Co-Designing Adaptive Futures

DURING TIMES OF

Uncertainty & Conflict

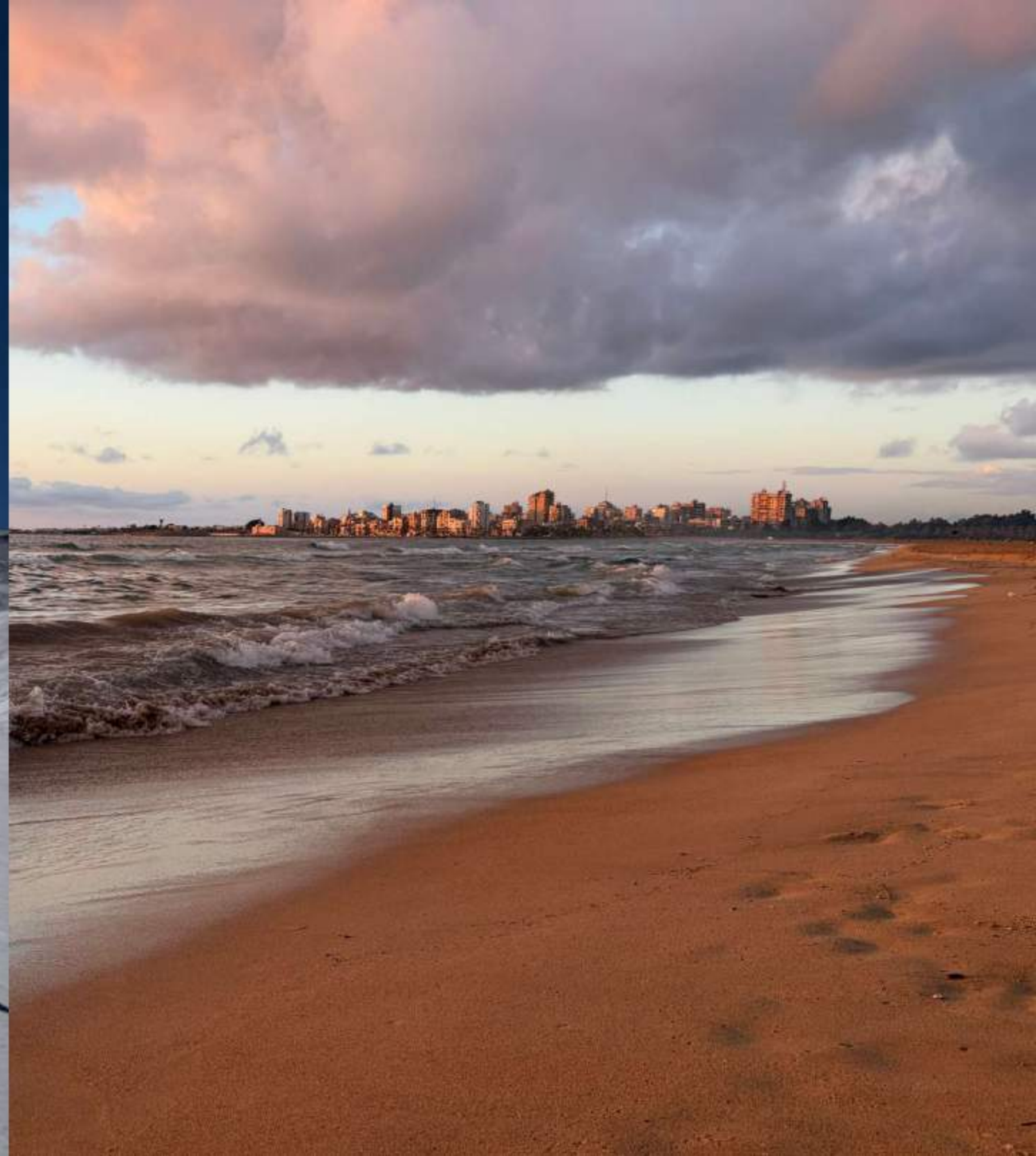


Cristina A. Fawaz López

Design Matters 2026





















“Yes. The **war has begun.**”

Aunt

“Dad, soon you’ll hear
the **war has begun in Beirut.**
Just know I’m okay.”

Dad

“Okay my dear.
Everything will be ok.
Sleep tight.”

Dad

“How are you?
Are you safe?”

