



**ACCUMULATION
BY
DISPOSSESSION**

Asunción Molinos Gordo

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**An exhibition exploring the inequalities in the global food system
curated by Dani Burrows for Delfina Foundation, “The Politics of Food” programme.**

The exhibition takes its title from the work of the eminent Marxist Professor David Harvey. In his 2003 book, *The New Imperialism*, Harvey introduces the concept ‘accumulation by dispossession’ to describe the mechanisms through which neoliberal capitalism concentrates wealth and power by dispossessing people of resources and capital .

During her 2014 residency at Delfina Foundation, Molinos related this concept to her on-going research into the food system, exploring the relationship between food trade and food insecurity.

Accumulation by Dispossession offers visual representations of how the current food system has led to the commodification of staple foods in a processes of financialization of land, labour and means of production leaving large numbers of the population on the verge of starvation. Molinos has created a series of “economic objects” produced through hand-made, machine assembled and computerised processes to highlight the crafted elements within the global food system.

Accumulation by Dispossession is part of Delfina Foundation’s latest iteration of the thematic programme *The Politics of Food*, which will run from 1 April - 23 June 2019, curated by Dani Burrows. Acknowledging that the food system is broken and seismic systemic change is an inevitability, the fourth iteration of *The Politics of Food*, subtitled *Adapting*, will explore responses to the changing environment of food production.



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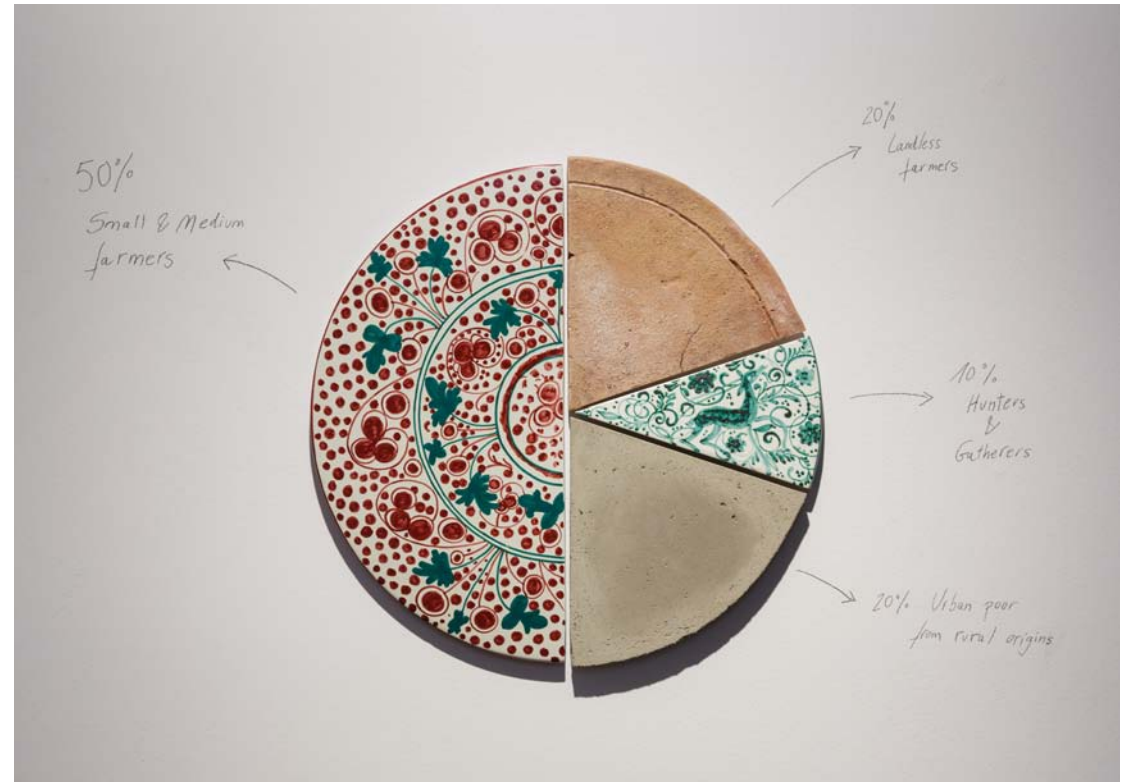
WHO ARE “THE HUNGRY”?

