

Vrouyr Joubanian

FOR THE LOVE OF DESIGN

DESIGN EDUCATION IN LEBANON

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FOR THE LOVE OF DESIGN

DESIGN EDUCATION IN LEBANON

By Vrouyr Joubanian

*A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree Master of Industrial Design in the School of Design*

The University of the Arts
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

May 2014

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FOREWORD

3 years ago, I was pitching my thesis idea at the Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts, in Lebanon. My project was not a conventional product; it was a whole system: I had worked on decreasing traffic congestion in Beirut — a wicked problem par excellence — by attempting to change people's behavior and encouraging them to carpool.

I was excited and had just discovered that “service design” is a real thing. I was doing something different and innovative. After I finished explaining the idea, one of my advisors turns to me and says: *“But what's the product? This is an art school; you need to make a physical object.”*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A special thanks to all those involved in the shaping of this project.

Thank you Meredith Warner for being an awesome thesis lead advisor and the voice of reason and clarity in confusing times. Thank you Sharon Lefevre, Jonas Milder, and Jeremy Beaudry for taking an active role in guiding my work and making it stronger with every conversation.

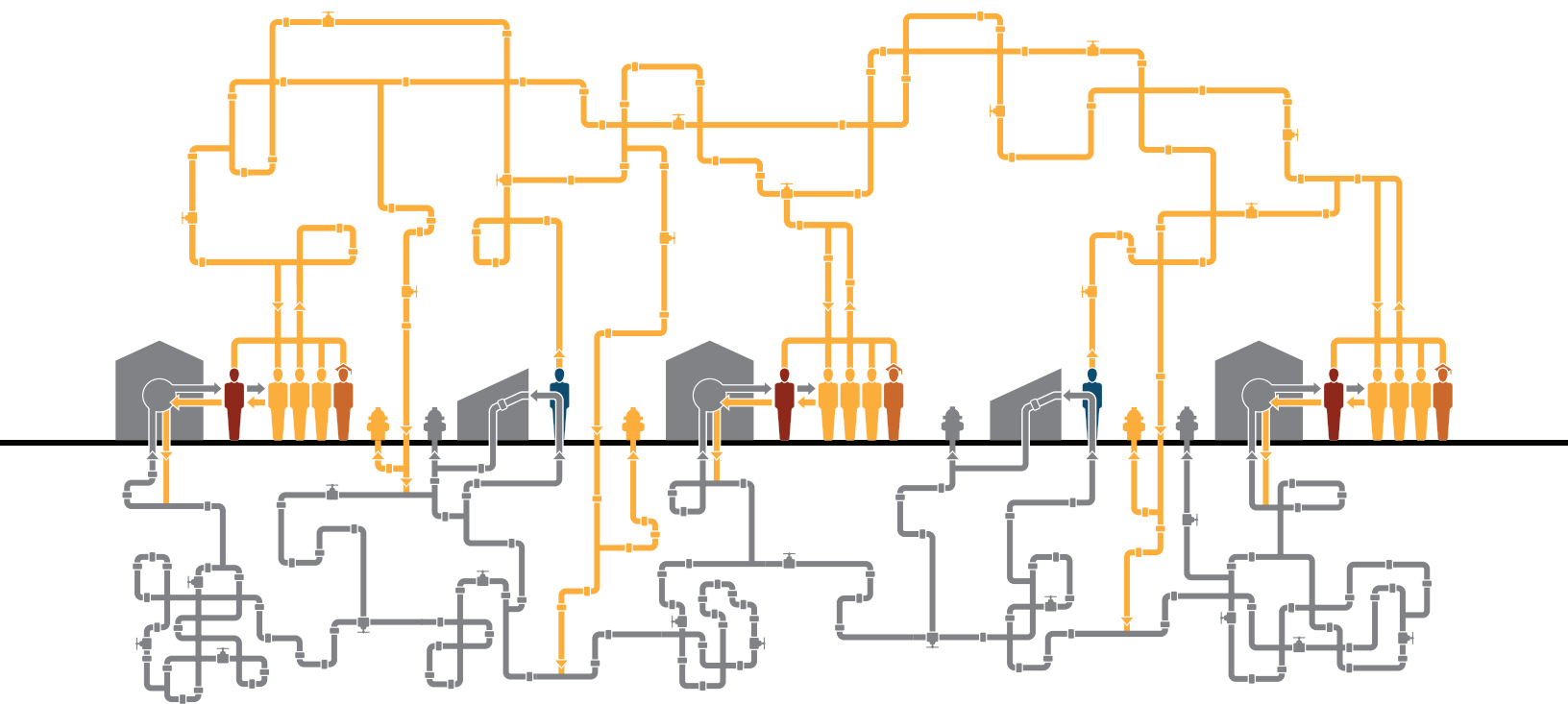
A special thanks to Cyril Kallab for ‘trusting the process’ and making this project a success. Thank you Hala Hassan and Elias Salamoun for helping me take this project off the ground. Thank you Diala Lteif and Elena Habre for your great support. Thank you Doreen Toutikian for taking the time to talk to me and sharing your expertise. Thank you to the participants of both workshops.

Thank you Jordan Shade for constantly challenging me, being there when I needed someone else’s perspective, and for always practicing presentations with me.

Thank you Fulbright and AMIDEAST for giving me the opportunity to come to Philadelphia and pursue this degree. Thank you fellow Fulbrighters for being an awesome support group during the past two years.

Thank you to all my friends and family who supported me along the way. Thank you Nanor Joubanian Kassardjian for being the best sister in the world.

*To Mom and Dad,
for all your love and support that got me here*



ABSTRACT





The design education infrastructure in Lebanon does not support human centered design, because of the stagnation of its curricula and, more importantly, because of institutional politics.

This project tests the validity of a grassroots initiative that would bring together an independent collective of students, designers, professionals and partner institutions in order to explore the value of human centered design in Lebanon. It creates a framework for building an innovative DIY design education model that plugs into the existing infrastructure of design education.

















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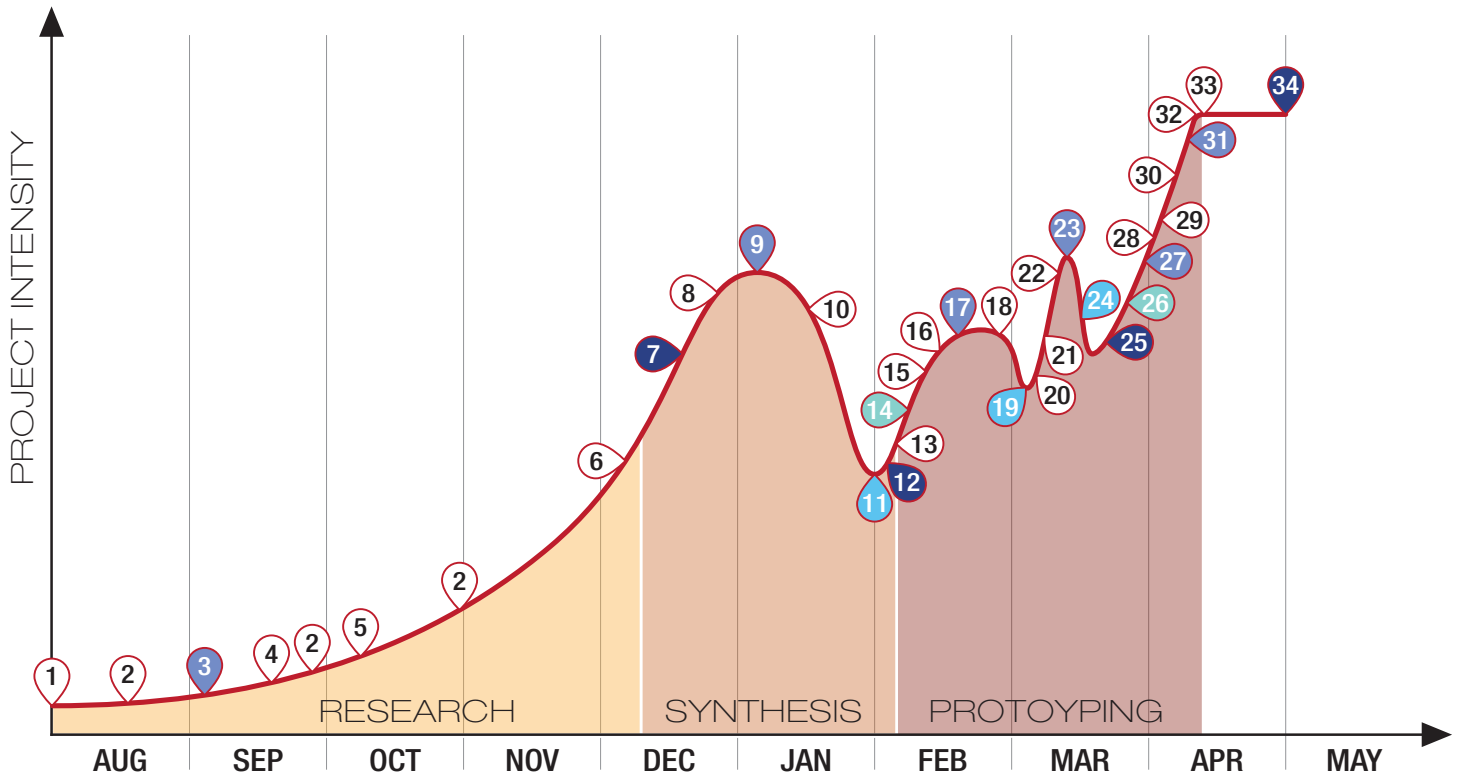
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PROJECT VISUALIZATION

-  Milestone
-  Design Intervention
-  Roadblock
-  Recalibration

KEY MOMENTS

-  1 Developing interest in design education
-  2 Literature research
-  3 Interview emails sent
-  4 Interview replies received
-  5 Synthesis of interview findings
-  6 Synthesis of literature research
-  7 Declare thesis
-  8 First workshop planning
-  9 Workshop: Exploring possibilities
-  10 Return to Philadelphia
-  11 Feeling distant
-  12 First thesis committee meeting
-  13 Literature review writing
-  14 Reaching out to students
-  15 First Google Hangout session
-  16 Co-design of a strategy



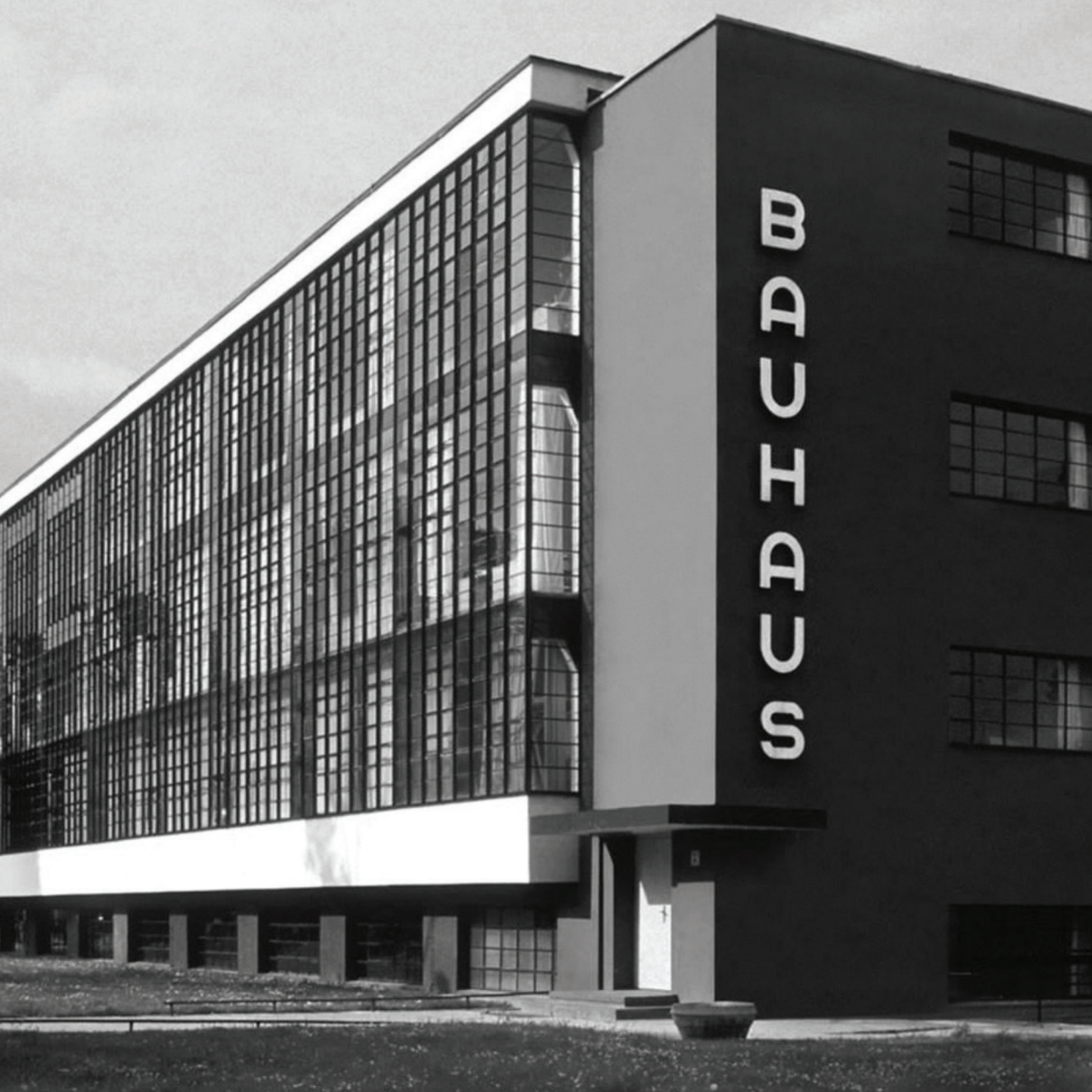
- 17 Boundary object creation
- 18 Project plan established
- 19 Team member lost
- 20 Research topic defined
- 21 SWOT analysis
- 22 Research plan established
- 23 Interview tool creation
- 24 Another team member lost
- 25 Second thesis committee meeting

- 26 Decision to mirror process in Philly
- 27 Coinciding interviews in Beirut and Philly
- 28 After-action report: Interviews
- 29 New team members join
- 30 Second workshop planning
- 31 Workshop: Passing the torch
- 32 After-action report: Workshop
- 33 Thesis documentation
- 34 Thesis defense

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

GENERAL TRENDS IN DESIGN EDUCATION

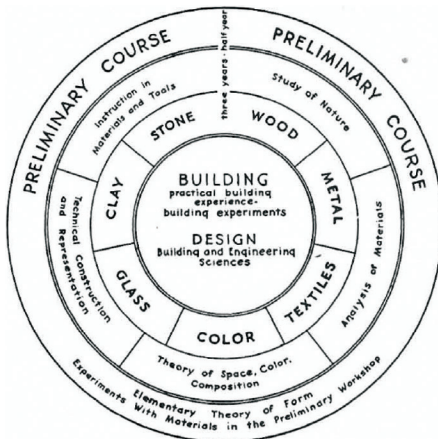


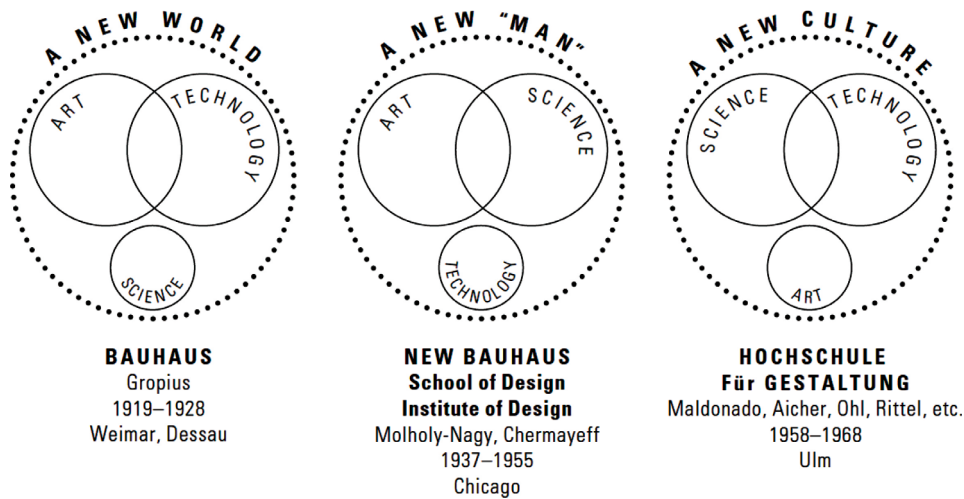
A BRIEF HISTORY ON DESIGN EDUCATION

Why is design education in Lebanon so out of step with the developments in design in the rest of the world? To answer this question, I researched design education models abroad and compared them to Lebanese schools.

In the book *Re-inventing the Art School 21st Century*, Jeroen Chabot discusses the evolution of different art and design education models through time. In the master-apprentice and later on the Beaux-Arts systems, the apprentice learned the master's trade and craft through pure imitation and reproduction, with no room for originality or personal touch; it was the demonstration of one's mastery of the technique and the technical proficiency that mattered, rather than the vision and the artistic proficiency. The demand for Arts and Crafts schools and technical schools was created by mass production and the industrial revolution. In order to make the products of mass production more aesthetically appealing, craftsmen (designers) were called in who had the proper skills and were verse in new mechanical production techniques. The Bauhaus (Germany) and the Black Mountain College (US) came along and took elements from both the Beaux-Arts and the Arts and Crafts traditions. New principles that focused on the individual artist-designer (or Designer with a capital D) and the design of goods for the society as whole were adopted. Design was now considered a fine art, and all arts were expected to play a positive role in humanity's struggle towards a better society.

Source: Walter Gropius et al.,
First Proclamation of the Weimar Bauhaus.





Source: Findeli Alain, "Rethinking
Design Education for the 21st Century",
Design Issues Vol.17, Number 1, Winter 2001.

The Ulm School of Design (Hochschule für Gestaltung Ulm, Germany) followed and was seen as the second most influential school of design — after Bauhaus. It broke the tradition of skill-oriented instructional program of the craft schools and enhanced the scientific knowledge within the design field. The hfg treated design as a teachable and learnable discipline, and instituted it as an autonomous one, which did not serve as an agency for other disciplines.

Today, the stages and developments of design through time are described as four different “orders of design,” and John Body breaks them down in his "Design in the Australian Taxation Office" article.

The first order, or the “symbol” as Richard Buchanan puts it, is graphic design looking at visual symbols, and is aimed at communication with words and images. The purpose is to get people to think by making a persuasive argument. In the second order, — the “object” — industrial design produces tangible artifacts, usually mass-produced, to provide a physical experience. In the third order, — the “action” — interaction, experience, and service design are concerned with how human beings select and use products in daily life. While the profile of interaction design has been lifted by the rise of digital products, the concepts of interaction go back further than this and apply to all types of products (objects, services, etc.). This order of design is about people and how they interact with the product or service: it allows for a customized experience. The fourth order of design — the “thought” — is concerned with systems and environments. The systems that designers are concerned with at this level involve humans, not only material things. There is recognition that people cannot experience a whole system, but rather experience their personal pathway through the system.

