



• Creativity • Collaboration • Continuity • Community

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FEATURE STORY

SARI AND JENNY HOLD INTRO TO PERMACULTURE SESSION IN BEIRUT

On **January 17, 2015**, our friends **Sari Hawa** and **Jenny Webster** gave a small **introduction to permaculture** session in Beirut. The cozy session was held in an apartment in Hamra and gathered half a dozen enthusiasts eager to meet new people and get a taste of permaculture.

The session took the whole day and included an overview of the theory of permaculture, its ethics and its design principles, along with some fun exercises and games about patterns and zoning. Lunch was prepared by our friend **Dina Yazbeck** at her restaurant nearby, **Fresh Pasta**.

As it happened, **Naim**, one of the participants had just rented a land close to Aaley and he invited the group for a visit the next day. This gave everyone the chance to start visualizing the previous day's learnings, making on-site observations and practicing with a quick design exercise. Naim's land is close to the area known as Lamartine's Valley (after the French poet Alphonse de Lamartine who spent time in Lebanon and admired its natural beauty). Naim has a lot of ideas for the land but, ideally, he will have to observe the climate and other conditions for a year (4 seasons) or more before actually starting a big project there.

Such sessions are a good vehicle to reach like-minded people and share thoughts. We really wish we could hold more of these. For the moment, we can only rely on permaculture facilitators from abroad when they visit or if we get the chance to invite them. Hopefully, we will build up capacities in Lebanon and graduate our own locally-bred teachers.

Shared by *Rita Khawand*



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LET'S SHARE OUR NEWS

MAGHDOUCHE REVIVES TRADITIONAL WOOL WORK

It's hard to believe it's been over **7 years** since we launched the **Dignity Project** and **Beit El Founoun** in **Maghdouche, South Lebanon**. But there you have it: in these 7 years the Dignity Project has engaged more than 30 people in the town and produced so many original handmade clothes and items from natural wool and fabrics that it's hard to keep track of all of them.

I had been living in Norway for some time when I first came back to visit my hometown with my friend **Trond Einar Indsetviken**. Having spent a large part of his life in the great outdoors, Trond is very adept at living close to nature. Having grown up in a village, I was also interested in such "homestead" knowledge and skills, and together we experimented a lot with foraged food, natural remedies and - always - working with wool. When he discovered Maghdouche, its climate and its people, he immediately saw the potential for intervention.

Maghdouche is a sizeable town with a population of some **7,000 residents**, but we still struggle with the lack of economic prospects. Because a lot of people work in nearby Saida or Beirut, there is relatively little attention spent on preserving traditional knowledge and improving the quality of life sustainably in the town.

That was about to change. We purchased a house in the old part of town, amidst a small network of narrow streets. Villagers actually discouraged us from moving in because the house had no parking space! Ha! That was one of the reasons why we bought it in the first place.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

"A SONG" PHOTOGRAPHY AND SOUND INSTALLATION



FEBRUARY 13-15, 2015
Brut l'Atelier - Mar Mikhael

Installation about the journey of delving into the self, through the young monks of Nepal

https://www.facebook.com/events/329285183928894/?ref=2&ref_dashboard_filter=upcoming&sid_reminder=4563679489627783168

"SATSANG AND INDIAN DINNER" MEDITATION, SHARING AND FOOD



FEBRUARY 15, 2015
7:00 p.m. SHARP

Sivananda Yoga- Gemmayzeh
Meditation and Indian dinner

Satsang: Free
Dinner: \$10 per person

https://www.facebook.com/events/1525301471072269/?ref_dashboard_filter=upcoming&sid_reminder=158477133511917568

THE ART & SCIENCE OF HERBALISM WORKSHOP BY FLOWER POWER



FEBRUARY 16, 2015
Furn El Chebbak

5-week herbalism course for beginners (3 hour sessions once a week)

Fee: \$220/person

https://www.facebook.com/events/698221036962878/?ref_dashboard_filter=upcoming&source=1&sid_reminder=4563679489627783168

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LET'S SHARE OUR NEWS

Continued from Page 2

We converted the downstairs part of the house into a workshop space - this became Beit El Founoun (the "house of arts" in Arabic). We then got in touch with similar-minded people in the town and agreed to kick off the Dignity Project, a very dear initiative for us personally and on the town level.

The Dignity Project is a way for people in rural communities to learn wool working skills and earn income - with dignity - from their work. The human dimension of the project is as important as its artistic value - if not more. When doing our research, we were surprised to see how little had been made to preserve traditional needlework and wool spinning or carding in Lebanon. A lot of this knowledge is lost or can only be found among very remote communities or the few remaining Bedouin families. For this reason, a lot of the time we had to start from scratch and experiment, experiment and experiment some more.

Our main hurdle is the fact that most sheep in Lebanon are bred for meat, not wool. It is near impossible to spin woolen threads from this material. However, it can be felted to make a strong, waterproof fabric for hats, shoes or blankets. For now, the wool we use to spin threads is imported. We also recycle; using leftover wool and curtain parts. On the other hand, we have experimented with natural dyes using local plants and we have had great successes with onions, eucalyptus, pomegranates and wild flowers.