Ceramic pie chart

The people most likely to experience food insecurity are farmers themselves.

Today's wealth is unparalleled. There is enough food to nourish the entire planet 1.5 times, nevertheless 821 million people in the world do not have enough food to lead a healthy life. Three quarters of these people live in rural areas and work in agriculture.

Industrial large-scale agriculture is often presented as the solution for feeding the world, but it is the small family-run farms who produce 70% of the world's food on a quarter of all farm land.



50%

Small & Medium
farmers



20%

Landless
farmers



10%

Hunters
&
Gatherers



20%

Urban poor
from rural origins



INSUFFICIENT FARM REVENUES

Photograph of dust in a farmer's warehouse swept after the sale of the harvest

Small and medium producers are price takers. They have very little power to negotiate what they produce or the price of their produce.

A European farmer on a small to medium sized farm will use most of the income generated from the sale of their goods to pay the expenses of the production. This remaining income will be combined with subsidies to create a living. A small and medium sized producer in the global south will sell their crops after the harvest and the income will not always be sufficient to buy food for the rest of the year.

The price of the staple crops such as wheat, rice, corn and soy are allocated in the Chicago Board of Trade in US Dollars. They are subjected to high frequency trading on the futures market. Before seeds have been sown crop yields are traded many times over. After the 2008 crisis in the property market, food markets grew exponentially resulting in increasingly volatile food prices for both producers and consumers.





Archaeological Excavation
This image shows a large, roughly spherical mound of earth and organic material, possibly a natural formation or a large-scale archaeological find. The mound is composed of dark, textured soil with visible roots and some lighter-colored, fibrous material protruding from its surface. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the uneven texture and the central peak of the mound.



LAND & WATER GRABBING

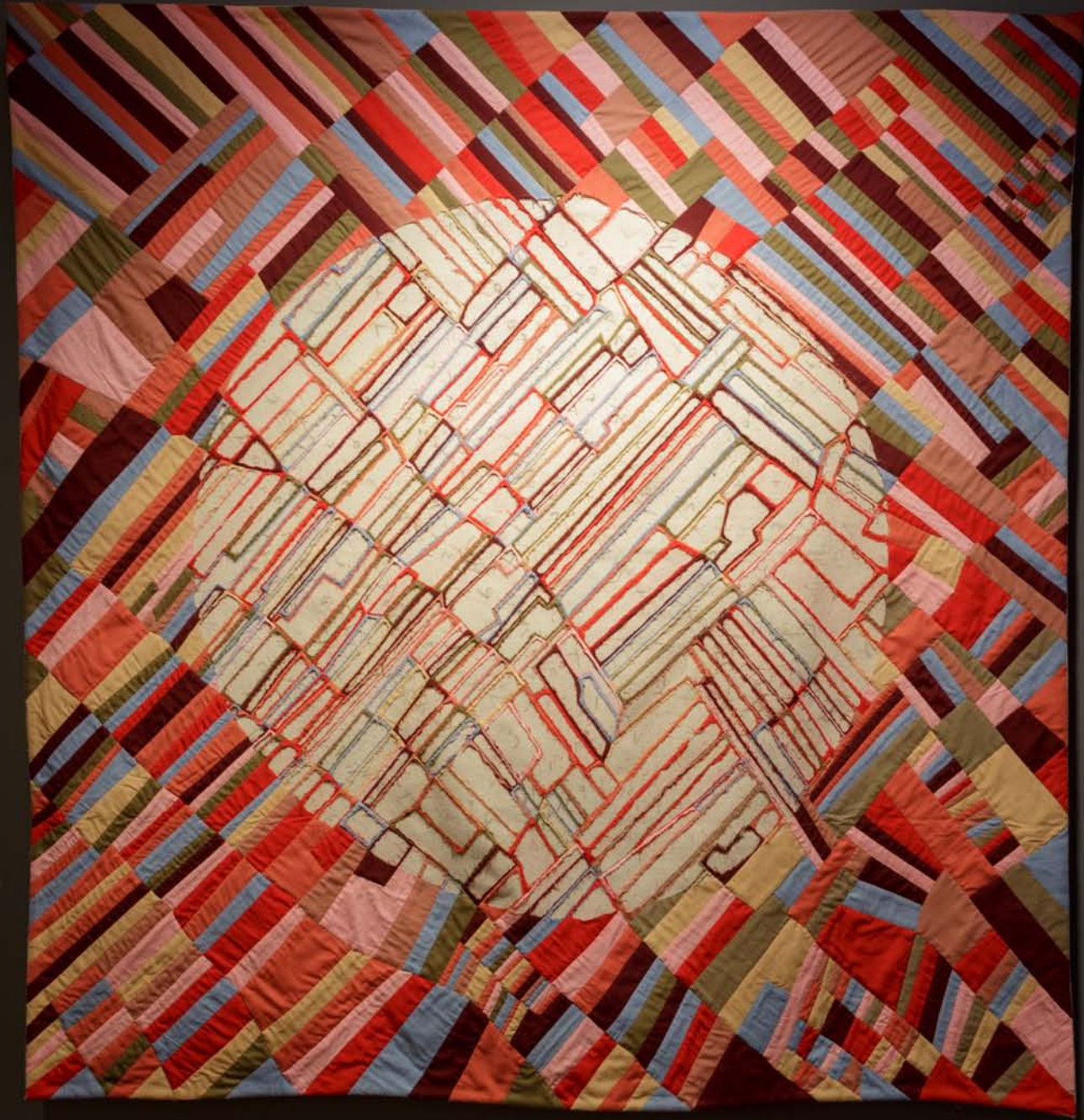
Hand stitched egyptian cotton textiles.Kheimeya technique.