Friend

Nothing can
prepare you for it.

crisis

crisis

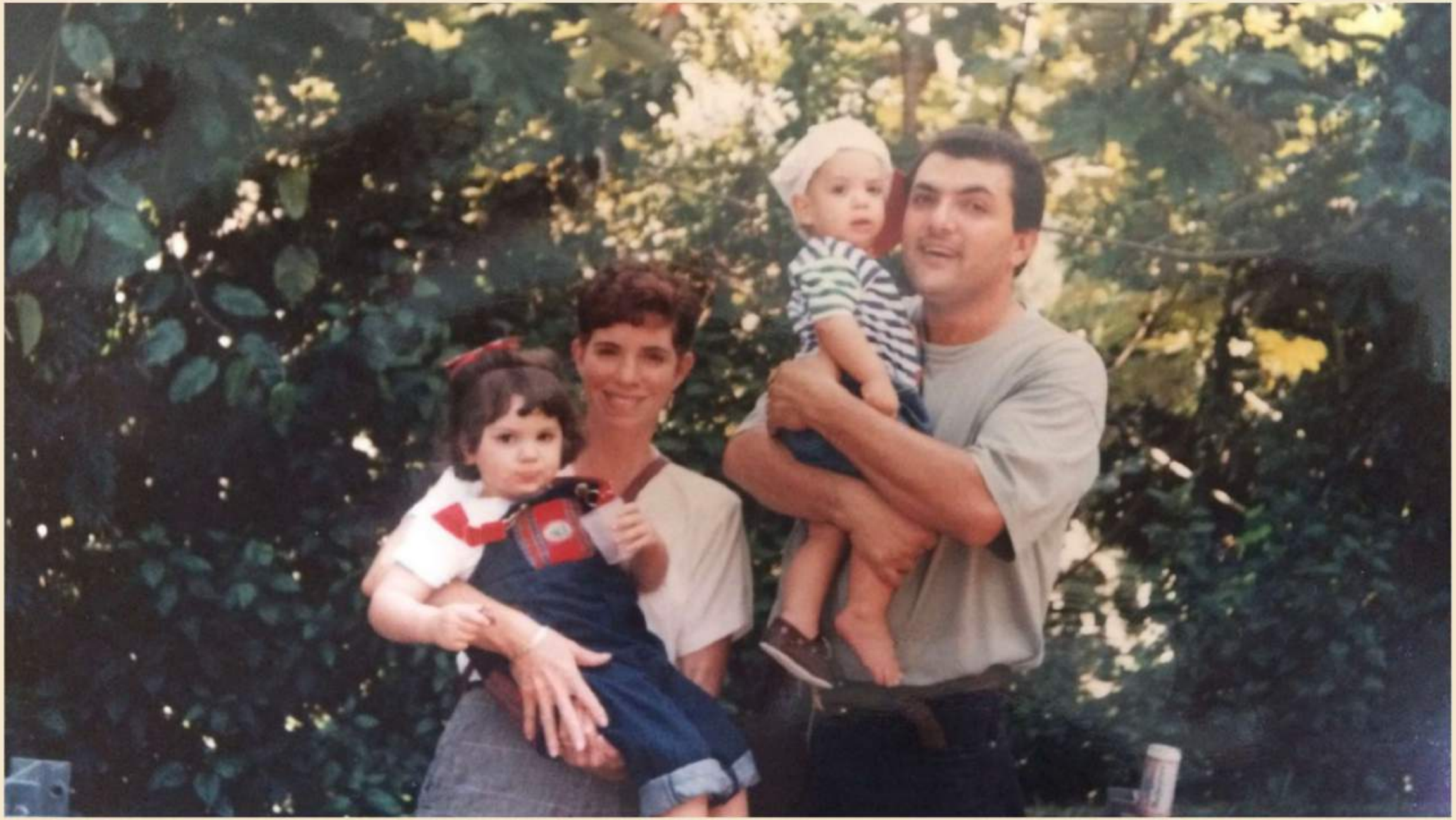
conflict

~~crisis~~

~~conflict~~

~~emergency relief~~

curiosity




NORTH AMERICA
UNITED STATES
ATLANTIC OCEAN
ATLANTIC OCEAN
San Juan★
PUERTO RICO
Culebra
Vieques
Caribbean Sea




















