the ideal city of the tourist. When people visit Seville, they imagine the cliché: bullfighting, narrow streets, the Giralda tower.” He explains that another classic image of Seville, the Plaza de España, was designed by architect Aníbal González with a traditional look so “the people accepted that it belonged to Seville.” He underlines the interesting point that Plaza de España is a double story design: it was born as the main scenario for the 1929 exhibition and altered that has been used as a cinema stage.

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Lawrence of Arabia and Other Fictions

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In order to compete on a global scale, the Andalusian capital faces challenges adapting to modern society while still preserving its rich traditions. We talk about the city and its future with Juan Carlos Blanco, director of El Correo de Andalucía daily, and Raquel Rico, president of the civic movement for change, Iniciativa Sevilla Abierta.

A pleasant climate, picturesque buildings, rich history and dazzling sunshine… To a visitor, Seville seems to breathe with the rhythm of a relaxed atmosphere and a slow, friendly ambience. One need not look further than the enchanting Holy Week or the Maestranza ring by the river that wakes for the bullfighting season.

People of Seville are proud of their society as a piece of preserved history. However, there is much more to the city than its presence as a tourist magnet and an anachronism, says Juan Carlos Blanco, director of El Correo de Andalucía, the oldest newspaper of the city (founded in 1899).

“The Sevillanos feel very much a Sevillano. He or she is very much identified with the place where he or she lives. But they do not feel very responsible for the state of things there. Their sense of belonging is much more sentimental than political. People lack any sense of citizenship or obligation.”

He explains that there is too much emphasis placed on tradition and that people with the power to initiate change seem to share the same mentality. “Seville is too conservative. There are all types of current trends, but religion and conservatism are dominant.”

Indeed, he thinks that the relationship between citizens and those who represent them is marked by a lack of responsiveness or connection. “There is a problem of representation. There is no muscle of civil society. The politicians are a mirror of their own city. This is seen in the publications and in other media.”

“In the university, there is less movement for change. It is a more conformist society. For example, there is no ecological movement as there is in other parts of the world among young people. There is very little activism among the youth, especially in the university.” For this reason, he emphasizes the need for a more European mentality.

“Impressive communication student Karla Nahra Illescas of the University of Seville agrees that activism simply isn’t present among the university population, and she echoes the beliefs of Blanco and Rico that this is due to a culture of passivity.

“While the students do have certain forms of representation, their scope is limited. She states that neither she nor her peers feel much personal connection to their representatives. Moreover, being a student, she燃烧s that there are no contemporary sensibilities in the university.”

The rise of social networking has encouraged more people to talk about issues, but Illesca believes that there is a great difference between talking about issues and actually working toward change. “The young people prefer to complain behind a computer screen rather than taking to the street to fight for their rights.”

But bit by bit, the groundwork must be laid for Seville’s future. The director of El Correo de Andalucía suggests that both personal and collective sacrifice may be the key. “Many people complain and protest, but few participate. There is an anti-system attitude, but you have to work to change something. If not, your conduct will be passive and will not serve to improve the situation.”

The city needs to learn, collectively, the importance of innovation. A recurrent and self-contained image will not work. It has a lot of potential, but it needs progress. It lacks the ambition and desire to improve. It needs to look more beyond itself. It looks at itself very much but it doesn’t look to the rest of the world.

No one intends to demonize regional pride or eschew tradition. Rather, coexistence between the historic and contemporary world would open the door for a more multifaceted and fruitful society. Blanco summarizes his aspiration for Seville’s future: “Seville needs to have more strength, more rhythm and to believe more strongly in itself. It needs more imagination, and not just for its celebrations and traditions. Seville is much more than that.”

Citizens of Seville After the Demonstration of the Past General Strike of March 29th, 2012 / Max Landerman
Nurturing an Urban Oasis at the Huerto del Rey Moro

There may be a lack of green space in Seville, but this 15th-century urban orchard embedded in the blocks of Enladrillada and Sol streets is the largest undeveloped land in the old town. The love and support of the community ensures that this garden is in no danger of extinction.