In the Nile valley's geometry an insight into the privatisation of resources across the global south emerges.

Satellite images developed from military technology show the river-banks covered with thousands of plots of land. This land is cultivated by small scale farmers providing a wide variety of food for the local market. The rectangular fields derive their shape from the surface irrigation system. Using canals water follows the natural contours of the land to flood the fields. Each rectangle is irrigated with renewable water from the Nile. Analysis of water pollution is no longer permitted. The high productivity of the land means some crops can yield more than four times per year. Land owners are subjected to continuous harassment, violence and eviction.

Scrolling out and zooming into the reclaimed lands of desert a series of large circles appear, grouped in macro agricultural plots. These farms produce monocrops for export to the international market. They are run by a handful of private companies in partnership with central government. The circular shape of large farms is the outcome of the central pivot irrigation in place. Mechanical equipment rotates dispersing water through its sprinklers. Each large circle gets its water supply from underground aquifers. This water is non-renewable fossil water with little or no pollution. Data on the exact amount of water in the aquifers is unclear with significant variation between studies. The main crops produced are alfalfa and other forage sold for Saudi Arabia's cows and horses. Land is offered freely or at significantly discounted rates to those with investing power.







PURPOSE, SCOPE AND PENALTIES

Video, 18 min, 35

Dispossession is driven by economic incentives and enacted through bureaucratic and legal support.

Turkey is rich in biodiversity and has resisted the introduction of GMO seeds. However, like in many countries, The World Bank's Agricultural Reform Implementation Act in 2001-2005 has led to increased pressure to create radical changes toward a market driven food and farm sector.

In 2006 Turkey's Grand National Assembly passed a far-reaching law on seeds. It had the potential to erode traditional farming practices, affecting 35 % of Turkey's population. Established to improve plant production and restructure the seed sector, it dictated that a good quality seed was one that produced the highest yield, ignoring the value of variety and adaptability. The law introduced policies that would create heavy new financial burdens on small farmers, including the compulsory registry and certification of all seeds. It also designated areas where seeds could be grown and imposed fines for non compliance but no offered no compensation for this change. The law dispossessed farmers of a millenium of work developing and improving seeds reducing them to raw material providers. Created in collaboration with researcher Ayse Sarı Ceren this film builds on numerous interviews and gathers an informal committee in a local coffee shop to evaluate the law.