GENERAL TRENDS IN DESIGN EDUCATION

With social, cultural and economic shifts, and technological advancements, design programs in the Western world are undergoing major transformations that focus on producing competent graduates who use relevant skills to create meaningful contributions on social and commercial levels. New technologies and modes of communication are constantly impacting the nature of art and design, and their educational trajectories. Easy access to complex technologies has democratized aesthetics, production, distribution and consumption of design products. Moreover, as the role of consumers increases in the production phase, where they co-create with the designer — for example, customize and modify open-source files and 3D print them at home — the traditional role of the designer is challenged, but also the importance of service design and user/consumer involvement is brought to light.

In the last part of the book *Re-inventing the Art School 21st Century*, Peter Toxler discusses “how the changes [technologic, economic, social] of the 21st century create the conditions for a collaborative practice in design,” and how these changes lead to a new industrial revolution that should generate lateral rather than hierarchical power relations and structures. He uses the example of Free and Open Source Software (FOSS) to illustrate how legal instruments can be used to foster lateral structures in the world of software. Design is no longer an exclusive act by a single individual designer, or Designer. A designer today works in a co-creative, collaborative and multidisciplinary manner.

The book, which is written by Willem de Kooning Academy’s own researchers and faculty, seems to be a sort of a manifesto of the Academy’s new methodology and curriculum. Most of my research showed how hard it is to implement a new curriculum in an existing system, but this book showed me that curriculum change in a school is much easier and faster when it’s triggered and studied by its own students and faculty, as opposed to an external party.

True. It’s a lot more sustainable and effective when a change comes from within an institution, but how can internal change occur among students and educators who have not been exposed to new practices within the design field?

UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

CULTURAL ASPECT

INFRASTRUCTURAL ASPECT

INSTITUTIONAL ASPECT

CULTURAL ASPECT

Director of MENA Design Research Center in Beirut, Doreen Toutikian's thesis, *Design Education in the Middle East*, provides a good overview of the context in which we can understand design education in Lebanon. After World War and the cold war, the region of the Middle East was falling behind the rest of the world in terms of trade, production, communication and education — everything that relates to economic and social progress. Other regions such as Eastern Europe and some parts of Asia had surpassed the Middle East by decades.

The reason for that is that the growth was inhibited by political restrictions, corruptions, cronyism and overspending on arms and prestige projects (i.e. Iran's revolution, the Persian Gulf war, the Middle Eastern order and the Civil War in Lebanon). When colonization ended, a strong economic, cultural and political dependence on developed countries remained, and the European powers started promoting and implementing their education models to the region, which started building the infrastructure of education. Since then, the education models haven't really developed much.







For Lebanon in particular, which was a French colony, a web of cultural, social, economic and political issues, and more specifically, the series of wars and their aftermath, slowed down the development of its infrastructure of education, and eventually that of design education.





Signage and some area names reflect the French influence and the challenges of a multilingual culture.





In addition, as there is no manufacturing or export industry, and only one product design school, the majority of designers are limited to the field of print and media, or interior, fashion and jewelry design.

This has created a huge advertising industry, which has strengthened the commercial aspect of design and disregarded its social implications, leaving Lebanon stuck in the 2nd order of design.



A resident of Beirut's southern suburb stands next to sandbags placed at the entrance of his shop to protect it from future explosions targetting the area.



SCARCITY

Why aren't Lebanese institutions moving toward a curriculum that reflects a human-centered approach? To answer that question, I referred to a book called *Scarcity: Why Having Too Little Means So Much*, by Sendhil Mullainathan and Eldar Shafir.

The authors introduce a concept they call “bandwidth,” which basically means how much of our mental capacity is available to us at a given time. All sorts of distractions can sap our bandwidth; two people may have the same work hours and the same IQ, but if one's operating on four hours of sleep, is a single parent, and takes care of an elderly person at home, while the other has none of these concerns, the first is likely to do a much poorer job than the second on a variety of cognitive tasks.

They also examine how scarcity — the sense of having more needs than resources to satisfy them — can play out in the world of the poor, and how the challenges they face offer a clearer explanation as to why poverty begets poverty. If an impoverished, single mom trying to juggle part time work and raising a child, for example, she may fail to perform any number of routine but important tasks — renewing food stamps or signing up for adult-education classes — not because she is lazy, but because her brain is overloaded by worry and stress.

If this is true for individuals, can't it be true for countries like Lebanon? Why don't we have water and electricity 24/7? Why can't we have civil marriage? How dare a Lebanese athlete representing Lebanon at the Sochi Olympics tarnish the reputation of Lebanon and its women by posing almost topless for an international calendar?



There's so much 'scarcity' going on, so many political, economic and social problems, that there is no time to look into issues that address design education.

The book *Scarcity* helped me better understand our inability to climb out of the holes we dig ourselves, especially those related to education and educational institutions. One of the most important points of the book is that tweaks, not necessarily massive and radical changes, can accomplish a lot. They have a cascading effect: when you shift one thing in the system, it affects the actions further down the chain.

INFRASTRUCTURAL ASPECT

TRAFFIC

I can’t help but think of all the “action” and “thought” related issues that Lebanese citizens face in their everyday life. The simple example of circulation comes to mind: most of the roads/streets are painfully narrow, because the cities have grown geographically on an extremely ancient core.

Research shows that since the mid 1970s, the total number of vehicles in Lebanon rose from about 250,000 to nearly 1,600,000; an increase of about 540 per cent, with private cars making up about 86 per cent of the total number of vehicles. Today, there are 434 private passenger cars per one thousand people in Lebanon. This ownership rate is one of the highest in the world, even amongst the developed countries. Meanwhile, during that same time frame, use of public transportation decreased from 9% of the population to a mere 1.3%.

	<u>LEBANON</u>	<u>PENNSYLVANIA</u>
Area	4,542 sq mi	46,055 sq mi
Population	4,000,000	12,700,000
Number of cars in 2010	1,600,000	7,800,000

What does all this mean? Traffic congestion.
Traffic congestions have extended the concept of “rush hour” and turned them into “rush day” making people drive crazier everyday, especially since public transportation is almost non-existent.



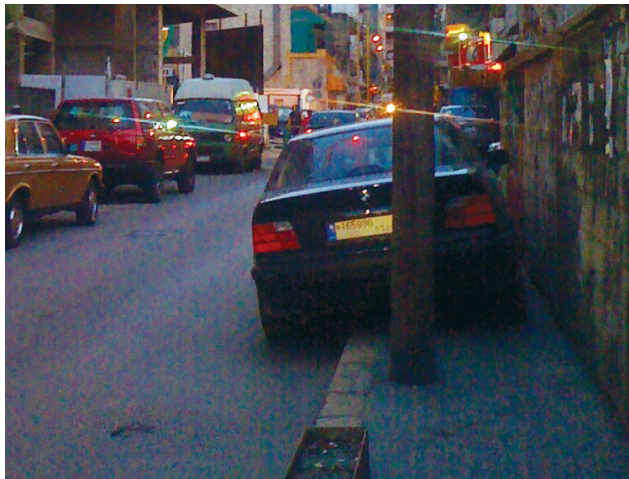


Lacking public transit, the city is snarled in disorganized traffic.



According to Youth Association for Social Awareness (YASA) in Lebanon, at least 700 people have died as a result of traffic accidents, and around 10,000 have been injured in 2009.

As for the sidewalks, they are extremely narrow and where they actually exist, cars occupy them.



side-walk: a paved path for pedestrians at the side of a road. (Source: Google)



Here's the sidewalk outside Beirut by Bike — a bicycle rental place in Beirut. During the day, this sidewalk becomes a workspace where bikes are repaired, adjusted, or upgraded.

GARBAGE MANAGEMENT

Beirut's municipal garbage collection is a crude system that relies on residents to throw their trash into open dumpsters along the city streets. This is a phenomenon that we never paid much attention to until last January, when trash bags started to spill out of the open dumpsters found along the city streets.

Sukleen, the private company that handles garbage collection in Lebanon, dumps into a landfill in Naameh, just south of Beirut. Naameh was initially supposed to operate for six years, but it continues to receive garbage from the Beirut area. The local community has been complaining to authorities for years about the smell, that the landfill is filled far beyond capacity and that the toxic waste is making residents sick. Some residents also point to the landfill as a cause of the string of deaths due to cancer in the area.

Since the authorities and Sukleen (or anyone else, really) did not address their complaints, the activists of Naameh blocked the road to where Sukleen dumps into the landfill, demanding that it no longer be used.

Sukleen workers dumped a chlorine powder over garbage piles to keep germs and bacteria from spreading, while they looked for yet another “temporary” solution.

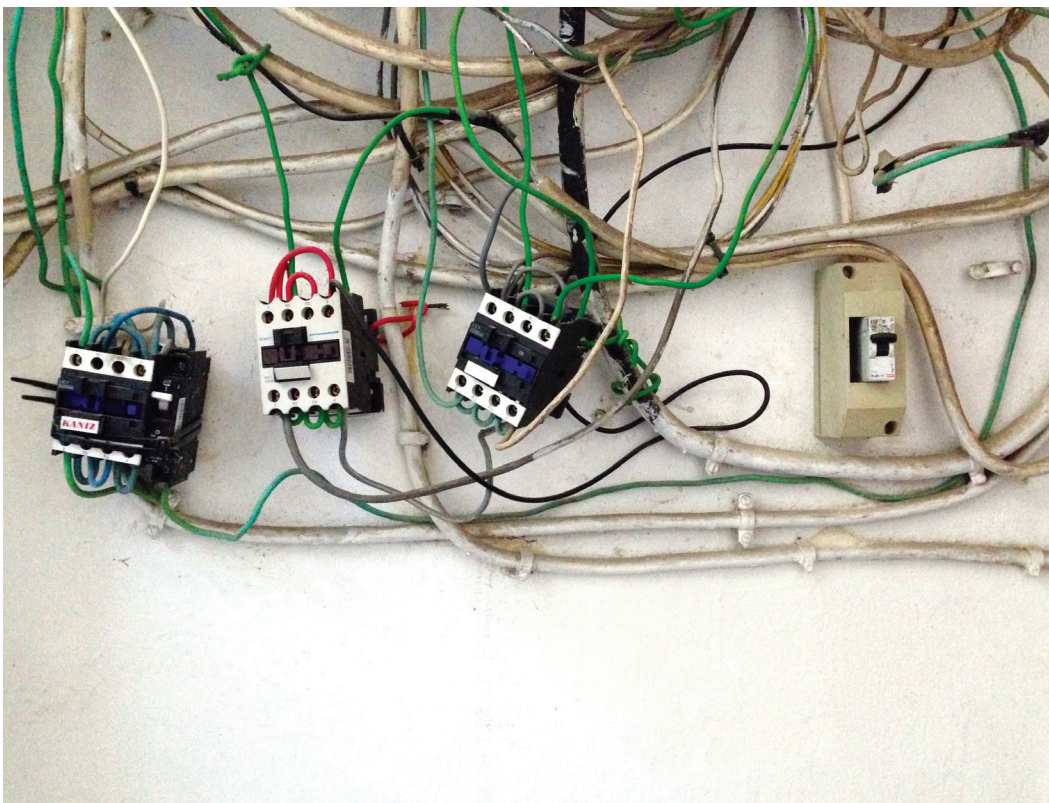






ELECTRICITY

Every household in Lebanon experiences a daily electrical blackout. The government regulates this and it happens every 3, 4 or 6 hours. In some areas, these blackouts occur every 4 hours: 10:00, 2:00, and 6:00. But there are back-up generators that are turned on as soon as the power cuts. These alternative electricity generators (secondary electricity) exist in almost every neighborhood, are sold to households, and are limited in amperage. This means residents can't turn on the water heater or iron a shirt when the secondary electricity is on: they have to schedule those activities in advance. Obviously, this is a problem of physical infrastructure, and to top it off, there's a political element to it, because the government provides it. Consequently, an opportunity for corruption is created: the companies who own and run the secondary electricity generators are private companies (who have connections in the government of course), and benefit from the failure of the system/infrastructure.



Even the back-up generators installed to shore up a failing general grid, require routine fuse adjustment from each household.

Television, Internet, and electricity (both government and independent) cables are tangled, vulnerable to accident and mayhem.



ELECTRICITE DU LIBAN 

EDL - ELECTRICITE DU LIBAN
100% CAPITAL ETAT
LIBAN 2000

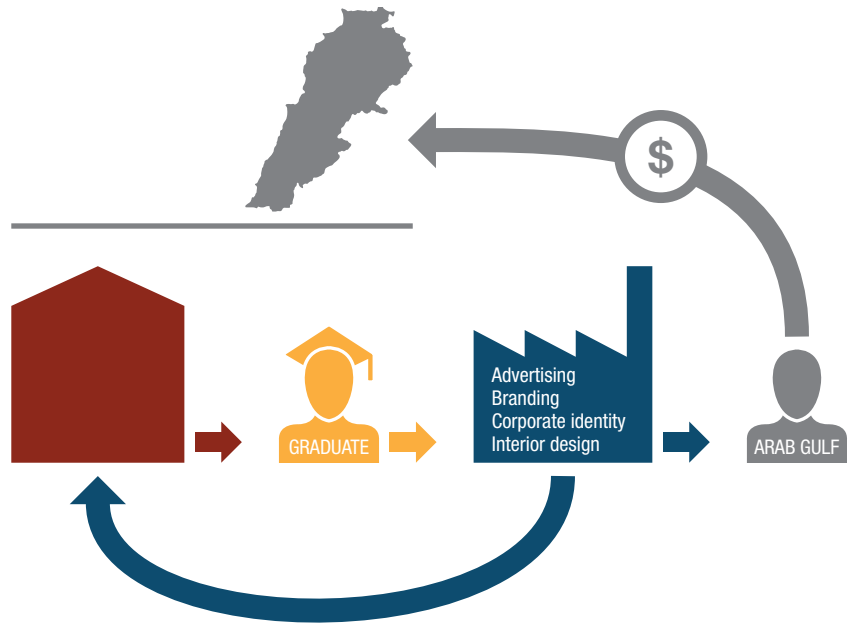
Electricité du Liban



These problems with basic infrastructure and city services are an opportunity space for human-centered design: the processes and methodology are built to make sense of intractable and wicked problems, of which Lebanon has no shortage.

INSTITUTIONAL ASPECT

Design schools in Lebanon are single-disciplinary, aimed at skills for specific jobs in the design industry. And having only one design school that deals with products, and a non-existing industrial infrastructure, most design programs are based on graphic design. This has created a huge advertising industry, which has strengthened the commercial aspect of design and disregarded its social implications. Moreover, the country's constant economic pressure pushes students into the workforce immediately after graduation to work for the [very specific] design industry that provides most of its services (branding, campaign creation, etc) to the Arab Gulf.

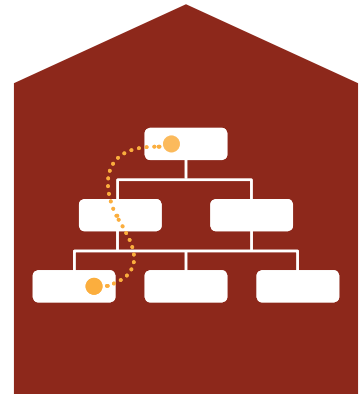


For this reason, most design educators believe that briefs should be typical of the existing advertising (or branding) norms, which are limited to encouraging consumer behavior without much thought or research. This has created a design education system that promotes the “production” aspect of design.

Other design educators, however, are trying to change the situation by incorporating the social aspect of design in their project briefs. They believe they should nurture minds that could be given the opportunity to trigger social change.

All design schools in Lebanon are private and their vertical organizational structure makes it very difficult for a new way of teaching — one that includes the social implications of design — to be put in place. These institutional politics often create clashes between faculty members, department heads and school directors who do not share the same opinion about the matter.

The MENA Design Research Center, however, is an institution that is trying to raise awareness around the potential of design and how it could be relevant to the Lebanese society.



JOSEPH RABBAT

Joseph Rabbat completed both his undergraduate and graduate degrees in interior architecture in Paris and moved back to Beirut to build his own firm. Since the '70s, he's earned a great reputation because of his high-end residential and commercial interior projects, as well as his extensive teaching experience in several architecture schools in Lebanon.

Today, Rabbat is in his seventies, and although he stopped teaching about 10 years ago and has handed his architecture firm to his son, he remains the director of the interior design department at ALBA.



To him, fundamentals are essential. He thinks one cannot be an interior designer if one does not know how to draw, sketch, paint, and sculpt. In short, an interior designer is an artist who has volumetric/spatial proficiency.

This is why Rabbat believes keeping the basic core courses — drawing, sketching, art history, painting, perspective drawing, etc. — is extremely important, since they build the necessary skills to make a space (or a 2D graphic representation) look aesthetically pleasing. Because of his pedagogical stance, one that I would describe as pro-Bauhaus

and crafts-oriented, he is inherently skeptical of a human-centered approach.

Last year, he attended the product design student's final year project presentations as a jury member. One of the students presented a design research project that examined people's chocolate eating habits, which resulted in designing a new experience for chocolate lovers. Rabbat, who doesn't value a service/experience as a possible "product", was not convinced, since he believes there needs to be a sellable, commercial product at the end of the project.

MENA DESIGN RESEARCH CENTER



The MENA Design Research Center is a non-profit organization based in Beirut, Lebanon. Founded by Doreen Toutikian and Maya Karanouh in 2010, it soon became one of the few institutions in the region that focus on Design as a multidisciplinary tool for development. The center believes that designers are far more capable of improving the world than their often undermined occupations as mere makers of beautiful things, and promotes a diverse understanding of design through the implementation of design research and collaborative multidisciplinary projects in the region.

The MENA DRC is highly involved with social initiatives that concern the Arab World and contributes to a variety of social issues by developing innovative tools through design thinking and co-creation. The center is also closely linked to design education in order to encourage and guide the participation of designers in the non-commercial, public, and non-profit domains.

In 2012, the center initiated and organized the first Beirut Design Week, which set a new standard for Beirut as the Design Capital of the Middle East & North Africa.



HOWAYDA EL-HARITHY

Howayda el-Harithy is a Lebanese educator who holds Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Architecture, and a PhD in History of Art & Architecture, all from the United States. She has been teaching in the department of Architecture and Design at the American University of Beirut since 1994, where she also served as Chair of the department for several years.

Harithy's research focuses on Islamic Art and Architecture and engages theoretical models of interpretation, particularly post-structuralist models, as analytic tools of the production of architecture and urban space. Her more recent research focuses on urban heritage with special emphasis

on the theoretical debate on heritage construction and consumption related to identity building and post war reconstruction. She's a great, passionate and very knowledgeable teacher, say her students.

During the first Beirut Design Week conference, where European and American design educators were invited to share their opinions about the future of design education, and how Lebanon should make a significant change, Harithy felt offended. She was not a fan of Westerners telling non-westerns what to do or how to go about doing things, or better yet, "helping" them. In this case, she construed the project as Western designers telling

Lebanese educators how to teach design and what to include in their curricula. Who said they know any better?

There's a very legitimate aspect to her perspective: she has been studying Lebanese culture long enough to understand how crucial it is to include it in the art and design education, which is why she resents the idea of adopting western concepts and teaching methodologies and applying them in Lebanon, because simply, you can't just package an idea or a concept that's generated in one cultural context, parachute it in a different one, and expect it to work like magic. It just doesn't work that way.