On a Sunday morning in the Huerto del Rey Moro, or the Orchard of the Moorish King, one will find tranquility. The humming of bees, the faint host of a Mourning Dove, and the sweet aroma of flowers fill the air. As time passes, five neighbors begin to gather in preparation to build a considerably large snake out of fresh cement, car tires, bamboo sticks, rocks and straw. According to Luciano Fucarès, a regular at the garden from Sicily, Italy, the snake has religious meaning behind it. Little by little, families stroll through the garden show interest and begin to join in on the construction. After an hour, there are 20 neighbors working on the large snake, packing it with straw and dirt, or searching for rocks to support its body. This is a true depiction of Huerto del Rey Moro. It is a place for the community, built by the community.

Huerto del Rey Moro opened as a communal space on Feb. 15, 2004, for the use and enjoyment of Sevillians. There are half a dozen urban gardens in Seville, explains David Herrera, who works with schools to get children more involved with environmental activities. Since its opening, the garden has become a popular location. In the summer it is transformed into an outdoor movie theater, and it is a common place to celebrate children’s birthday parties on the weekends.

This space in the northern quarter of Seville has remained almost entirely untouched for more than five centuries. Connected to the orchard is the Casa del Rey Moro, a Gothic-Moorish late 15th-century home and also the oldest domestic building in the city after the Alcázar, a medieval royal palace. The house is now the home of the foundation dedicated to Blas Infante, the leader of Andalusian autonomists, who was murdered at the beginning of Spanish Civil War in 1936. On May 22, 2001, both the Huerto del Rey Moro and the Casa del Rey Moro were declared by the regional government as Bien de Interés Cultural (B.I.C.), or places of cultural interest, which means they can not be altered.

Even with the city suffering from a lack of green space, especially in the ancient intramuros or walled town, this eclectic orchard was once in danger of being diminished. In 1987, the General Urban Plan of Seville announced the construction of 40 subsidised rental apartments for persons of low income at a corner of the garden on Enladrillada street. The garden would have reduced in size from 5,000 square meters to a mere 1,300. The neighborhood refused and their claim seems to have been tacitly acknowledged by the last governments of the city. “We’re not totally certain, but it seems that we won the fight for the need of a free, communal space,” says Mayte Toldedano, of El Ecolocal, an organization that produces workshops, with children from elementary and primary schools in the area, cover topics such as food and economic sustainability, farming and nutrition. One of the main goals is to teach them how to independently grow vegetables. But School Gardens also promotes reflection and critical thinking about what’s happening in the environment. The mode of eating influences every person, the whole city, the markets, the world,” says Mayte Toldedano. She and David visit schools in Seville three to four times a week within this program.

Somehow, this orchard succeeds at being a nook so peaceful despite being embedded in the streets of a hectic city. “The Huerto del Rey Moro is a very special place. I think that it is for the community to share and that benefits both the young and the old, and in general it benefits the environment,” says Gertrudis Cerda, a neighbor who stars often with her grandchildren.

“Huerto Comunitario.” A community garden that embodies a strong sense of civic union as the old and the young converse as if they have known each other for years. The plants are shared and cared for by one another, and each neighbor is working together to nurture this treasured space. After finishing the snake, Luciano plans on creating two elephants out of cement, hay and rocks. He, as well as others in the community, will transform the 200-year-old fig tree into the mother elephant, and a playground into its child. “The people of the city want more green space,” says David. The fight to keep this rare oasis alive (and conquer new ones) continues.
Taking your Home(s) Wherever You Go

Despite living in a time of financial unrest and personal hardship, American expat Mary Anne Nixon copes with ease in her adoptive home.

Arriving at her apartment building, Mary Anne Nixon steps back and looks up to her porch. “¡Poufa! ¿A ti qué te pasa?” (what’s the matter with you?). “She must have scurried in the kitchen. ‘No pasa nada’,” she says shrugging her shoulders.