Small white text on the left wall, likely a notice or informational sign.

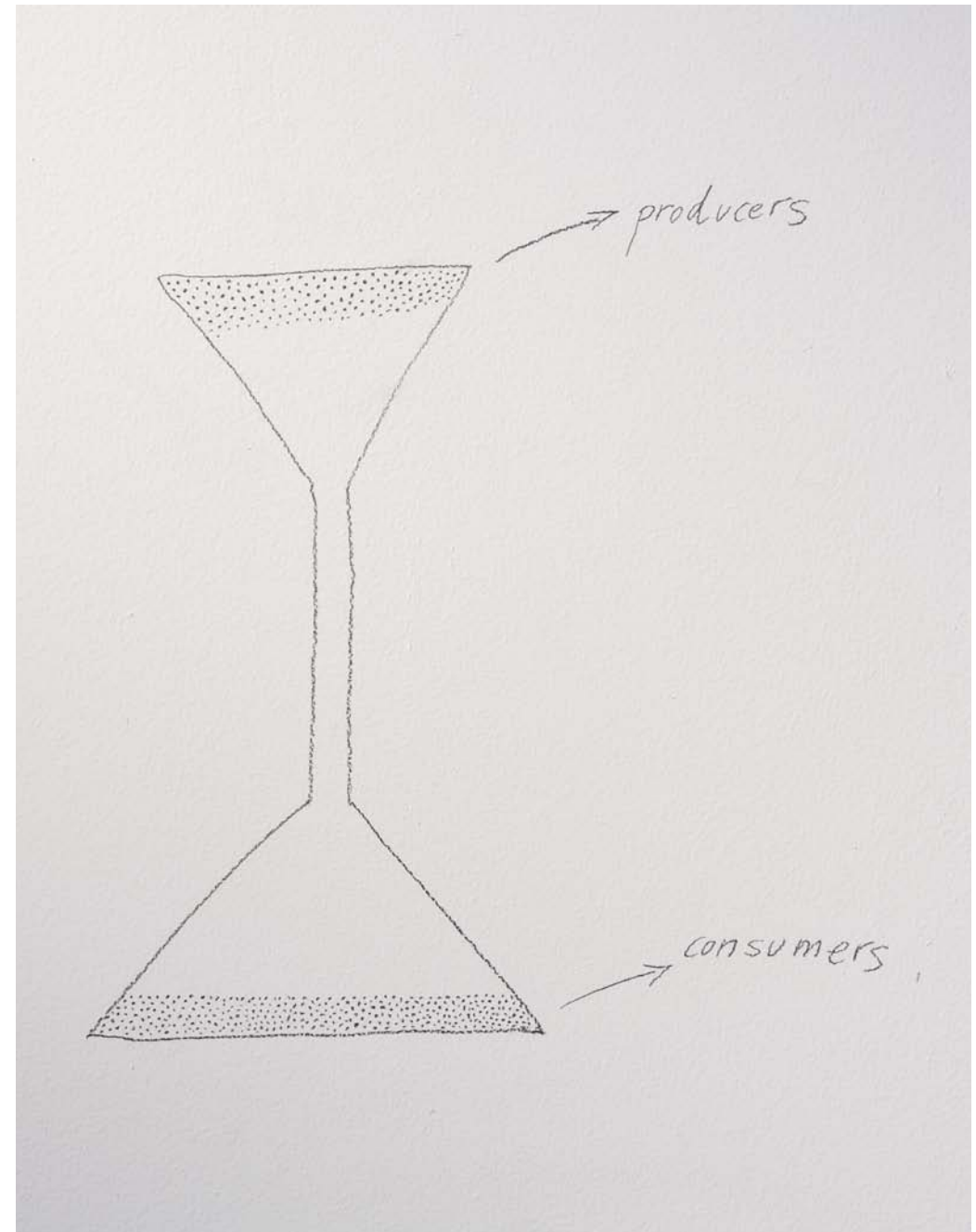
HOURGLASS DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM

Pencil sketch on the wall

The trading relationships between millions of producers and billions of consumers are mediated by a small number of companies dedicated to the transportation, processing and commercialisation of food. This distribution model is known as hourglass or funnel system.