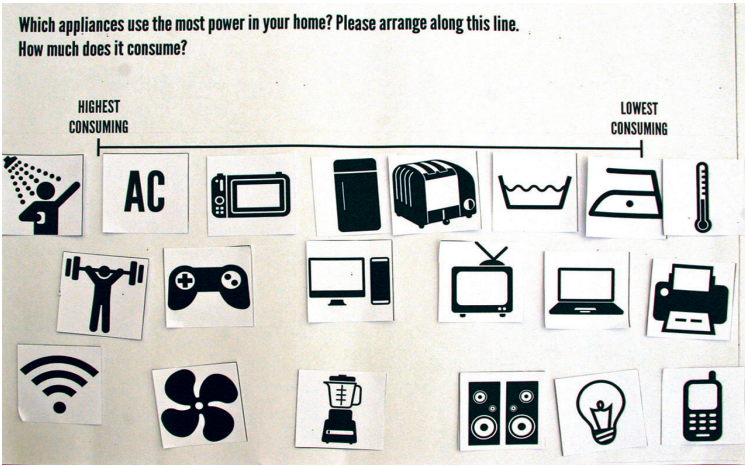
Any type of change, be it institutional or behavioral, needs to come from within the organization. People do not respond well to a third party giving instructions about a certain issue, especially if the party is a stranger to the context the issue lives in. This is why the change/shift in the design education infrastructure in Lebanon should be co-designed with the current players and stakeholders.

ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM

CASE STUDY: DESMEEM

ADHOCISM

DIY INFRASTRUCTURE



A CASE STUDY: DESMEEM

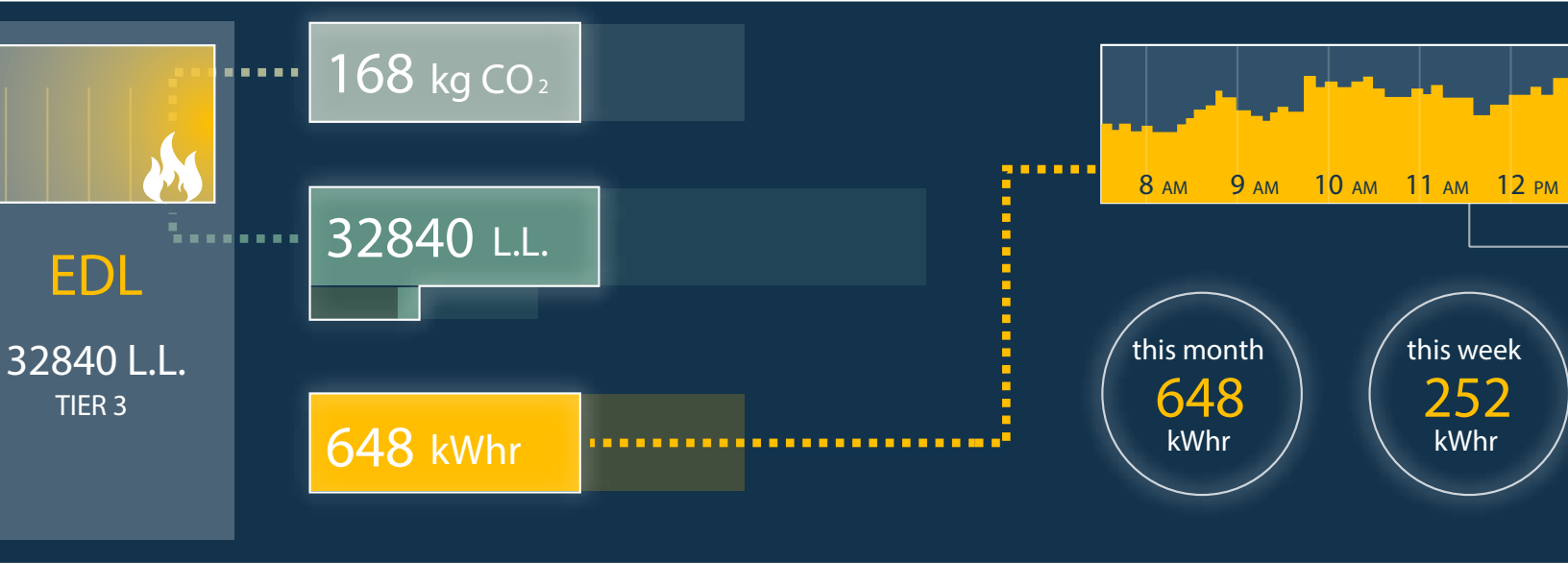
In 2012, the MENA Design Research Center organized a three-month long project called DESMEEM, which was a pilot to practice human-centered design in Beirut. Lebanese design students collaborated with American and European design students to find creative solutions to some of Lebanon's social and environmental problems. One of the issues they tackled was that of electricity.

To understand the problem better, the multidisciplinary team started by interviewing users and stakeholders.

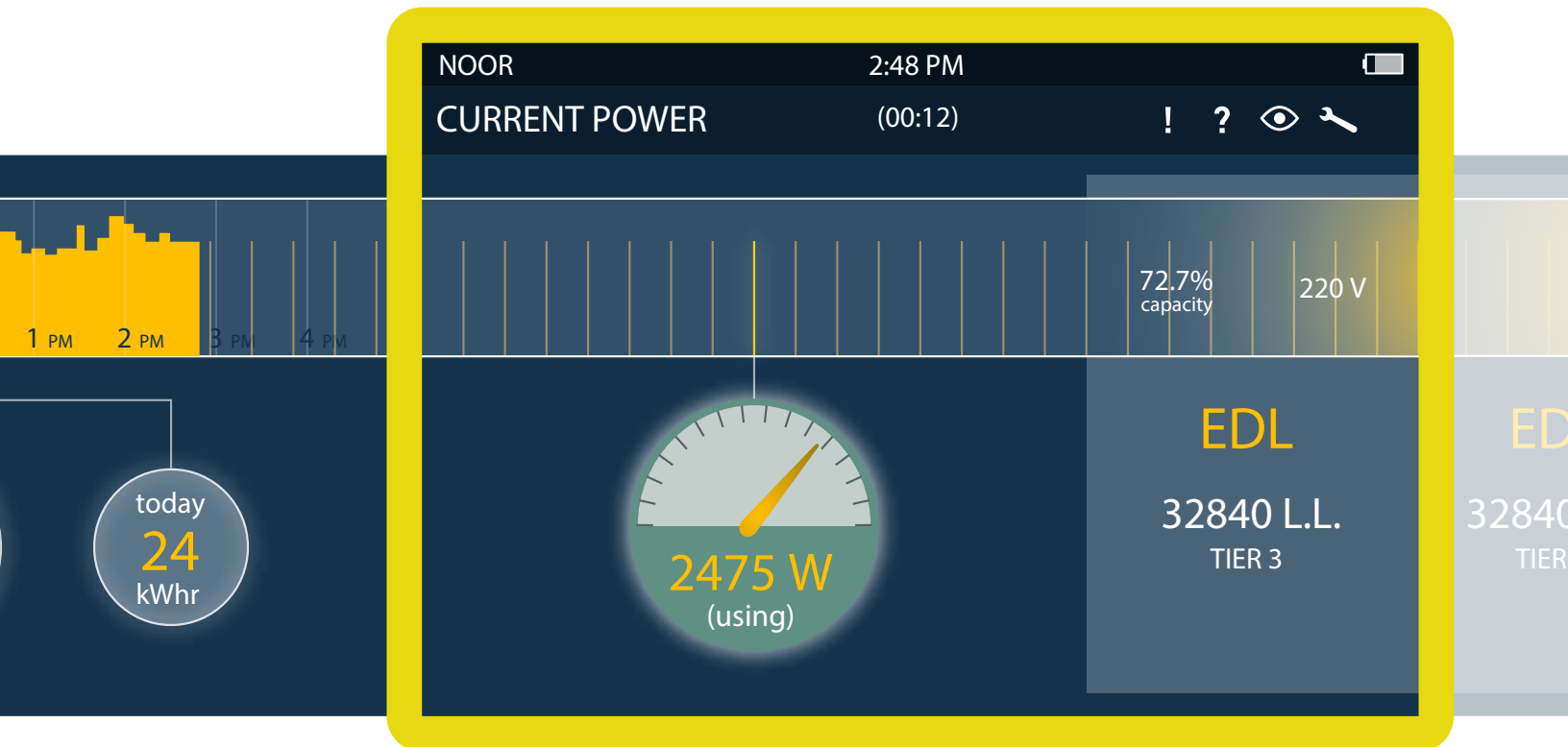


Here, Farah and Connie are conducting interviews during home visits using human-centered design tools and methods.

After research and interviews, Farah, Karim, Peter and Connie synthesized the data they had gathered.



The team developed a concept for an electricity monitor that would let users take charge of their everyday situations: it tells them which electricity (government or independent) they are using at that moment; their Kwhr consumption (separated by each room in the residence); and their real-time power bill. This enables homeowners to see which devices are consuming more energy and decide whether or not they want to turn them off.



One of the most important points of *Scarcity* is that tweaks, not necessarily massive and radical changes, can accomplish a lot. In my case, tweaks within the existing infrastructure of design education in Lebanon can accomplish a lot, and a lot faster than attempting to change the infrastructure as a whole, which seems impossible.

In order to begin thinking about incremental development, I referred to other methodologies that can be potential vehicles for 3rd and 4th order of design.

Adhocism: The Case for Improvisation is a book by Charles Jencks and Nathan Silver. The authors position the DIY (do-it-yourself) culture of the '60s as an empowering, even revolutionary choice against consumerism, mass production and, most importantly, bureaucratic planning methods.

I learned from my research and interviews that the reason design education infrastructure in Lebanon does not support human-centered design is institutional politics. This book argues that a culture of improvisation (and DIY) can be liberating, especially when set against these systems of bureaucratic control.

ADHOCISM IS THE ART OF LIVING
AND DOING THINGS AD HOC — TACKLING
PROBLEMS AT ONCE, USING MATERIALS AT
HAND, RATHER THAN WAITING FOR THE
PERFECT MOMENT OR “PROPER” APPROACH.

DIY INFRASTRUCTURE

In his Ph.D. dissertation, Jonathan Lukens investigates a set of “DIY Infrastructure” projects, in which designers are successfully building alternative (and effective) infrastructural systems that plug into existing ones.

Each of the case studies in the piece highlights lessons from DIY infrastructure, like the role of the social in the design of systems; how the relationship between established infrastructure and DIY infrastructure could be both complementary and antagonistic; and how DIY infrastructure might scale up and effect lasting social change. To support his argument, Lukens gives the

example of Cloacina, which is the project of two activists developing a new municipal waste disposal system in which a decentralized networked system significantly lessens the amount of water used in processing human waste. Another example Lukens gives is Feral Trade Courier, which employs the sort of shipping database we might associate with FedEx or UPS to facilitate an alternative shipping infrastructure, in which volunteers transport goods in an ad hoc freight network.

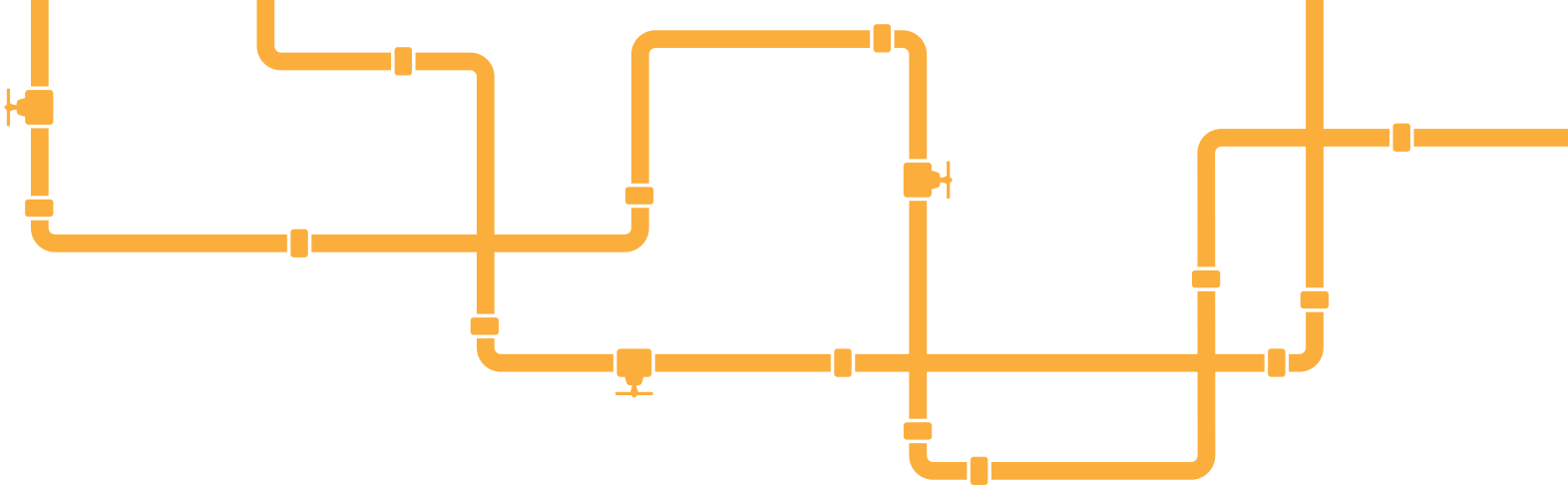
A DIY infrastructure should understand the extensive social and political effects of old [design] decisions,

which resulted in existing infrastructure (i.e. the education system in Lebanon was mainly shaped by the French after the colonization, and a web of social, political and economic issues that followed in the next decades slowed down its development).

Lukens wants designers to see that DIY can have a substantial/ reverberating impact on the future.

“The design of infrastructure today affects the generation of wealth tomorrow. The allocation of today’s resources — expressed through infrastructural design, as well as through infrastructure’s maintenance or neglect — affects the development of future resources.”

— Jonathan Lukens



THESIS STATEMENT

The existing design education infrastructure in Lebanon does not support human-centered design, because of the stagnation of its curricula, and more importantly, because of institutional politics. I understood from my research and findings that the way to include this understanding of design is not reforming or rebuilding existing design programs, but creating and offering something different — something that's interesting and relevant to the Lebanese context and marketplace, and that plugs into the existing [broken] infrastructure of design education.

This project will bring together an independent collective of students, designers, professionals and partner institutions that will explore the value of human centered design in Lebanon. It creates a framework for building an innovative DIY design education model that plugs into the existing infrastructure of design education.

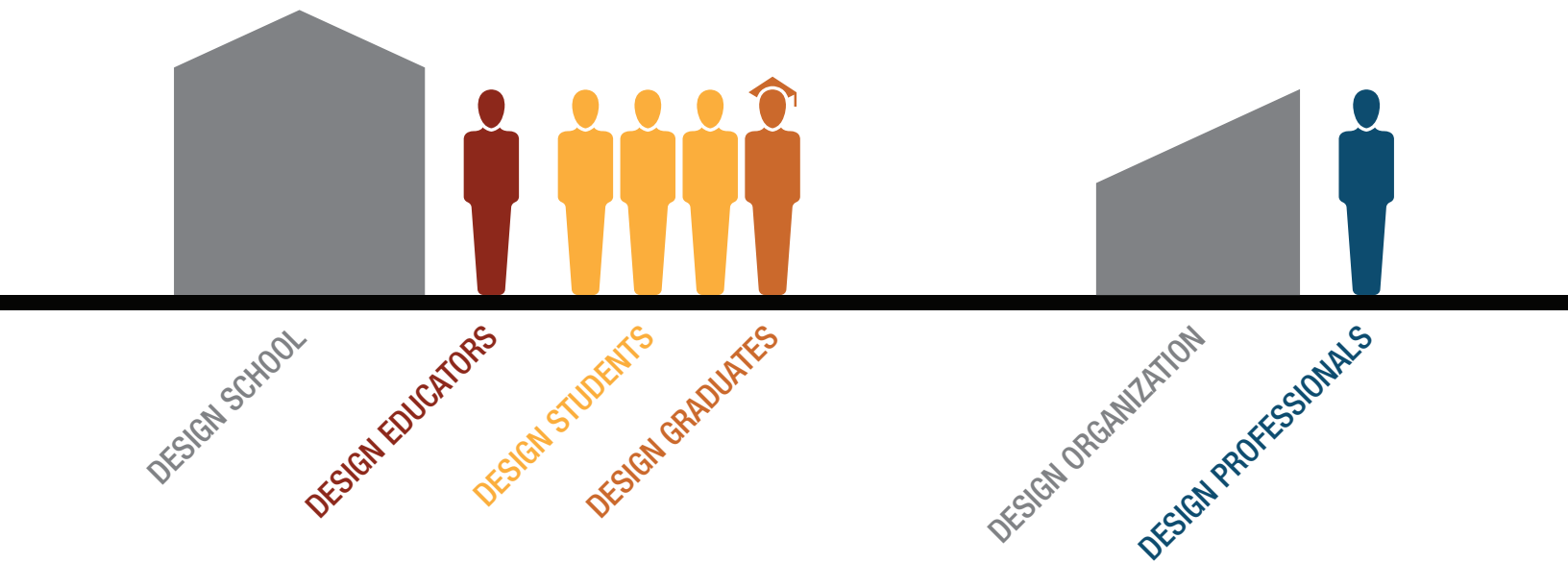
CHOOSING A PATH

STAKEHOLDERS

CROSS-CONTINENT INTERVIEWS

WORKSHOP: ABOUT DESIGN EDUCATION IN LEBANON

STAKEHOLDERS





ELENA HABRE

Elena Habre attended the Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts in Beirut and finished her master's studies in interior architecture in 2011.

In 2012, while working full-time in an architecture firm designing commercial interior spaces for private residences and hotels, she took part in DESMEEM: a cross-cultural, multi-disciplinary project around social and environmental problems in Lebanon. For three months, her team partnered with Helem (a Lebanese non-profit, non-governmental organization) and engaged with citizens to better understand and define problems relating to gender and sexuality in Lebanon. Since topics of sex and

homosexuality are taboo, and schools avoid sexual education and health awareness, the team aimed to empower Lebanese LGBT persons to take care of their sexual health and have access to healthy sex. This is when Elena got to see the “other side” of design: the side that’s different from just creating spaces, choosing colors and materials, designing posters, and making things look aesthetically pleasing; she saw the side that can help have real impact on society. Since then, she tried working on as many social design projects as she could find, parallel to her full-time, commercial architecture job, but they were so few that she felt she was stagnating in her field, not doing any meaningful work.

Since the Civil War in the 1970s, Lebanese young adults have migrated in large numbers to the Arab Gulf countries, Europe, Australia, the US and Canada — even after the War ended, they were frustrated with

how socio-political problems affect life and livelihood. But Elena’s frustrations are a little different: she’s actually frustrated because she knows design can be a tool for solving a big number of social problems in Lebanon, but designers and design schools haven’t recognized that just yet, and they keep teaching design as a tool to make things “look good.”

She left the country last August to volunteer with Architects Without Borders in Ecuador, using participatory design process to develop informal settlements in South Quito. Since then, she’s been working on creating strategies for reinforcing the community as well as working on possible future urbanization layouts. *“It’s a very challenging design process, but feels like an extremely important topic to explore” she says.*

She’s still working in Quito, but has taken a month off to visit her family and friends in Beirut.

MARC BAROUD

After completing his degrees in interior architecture and furniture design from the Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts, where he has been teaching since 2004, Marc Baroud went to Paris to study industrial design. He came back to Beirut and established a brand development company and later co-founded a multidisciplinary architecture and design firm that focuses on residential, corporate, retail and office spaces.