Of course all this requires dedication and follow-through. Because I work in Norway, I can only visit Maghdouche during the holidays. We're lucky to have hardworking people on our team. We have worked with as much as **32 persons** at a time. Occasionally, we hold workshops to experiment with new techniques. Beit El Founoun is also open to all visitors on Thursdays from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Anyone who wishes can come in and work under the supervision of **Georgette Hayek** or another member of the team.

We started participating in a few exhibitions since August 2012 when we felt confident enough of our products and their quantities. Over the last holiday season, some of the villagers agreed to lend us the old grocery store to hold our very first **solo exhibition**. The old stone building had been closed down for years and had remained untouched; all it needed was a little cleaning and voila! We had our exhibition. We took this opportunity to invite locals to exhibit their produce with us too.

As a next step, we are working on developing a new exhibition format to reach out to Beirut and other part of the country. We are also planning to write and publish a book about Dignity Project and the wool products and techniques we perfected.

We always like to have visitors and meet new people. If you'd like to get in touch with us, visit us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/285454598163855/> or email us on: dignity.maghdouche@gmail.com

Shared by Robert Khoury



The exhibition in Maghdouche is open until 1 week after Easter 2015.

OPENING DAYS:

- .Friday:** 4:00-6:00 p.m.
- .Saturday:** 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. and 4:00-6:00 p.m.
- .Sunday:** 10:00 a.m.- 12:00 p.m.

***Private visits can also be arranged upon request**



LET'S SHARE OUR NEWS

MY UPCYCLING DIARIES: FROM ART FESTIVAL TO INDUSTRIAL AREA

In **September 2014**, I was awarded a 6-week training and internship on Cultural Management in **Berlin - Germany** by the **Goethe Institut**.

As a cultural manager with the **Al Bustan Festival**, I am trying to introduce some environmental practices that go along with the organization. Initiating a new environmental strategy in parallel with music and theater performances will help reduce the festival's footprint and spread awareness among young generations.

During the training my project was selected to get funding to initiate additional side activities related to the environment. In preparation for such activities around the festival, I joined forces with **Public Interest Design - Levant (PID)** to launch the **Urban Upcycling Initiative - UUI**, a pilot project in the **Medawar** district near **Karantina - Beirut**. On **January 27, 2015**, we held an open talk with urban designers and environmental enthusiasts to discuss the project.

The neighborhoods of Medawar were once fully intertwined before the coastal highway cut through them in the 1950s. Surrounded by the port of Beirut to the west, the Beirut river to the east and the sea, some neighborhood have effectively become islands. 2 pedestrian bridges over the highway are their only link to the city. The proximity of multiple military and civil defense barracks, the waste management facilities of the **Sukleen** waste management company and other factories have given this residential area an industrial feel.

PID chose a neighborhood in this district as the site of their first intervention as part of their **Neighborhood Initiative**. Naturally, they approached Sukleen to build on its recycling efforts and collaborate on the UUI, taking advantage of its waste sorting and management expertise. A representative from the company gave a talk about their efforts to promote sorting waste at source. After sorting and treatment, Sukleen ends up with products that include compost sometimes distributed for free in municipalities and farms (*Editor's note: There are a number of concerns by both farmers and environmentalists regarding the safety and efficiency of this compost*), as well as non-organic materials that are sometimes reused in industry. More importantly, PID recognized the value of the solid waste collected by Sukleen as raw material for public art or furniture. This "treasure-trash" includes wood pallets, tires, PET bottles, etc.

The next step involves getting together with the residents and getting their input on what type of public intervention/furniture they would like to see first. PID has already been in contact with the residents for over a year, and the group knows their concerns intimately.

All the participating artists will then hold a first free upcycling workshop on **February 7, 2015** at **Brut l'Atelier** in Mar Mikhael. Depending on the outcome and the continued collaboration of the artists, the residents and Sukleen, we aim to hold a series of similar workshops throughout the year and spread the culture of upcycling. The Ashrafieh 2020 initiative has already expressed its interest in the UUI and is supporting it.

If you're interested in finding out more or contributing to an upcycling initiative, please email me: maha.kobeissy@gmail.com

Or visit the Public Interest Design (PID) page: <https://www.facebook.com/PIDLevant>

Shared by Maha Kobeissy



The last 2 pictures are from an upcycled furniture project we personally tried at home using old wood pallets.



THE AL BUSTAN FOREST PROJECT

In April 2014, the Al Bustan festival held a reforestation project for the first time in Boueirij – Bekaa in collaboration with **Save Energy Plant Trees (SEPT)** and we gathered over 90 participants among our friends and visitors to plant **550 trees** (cedar, juniper and fir) in the area.

A caretaker and his family live on the land and tend to the trees. We receive weekly or monthly reports from the caretaker and Pierre Haddad (SEPT) who checks on the young forest. The trees are doing fine although the storms damaged some 70 of them (but they survived).