LEBANON
SYRIA
IRAQ
EGYPT
SAUDI ARABIA
Red Sea
Tripoli
Zahrani
Baskinta
Baharni
Jubbayt
Junnyah
Beirut
Zahlah
Alayh
Sidon
An Nabatiyah at Tahta
Tyre
Mari Ayun
Golan Heights
(Israeli-occupied since 1967)
LEBANON MTS.
Baalbek
Ba'labakk
ANTI-LEBANON MTS.
BEKAA VALLEY
Litani
Mediterranean Sea
DAMASCUS
SYRIA
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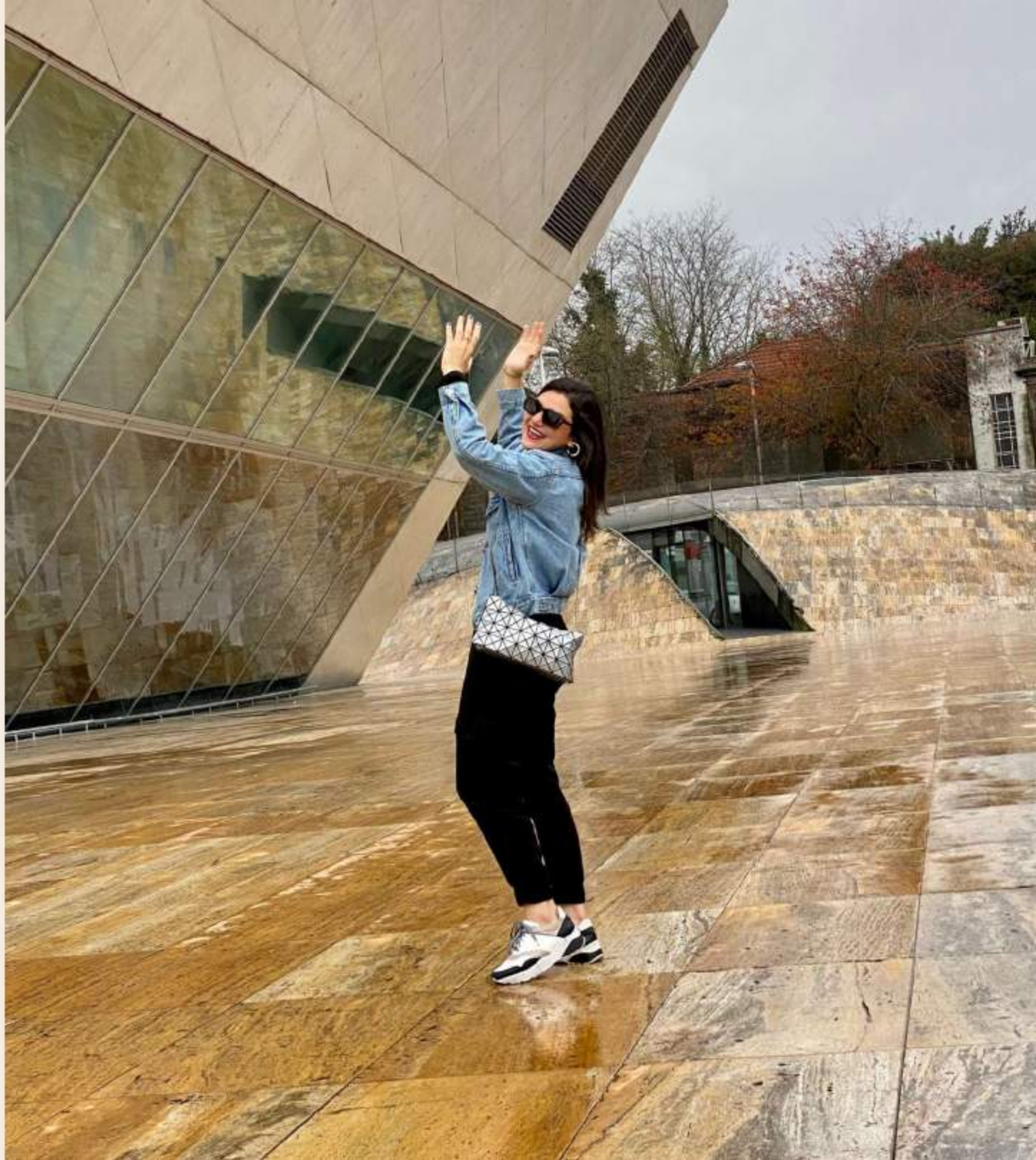








Design & Innovation Strategist and Educator

















RETMAGINA Puerto Rico





“If not now, when?”