Marc is an “outside the box” thinker. He always argues with other faculty members and colleagues about design, and whether or not they are teaching students the right skills and the

proper ways of thinking. One of his famous examples is the window: “When I ask a student to design a window, a framed glass panel is the last thing they should be imagining. Instead, they should think of it as an opening that could create thousands of possibilities. As educators, we should give them the tools to break out of archetypes.” His way of critiquing and giving constructive feedback pushes students to deliver innovative solutions with their projects.

In the last few years, however, Marc realized design is shifting. His role was no longer creating project briefs that only require an object or a 3D product at the end; it was larger than

that. Students now started exploring service design, but it was not easy: he was one of the very few faculty members who supported this type of work and was resisted by other faculty members who think the word “product” in “product design” is a physical, palpable, 3D object.

In 2013, he took on the role of the head of the new Design school in ALBA and decided to drive it towards a new, upgraded understanding of design. He realized that the different sectors in the Lebanese infrastructure need to be rethought, redesigned, rebuilt and reoriented, especially after the political, and economic roller coaster the country has been through for the past 3 decades.



The product design curricula—in their current state—do not respond to such needs, which is why he decided to design new curricula that include services, interactions, and systems design.

He started hiring new and like-minded faculty members to support him in this paradigm shift, but currently these new hires are outnumbered and overwhelmed by faculty members who have been teaching for many years and are not willing to reassess their ways and accept change. Institutional politics and bureaucracy that play a big role in educational institutions pose a huge barrier and are slowing down the process.

DOREEN TOUTIKIAN

On July 12th 2006, another war broke out in Lebanon that lasted 33 days. It was the day of Doreen's graduation from Notre Dame University, where she had completed her studies in graphic design. Together with other people with a dual citizenship, she was rushed out of the country and to Cyprus in a military boat.

She felt that being a graphic designer in Lebanon meant very little compared to scientists, doctors, and architects, which is why she was determined never to return. During her course of studies in Lebanon, every time she tried to dig deeper or go a step further, she was told not to over-think or over-conceptualize, or stick to cost-efficient packaging



processes. The projects were limited to the commercial aspect of the design industry: graphic, advertising, fashion, and products.

She decided to pursue another degree and enrolled in Köln International School of Design (KISD) as a Master in European Design student, and it left her shocked. For the first time, it was the thinking behind the project that mattered; not the typeface she used. The learning process was about going outside the walls of the school to observe, research, and be critical. The purpose behind her design projects was to solve a problem in society or make a system function better, not to create a sleek image for a company that sells perfume or lingerie.

For her thesis, she proposed the Middle Eastern Design Research Center that would aim to research the cultural aspects of the Middle East within a design context, and test the validity of the findings through a series of projects. Consequently, the information gathered

would be used to rebuild a design education curriculum for the needs of the Middle Eastern countries. As planned, she moved back to Lebanon and co-founded the MENA Design Research Center. Through the DESMEEM project, which was exhibited and applauded at the first annual Beirut Design Week, awareness was created and, for the first time, design was portrayed as a creative problem-solving tool.

But it wasn't all positive. Some Designers did not support this new perspective and their buy-in was hard to get. But often people's buy-in comes with their participation, which is why for the second edition of Beirut Design Week, Doreen created a "committee" that helped organize the week and promote the work. All of a sudden, everyone was interested: having **insert name here** on the committee of Beirut Design Week made it more credible and easier to get other designers' buy-in. Except this approach took away (temporarily, I hope) the potential social implications of design, which is the center's main mission.



LEA KRAKODIAN
Product Designer

WHERE DO YOU STUDY DESIGN?
BA, Beirut, Lebanon

ARE YOU GENERALLY SATISFIED WITH YOUR EDUCATION PROGRAM? IF YOU HAD THE CHANCE, WOULD YOU CHANGE OR ADD ANYTHING TO IT? HOW DO YOU COMPARE IT TO DESIGN PROGRAMS ABROAD?

No, I am not satisfied with my educational program. If I had the chance to change anything, I would ideally have liked:

- To have open and furnished workshops in order to experiment with materials/ prototypes/etc...
- More competent professors who show up to classes, or reschedule missed classes.
- Wider ranges of courses that delve into design theory, design history and design today.

I would compare it to foreign design universities as being VERY backwards both theoretically and practically. ALBA has a long way to go to reach standards present in universities outside.

HOW DO YOU COMPARE YOURSELF TO STUDENTS/GRADUATES FROM OTHER DESIGN SCHOOLS IN LEBANON/MIDDLE EAST? WHAT ABOUT DESIGN SCHOOLS IN EUROPE OR THE US?

Well, I guess relatively to Lebanon and it's universities, ALBA's educational program ranks among the highest. Probably due to the fact that Product design and Industrial design schools are limited to 2 or 3 universities tops.

Comparing myself to foreign students who completed courses in Europe or the US, I would rate myself as a pretty incompetent designer.

WOULD YOU WANT TO PURSUE ANOTHER DEGREE?

I would always pursue another degree. When the chance comes financially, I'll complete it abroad this time.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF GETTING A DESIGN DEGREE IN LEBANON/MIDDLE EAST REGION? WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE DISADVANTAGES?

Advantages: The school of design is still very young in this region and the world, and the competitiveness of courses and curriculums are still developing. The large amount of problems faced being in a developing country with contradictory ideals, were the main source of inspiration for the types of problems I along with other Lebanese designers decided to tackle through design.

Disadvantages: The school of design is still very young in this region and the world, and the competitiveness of courses and curriculums are still developing. The large amount of problems faced being in a developing country with contradictory ideals, were the main source of inspiration for the types of problems I along with other Lebanese designers decided to tackle through design.



ZEIN HAMZE
Graphic Designer

WHERE DO YOU STUDY DESIGN?
I study design in the Lebanese American University of Beirut.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF GETTING A DESIGN DEGREE IN LEBANON/MIDDLE EAST REGION? WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE DISADVANTAGES?

The advantage is the fact that there is a good relation between professors and students; they know each other and professors focus their efforts on each and every students. Also, we get a chance to learn Arabic typography and calligraphy which is useful because we know the language. The disadvantages are the tools we use, we are not that up-to-date and developed classroom etc...

WOULD YOU WANT TO PURSUE ANOTHER DEGREE?

I will pursue another degree.

ARE YOU GENERALLY SATISFIED WITH YOUR EDUCATION PROGRAM? IF YOU HAD THE CHANCE, WOULD YOU CHANGE OR ADD ANYTHING TO IT? HOW DO YOU COMPARE IT TO DESIGN PROGRAMS ABROAD?

I am satisfied in the education Graphic Design program in the Lebanese American University. I would probably change some foundation year courses because they were not very useful nor taught me anything such as Sketching, Studio design 1B...

HOW DO YOU COMPARE YOURSELF TO STUDENTS/GRADUATES FROM OTHER DESIGN SCHOOLS IN LEBANON/MIDDLE EAST? WHAT ABOUT DESIGN SCHOOLS IN EUROPE OR THE US?

Altogether it was more theoretical than LAU; other than that I am not very sure about Europe and the US.

WOULD YOU WANT TO PURSUE ANOTHER DEGREE?

I will pursue another degree.



RIZKALLA CHAAROU
Architect

WHERE DO YOU STUDY DESIGN?
Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts, ALBA

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF GETTING A DESIGN DEGREE IN LEBANON/MIDDLE EAST REGION? WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE DISADVANTAGES?

The advantages of getting a Architecture Design degree in Lebanon is getting a good background in the basics of Architecture through an intensive Bachelor and Masters Program.

The disadvantages are getting to learn and practice the basics, and only the basics, not having any specialized degrees in the Sciences of Contemporary Architecture, and working in a non competitive environment.

WOULD YOU WANT TO PURSUE ANOTHER DEGREE?

I would definitely pursue another degree abroad.

WHERE DO YOU STUDY DESIGN?
I am currently in Taubman College

HOW DO YOU COMPARE YOURSELF TO STUDENTS/GRADUATES FROM OTHER DESIGN SCHOOLS IN LEBANON/MIDDLE EAST? WHAT ABOUT DESIGN SCHOOLS IN EUROPE OR THE US?

In terms of knowledge in Lebanon and in the Middle East, I consider myself to be a same person, which easily reflects here through the things I do. However, I do not feel that I am not a professional back and competitive poor output, which is a same person.



TAREK ELKASSOUF
Architect

WHERE DO YOU STUDY DESIGN?
Studied architecture in the fine art faculty of the holy spirit university Kaslik (USK), Lebanon

ARE YOU GENERALLY SATISFIED WITH YOUR EDUCATION PROGRAM? IF YOU HAD THE CHANCE, WOULD YOU CHANGE OR ADD ANYTHING TO IT? HOW DO YOU COMPARE IT TO DESIGN PROGRAMS ABROAD?

Most of a designer skills are self-thought, in Lebanon, so they mostly depend on their personal research and international workshops.

I had the chance I would definitely like to participate more to seminars and workshops.

The design programs in Lebanon, would give you just what you need to be a good designer, and good is not enough in design, but other international programs would be more suitable for some other designers.

HOW DO YOU COMPARE YOURSELF TO STUDENTS/GRADUATES FROM OTHER DESIGN SCHOOLS IN LEBANON/MIDDLE EAST? WHAT ABOUT DESIGN SCHOOLS IN EUROPE OR THE US?

USK is one of the best schools of architecture in Lebanon and the middle east, it has its standards and rankings that permit its student to be one of the best in the region, as for other schools in Europe and the US, and after having some international workshops, and meeting working with different people from Europe and the US, I think with some efforts, the student would be far from other schools, concerning their educational system.

WOULD YOU WANT TO PURSUE ANOTHER DEGREE?

Yes, and I am already pursuing another degree in research in Paris.



ELENA HABRE
Product Designer

WHERE DO YOU STUDY DESIGN?
ALBA - Académie Libanaise des Beaux Arts MA - Interior Architecture

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF GETTING A DESIGN DEGREE IN LEBANON/MIDDLE EAST REGION? WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE DISADVANTAGES?

I think a definite disadvantage is the lack of the Research Process. In Lebanon, we are most of the times given a brief of a few lines to design according to the problem is most of students end up with very similar designs and more or less the same style. We do not really dig into the project, so it's really to stay on the shallow layer of it. Many of our classes are very theoretical, for instance even the "material" course was about memorizing wood details rather than organizing a few field trips to carpenters to actually see them, understand them and work on the visual memory.

WOULD YOU WANT TO PURSUE ANOTHER DEGREE?

I'm not very acquainted with design schools in the Middle East, but I have to say I think in Lebanon has more to offer when it comes to Art Centers and Contemporary Galleries. Because much more exposed to Design here than in other Middle Eastern Countries.

ARE YOU GENERALLY SATISFIED WITH YOUR EDUCATION PROGRAM? IF YOU HAD THE CHANCE, WOULD YOU CHANGE OR ADD ANYTHING TO IT? HOW DO YOU COMPARE IT TO DESIGN PROGRAMS ABROAD?

In general, I can't complain although if I had the chance I would have probably just done the BA in Lebanon and the MA abroad. What we lack here that exists in design programs abroad is multidisciplinary. The training that we get here is very much focused on one discipline, and once you graduate from that it's hard to shift practices. Missing for instance a year or even more to be working on different projects with people from different backgrounds, would definitely break the boundaries that we have between our disciplines and enhance our creativity (like the feedback project that we did).

HOW DO YOU COMPARE YOURSELF TO STUDENTS/GRADUATES FROM OTHER DESIGN SCHOOLS IN LEBANON/MIDDLE EAST? WHAT ABOUT DESIGN SCHOOLS IN EUROPE OR THE US?

I have to say that a lot of my design thinking and perception of Design today had to do with the different workshops that I've done that led me to the Education that I got from my university.

WOULD YOU WANT TO PURSUE ANOTHER DEGREE?

Definitely I would like to study Transdisciplinary Design in Paris.



GRACE AARAJ
Architect

WHERE DO YOU STUDY DESIGN?
Lebanese University, Institute of Fine-Arts (Université Libanaise, Institut des Beaux-Arts)

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF GETTING A DESIGN DEGREE IN LEBANON/MIDDLE EAST REGION? WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE DISADVANTAGES?

Advantages:

- Being exposed to western influences and to Arab influences, as well as the strong presence of historic inspirations.
- Being bilingual / multilingual.
- Disadvantages:
- Less opportunities to collaborate and exchange between universities themselves, m between these universities and international.
- Educators are not always at a high level of continuous education.
- Plagiarism is not taken seriously.
- Lack of governmental support to educational institutions.
- Weak focus on a broad spectrum of specializations.

WOULD YOU WANT TO PURSUE ANOTHER DEGREE?

University of Oregon in Portland.

WHERE DO YOU STUDY DESIGN?
Generally, I was not satisfied. Mainly because of my university, my degree.

HOW DO YOU COMPARE YOURSELF TO STUDENTS/GRADUATES FROM OTHER DESIGN SCHOOLS IN LEBANON/MIDDLE EAST? WHAT ABOUT DESIGN SCHOOLS IN EUROPE OR THE US?

As for my program participation and to his own way, it is how we help each other.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF GETTING A DESIGN DEGREE IN LEBANON/MIDDLE EAST REGION? WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE DISADVANTAGES?

The advantages of being a designer graduated from Lebanon, made me understand more the Lebanese and middle eastern market/client sections, and some familiarity of urban planning laws in the case of Lebanon.

As for the disadvantages: it's mainly lack of accessibility for resources: international journals, wide range of books, because most of the libraries in Lebanon are privately owned. And a missing interaction between universities in the country itself and with the surroundings. Art schools are more competitive rather than collaborative, which sometimes focuses on building individual rather than team spirit.

WOULD YOU WANT TO PURSUE ANOTHER DEGREE?

Yes, and I am already pursuing another degree in research in Paris.

WOULD YOU WANT TO PURSUE ANOTHER DEGREE?

I would like to study Transdisciplinary Design in Paris.

WOULD YOU WANT TO PURSUE ANOTHER DEGREE?

I would like to study Transdisciplinary Design in Paris.

WOULD YOU WANT TO PURSUE ANOTHER DEGREE?

University of Oregon in Portland.

WOULD YOU WANT TO PURSUE ANOTHER DEGREE?

University of Oregon in Portland.



TINA BREIDI
Product Designer

WHERE DO YOU STUDY DESIGN?
Académie Libanaise des Beaux Arts (ALBA), Lebanon

ARE YOU GENERALLY SATISFIED WITH YOUR EDUCATION PROGRAM? IF YOU HAD THE CHANCE, WOULD YOU CHANGE OR ADD ANYTHING TO IT? HOW DO YOU COMPARE IT TO DESIGN PROGRAMS ABROAD?

Satisfied no.

add : courses related to design culture / design news / materials / more facilities when it comes to the production or the realization of ideas / concepts / maybe to develop a better workshop, an adequate place to work.

improvements to facilities (I show students how things really work in the real life)

focus more on the PROCESSES of the project than the final Concept

exchange students between universities abroad

learn courses in English

HOW DO YOU COMPARE YOURSELF TO STUDENTS/GRADUATES FROM OTHER DESIGN SCHOOLS IN LEBANON/MIDDLE EAST? WHAT ABOUT DESIGN SCHOOLS IN EUROPE OR THE US?

Between other students, specially in Europe and the US, are advanced comparing to us, we have the minimum basic knowledge but it's not enough at all, and I guess the system improves and evolves remarkably year after year, while our rhythm is way to slow.

WOULD YOU WANT TO PURSUE ANOTHER DEGREE?

Definitely yes!



STEPHANIE MOUSSALEM
Product Designer

WHERE DO YOU STUDY DESIGN?
Académie Libanaise des Beaux Arts (ALBA), Lebanon

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF GETTING A DESIGN DEGREE IN LEBANON/MIDDLE EAST REGION? WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE DISADVANTAGES?

Advantages of getting a degree in Lebanon is that the major is not that developed yet, and the disadvantages is that the major is not that developed yet.

WOULD YOU WANT TO PURSUE ANOTHER DEGREE?

Not for now.

ARE YOU GENERALLY SATISFIED WITH YOUR EDUCATION PROGRAM? IF YOU HAD THE CHANCE, WOULD YOU CHANGE OR ADD ANYTHING TO IT? HOW DO YOU COMPARE IT TO DESIGN PROGRAMS ABROAD?


Yes I am satisfied with my education program if I had to change something it would be to have more collaborations with students / universities / design firms around the world.

HOW DO YOU COMPARE YOURSELF TO STUDENTS/GRADUATES FROM OTHER DESIGN SCHOOLS IN LEBANON/MIDDLE EAST? WHAT ABOUT DESIGN SCHOOLS IN EUROPE OR THE US?

I don't think that there is that much of a difference but one thing is sure, each country city/university has its own experience.

WOULD YOU WANT TO PURSUE ANOTHER DEGREE?

Not for now.



WASSEF DABBOUSSI
Architect

WHERE DO YOU STUDY DESIGN?
Bachelor of Architecture from AUB.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF GETTING A DESIGN DEGREE IN LEBANON/MIDDLE EAST REGION? WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE DISADVANTAGES?

Yes, I felt that I had big advantages with my AUB degree in Lebanon. I know that it's also well considered in the region around Lebanon.

WOULD YOU WANT TO PURSUE ANOTHER DEGREE?

Yes, I was very satisfied with the program since most of the professors have had their higher education at Prestigious schools, like Harvard, MIT, etc. I pursued a degree abroad just because I had the scholarship chance. Otherwise, it would have been a little bit difficult.

WHERE DO YOU STUDY DESIGN?
The United States

HOW DO YOU COMPARE YOURSELF TO STUDENTS/GRADUATES FROM OTHER DESIGN SCHOOLS IN LEBANON/MIDDLE EAST? WHAT ABOUT DESIGN SCHOOLS IN EUROPE OR THE US?

I think that I have and the region, and (National Design) have also felt a bit of a disadvantage. Maybe because we have implemented.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF GETTING A DESIGN DEGREE IN LEBANON/MIDDLE EAST REGION? WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE DISADVANTAGES?

Advantages: calligraphy / Multicultural region / Influences brought such an unstable society on our way of thinking and our design practices.

Disadvantages: everything is limited

HOW DO YOU COMPARE YOURSELF TO STUDENTS/GRADUATES FROM OTHER DESIGN SCHOOLS IN LEBANON/MIDDLE EAST? WHAT ABOUT DESIGN SCHOOLS IN EUROPE OR THE US?

Between other students, specially in Europe and the US, are advanced comparing to us, we have the minimum basic knowledge but it's not enough at all, and I guess the system improves and evolves remarkably year after year, while our rhythm is way to slow.

WOULD YOU WANT TO PURSUE ANOTHER DEGREE?

Definitely yes!

HOW DO YOU COMPARE YOURSELF TO STUDENTS/GRADUATES FROM OTHER DESIGN SCHOOLS IN LEBANON/MIDDLE EAST? WHAT ABOUT DESIGN SCHOOLS IN EUROPE OR THE US?

I don't think that there is that much of a difference but one thing is sure, each country city/university has its own experience.

WOULD YOU WANT TO PURSUE ANOTHER DEGREE?

Not for now.

HOW DO YOU COMPARE YOURSELF TO STUDENTS/GRADUATES FROM OTHER DESIGN SCHOOLS IN LEBANON/MIDDLE EAST? WHAT ABOUT DESIGN SCHOOLS IN EUROPE OR THE US?

I don't think that there is that much of a difference but one thing is sure, each country city/university has its own experience.

WOULD YOU WANT TO PURSUE ANOTHER DEGREE?