Power is concentrated in the narrow section of the hourglass, which represents these companies. They can dictate the prices paid to producers and the prices charged to consumers globally.

Three trading giants, Cargill, ADM and Bunge control 90% of the global grain trade. They are all based in the United States. These companies with their logistics focus have enormous installations for storage and numerous fleets of cargo ships for transportation and distribution.





Small text panel on the left wall.



Small text panel on the center wall.

Small text panel on the right wall.



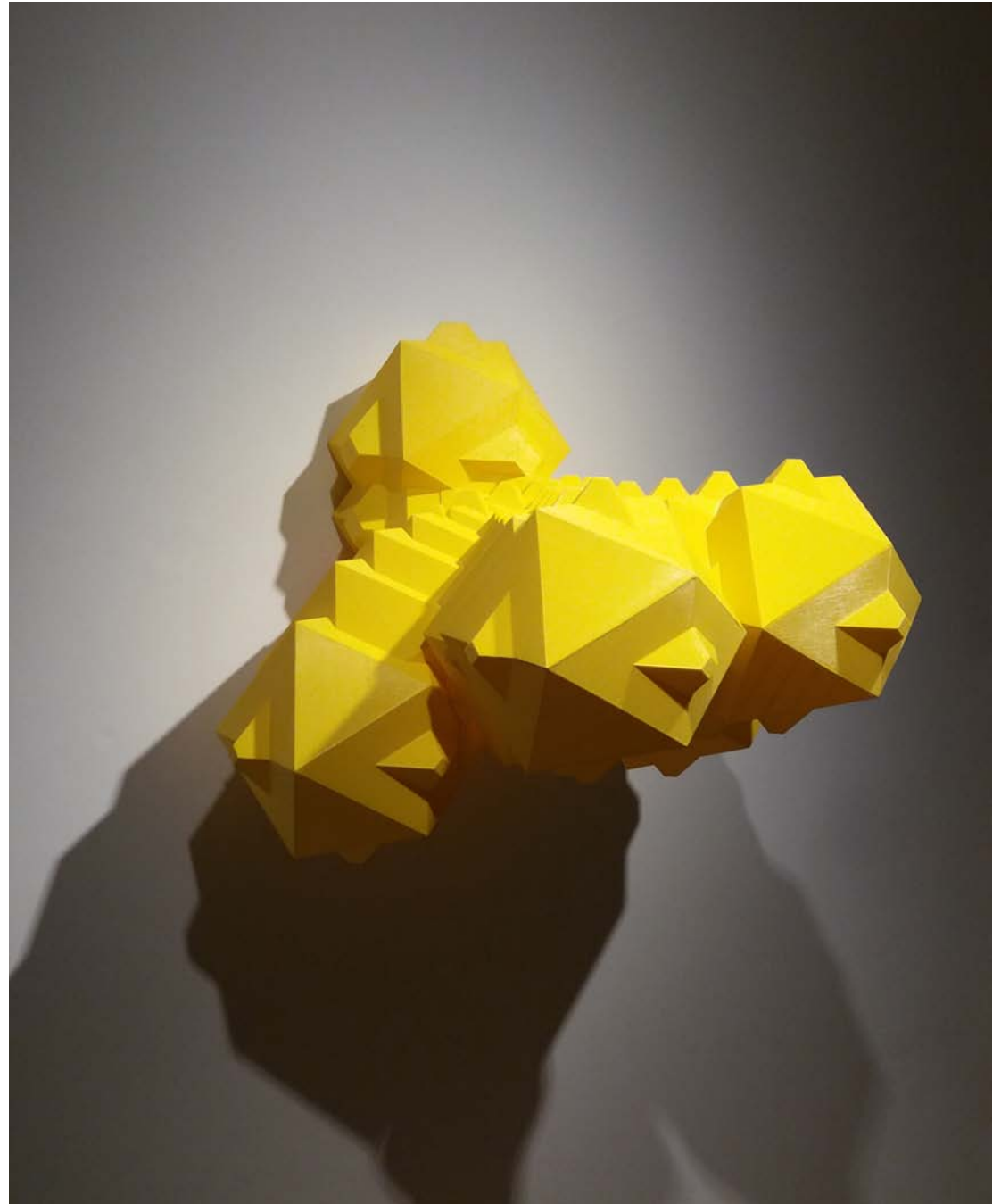
MATHEMATICAL MODEL

3D print made of P.L.A, a biodegradable plastic derived from corn starch

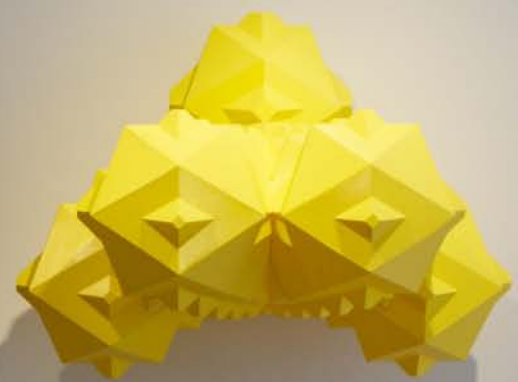
Mathematical models are used to predict future scenarios. In business they are the basis of trading strategies, such as buying and selling on the futures market.

Highly complex these models rely on data to generate them and experts to interpret them. This data is predetermined by the interests of the commissioning organisation and is subject to certain limitations, such as the use of intuitive approximations when information is too complex to quantify. The lack of transparency in the construction and the interpretation of these models makes them highly vulnerable to manipulation.

Produced in collaboration with research scientist Tamara Ben Ari, this model represents a 3D visualization of her data. This data maps the global quantity of available food minus the proportion of this food not used for human consumption, this includes the production of biodiesel, animal feed, or plastics such as P.L.A.



Art by [unreadable]



CONCEALMENT, FALSE SCARCITY OR FEIGNED SHORTAGES

Wooden bulk carrier hand painted

During the First and Second World Wars certain ships from the British and North American fleets adopted dazzle camouflage. This made it difficult for the enemy to determine the size, speed and position of the ship.