instability has become the **norm**




















BANQUE DU LIBAN








BANQUE DU LIBAN










BANQUE DU LIBAN









drones humming
in the sky, daily

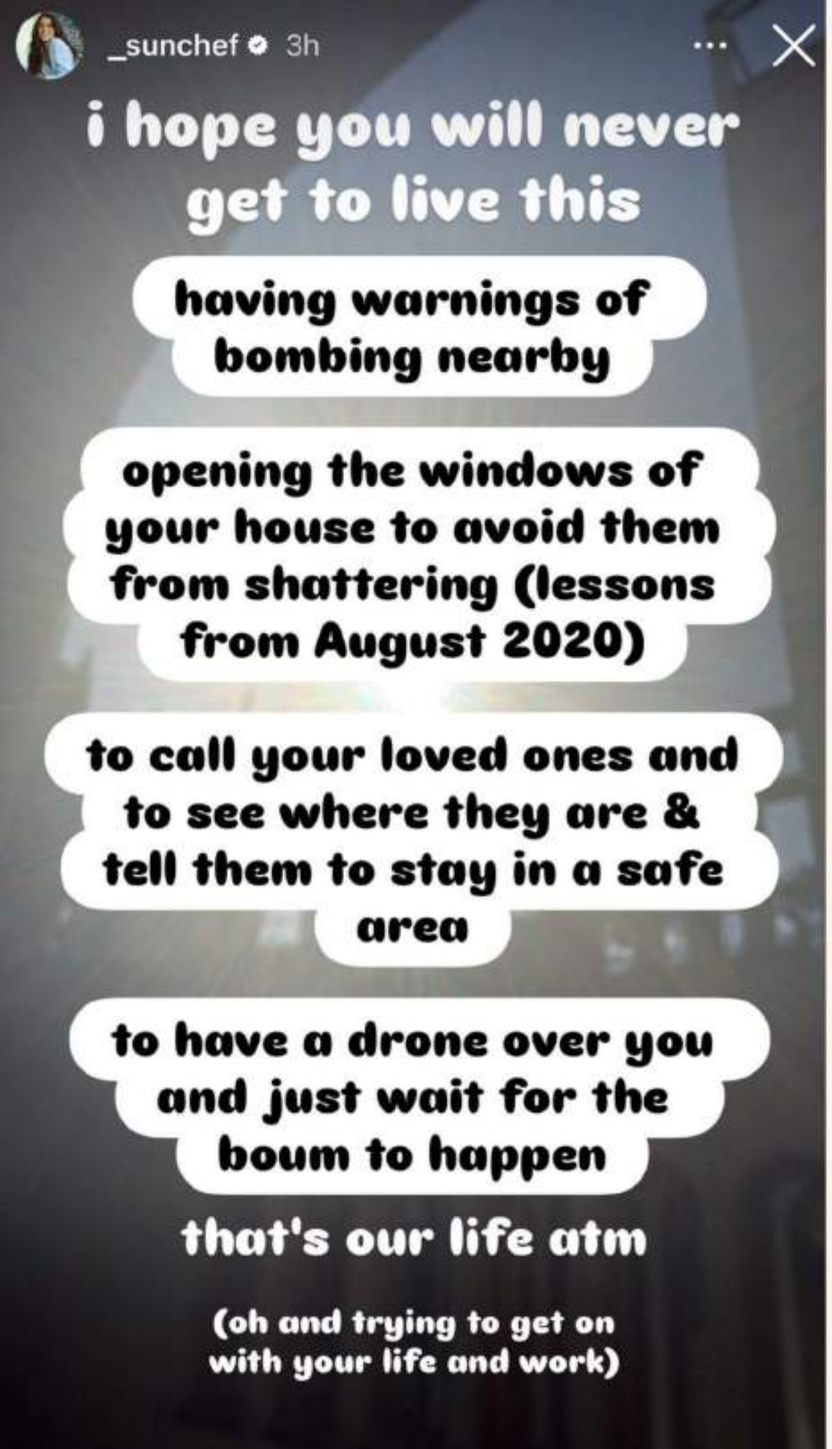
“It’s **normal.**
You better **get used to it.**”

Souk el Tayeb





“May God protect.”



political

physical

psychological

What is my role as a designer here and now?

What is my responsibility in the face of conflict and crisis?

what fails

systems, infrastructure

&

assumptions about how communities assess, adapt and take action

predictability

~~predictability~~

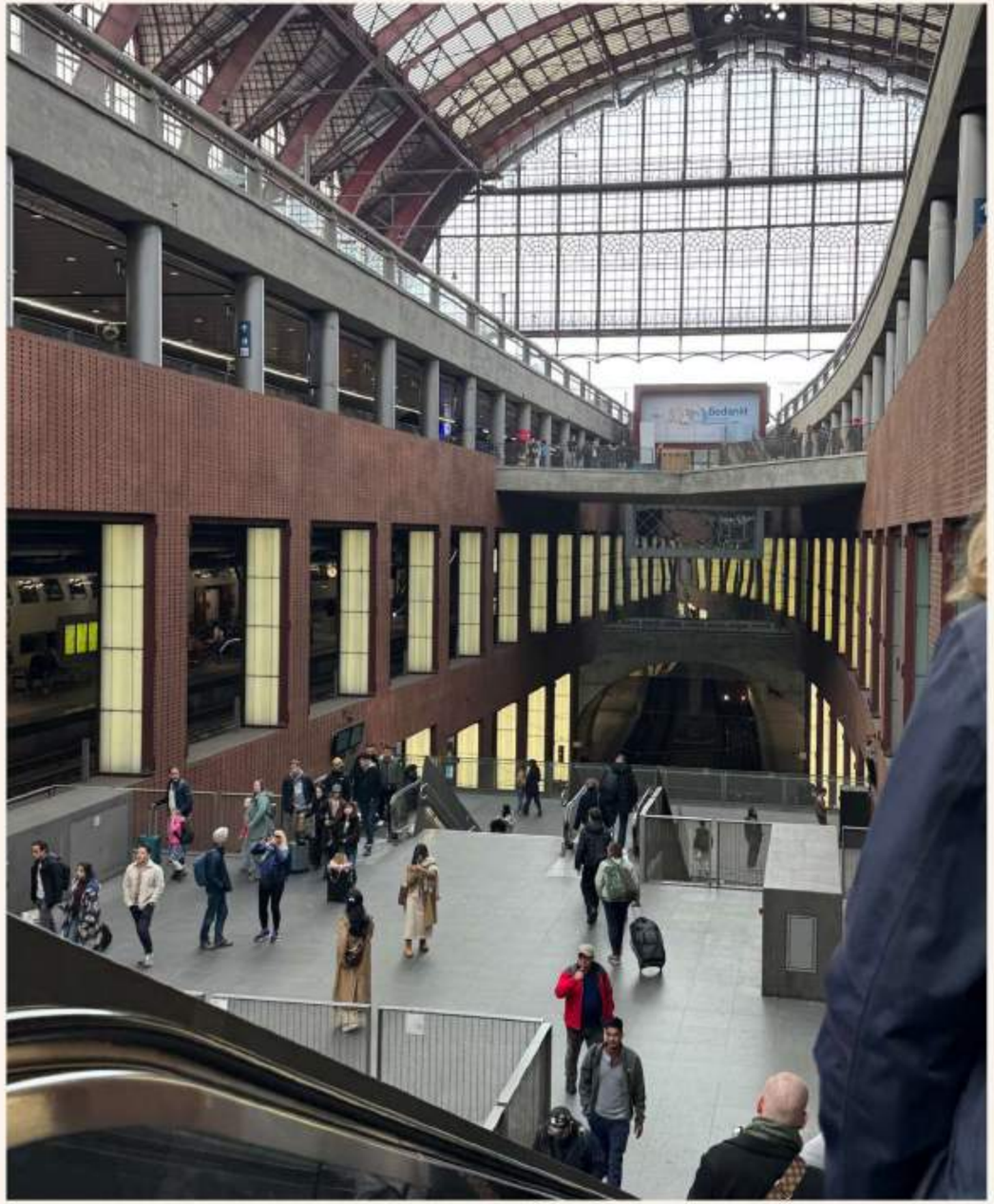
?