Not for now.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF GETTING A DESIGN DEGREE IN LEBANON/MIDDLE EAST REGION? WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE DISADVANTAGES?

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I think that I have and the region, and (National Design) have also felt a bit of a disadvantage. Maybe because we have implemented.



ABRAHAM ZEITOUN
Architect

WHERE DO YOU STUDY DESIGN?
Studied architecture at the American University of Beirut (AUB) and worked as an architect in Fine Arts.

ARE YOU GENERALLY SATISFIED WITH YOUR EDUCATION PROGRAM? IF YOU HAD THE CHANCE, WOULD YOU CHANGE OR ADD ANYTHING TO IT? HOW DO YOU COMPARE IT TO DESIGN PROGRAMS ABROAD?

Generally speaking, I am satisfied with the program as I believe I acquired a lot of knowledge across different design fields, and it also helped me to gain experience through those required internships. However, my greatest wish was to have more open and furnished workshops in order to experiment with materials/ prototypes/etc...

I had the chance I would definitely like to participate more to seminars and workshops.

The design programs in Lebanon, would give you just what you need to be a good designer, and good is not enough in design, but other international programs would be more suitable for some other designers.

WOULD YOU WANT TO PURSUE ANOTHER DEGREE?

I cannot complete it as I design programs abroad, so I have but little information on what they're like generally because I know the design field.



LINDA SELWOD CHOEIRI
Design Educator

WHERE DO YOU STUDY DESIGN?
Académie Libanaise des Beaux Arts (ALBA), Lebanon

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF GETTING A DESIGN DEGREE IN LEBANON/MIDDLE EAST REGION? WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE DISADVANTAGES?

Advantages of getting a degree in Lebanon is that the major is not that developed yet, and the disadvantages is that the major is not that developed yet.

WOULD YOU WANT TO PURSUE ANOTHER DEGREE?

Not for now.

HOW DO YOU COMPARE YOURSELF TO STUDENTS/GRADUATES FROM OTHER DESIGN SCHOOLS IN LEBANON/MIDDLE EAST? WHAT ABOUT DESIGN SCHOOLS IN EUROPE OR THE US?

I don't think that there is that much of a difference but one thing is sure, each country city/university has its own experience.

WOULD YOU WANT TO PURSUE ANOTHER DEGREE?

Not for now.



SARAH LUCY ESTEPH
Architect

WHERE DO YOU STUDY DESIGN?
Académie Libanaise des Beaux Arts (ALBA), Lebanon

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF GETTING A DESIGN DEGREE IN LEBANON/MIDDLE EAST REGION? WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE DISADVANTAGES?

Yes, I felt that I had big advantages with my AUB degree in Lebanon. I know that it's also well considered in the region around Lebanon.

WOULD YOU WANT TO PURSUE ANOTHER DEGREE?

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WHERE DO YOU STUDY DESIGN?
The United States

HOW DO YOU COMPARE YOURSELF TO STUDENTS/GRADUATES FROM OTHER DESIGN SCHOOLS IN LEBANON/MIDDLE EAST? WHAT ABOUT DESIGN SCHOOLS IN EUROPE OR THE US?

I think that I have and the region, and (National Design) have also felt a bit of a disadvantage. Maybe because we have implemented.

CROSS-CONTINENT INTERVIEWS

As a human-centered designer, conducting interviews with stakeholders around this issue of design education was an obvious step to get as much information and insight as I could.

Interviews are a fundamental research method for direct contact with participants, to collect firsthand personal accounts of experience, opinions, attitudes, and perceptions. They are best conducted in person so that nuances of personal expression and body language are recognized in conversation, but my case was different. Since I was based in Philadelphia, at a seven-hour time difference, my most convenient interview tool was the email.

I had a fixed script of questions, which was not flexible, since I would send them to the interviewee and receive a reply; it was not exactly a conversational format. Conducting these interviews over email — behind a screen, with no face-to-face conversation, allowed for certain honesty from the interviewees. They expressed thoughts and opinions that they would have probably not expressed had I been interviewing them in person. It's true that the human interaction and the real-time story telling elements weren't there, but the sincerity made up for it.

I contacted over 25 students, recent graduates, faculty members and design professionals to get a wide enough spectrum of opinions. My questions were mainly about the advantages and disadvantages of getting a design degree in Lebanon, how they compare themselves (or their students) to students from design schools abroad, if they are generally satisfied with the system, and if they would change anything in it.

A major advantage is that we're a multicultural country.

Comparing myself to foreign students who completed courses in Europe or the US, I would rate myself as a pretty incomplete designer.

I think there is a lot of stagnation in our design curricula, which usually stems from institutional bureaucracy and financial constraints.

What we lack is multidisciplinary.

We have the minimum basic knowledge. That's not enough at all.

The advantage is that the major is not that developed yet. The disadvantage is that the major is not that developed yet.

We are subjected to an array of ideas, concepts, theories, movements, know-hows, and tools that spring out from our region as well as the rest of the world.

The country is such a mess that it has a huge potential.

Lebanon is a trendsetter for the Arab Gulf, and a door to this region that has an important population and major growth possibilities.

I think a definite disadvantage is the lack of the research process.

What is more difficult, is to adapt to an old academic system that tend to see everyone "else" as a competitor, an opponent, and doesn't help develop collaborative working...

The local degrees need to become updated to include service design, new research methodologies, etc.

If I had to change something it would be to have more collaborations with students and universities.

Lebanon is a great place for entrepreneurship.

I guess the system [in Europe and the US] improves and evolves remarkably year after year, while our rhythm is way too slow.

Lebanon offers for the designer the possibility to work with craftsmen.

I would like my program to focus more on the process of the project rather than the final concrete object.

Design workshops are a form of a participatory design consolidating creative co-creative methods into organized sessions for several participants to work with design team members. Through activity-based research, workshops can be very efficient, as well as a creative way to gain the trust and input of stakeholders, and consequently, their buy-in.

The workshops we facilitated with our studio partners were products of a team, not of one person. But there I was, brainstorming workshop activity ideas on my own, with no one to bounce them off of, no other perspective or a set of fresh eyes. “Does this make sense to someone who hasn’t been researching the topic for the past five months?”, “will the participants be lost?”, “do the activities flow nicely?” were questions I constantly asked myself. I decided to do a first draft of activities and go over them with 2 of my collaborators once in Beirut.

WORKSHOP PLANNING

For my next step moving forward, I decided to facilitate a co-creative workshop with my stakeholders and potential collaborators. My last 2 semesters were very helpful in planning and facilitating workshops and brainstorming sessions, since we did quite a few of them for our studio projects.

My main goal was to have a discussion around the topic of design education in Lebanon to validate my research findings, and start building a network of potential collaborators who would come together to explore the value of HCD in Lebanon. My other ultimate goal was to start brainstorming ideas on how to move forward. I didn’t want the session to be one where we state all the problems and discuss the reasons that lead to them; I wanted us to generate solutions, and possible next steps we can actually take.

The morning after I landed in Lebanon, a car bomb killed a politician and a few other innocent Lebanese citizens in the heart of Beirut: a warm welcome home gift that struck my motivation. This happened right before my meeting Doreen, who's a partner and the director of the MENA Design Research Center.

Car bombs, or just bombs in general, have sadly become part of our Lebanese routine, so I decided to ignore the incident and focus on planning the workshop. I met with Doreen and later with Diala — another partner, and we went over

the draft of the workshop plan and activities. Things started to get much clearer, but it felt like I was packing in a lot for a 3-hour session. It was hard letting go of some activities/sections and the time I had planned to spend on discovery and exploration was much longer than time I had planned to spend on generative activities.

We set the date of the session for Friday, January 3rd, from 12:00PM to 3:00PM. Knowing how competitive Lebanese universities are, I wanted to find a neutral space to hold the workshop, or

it would look like I'm taking sides. Luckily, Beirut Art Center was nice enough to let us use their space.

Now that time, date and location were set, I started reaching out to design students, educators and established designers, and invited them to take part in our "brainstorming session" (since the term "workshop" sometimes implies making/building something, or learning a new skill) around the theme of design education in Lebanon through a series of co-creative activities and group discussions that would generate valuable insight moving forward.



WORKSHOP: ABOUT DESIGN EDUCATION IN LEBANON

The workshop around the theme of design education in Lebanon kicked off a few minutes past 12:00PM, with 6 design students, 6 design educators and 6 design professionals, at the Beirut Art Center, in Beirut.

The participants were Ronald Abdala, Danny Arakji, Marc Baroud, Salim Batlouni, Karim Chaya, Pascal Hachem, Rana Haddad, Pierre Hage-Boutros, Hala Hassan, Cyril Kallan, Diala Lteif, Joumana Matar, Simon Mhanna, Micheline Nahra, Rani Rajji, Elias Salamoun, Doreen Toutikian, and Mohamed Yassine.

During my studio projects in the last couple semesters, my team and I realized that it gets a little out of hand when a big group of individuals are discussing a specific topic — everyone starts talking at the same time and no one really listens to the other. For this exact reason we developed the “question/comment signals” that participants would use (raise) before asking a question or commenting on something, in order to have a more structured discussion. With a group of 18 participants, the use of this tool was inevitable.



It was very exciting to have 18 experts and key players in the same room, but it was also a little overwhelming. The goal of the workshop was to compile a body of ideas and possible next steps we can implement, test and evaluate within the coming months.

Once everyone was in the room (on the terrace, to be exact), I introduced myself, stated the goal of the workshop, set some ground rules, which we all agreed on, and quickly went over the agenda.



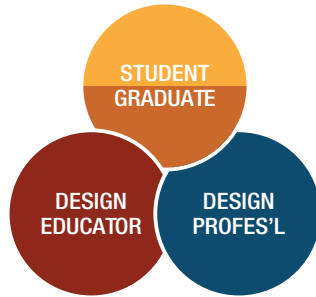


The activities were divided into 2 types: discovery/exploration and idea generation that would trigger discussions around design education in Lebanon. It was important for me to be as transparent as possible and explain the goal of every activity as clearly as I can, to avoid confusion.

The agenda was as follows:

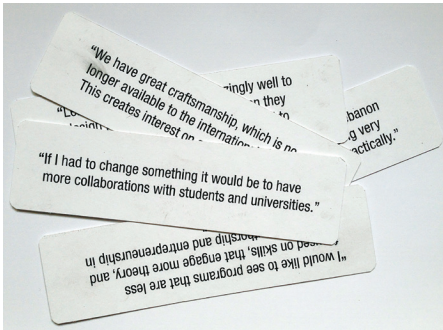
- 1 ICEBREAKER**
- 2 INSIGHTS + AFFINITY MAPPING**
- 3 FUTURE BACKWARDS EXERCISE**
- 4 HEAVEN BRAINSTORMING**
- 5 IDEA DEFENSE GAME**
- 6 VOTING + MOVING FORWARD**

For the icebreaker, we went each around the table and explained how and why we became designers.



INSIGHTS + AFFINITY MAPPING

For our first activity, I divided the participants into 6 teams of 3 — a student, an educator, and a design professional — and asked them to pick a card that has 2 quotes from previous interviews about the advantages and the disadvantages of getting a design education in Lebanon.



Taking anonymous and honest quotes from the interviews I had conducted over email and putting them in a different context seemed to be a risk I was willing to take. By advocating and responding to other people's opinions, participants saw the problem from a different perspective, by empathizing with the person behind the quote.

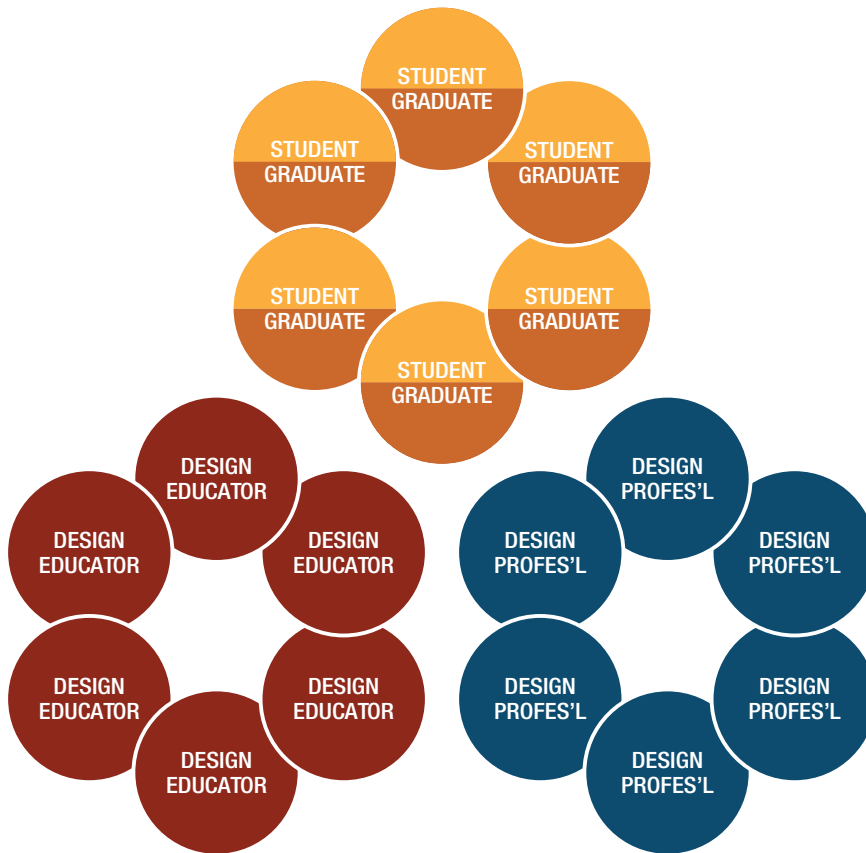
Here, Doreen and Danny are discussing and analyzing the factors/reasons that, in their opinion, played a role or lead to the statement in the quotes, and list all the constituents that might have a stake in the mentioned statement.



After writing their ideas on post-it notes, each team stood up and read both quotes out loud and explained their analysis and thought process to the rest of the participants, by posting their notes on the wall. This generated great discussions and confrontations between students, educators and design professionals.

This activity shed light on major problematic areas as the wall got covered with post-it notes. Institutional politics, corruption, and lack of collaboration were some of the major topics that were discussed.

Here, Marc and Ronald are using the signals to ask questions or comment on Simon's team's analysis.



Next, new groups were formed:
3 teams of 6 — all-students,
all-educators, and all-design
professionals, for a generative design
exercise: the future, backwards.

Generative design exercises engage the participants in creative opportunities to express their feelings, dreams, needs, and desires, resulting in rich information for concept development. The purpose of this exercise was to allow participants to describe their long-term and short-term goals and possible roadblocks/obstacles relating to design education in Lebanon, in short anecdotes.

FUTURE BACKWARDS EXERCISE

The teams were asked to start by identifying 2 or 3 descriptions that for them summarize the current state of design education in Lebanon, and write them on post-it notes.

Once that was done, they were asked to identify the most significant event in the immediate past that shaped the current state, and then, the most significant event that immediately preceded that event that shaped the current state. This might sound a little confusing when read as whole, but imagine it as a separate, step-by-step procedure.



In ideation, the goal is to come up with as many ideas as possible in a non-judgmental, non-critical, quick fashion. The teams are asked to come up with the best ideas (blue-sky ideas), regardless of constraints, which are imposed to help focus the team's thinking in different creative directions (usually one at a time), or come up with the worst possible ideas (grey-sky ideas).

After each group identified the current state and the “history” of design education in Lebanon, the fun part started. Each group was asked to imagine an impossibly good future—the heaven of design education in Lebanon, and identify 2-3 descriptions that for them summarize it. Later, the teams were asked to “make heaven happen,” by identifying the most significant event in the immediate past that would shaped heaven, and then work backwards, event by event to one of the significant events that track back from the current state.

The same steps were repeated for an impossibly bad future—the hell of design education in Lebanon.



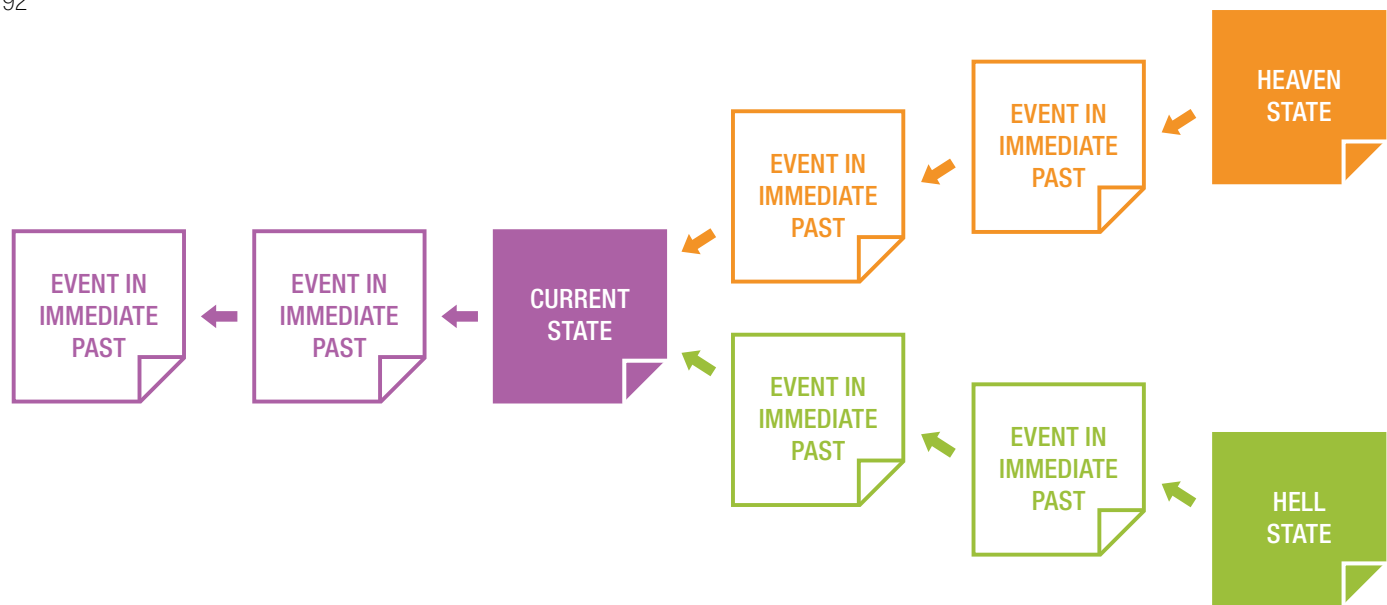
The teams worked very differently. The students' team was the first one to finish each step and wait for instructions on the next, whereas the other 2 teams spent a lot of time discussing and writing plenty of notes, having a hard time narrowing down to 2-3 short ones.

Once all groups were done, they each quickly presented their scenarios to everybody else, so we could all see the commonalities and the differences and prepare for the following exercise.






In this picture, Rana — a design instructor at the American University of Beirut — describes her team’s perspective on the current state of design education in Lebanon as “disconnected from reality.”



The current state of design education in Lebanon was described as follows:



TOTAL PERFORMANCE CONTROL
 POWER STRUGGLE
 UNFIT EDUCATORS
 ISOMORPHIC DESIGN DEPARTMENT
 WHAT SHAPED DESIGNER




WHAT SHAPED DESIGN EDUCATION TODAY?

A yellow sticky note is placed on the page, featuring a simple line drawing of a foot and the handwritten text "Instagram mit".