Tax-free international waters are today the perfect place to store large amounts of grain. Effectively camouflaged the grain can be concealed from the international market. The result is false scarcities and forced price hikes. When the grain reaches the desired price the ship is simply ordered to port and the product is sold. Forged data on natural catastrophes, banning of exports and bad harvests are other strategies deployed to increase prices through the management and manipulation of crisis.





Informational card on the brick wall to the left of the display.

Informational card on the floor in the bottom left corner of the display area.

DUMPING

60 raffia sacks. Unloading of food aid

Dramatic increase in food prices means the World Food Programme (WFP) redistributes food supplies not only to refugees of war and victims from natural disasters but also to populations without sufficient money to buy them. WFP acquires the food in the international market from the big traders with payments of millions of US dollars.

“Dumping” is when large amounts of a crop grown locally is introduced into a country at artificially low or no cost. Local farmers are unable to compete with the prices of these imported products and have difficulties selling their harvests at a fair price. These farmers have no access to the international market. The longer the situation lasts the fewer farmers continue to sow the crop until it completely disappears from the local economy. Without competition the prices of the imported product then increase to the normal level.





HUMANITARIAN AID

Tamiya toy. Sandbags miniature reproduction

After World War II both the US and the USSR redistributed agricultural surpluses strategically to defend against the communist and capitalist threats. The Marshall Plan was the start of what today we know as USAID. It supported struggling European economies post World War II and bolstered US influence.