"THE OBJECT ISN'T
TO MAKE ART. IT'S
TO BE IN THAT
WONDERFUL STATE
WHICH MAKES ART









≠


18:22
LIVE
عاجل
رجي: كلفت الأمين العام للوزارة بإبلاغ سفير إيران
رفضنا لأحداث ومواقف تنتهك سيادتنا الوطنية


gather & connect the
diaspora virtually

Rest for Heavy Hearts

Wednesday May 6
12-1 pm EST
7-8 pm Beirut



Join us for a virtual community event to process the weight of what's happening in the world right now. This gentle event will include meditation, movement, and connection. All are welcome.

STRONGER TOGETHER FOR LEBANON

+ CONNECT + GROUND + BUILD CARE



THIS THURSDAY

APRIL 16

12 PM - 1 PM EST

9 AM - 10 AM PST
6 PM - 7 PM CET
7 PM - 8 PM BEIRUT TIME

Join us for a **virtual gathering to connect with other Lebanese** living in diaspora, ground, and **process** these challenging times together.

Rest for Heavy Hearts

A virtual gathering for anyone feeling the grief of ongoing war and conflict, whether up close or from a distance. This is a space to breathe, connect, and be in community.

GENTLE MOVEMENT. REFLECTION. CONNECTION.

Wednesday, June 3rd

12pm EST | 6pm CET | 7pm Beirut/Gulf

Virtual | Free

design considerations

timing across global locations

community agreements

engagement activities

community agreements

We **meet each other** where we are.

Assume **good intent**.

We celebrate **collective truth**.

Take time and space as you need.

before action,
they **needed connection**

pause, listen, and redesign

collaboration

I could not do it alone.