Little Bits
Alysa Enders



How can
i learn it?
Isn't design
talent?



misunderstood -
Alone - isolated -
Trash

Tolerant
+ open-minded

EMPHATICALLY

ADDITION

MASS

MASS-
PRODUCTION
(industry)

INQUISITIVE
= ASK WHY?
Learn to.

Joint
Research
b/wn UNIS

investing
in design
→ profitable (3)

INTRO

- ① School level
 - Joint pilot project
 - Visit studios
 - integrated

Design education
CB
2014

EMBLEMIC

Buy in
teachers

Understand
mentoshyp
show case

Resources Inventory

A photograph of a sticky note with a circular logo and handwritten text. The logo contains the words "design eco system" in a circular arrangement. The handwritten text on the sticky note reads "Infradisystem" and "Infradisystem". The sticky note is placed on a light-colored, textured surface.

Expand into new design discipline

Here's how the teams described the different heavens of design education in Lebanon:

NEW
CONSUMERISM;
NEW MARKET

A DESIGN
ECOSYSTEM
IS CREATED

COLLABORATION
BETWEEN
UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENTS

INTERDISCIPLINARY
DESIGN CENTERS
IN UNIVERSITIES

PARTNERSHIPS
WITH CORPORATE
AND PUBLIC
SECTORS; FUNDING
FOR STUDENT
PROJECTS

EXPAND INTO
NEW DESIGN
DISCIPLINES

MAJORS ARE
CUSTOMIZABLE

PROFESSORS
BECOME
FACILITATORS; NOT
LECTURERS

DESIGN
INSTRUCTORS ARE
ALSO WORKING
PROFESSIONALS

CONSTRUCTIVE
CRITICISM

NO SEPARATION
BETWEEN
EDUCATION AND
PRACTICE

CULTURAL
RENAISSANCE

And here's how the teams saw the impossibly bad future (hell) of design education in Lebanon:

MATRYOSHKA

DESIGN BECOMES
AN ADJECTIVE

EDUCATE [WAR]
FIGHTERS

EDUCATION BY
RELIGION

DESIGNERS AS
OPERATORS

ILLITERACY

TOTALITARIAN
SYSTEM

ONLY TECHNICAL
AND THEORETICAL
COURSES; UNFIT
EDUCATORS

MASS PRODUCTION
IN SHELTERS

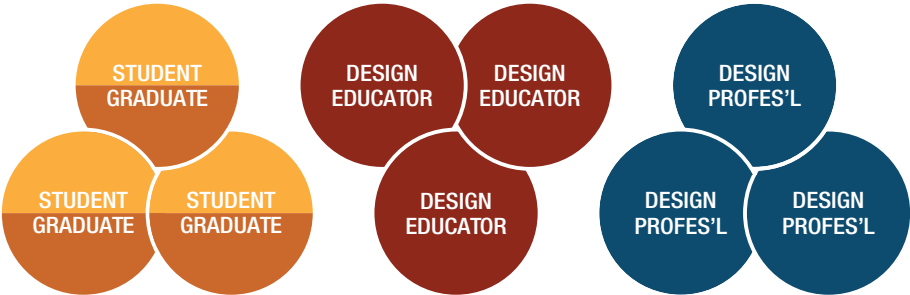
ISOLATING DESIGN
DEPARTMENTS

GOVERNMENTAL
CONTROL

TOTAL PRIVATE
CONTROL; POWER
STRUGGLE

HEAVEN BRAINSTORMING

To put these insights into use, the teams were asked to split in 2 (total of 5 teams), pick their favorite step from the “make heaven happen” series of steps (not necessarily their own), and spend a few minutes to break it down to detailed, actionable steps. This would help us define and discuss actual steps we can take moving forward.





FOSTERING EMPATHY

This team of students want to get together students, educators and professionals and have them work in groups by designing activities and games (e.g. role playing) that would help them get into each another's shoes and hear each other's point of view. This will allow the different key players to communicate better, negotiate and reach a common ground, which would result in a more accepting, tolerant and open-minded group of stakeholders.



THE STONERS

Quite often, the most surreal and silly ideas turn out to be the easiest to implement. This team of educators want to send coded, discrete invitations to select designers and stakeholders, and ask them to go to the Bekaa valley, into the fields, where illegal substances are grown. The purpose is to get them high and drunk. Once in the desired state, a sober facilitator will easily convince the people to drop the institution (together with its politics) and do actual "field" work. It's quite a nice metaphor of having everyone in the field (a big, outdoor place in Bekaa) drop the frame and the boundaries that the institution has put on us. In other words, it's about letting go of these boundaries and going into the field.



DESIGN IN HIGH SCHOOLS

This team of educators aims to bridge high schools and universities by integrating design classes in high school (or middle school) level. Sadly, art classes are vanishing from schools, but “injecting” more design into them, where students would learn more problem solving skills to understand and embrace the practicality of design, would prevent that. On a university level, there would be more projects that reach out to the society and the environment around them by collaborating with high school students. A joint exhibition of the different projects that link design students in universities with high school students tackling social and environmental problems will create awareness about the potential of design.



NEW FOUNDATION YEAR

This team of design professionals would like to start breaking the boundaries of design by hosting an open cooperative workshop with educators, professionals, students and creative minds to create a common foundation year for all universities to implement, or an external third party to administer. This would bring all design disciplines, old and new, to the same space, where students can deduce what they want to focus on in the future according to what they’re learning.



STUDENT REVOLUTION

Since a top-down approach doesn't seem to be effective and very feasible, this team of students would like to reach out to other students and student councils and take matters into their own hands. Planning group meetings and starting a design movement that would create hype and grow through social networking, will result in a strike to take radical action to change the course of design education in Lebanon. Why is this idea effective? Because it's been done several times before and it's worked every time. It requires little effort compared to the drastic change it triggers.

IDEA DEFENSE GAME

Once done, the teams advocated for their idea (and steps) by presenting them to the rest of the groups.

To game-ify it a little, each team was asked to roll the devil's advocate dice, twice, and answer the questions asked to test the feasibility of their idea.



This is another tool developed with my team in our studio project, and it essentially turns the “Devil’s Advocate” role into an inanimate object: making it less threatening. The performative nature of the tool also encourages others in the group to give quiet attention to the person rolling the dice and answering the questions.

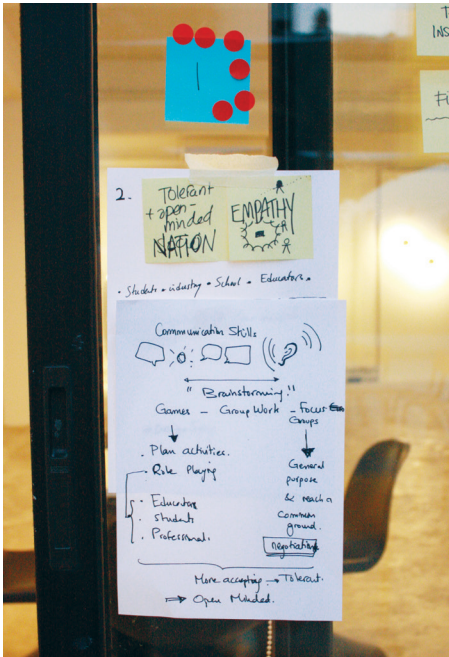


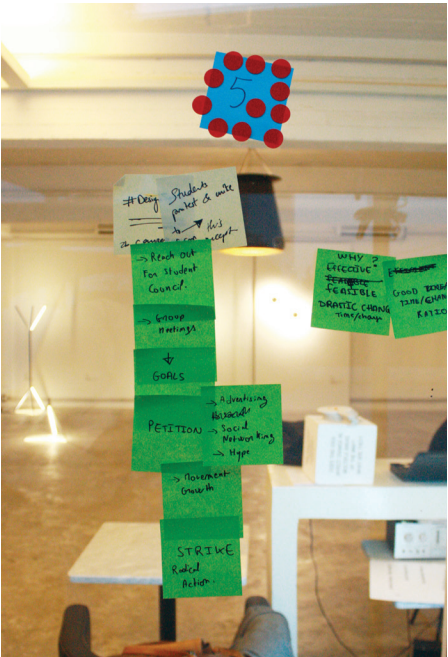
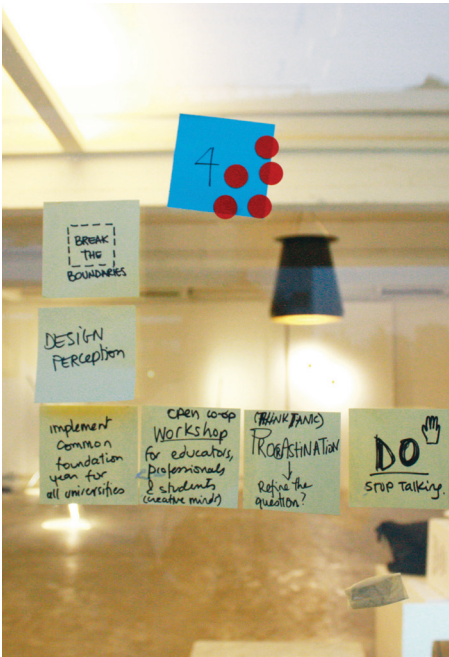
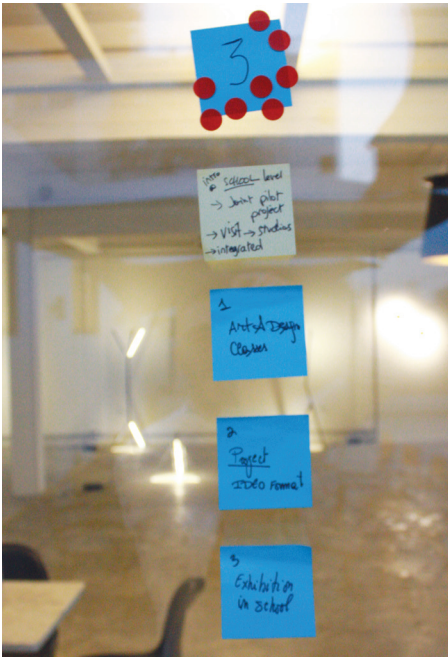


Here, Joumana rolls the dice and gets the “can this idea be implemented within a reasonable budget?” question.

VOTING

We concluded the workshop by voting for the best idea out the five presented, in order to implement it next as our first step moving forward.





The “Student Revolution” took the lead, followed by “Design in High Schools”, “Fostering Empathy”, “New Foundation Year”, and “The Stoners”.

“The only grounded and implementable solutions came out from the students, which is very significant, because as educators, our hands are tied by the knowledge of how the system is broken. It’s refreshing to see how the students remain hopeful, and we should encourage that more.”

— Diala Lteif

TAKE AWAYS

It was clear that most of the problems in the current design education system stem from institutional politics and bureaucracy, and it became clearer that the fastest way to make a change—introduce human-centered design processes—in the existing design education infrastructure is to avoid the politics and use a bottom-up approach. In other words, a student-led initiative.



PURSUING THE PATH

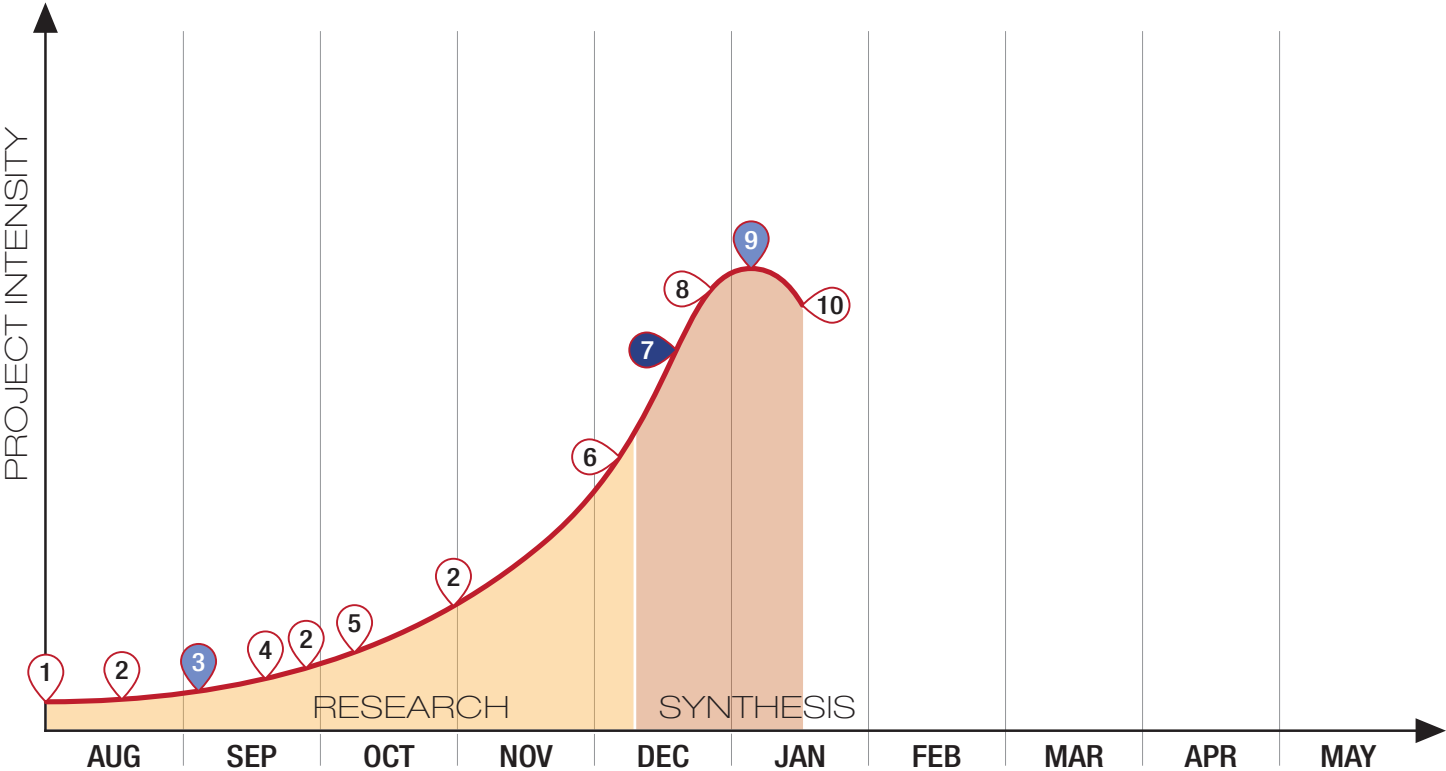
COMING BACK TO PHILADELPHIA

THE BIRTH OF A TEAM

THE CO-DESIGN OF A STRATEGY

REMOTE COLLABORATION

WORKSHOP: PASSING THE TORCH



COMING BACK TO PHILADELPHIA

After the workshop, I connected with Cyril and Elias — two of the participating students — and they showed a lot of enthusiasm in taking the steps that came out of the session and moving the project forward. I felt like 3 weeks of field work in Lebanon were productive.

Returning to Philadelphia just when the project seemed to be taking shape was a little discouraging. I was back in a different continent, at a 7-hour time difference and only one line of communication, which is not always reliable in a developing country: the Internet. As a human-centered designer, being there, in the moment,

talking to people, collaborating and figuring out the next steps together is the normal thing to do. Being on a whole other continent, trying to find the best way to stay in touch with potential collaborators is not. My own confidence and enthusiasm in the project started to decline. I felt like I had regressed to my old design process: one where it was just me, a solo designer, sitting at a desk, brainstorming and sketching out ideas on a piece of paper, by myself. A process that now seems very alien to me. I allowed myself, however, to re-synthesize the outcomes of the workshop, to make sure my assumptions were grounded.

For the ground-up, student-led initiative to succeed in making a change in the design education infrastructure, it is important that the students and leaders of the initiative see the value of the work first to be able to push and advocate for it later.

And so, with this in mind, I opened up the process and invited the students in to explore the value of human-centered design. This way, they would take it upon themselves to include it in their programs and have a positive impact on their education, which is the long-term goal of this project.

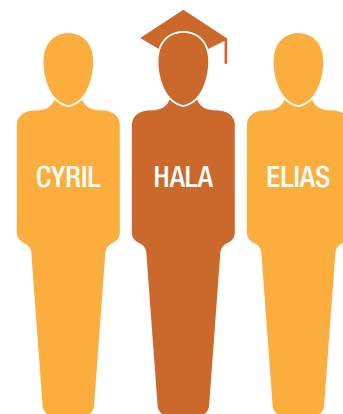
THE BIRTH OF A TEAM: BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP

When starting a design project and aiming to generate sustainable solutions, a designer shouldn't be designing FOR other people; a designer should designing WITH other people, and all that takes is relationship building. The initial part isn't just doing research, observing, shadowing, taking pictures, giving surveys, etc. It's actually sitting down with the people involved and understanding who they are, what their motivations and inspirations are, and most importantly, what they expect to get out of the project at hand. This process is called co-designing.

Co-design is an approach to design that incorporates input from stakeholders throughout the design process. This input can create innovation and value for the multiple stakeholders, particularly in networked situations. Immanuel Kant's assertion that one must use a priori knowledge before asking a question indicates the impossibility of complete objectivity. In the design process, if no one can be objective, this emphasizes the need for frequent input from all stakeholders, and the need to question each one's underlying assumptions.

I reached out to Cyril, Elias and Hala—the enthusiastic student revolutionaries from the workshop, who demonstrated an interest in collaborating with me in taking a next step—and scheduled an online meeting. The point of the meeting was to discuss the 5 ideas that came out of the workshop and check their engagement level. I was worried at first that the Internet connection would not be strong enough for us to have a video conference call, but luck was on my side and Google Hangout worked like magic.

The independent collective was born.