“The pitter-patter of Poufa’s feet can be heard in the second-floor hallway. As she opens the door, Mary Anne has to dodge the small, energetic dog just to flip the light switch, let alone to get her bike inside. She lets out a sigh of relief and removes the gate keeping Poufa in the kitchen.

As Mary Anne keeps Poufa in line, one cannot help but notice and admire her optimistic and carefree attitude. Going through life wherever it takes her, she maintains a positive outlook.

In 1998, she came to Seville to study for the semester as a college student with little knowledge of Spanish and the “no pasa nada” (no problem, take it easy) attitude of the city. As Mary Anne keeps Poufa in line, one cannot help but notice and admire her optimistic and carefree attitude. Going through life wherever it takes her, she maintains a positive outlook.

“My expectations; she did not expect to learn the language so quickly or to fall in love with her boyfriend Chavi, who connected her strongly to the city through his hospitable family.

After graduating college, Mary Anne joined the Peace Corps in Honduras, working with children and in village across the country before deciding to return to Seville. While she was away, she found an outlet for the nostalgia she felt for Spain.

“I was in Honduras for two-and-a-half years,” she recalls. “I missed dancing flamencos while I was there, so I was in a cultural center with young Honduran girls, I taught them how to dance and we toured around the country doing flamencos. I felt like an ambassador of the city. It took an American person to share something in another country that the people didn’t have themselves, though it was me who missed Seville, those girls learned good pos...

“Around me there are so many people facing changes in their jobs like I am and they’re all trying to cope with a new lifestyle.”

Some Americans move abroad after their college graduation in search of a sense of thrill and inspiration to find their identity. Mary Anne, however, is not lost. She lives in Seville because she knows who she is and why she belongs. In the light of day, her apartment reveals a mixture of the rich culture of her adoptive town with a hint of American nostalgia. Above her television, a Spanish fan stands holds a picture of Mary Anne and her friends from the United States.

Though she rules her bike to work and enjoys a glass of red wine midday like any Spaniard, she naturally misses certain comforts of home. “As a general stereotype, a general comment, you get used to how easy it is to live in the United States,” she says. “But I’ve found that instead of complaining about what I miss, I try to be the change I want in the city. If I like it, there’s a small chance others will too. I must try spreading things here, because otherwise I would never know.”

Mary Anne carries this attitude with her at all times, starting with teaching flamencos in Honduras over a decade ago. She has made similar efforts here in Seville, yet with a different dance: Zumba, a Latin American workout routine. “I just love to dance Zumba, so I went out and got certified to teach it. Hopefully with my school giving me their gym to use, I can spread the word and get more people to participate and learn what it’s all about.”

She is optimistic about this new venture. And it’s only a matter of time before this American-Sevillian starts another initiative to uplift a city so damaged by economic circumstances, every day she learns a fresh perspective on how she can enrich her life here. “You can organize your life however you want. I have been so lucky,” she affirms. No matter how many hurdles she must overcome, Stota Anne is home.
The foundation Gota de Leche provides healthy breakfasts to children who suffer in different ways, from hunger or obesity, due to the impact of poverty on their diets. A visit to two schools shows us this reality.

It is not only subnutrition we are dealing with, but also malnutrition. Some children are larger than others not because they eat more but because they are being fed inexpensive foods with little nutritional value and lots of fat.

Here lies a general problem of today’s youth, not just in Spain, but across the world. In Spain alone, 26 percent of children are overweight and almost 14 percent are considered obese. The highest rates are in the regions of Andalucía and the Canary Islands, in the south, where the income is the lowest. “There are many reasons that have created this situation,” explains the Spanish Agency of Food Safety in its Infostad Food Guide. “Our country has suffered great changes in the last decades that have largely impacted the type of diet we consume. Traditional diets have been superseded by diets with higher caloric quantities, which means more fats and more added oxidants are said to be large contributing factors to a long, healthy life, while an emphasis on “daily exercise and freshness, balance and pleasure in food” completes the equilibrium of a healthy lifestyle, says French-American author Mireille Guillaume.