We hope to plant more trees there in April 2015. Stay tuned to our page to find out more: https://www.facebook.com/AlBustanFestival/photos_stream website: <http://albustanfestival.com/>



LET'S SHARE OUR NEWS

MAKE A GINGER POULTICE TO RELIEVE PAIN

Although pain comes in many shapes and sizes, its effect is always the same: it challenges our well-being. Over-the-counter pain relief medication is widely available, but a more natural way to relieve pain exists thanks to herbs and the modification of diet and lifestyle. Working on the root of imbalances and getting wellness as a side effect is herbal medicine's true goal.

Pain is a nervous, immune and musculo-skeletal problem. It has to be taken globally and eased in such a way. Anti-inflammatory herbs are legion: wild yam (*Dioscorea villosa*), meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*) and chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*) all work through different chemical paths to calm and support inflammation.

Nervine tonics are herbs that support the nervous system, improving its function and soothing excessive tension. St John's wort (*Hypericum perforatum*) is back in the spotlight through extensive clinical research. Herbalists never forgot its powerful restorative action on the nervous system. Oats (*Avena sativa*) relieve pain by providing nourishment and tonus to the nerves.

Supporting detoxification is important in painful conditions and a whole range of herbs such as alteratives, alkalinizing and circulatory stimulants will contribute to reaching wellness.

THE GINGER POULTICE - - - - -

For quick and temporary relief, herbs can be used topically (applied on the body where the pain is). Ginger (*Zingiber officinale*) is a warming, anti-inflammatory and circulatory stimulant herb. Used on the skin, it will warm and activate the area thus promoting healing and relieving pain. Used internally as food, an infusion or a tincture, ginger will balance cold digestive systems that are prone to nausea and vomiting, and improve gynecological pain such as endometriosis, dysmenorrhea and uterine fibroids.

This ginger poultice is a blessing for people suffering from localized dull pain. Wherever there is numbness or constant dull pain, ginger will help:

- Kidneys (replenish your energy)
- The uterus (soothe pre- and menstrual pain)
- Congested ear or ganglion (ease tension)
- Feet (warm up the entire organism)

To make a ginger poultice, you will need:

- A regular cheese grater
- Organic fresh ginger roots
- A spoonful of hot water
- A small towel



Peel the ginger roots and grate enough to cover the entire painful area (use the big-sized holes on your grater, as ginger is very fibrous). Add a little bit of hot water to the grated ginger to form a hot paste and apply on the painful area (be careful that the paste is not too hot). Then place a towel on your poultice to cover it and preserve the heat. Leave for a minimum of 10 minutes. If the heat is uncomfortable and is causing tension, remove the ginger paste and massage around the pain.

Shared by Anabel Gravel Chabot

This article was first published on the website:
<http://www.flowerpowerherbalism.com/>

Flower Power Herbalism proposes natural teas and cosmetics, as well as herbalism workshops. Follow their events on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/flower.power.herbalism>



GREEN RESOURCES

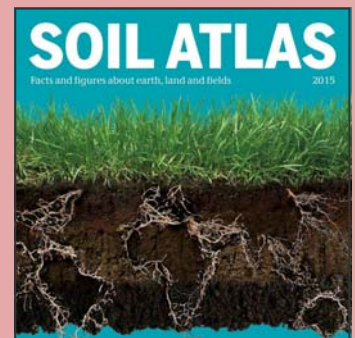
INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF SOILS



News and resources linked to soils conservation and management.

<http://www.fao.org/soils-2015/en/>

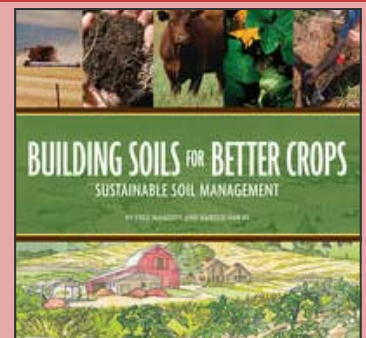
SOIL ATLAS 2015 - EBOOK



Free downloadable e-book showing how to preserve and enrich soils

http://lb.boell.org/sites/default/files/soil_atlas_2015.pdf

BUILDING SOILS FOR BETTER CROPS - EBOOK



Free ebook about sustainable soil management

<http://www.nesare.org/Dig-Deeper/Useful-resources/Books/Building-Soils-for-Better-Crops-3rd-Edition>

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PHOTO OF THE MONTH

You sent us your submissions and you voted for your favorites. Here it is, the PHOTO OF THE MONTH:
To send us your photos, email us on contact.soilslebanon@gmail.com



By the river in Val d'Or, Quebec—Canada
Photo by Joey El Khoury

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GET IN TOUCH, GET INVOLVED


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A THOUGHT TO SHARE ...

**“How wonderful it is
that nobody need wait a
single moment before
starting to improve the
world. ”**



–Anne Frank (1929-1945)
The Diary of a Young Girl

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