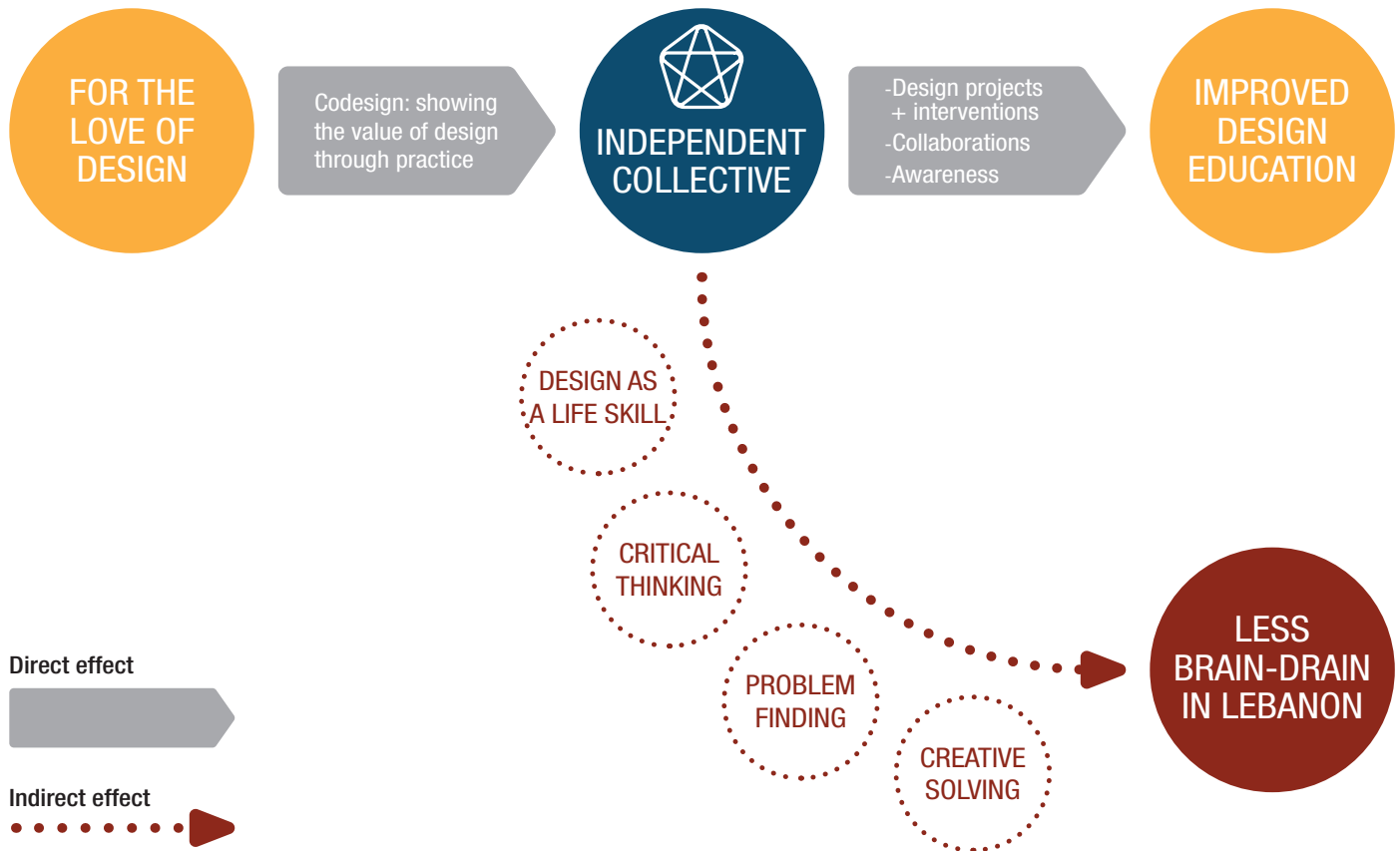
It's important to not see implementation (in this case, the kick-off of a sub-project) as an end goal, but something that happens throughout the design process. Creating small prototypes, testing things out early on (e.g. whether or not an independent collective is the way to go about impacting design education in Lebanon) and consistently making things more and more real throughout the process. These early wins keep people engaged in the work and are essential to getting their buy-in.



THE CO-DESIGN OF A STRATEGY

As planned, we discussed the ideas that came out of the workshop and dug a little deeper into that of “design in high schools.” If we frame “design” as a life skill, and rename it “critical thinking,” “problem finding” and “creative solving,” we can more easily infiltrate high schools and other fields of study.

We realized that this could have a ripple effect and secondary outcome that can have a large impact on Lebanon: by giving young individuals the tools to practice those life skills and by planting this way of thinking in their minds, we might (just might) be developing in them the power to solve problems on a larger scale and on a social and systems level. Who knows, maybe the common “I’m leaving Lebanon, because the system in the country is corrupt and there’s nothing I can do about it” expression changes to “I’m staying in Lebanon, because I know how to address a large, systems-level problem and I can make a change.”



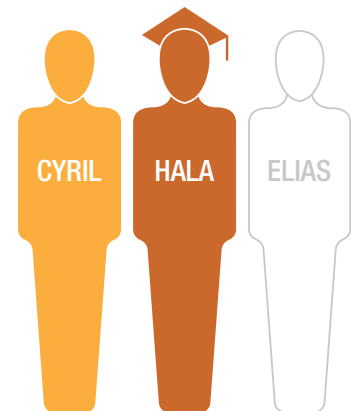
Coming back to our short-term goals, things were a bit more concrete. I suggested doing a series of student-led activities or initiatives that reveal the value and potential of design by using the proper tools and methods and engaging others: reaching out and collaborating with other students, faculty, and the public. The team agreed with this approach, but I needed them to have an input in our first decision-making moment, since this would be a “model” for our future decision-making moments. As we discussed what these initiatives could and should be, the team suggested that we should design them around social themes that everyone relates to (e.g. electricity and water problems, public transportation, corruption, etc.). This would be the only way to engage other students, faculty, and the public.

For a project to be sustainable, a designer has to make sure it's a transparent and collaborative process. And this happens based on the relationships built with the people involved. The design should be contextual, with individuals, through relationships. This method, however, slows down the process since it's not linear, and it could be messy, but eventually, everyone involved learns more about the process and develops ownership around the ideas that come out.

One of the students, Cyril, mentioned that the ultimate goal and the outcome seem a bit blurry and perhaps loose-ended, and that it can be frustrating working towards something “uncertain.” I feel the same way and I realized this was my chance to start building some level of trust in our relationship by being honest and transparent: I struggle with ambiguity quite a bit and I share Cyril’s frustration. If I don’t have a clear picture of the result or the end product, I have trouble taking steps forward. But this is what design is all about. We don’t always know where we’re going, but we make sure we’re taking the right direction towards it. As my thesis advisor puts it: it’s about trusting the process and your own capacity to navigate complexity one step at a time. “It is like checking-in your luggage at the airport and taking a flight. When you get to your destination, your bags might not get there in time—maybe an hour, maybe a couple days late—but they will get there eventually.”

We agreed to take one step at a time and see where our journey takes us. The initial plan was to have 3 design sprints (quick design projects/interventions), and invite new parties at every step: the first one’s participants would be the students, the second one would include students, faculty and design professionals, and the third one would invite the public — non-designers and individuals who are interested in the topic at hand.

That approach seemed a little tough after a week, and I believe was the reason we later lost Elias somewhere along the way. It meant we had to research 3 different topics in a very short amount of time, and that’s asking for a lot of commitment from full-time students.



SOCIAL DESIGN PATHWAYS

RANGE OF EXPERTISE			
SCALE OF ENGAGEMENT	Get all faculty members on board Create awareness	A well-rounded design education	Entrepreneurs with a social mission
	Include HCD in own projects Educator: include HCD in class	DIY infrastructure that explores the value of HCD in Lebanon	Design/social entrepreneurship courses
	Talking to people about HCD Show methods and tools Create awareness	Design intervention about a social issue using HCD methods and tools	A start-up with a social mission
INDIVIDUAL (DESIGNER) <i>A lone person or discipline</i>	INTERDISCIPLINARY (TEAM) <i>A team made up of the necessary expertise</i>	CROSS-SECTOR (GROUP) <i>Requires cross sector participation for ideation and execution</i>	CULTURAL (TRANSFORMATION) <i>Changing the attitudes and behaviors of a community or organization</i>
			SYSTEM (INNOVATION) <i>Altering an existing system, or creating a new one to deliver a better solution</i>
			STAND-ALONE (INTERVENTION) <i>The introduction of a discrete product or service</i>

The Social Design Pathways matrix is a useful tool for clarifying the terrain, stakeholders and potential impacts of social design projects. It acknowledges the fact that design for social impact, as an emerging field, can be complex and multi-dimensional, and that a process for mapping its many ingredients can be instructive and beneficial. The matrix can help reveal the skills required for action, the kinds of participants and partners required for rigorous work, the scales of engagement, and the possible outcomes for a given social impact challenge. It helps designers see the distant but clear edges of the total landscape of social design practices, to expand their perspective, and to inform the solution strategies that they choose to pursue.

The Social Design Pathways matrix was developed by the attendees at the 2013 Winterhouse Symposium for Design Education and Social Change.

REMOTE COLLABORATION

The following week was hectic for my collaborators and we weren't able to schedule a Google Hangout session. I did not want to waste time and decided to do some brainstorming on my own, while I waited for our next meeting.

Based on my team's schedules and level of commitment, it made more sense to merge the 3 design sprints into one by having one general topic and dividing the design process into 3 distinct steps: research, synthesis, brainstorming and prototyping.

For our next conference call, I had prepared a rough project plan, which I shared with the rest of the team via Google Docs. My goal was to provide the team with some recommendations and structure to ease and guide our process, all the while making it clear that it was flexible and that we would finalize it together. I wanted to avoid the decision-maker role by making sure all final decisions were made together, as a team— whether by vote or just consensus. After all, it's essential that every member develop ownership of the decisions and ideas that come out in order to have a successful project.

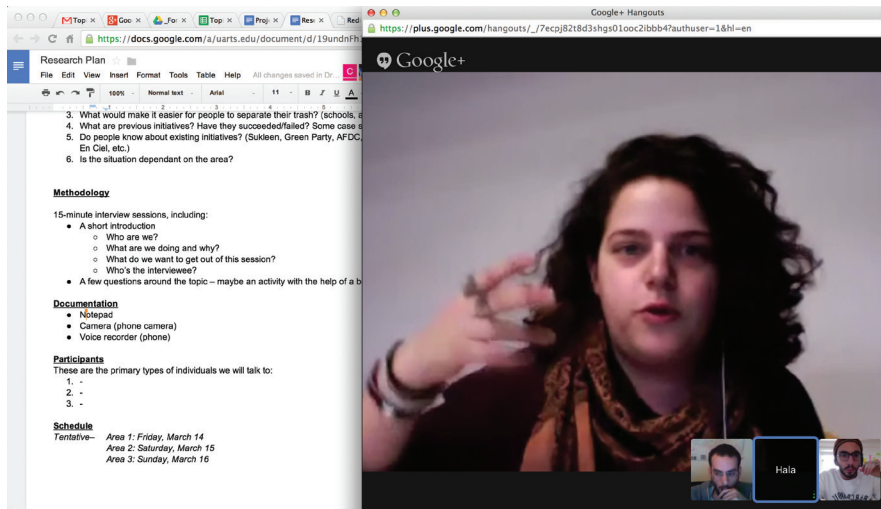


We went through the different steps of the plan, made changes together and added deadlines to each step. My teammates set the deadlines, since they already had other commitments (school projects) and I did not want to seem imposing, or selfish.

Part of our agenda was also to discuss possible research topics (social issues in Lebanon) that we would like to tackle. But since I'm working on this project from a different continent and with a 7-hour time difference, it's very hard for me to properly communicate with my collaborators, and get their quick feedback and input. We are not all available at the same time, and conference calls were starting to become less efficient, because the Internet connection is pretty bad. This is why we used Google Docs as a boundary object.

A boundary object is not what it sounds like: it does not create boundaries. It is a physical element that creates a common ground between parties by facilitating a conversation or a dialogue. It does, however, create a buffer between a question and an answer among parties, by giving them time to think and carefully choose specific and accurate information about the theme at hand.

A Boundary object, or a common-ground object, is a neutral, inanimate object that becomes something to point at and refer back to while putting the parties involved at ease and helping them feel comfortable discussing a personal and maybe sensitive topic.



Our common-ground-Google-document served as an online discussion board, where we all shared our thoughts and comments —at our own time and convenience— and gave each other feedback about the different social problems in Lebanon. We mapped out and discussed different social problems in Lebanon; defined their subtopics; the main affected groups and stakeholders; the strengths and weaknesses of choosing the topic; the areas it affects; its projected results; and some additional comments.

The week during which we were filling out our “Topics” spreadsheet, Cyril and I did a SWOT analysis of our initiative over a conference call. This was not an exercise he was familiar with, but once I explained what each letter stands for (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats), and started adding a couple points, he understood the general idea and engaged in adding his own thoughts. I felt like that was a learning moment for him, and wished the others were also present at the moment. Fortunately, our communication method (Google Docs) allowed the absent team members to check the document later on and add to it.

STRENGTHS

- Student-led initiative: no bureaucracy, no institutional politics
- The students on board are somewhat familiar with the design process
- Team comes from different design (and cultural) background
- Established contact with key players through the workshop in Beirut
- Horizontal “hierarchy”

OPPORTUNITIES

- Sustainable system: can continue to be lead by other students
- Engage non-students/non-designers
- Reconnect and collaborate with workshop participants
- Partner with design schools
- Design could be seen as a life skill
- It could have a ripple effect; results seen in a few years

SWOT

WEAKNESSES

- Vrouyr: working remotely
- Ambiguity - not a defined/ concrete end result
- Students’ busy schedules (commitment)
- Tackling a large topic with a very small team

THREATS

- Time
- Failure to get others on board
- Failure to demonstrate the value of design
- The politics we’re trying to avoid
- Be associated with ALBA

The SWOT analysis has been utilized in community work as a tool to identify positive and negative factors within organizations and communities that promote or inhibit successful implementation of social change efforts. It is used as a preliminary resource, assessing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of an initiative. This organizing tool helps teams develop goals and objectives for a project or, in this case, implement an organizing strategy.

As we filled out our topics spreadsheet, we had to pick one topic to move forward with. We had already discussed the implications and the strengths and weaknesses of each one, so it was a matter of voting.

The topic we collectively chose was that of garbage sorting and management. We established a detailed research plan together, where we defined out stakeholders, the brief, our goals, the questions we wanted to get answers to and the possible methodologies we could adopt.





INTERVIEW TOOL CREATION

Although the secondary research Hala shared with us provided a lot of insights around the topic of garbage management in Lebanon, the team felt it wasn't enough. We wanted to get the perspective of the users, especially after the "Sukleen-Naameh landfill" scandal that everyone was talking about.

Conducting street interviews seemed to be the way to further understand the problem and collect firsthand stories, opinions, and perceptions from users. I shared with the team some basic interview examples and it seemed to be a very straightforward procedure: ask a question, note down the answer, move to the next question, and repeat. We agreed on who's going to cover what area in Beirut and while discussing possible questions and how we should frame them, Cyril and Hala raised a very good point: walking up to people on the streets with a notepad and a pen can be very annoying and pedestrians might assume we are selling something. There would be reluctance to cooperate. The team

wanted to do it in a more interactive and engaging way — different from just asking questions and taking notes. Perhaps an activity, they said.

In comes the boundary object. I shared with them the concept and its use, and they were very excited. The interview tool my team created involves a metal board and little magnetic cards with pictures of common objects — mostly trash items — and the interviewee would be asked to sort them according to affinity. Ideally, plastics will be grouped together, same for metals, glass, etc. But we made it a point to not specify how the items should be sorted (i.e. by material, or size), to avoid distorting the information. Once the sorting exercise is done, we would ask the interviewees to walk us through their thought process and explain why they sorted the items the way they did. The main goal of the activity was to start a conversation around the topic of garbage management and see how familiar Lebanese citizens are with recycling basics.

Card Sorting is a participatory design technique that designers use to explore how participants group items into categories and concepts to one another. It's an activity that identifies terminology that might be misunderstood, either because the terminology is vague (trash sorting) or because multiple meanings are associated with it.

Here, during a Google Hangout, Cyril was showing us how he made the boundary object: he cut little pieces of soft magnets and stuck them on the back of the cards. He planned on using a metal tray from home as his board.



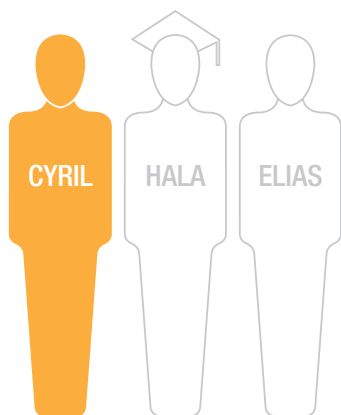
MIRRORING THE PROCESS

We had scheduled the interviews for the following weekend, but both Cyril and Hala got swamped with schoolwork/ work and there was a week of limbo. We all know how annoying constant emailing can be, so I tried to avoid that as much I could. I decided I would give them a few days and they will get back to me as soon as they have a chance.

Truth is, I felt paralyzed.

Here I was, again, on the other side of the world, waiting for an email that's going to tell me "let's go!" I'm pretty sure it's the same feeling kids experience while waiting for their moms outside school, on the stairs.

By the end of the second week, we lost Hala. She had work commitments and didn't have the extra time nor the energy to stay engaged with Cyril.

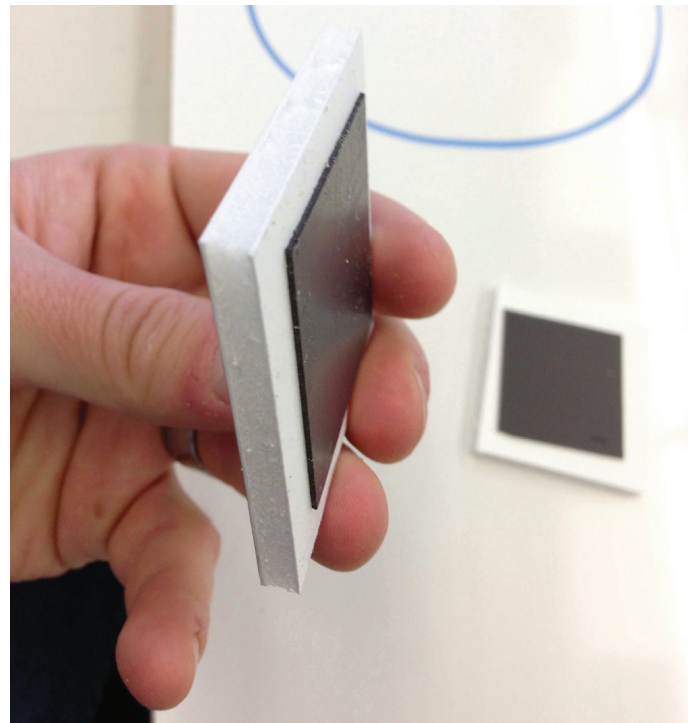


It was just Cyril and I, and I knew it was only a matter of days until I was the only one left on the team. Luckily, my second thesis committee meeting was right around the corner and as I shared the team's successes and frustrations with my advisors, Meredith, my lead advisor, raised a very good point: I had to find other ways to keep my collaborators engaged, and more importantly, keep myself motivated.

Emails and Google Hangouts weren't enough, and it felt like I was asking my team to do field work, while I sat here behind a computer screen and waited for the results.

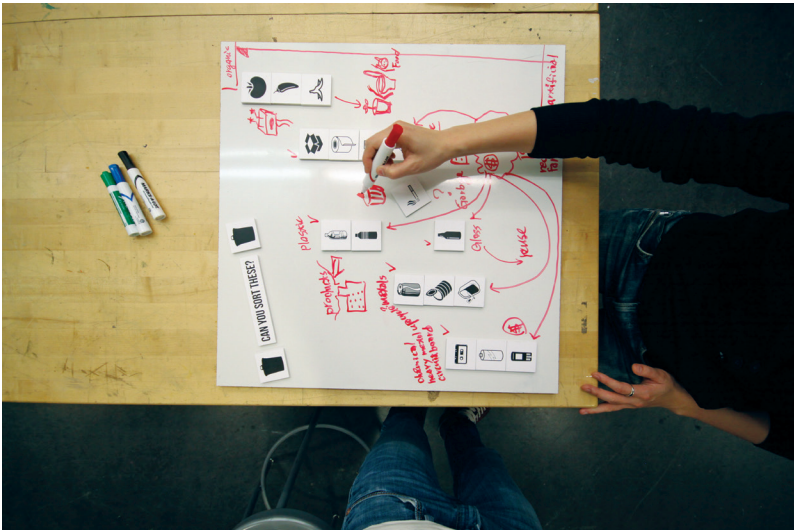
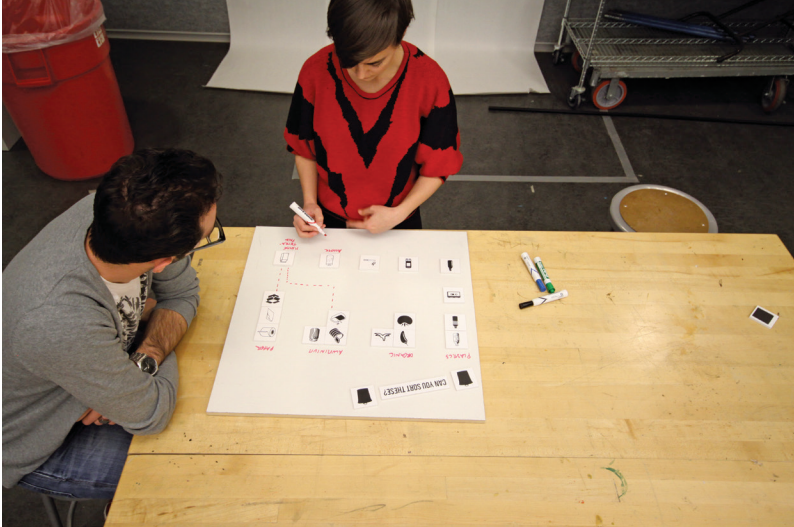
Why did I not think of that before? I was so focused on having my team members engaged and participating in every step that I sort of left myself out.