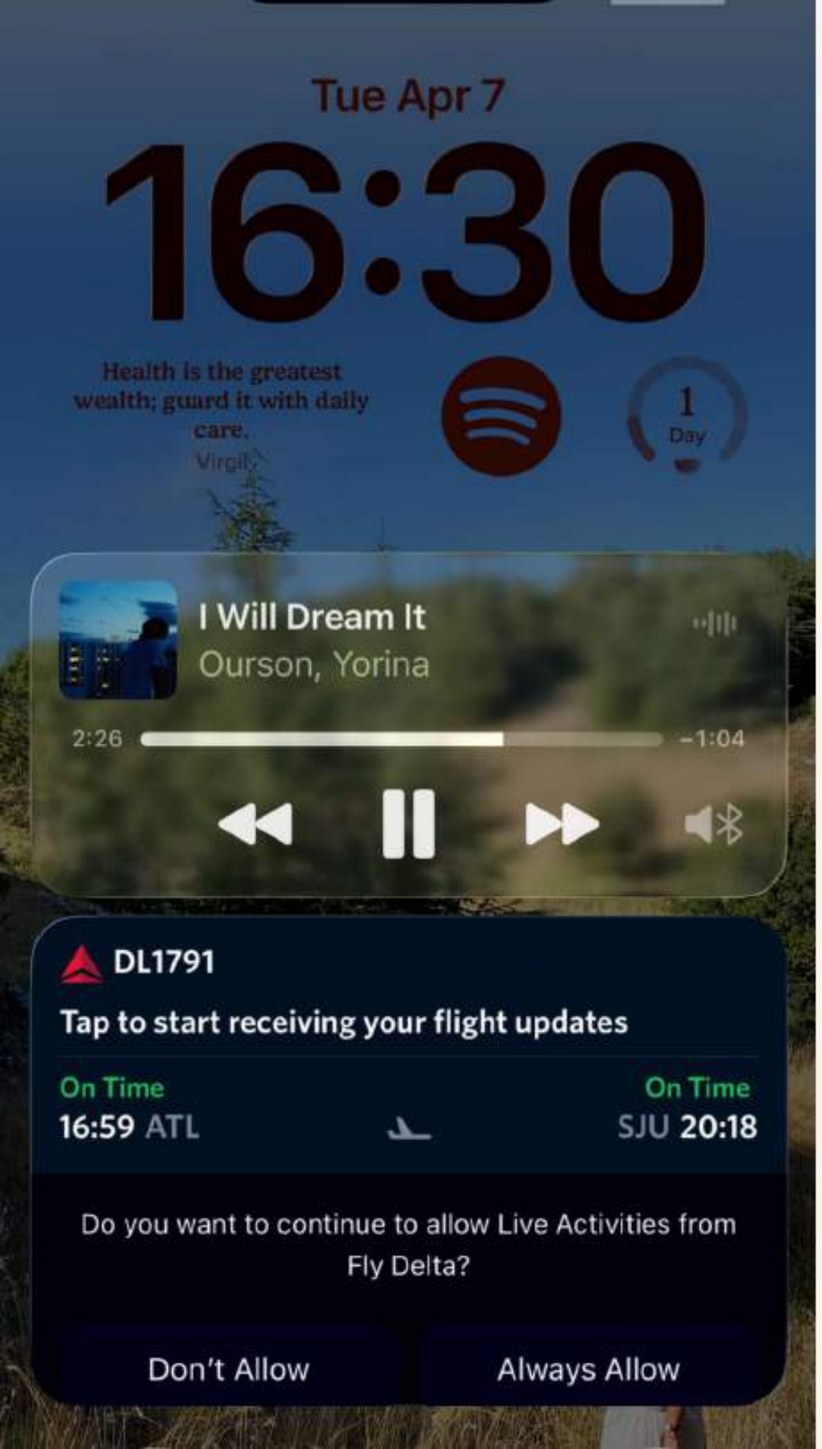
design was in the **conditions**

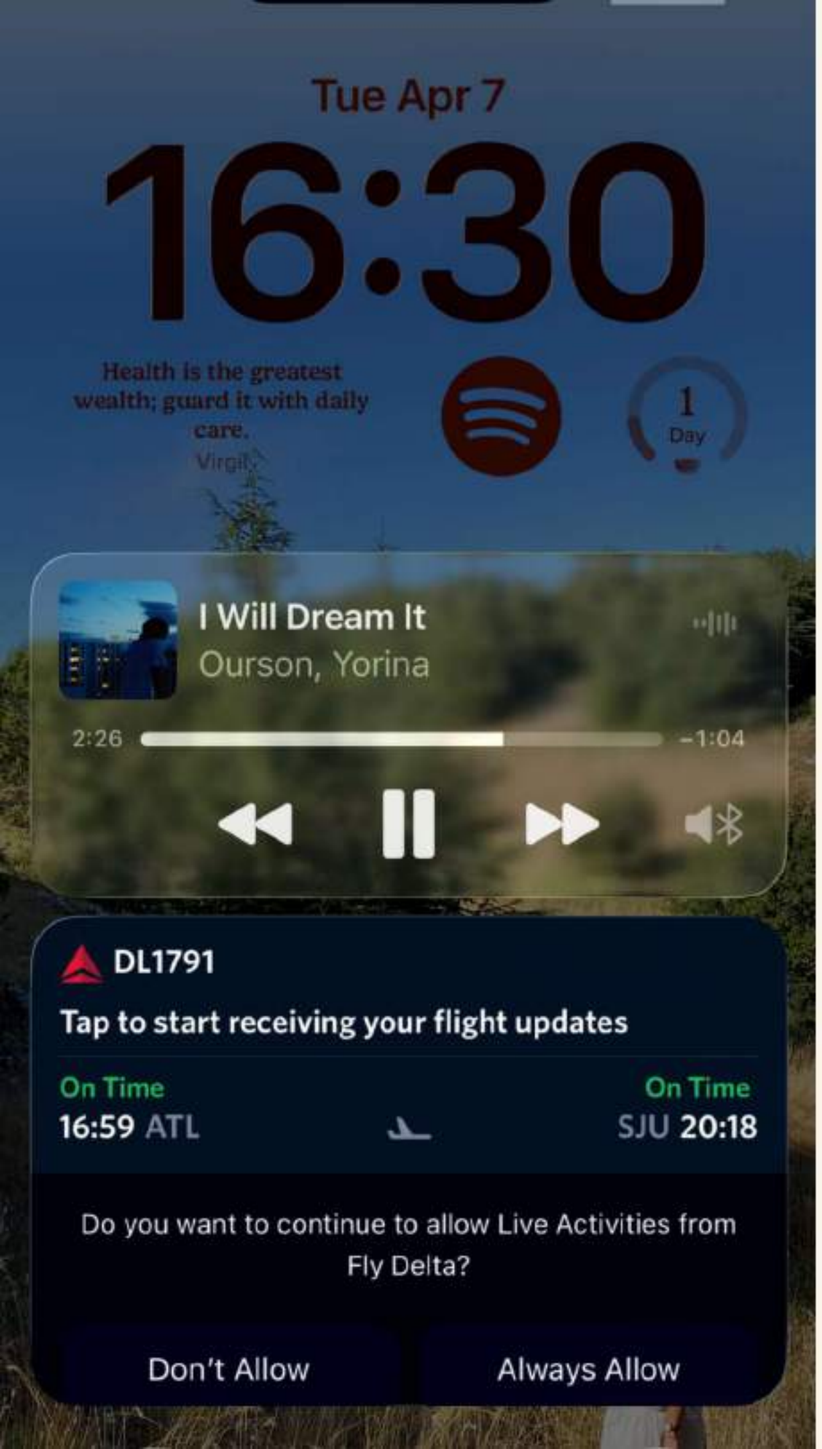
community agreements

pacing of the gathering

permission to not be okay

collaboration


Tue Apr 7
16:30
Health is the greatest wealth; guard it with daily care.
Virgil
1
Day
I Will Dream It
Ourson, Yorina
2:26
-1:04
DL1791
Tap to start receiving your flight updates
On Time
16:59 ATL
On Time
SJU 20:18
Do you want to continue to allow Live Activities from Fly Delta?
Don't Allow
Always Allow


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Imagine the **first two days of Hurricane María.**
Now put them on **repeat,**
with **no foreseeable end.**












“Sin agua”: la impactante historia del conteo viral de Café Regina en la calle Loíza
46 DIAS
SIN AGUA


Apagón masivo en Puerto Rico deja a 1.4 millones sin luz y paraliza servicios esenciales







Bad Bunny




PREOCUPACIONES











1

Develop feasible models to establish land tenure and community ownership in informal housing.

Potential Lead

Puerto Rico Department of Housing

Potential Partners

Puerto Rico Department of Justice Property Registry; FEMA; University of Puerto Rico Law School; NGOs; CBOs

Potential Funders

CDBG-DR; Philanthropic funding

Timeframe

Short and medium term

A great portion of Puerto Rico's housing stock is considered informal, where a significant portion lacks legal tenure in the form occupancy, or both. Informality in the housing sec the Island's most vulnerable citizens to natural haz basic services. Also, in the aftermath of disasters li are not able to benefit from mitigating measures, s and post-disaster FEMA funding. Given the diver and livelihoods across communities in informal s term, one-shot solution to address tenure issues is important to research, develop, and pilot feasible a pathway towards normalization, while avoiding

Key aspects of such an effort include:

- Research and recommendations of pathw informal communities throughout Puerto I
- Diversity and choice in tenure options and h community land trusts, among others).
- Risk-informed decision-making regard individuals and communities to ensure mit
- Changes to existing policies regarding disaster funding.
- Policies to protect communities from displ to affordable housing.
- Policies to reduce absentee ownership and
