

PRESS RELEASE

27-08-2019

theOtherDada: Native Urban Forests Built in Beirut

From May 24th to 29th theOtherDada partnered with the social enterprise, Afforestt, to plant over 1,200 trees from 16 different native species in Beirut, as part of an Urban Afforestation Workshop. Through utilizing the innovative Miyawaki Technique the forests created will be 100% more biodiverse, 30 times denser, growing 10 times faster and absorbing noise and pollution 30 times more efficiently, than conventional man-made forests.

The first site sits on the bank of Beirut River, where fifteen passionate participants revived a 200 square meter area with the support of the Sin el Fil Municipality. The area was chosen specifically for its location next to the river, which since its enclosure in concrete in 1968 has been cut off from the local community and become a heavily polluted dumping ground. The urban forest will clean the air, radically reduce flooding, recharge groundwater, reintroduce nature and become *self-sufficient* within three years.

The Urban Afforestation Workshop is part of theOtherDada's Beirut RiverLESS project, a series of initiatives to address the deterioration of the Beirut River and its negative impact on the surrounding *communities* and *environment*.

theOtherDada and Afforestt joined SUGi, an application that provides a network for funding rewilding efforts and urban forests, launched in tandem with the workshop; as well as Advanced Car Rental and their Carbon Free Journey, as partners in the project.

After the success of the Sin el Fil site, the team also planted a second 100 square meter forest in a cemetery near Horsh Beirut on the eve of Eid al-Fitr.

Beirut's environmental degradation has left communities detached from nature and surrounded by pollution. The workshop is one aspect of theOtherDada's work in architecture, research and consultancy to provide an alternative approach to sustainability through invoking new relationships between climate, landscape, and inhabitants.

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Forest 1 Information:

Location: Sin el Fil, Lebanon

Number of Trees Planted: 800 trees of 16 native species

Density: 800 trees in 200 square meters (equivalent to 4 trees in every square meter)

Methodology: Miyawaki Technique which creates forests that are 100% native, 30 times denser, 10 times faster in growth and 30 times better in absorbing noise and pollution

Project Partners: theOtherDada - Afforestt – SUGi – Advanced Car Rental

Forest 2 Information:

Location: Cemetery in Beirut, Lebanon, planted just before Eid

Number of Trees Planted: 400 trees of 16 native species

Density: 400 trees in 100 square meters (equivalent to 4 trees in every square meter)

Methodology: Miyawaki Technique which creates forests that are 100% native, 30 times denser, 10 times faster in growth and 30 times better in absorbing noise and pollution

Project Partners: theOtherDada – Afforestt

PRESS LINKS:

Short Video Documentary: <https://vimeo.com/348381254>

Crowdfunding Video on SUGi project:
<https://www.facebook.com/sugiproject/videos/2202707396505973/>

Al Monitor – May 28 2019:
<https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/05/beirut-urban-forest-saving-its-river.html>

Live interview on MTV – June 10 2019: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=639654909871266>

L'Orient Le Jour – August 07 2019:
<https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/1181947/une-foret-urbaine-pres-du-fleuve-de-beyrouth.html>

Adib Dada presents Beirut RiverLESS at Pecha Kucha sustainable waterways, Cleveland, USA:
<https://www.cleveland.com/arts/2019/06/pechakucha-presenters-rocked-nautica-at-cuyahoga-50-waterways-event.html>

Bespoke Magazine – June/July 2019:

44 LIVING *urban reforestation project*

Waste Not

Litter doesn't just take decades, or sometimes even centuries to decompose; it also contaminates our soil, air and water. Luckily there's at least one Beirut-based architecture firm that's doing something about it.

Words: Nadia Michel

Adib Dada describes his firm, theOtherDada, as "a Beirut based for profit architecture company with an environmental and social impact", while his urban intervention project RiverLESS, is just one of the many interesting pro bono design projects that it's taking on. (It also turns out that their pro bono work constitutes 50 per cent of their business, in monetary terms.) And the aim of RiverLESS is to bring back the diverse ecosystem that once existed in one of Beirut's most densely populated areas, the Beirut River. That's a waterway that runs east to west through the city, before curving north, separating Beirut itself from its eastern suburbs, primarily Bourj Hammoud and Sin El Fil. Historically, the river filled the canal with water via a Roman aqueduct but over time it was left unprotected from overgrazing, hunting, fire, deforestation, urban development and water pollution, to the point that it was transformed in 1969 from a riparian river to a concrete canal. Today, that canal is just a passageway for ill managed sewage and rubbish but the Beirut RiverLESS project has started to at least rehabilitate the area that surrounds the river, if not the river itself.