Today through similar humanitarian aid projects USAID provide food surpluses to mediate diplomatic agreements between countries, negotiate military and political situations, as well as expand market influence and foreign investment.





Informational text card, likely describing the products or the exhibition.



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CURRENCY DEVALUATION

Authentic banknote from the Zimbabwe Reserve Bank

The Zimbabwean dollar existed from 1980 until 2009. Hyperinflation caused the printing of 100 trillion dollar banknotes. Amid the multiple daily price changes the price of a loaf of bread reached 550 million Zimbabwean dollars.

The global trading of grain is done in US dollars. The inflation and devaluation of other currencies compared to US dollar results in the acquisition of less food for the same amount of money. When the quantity of crop production decreases in a country, like it did in Zimbabwe in the decade from 1999, there is a need to acquire it through the international market in US dollars.





Small white informational card mounted on the left wall.



Small white informational card mounted on the central wall.



Large white informational card mounted on the far right wall.

AUSTERITY

Hand painted cardboard box

The US subprime mortgage crisis led to an international crisis in the banking sector. In 2008 the UK government redistributed £50 billion to recapitalise banks, £250 billion to underwrite debt, injected £200 billion pounds into the money market. In this process, known as quantitative easing, private debt was transformed in public debt.

To combat public debt in 2010 the UK Government introduced an austerity programme. Cuts were made to social support, through the Welfare Reform Act and the introduction of Universal Credit system, preventative services and local councils.

Food prices increased 33% during the financial crisis as salaries remained static. Since 2012 food bank use has increased four times. There are over 2,000 food banks in the UK today, there were none in 2000. Food banks are a growing phenomenon in the global north.