But maintaining this lifestyle is easier said than done, and the growing, bloated stomachs of Seville’s lower classes prove that. “In Seville, the malnutrition is not the lack of healthy habits and because there are families that are displaced from other countries where the diet is very poor,” said Triviño. She added that some children of gypsy ethnicity “have had eating habits and they lack economic resources.”

On a separate occasion, I visited Colegio San José Obregon, another elementary school in the Seville macarreña district. Similarly, the majority of children in the breakfast program there were Spanish of gypsy descent. I met six and four years old respectively. As I watched her eat her ham and oil bocadillo, Alejandra gave me a look of monotony. I asked her what was wrong and she waved her bread in front of me and shook her head, signaling that she didn’t like it. It was hard for me to grasp the idea that a child who looked hungry could turn down food. Her skinny frame suggested malnourishment, yet she did not complain about still being hungry after the meal. “I can’t tell which is better because there are different food habits, food culture and personal- istic you. I love Seville, but soccer life is not normal. Look, in three years I have lived in four different places – Girona, Sara- goza, Sahalle, and Seville.” He lists his fingers. “Tomorrow I can get an unexpected and good offer from another club, and I will have no choice but to go. I can’t get ret- able to one city. Since the age of five, Hiroshi set as his main goal to become a professional footballer. Today he hopes to one day play in a World Cup, representing Japan, though he will cer- tainly attach to one city.”

Hiroshi made his first division debut in a Besa 1-1 Sevilla, Jan. 21, 2012, in the 82nd minute, coming onto the pitch for Álvaro Negredo, Sevilla FC’s number nine. The crowd in the bars, stadiums and streets were pleased to see the Japanese striker make his debut in perhaps the biggest stage imaginable, the Seville Derby. "The Andalusian capital has embraced Hiroshi, making it difficult for him to decide which town he loves most: Nagareyama or Seville. “I can’t tell which is better because there are dif- ferences in food, culture, history and personal- istic you. I love Seville and Spain, but I will always love my town. I feel comfortable in both places. I miss his friends and family; he misses his mother’s cooking, especially her fish, which he says he needs to learn how to cook. At home he eats his mother’s bocadillo and ham salad.”

Playing mainly in Sevilla FC’s reserve team permits him to go out and explore the city. “It’s not complicated to go out and explore because there are a lot of people there. ‘It’s not that famous yet,’ he says, though he admits that the day will come when he will have to sign autographs for more than a few people. ‘He’s near that moment. Hiroshi is overwhelmed with the people’s kindness with him. ‘When I go to bars, everyone greets me and asks how I’m doing, and after an hour, they always become my friends. This, for me, is unbelievable’"

The evening becomes chillier by the min- ute; he wears a blue leather jacket to ward off the cold. With his Andalusian Spanish accent, leaving out the last consonants of words, Hiroshi, or Hiro, as some of his teammates call him, looks back to his first visit to Seville, his new home since last summer: “I played in Se- ville with Girona against Sevilla Atlético (the reserve team of Sevilla FC), back when it was in Liga Adelante [the second league]. That day I noticed the people’s generosity.” Three years later, he moved here; a big step forward in his career. Hiroshi made his first division debut in a Besa 1-1 Sevilla, Jan. 21, 2012, in the 82nd minute, coming onto the pitch for Álvaro Negredo, Sevilla FC’s number nine. The crowd in the bars, stadiums and streets were pleased to see the Japanese striker make his debut in perhaps the biggest stage imaginable, the Seville Derby. "The Andalusian capital has embraced Hiroshi, making it difficult for him to decide which town he loves most: Nagareyama or Seville. “I can’t tell which is better because there are dif- ferences in food, culture, history and personal- istic you. I love Seville and Spain, but I will always love my town. I feel comfortable in both places. I miss his friends and family; he misses his mother’s cooking, especially her fish, which he says he needs to learn how to cook. At home he eats his mother’s bocadillo and ham salad.”

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16 PHOTOGRAPHS OF SEVILLE BY MAX LANDERMAN, SPRING OF 2012

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