- Education and legal assistance to inform ir and options.

7

Commission a study to support the deployment (underground and aerial) of a more resilient telecommunications infrastructure.

Potential Lead

Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority

Potential Partners

TIRB; Electrical conduit suppliers for Puerto Rico (e.g., American Wire Group, Underground Devices, Inc. and Gibson Stainless & Specialty, Inc.); FCC

Potential Funders

SG - franchise fee revenue; FCC's Universal Service Fund

Timeframe

Short and medium term

Before making capital investments in new infrastructure, a study should be commissioned to assess the best way to harden and protect the telecommunications and the energy transmission infrastructures. This study should include feasibility and cost-benefit of establishing an underground utility conduit system versus hardening the aerial infrastructure. The Puerto Rico telecommunications network sustained complete failure as a result of the hurricane. This was due to winds, wind-powered debris, falling tree limbs, and landslides.

Protecting the utility plants will make the network more resilient and mitigate shocks and stresses to the system. It is unlikely that any system can completely prevent outages, but a study would show which investments will have the best value. Deploying utilities in the underground conduit is generally more expensive than deploying on poles. Poles should be upgraded, and better attachment and maintenance procedures, like tree trimming, can mitigate against damage at a reduced cost.

The risk of future shocks and stresses impacting the utility plant is high. Therefore, a potential solution would be to move utility plants off aerial utility poles and into underground conduit. This solution must focus on building a redundant middle mile ring around the Island, along major highways.

Regarding implementation, direct burial conduit is a proven deployment practice, and the cost of deploying conduit, especially in conjunction with road work, can be cost-effective. Deploying a shared underground conduit bank for telecommunications and power cables, in a ring around the island, could help lay the foundation for this underground network in the near-term. In the long-term, it would potentially continue for utility infrastructure expansion.