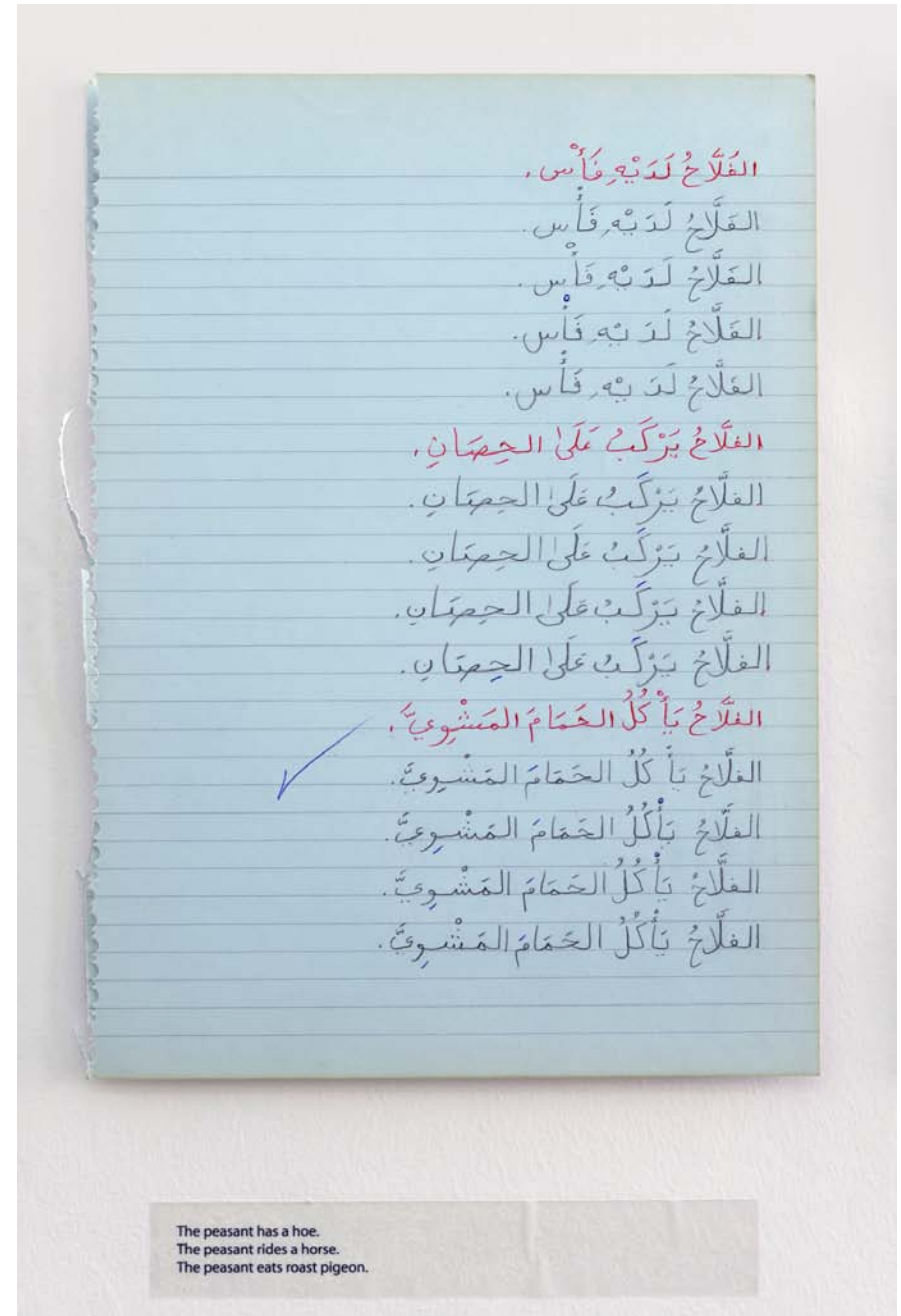




EL FELLAH ANDO FES

25 sheets of striped blue paper, with a series of hand written sentences repeated numerous in red pen and pencil

Within the context of public schooling in Jordan, calligraphy and grammar have an important place. Often the figure of the small farmer or peasant is used as the main subject of syntax exercises. The idealised farmer from the exercises has a different role in today's food system.



TRANSLATION from the ARABIC TEXT

Unit 1

Lesson 1

"The Peasant"

The peasant has a hoe.

The peasant rides a horse.

The peasant eats roast pigeon.

The peasant harvests the wheat.

The peasant waters the tomatoes.

The peasant feeds the chickens.

The peasant marries off his daughter.

The peasant builds a house.

The peasant rests in the shade.

Irrigation water gets privatized.

Irrigation water gets channelled to supply the city.

The fertile soil starts to turn into desert.

The peasant pays for irrigation water.

The peasant pays for industrial fertilizers.

The peasant pays for seeds.

Livestock feed gets more expensive.

Meat prices drop.

The peasant sells all his cattle.

The peasant goes on strike.

The peasant demonstrates against the rise in production costs.

Military police repress the protests.

The peasant gets advice from the agricultural engineer.

The peasant receives financial guidance from international donors.

The peasant is granted a generous loan.

The peasant mortgages his land.

Public support for production gets dismantled and the market opens up to imports.

Imported crops are sold below production costs.

The peasant undersells his crops in the central market.

The peasant does not want his children to become farmers.

The peasant wants his children to study in university.

The peasant's children and his wife move to the city.

The peasant sells his land.

The peasant looks for a job.

The peasant is employed by a potassium private company.

The peasant gets paid by day.

The peasant has no contract.

The peasant joins the army.

The peasant dresses in a uniform.

The peasant stands guard at the barracks.

The peasant receives orders.

The peasant is involved in the special operation to appease the protesters.

The demonstrators protest against the rise in production costs.

The peasant confronts the protesters.

The peasant yells to another peasant.

The peasant pushes another peasant.

The peasant shoots at another peasant.

The high commanders send the peasant to fight in Haiti, Senegal, Afghanistan, South Sudan,

Iraq, Eritrea, Libya, Kuwait and Bahrain.

They are sent on a peace mission to quell protests.

The peasants have begun the protests.

You can hear them singing:

Bread, Freedom, Social Justice!

DELFINA FOUNDATION

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AC/E

*Acción Cultural
Española*

TRAVESÍA CUATRO



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