"Just to the river there used to be wetlands, with lots of different tree species like Oak, native Pine, Pistachio trees, Strawberry trees, which have a red trunk, we've identified 26 different species of trees and shrubs," says Dada.

Using something called the Miyawaki technique, a proven Japanese method used to create forests that grow 30 times denser and ten times faster, theOtherDada has partnered with Allforest, a service provider based in India that specialises in growing native, maintenance free forests in urban settings around the world. And after five years of research, Dada and his team have begun by planting a 200 sqm plot of those native trees and shrubs, as part of a workshop that also teaches a new crop of social entrepreneurs about the technique.

"We worked with nurseries who've been growing native tree species for the last three years from seeds they've picked in the forest, so it's not just seeds from Italy or somewhere, which can survive here. It's really native plants – we've found about 70 per



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Above: This is Beirut's largest open river. It originates 30 kilometres inland at an altitude of around 1,900 metres from a spring in Hammana and another in Tarchiche. RiverLESS is developing a bottom-up plan to bring the watershed back to life.

cent of the species we need, which is enough for us to start." And by native, Dada means species that existed over a thousand years ago, and he is hopeful that in addition to beautifying the area, it will attract plenty of fauna including urban pollinators like bees, bats, beetles and birds.

"Beirut River Valley is an important bird area and it's recognised as Category 4, which is one of the highest categories, because it's a migratory path for birds travelling from Africa into Europe," he adds. "Lebanon is like the funnel because they don't fly over the sea or the mountain, they fly over our narrow coast, which is why we have a lot of hunters. In the winter, it's the reverse."

In order to fund the remaining 1,800 square metres of the forest, the firm has partnered with a local business – Advanced Car Rent, which actively and methodically implements solutions to offset the carbon emissions it generates, in addition to SUGi, a new crowd funding app that raises money for urban 'rewilding' by collecting donations that can be as little as 5 USD. So, it's a cause anyone can get behind. ☺

official@bespoke.com

Asharq Al-Awsat - August 17 2019: <http://bit.ly/2ZnPdm2>

BintJbeil.org - August 17 2019: <http://bit.ly/2Zf8Mla>

Cedar Wings Magazine – August 2019:

https://issuu.com/clounges/docs/5372g_cedar_wings_172_120dpi_conti/186

أحراش ضد التلوّث في بيروت

في شراكة بين theOtherDada والمؤسسة الاجتماعية Afforestt تم تحديد برنامج لزراعة أكثر من 1200 شجرة من 16 نوعاً مختلفاً في مدينة بيروت، وذلك كجزء من ورشة تشجير للمدينة. عملية التشجير تعتمد تقنية Miyawaki الزراعية المبتكرة، والتي بواسطتها تكون الأحراش الجديدة 100% أكثر تنوعاً و30 مرة أكثر كثافة، وتنمو بمعدل أسرع بعشرة أضعاف، كما تمتص الضيغ والتلوّث 30 مرة أفضل من الغابات التقليدية. ورشة التشجير هذه جزء من مشروع RiverLess التابع لـ theOtherDada وهي سلسلة من المبادرات الهادفة لمعالجة الحال السيئة لنهر بيروت، والتخفيف من تأثيره السلبي على المناطق السكنية المحيطة وعلى البيئة. الموقع الأول يقع على ضفة نهر بيروت حيث قام 15 مشاركاً من المنفوعين، بدعم من البلدية، بإحياء مساحة 200 متر مربع وتحويلها من مساحة ملوثة إلى حرش يعمل على تنظيف الهواء، والحد من الفيضانات وتحلية المياه الجوفية وذلك في خلال ثلاث سنوات. وإثر نجاح الموقع الأول في سن الفيل، زرع الفريق حرساً آخر مساحته 100 متر مربع في محيط مقبرة قرب حرش بيروت. لا شك أن التدهور البيئي في بيروت، ترك المناطق السكنية منفصلة عن الطبيعة وغارقة في التلوّث. وتصب ورش العمل هذه في إطار أعمال theOtherDada في مجال الهندسة والبحوث والاستشارة لتوفير نهج جديد بديل للاستدامة من خلال خلق علاقة بين المناخ والطبيعة والسكان.