Immediate Next Steps:

- Set up meeting with leads and partners to discuss project opportunities and define roles of initiative owners and contributing partners.
- Convene a kickoff workshop to design the study methodology, criteria, funding structure and set the scope of work with leads and partners.
- Review existing data and establish a database platform for tracking the study's progress.

I had done this before...
my work has been responding to uncertainty and crisis all along

What is **design** in the first place?









Doreen Toutikian

FRIEND &
FELLOW LEBANESE DESIGNER

BEIRUT
DESIGN WEEK
أسبوع التصميم
بيروت



MENA DESIGN
RESEARCH CENTER

“Crisis exposes how much **design had been doing** that was **optional**.”

Doreen Toutikian

What does this **situation require**?

designers' role reframed

facilitators

connectors

listening with intention

embracing **curiosity**

designers' role reframed

facilitators

connectors

listening with intention

embracing **curiosity**

creating the **conditions** for **existing work** and **knowledge** to become **visible, connected and influential**

~~resilience~~

~~resilience~~

adaptability

design as a **tool for...**

Nurturing **connection, community** and **care**

Listening for **existing knowledge**

Bridging the **past, present & future**

Cultivating **shared ownership**

where **trust begins**

creating the **conditions for people to find each other**

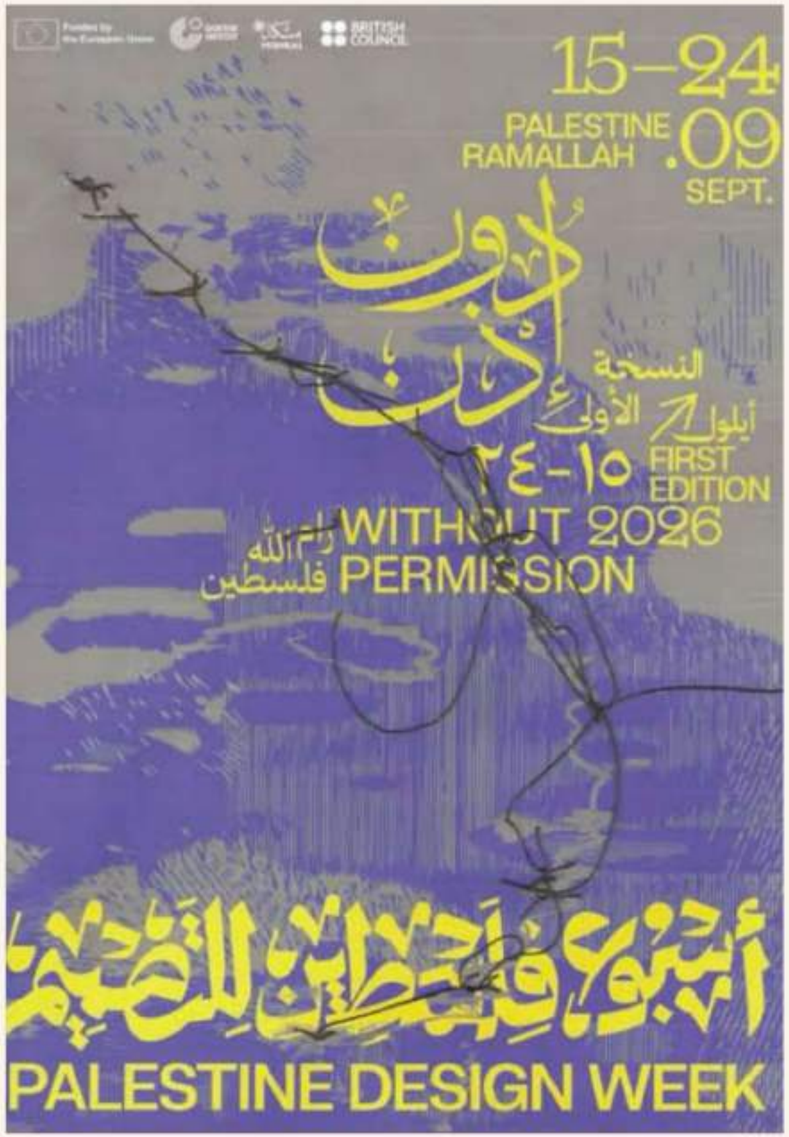
&

making **space** for what is **felt but not spoken**

> The **architect prototyping demountable homes for Gaza had not paused** for the right funding cycle. The **student recording oral histories on battery-powered** equipment was doing it because the work needed doing.

Doreen Toutikian,
Palestine Design Week

Bridging the **past, present & future**



building futures from
histories,
cultural knowledge,
&
lived experience

In what ways do participants have **decision-making power**?

In what ways do participants have **decision-making power**?

What happens after we leave?

“**Collaboration** here [Levantine] **has always been how the work functions.** Knowledge moves between generations, between workshops… the **useful posture is to assume the system is already in place and ask how to support it.**”

Doreen Toutikian,
Palestine Design Week


Thank You. Gracias. Shoukran.