So we decided to mirror Cyril's experience in Philadelphia. I asked him to send me the boundary object production files so I could make it and test it out simultaneously.





Here, Cyril is using cars' hoods as his metal sheet, after realizing the tray he brought from home was too small.



In Philly, I used a magnetic white board as the base, which allowed the interviewees to better illustrate and express their ideas.

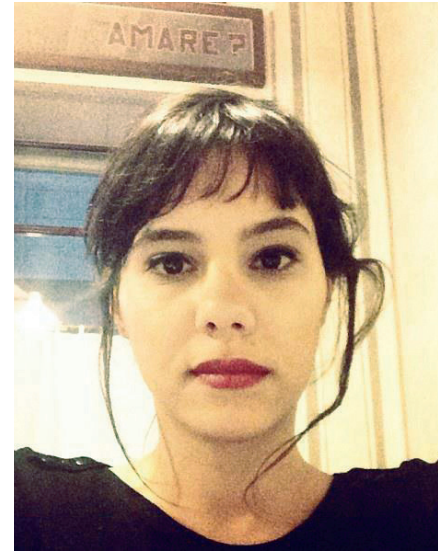
We followed up with a meeting a couple days after we conducted our interviews to do an after-action report. Just like the time we did the SWOT analysis, Cyril wasn't familiar with an after-action report. I explained it briefly and together we started answering the following questions: What was expected to happen? What actually occurred? What went well and why? What can be improved, and how?

The After Action Report (AAR) is a powerful tool to assess a team's performance to identify and learn from successes and failures. As designers, conducting an AAR at the end of a project has become a habit, because it helps us learn from our efforts. It is a structured approach for reflecting on the work we've done and identifying strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement.

We started to run out of time and we realized it's almost impossible to plan for 2 workshops to follow the street interview phase: one to share our findings and choose an area of focus, and another to ideate and prototype. We decided to merge them.

Cyril's use of the new tools and methods he learned (e.g. boundary object, card sorting, SWOT analysis, AAR, documenting, etc.) through our collaboration proved to me that working alongside students outside of their standard curriculum is a valid method and has a positive impact.

Cyril and I had already gotten used to “co-creating” online documents when planning a next step, but this phase got tricky. We were about to devise a plan for a workshop he was going to facilitate (his first time) and he needed more than my online, virtual support.



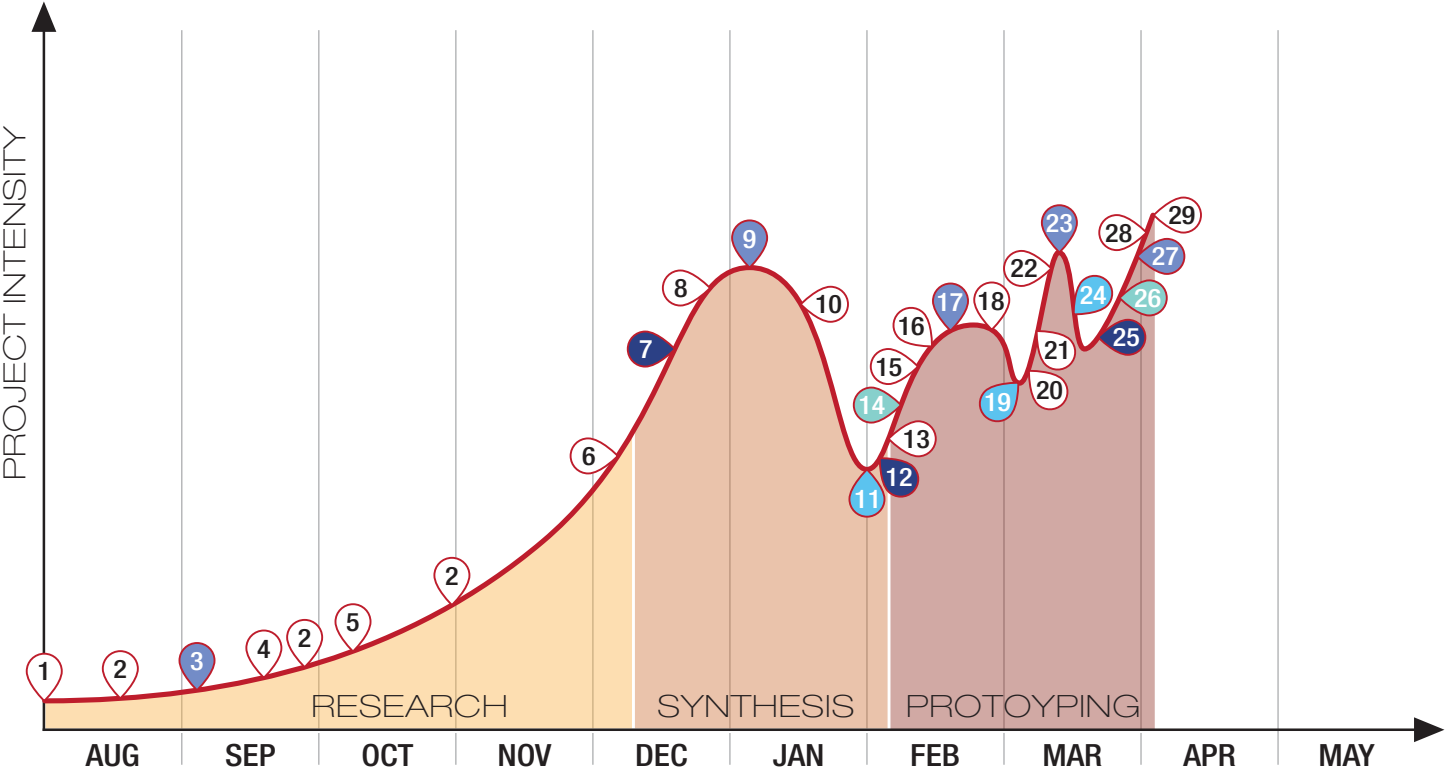
In comes Diala. Diala, who graduated from Parson's Transdisciplinary Design program, participated in our first workshop in January and is currently a design educator in ALBA, where Cyril studies. She came on board, no questions asked and was ready to help/support us.

Even though we had established certain “equality” between students and educators through the activities

in the workshop in January, the dynamics between Cyril and Diala weren't very smooth. It took me a few weeks to build a solid relationship with him and it was a little foolish of me to expect him to get as comfortable around Diala, his professor, in a matter of 2 days.

Lucky for us, Elena Habre, the designer who went to Quito to volunteer with Architects Without Borders, was back in Beirut for a

month — the time her next Quito project started. She had a good idea about my thesis project and was thrilled that she can use her “limbo” time in Lebanon to work on an issue she relates to. Since she's a recent graduate who sees the value of design and practices it in a human centered fashion, I felt she would be a good propeller for the project: a fresh pair of eyes with enough extra time to engage with Cyril and keep him motivated.



A design charette is a workshop-style method that provides a collaborative and engaging environment, where teams explore and share ideas freely around an assigned problem, and are expected to build off each other's best ideas.

Prototyping is the tangible creation of artifacts to develop and test with users the ideas that come out of a charette or a workshop.

WORKSHOP PLANNING

While Cyril, Elena, Diala and I were discussing the workshop over a Google Hangout, we realized what we were aiming for was more or less a design charette. Our goal was to generate prototypes that address the issue of garbage management and recycling in Lebanon, and that can be tested in the following week or two. We wrote down the activities, duration, their objectives, and the materials needed for each one.

As in our first workshop, we looked for a space that inspires creativity and is not affiliated with any design school. Beirut Art Center was, again, our incubator.

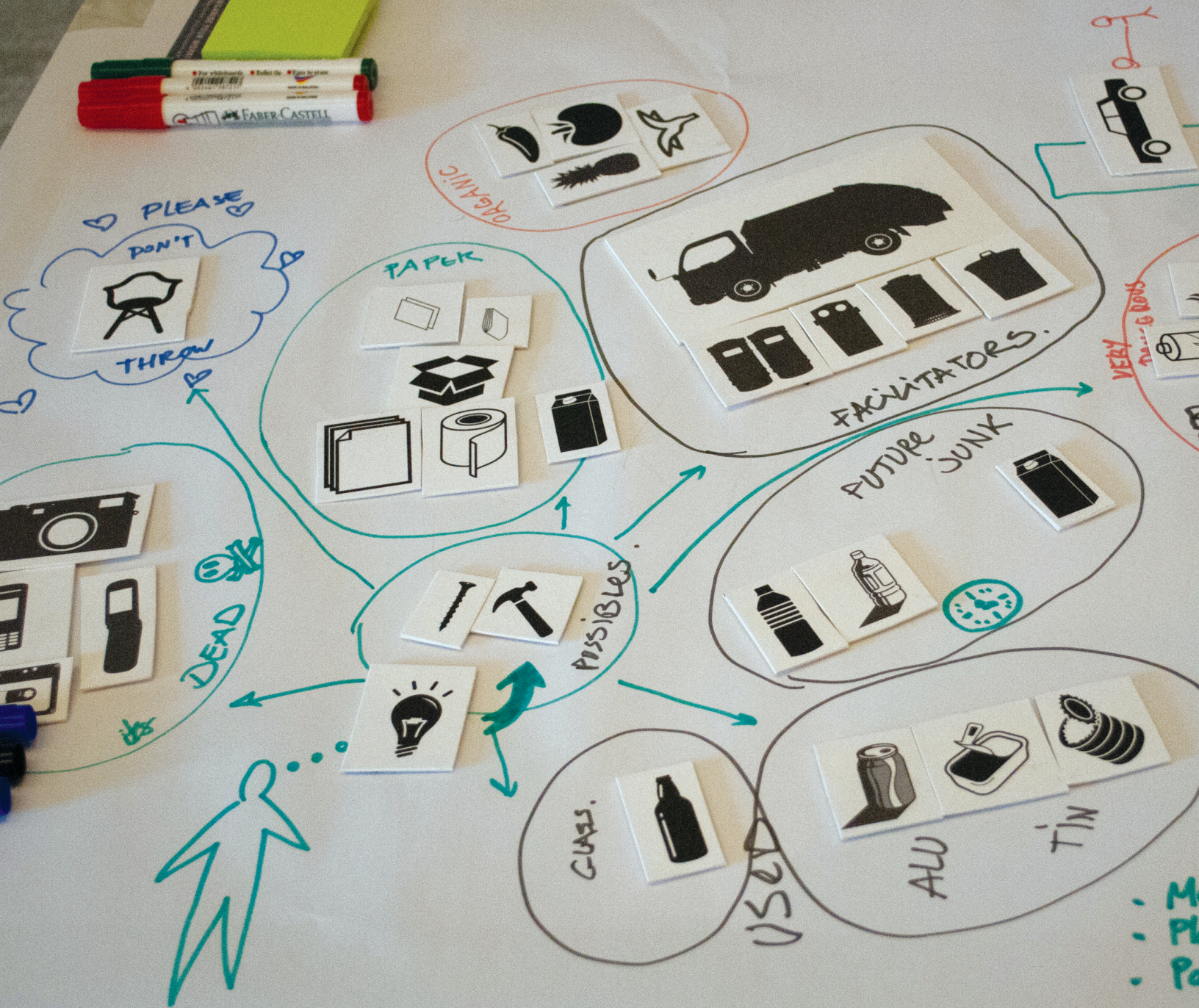
WORKSHOP: PASSING THE TORCH

The workshop around garbage management and recycling kicked off at 5:30PM on Thursday, April 10th. Although we were expecting to have enough participants to divide them into 2 groups, only five attended. Cyril, the first-time facilitator, was good with making last minute changes to the program.

Once all 5 participants were around the table, they were asked to present themselves to the rest of the group and to draw on a balloon what design represents for them.



In this picture, Marc explains that a pen is a designer's main tool and that it's where every idea is born. He continued saying that a pen is also a weapon: both literally and figuratively.





The next activity was to use the boundary object the team had created earlier for the interviews. The point of this exercise was to gather data from the participants to later merge them with the existing data.

Until this point, the interviews we had conducted were with one person at a time, which means that the interviewees sorted the cards alone, and then explained their thought-process. This time, we flipped it: all 5 participants, together with Cyril, who had added new elements and icons to the tool, sorted the cards as a team.

The conversation they had while doing the sorting exercise generated a lot of interesting moments. There were a few illustrations of bottles and cans, but we hadn't realized how some of them looked 'used' and others were 'still unopened.' Marc suggested to separate them and create a 'future trash' category — something that never came up in our initial interviews. Also, adding the option of writing/drawing allowed the team to link the elements and categories, and create stories.

The next activity was to define some opportunity areas to later generate solutions. To do that, we used IDEO's famous "How Might We...?" phrase.



The “how might we” (HMW) approach makes sure the participants are asking the right questions and using the best wording. When we try to innovate, we often talk about the challenges we face by using language that inhibits creativity instead of encouraging it.

“People may start out asking ‘how can we do this,’ or ‘how should we do that’” says Min Basadur — a professor at McMaster University’s Business School and a recognized world leader in the field of applied creativity and a specialist in organizational effectiveness, innovation and problem solving.

“But as soon as you start using words like ‘can’ and ‘should,’ you’re implying judgment: Can we really do it? And should we?” By substituting the word might, he says, “we’re able to defer judgment, which helps people to create options more freely, and opens up more possibilities.”

Asking “How might we” at the start of a team project is a creative problem-solving tool that can be applied to almost any ambitious, achievable challenge. Tim Brown — the CEO of IDEO — explains that each word within this deceptively simple phrase plays a powerful role in spurring creative problem-solving: “How” assumes that solutions exist and provides the creative confidence needed to identify and solve for unmet needs. “Might” says that we can put ideas out there that might work or might not — either way, we’ll learn something useful. “We” signals that we’re going to collaborate and build on each other’s ideas to find creative solutions together.

Saltwater
Coast Lodge

THE ONLY SOUND IS THE WIND
AGAINST THE SAILS



For the second part of the ideation phase and later the prototyping phase, the teams were divided into 2. With Cyril joining, there were two teams of 3.



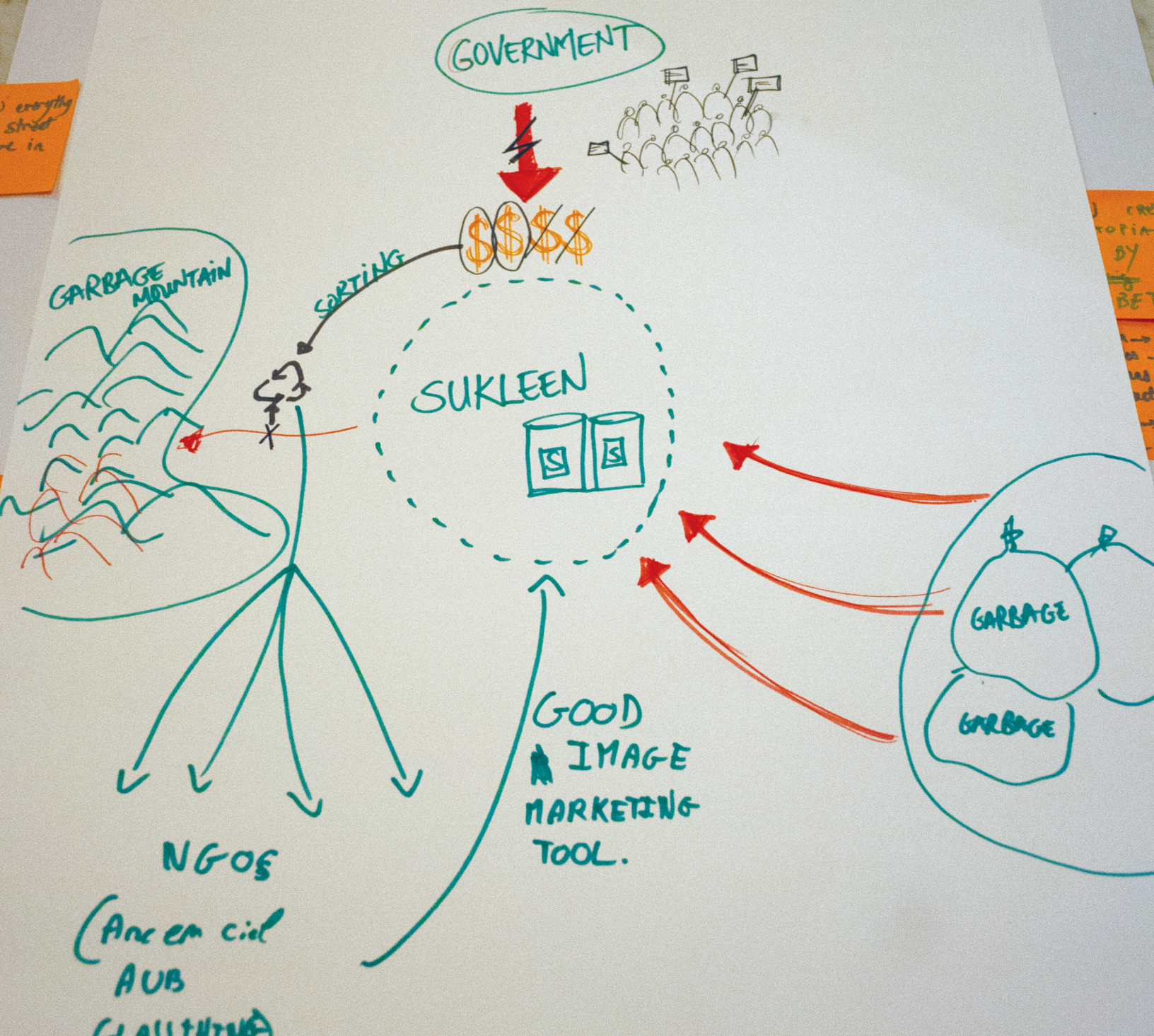
In this picture, Emilio, Marc and Elena are brainstorming ideas to keep Sukleen — the private company that handles garbage collection in Lebanon — engaged, by answering “how might we find a financial interest for Sukleen to start recycling?” and “how might we create a competition?”





The goal of the workshop was to generate prototype ideas that we could test in the following week or two, but the outcome was a systematic design, that changes the way garbage is collected and handled in Lebanon.

PROTOTYPING



“I realize now that design answers a problem.”

— Yara, workshop participant

“I learned more in 2 hours than my whole bachelor degree track.”

— Emilio, workshop participant

“I particularly enjoyed the blue and gray sky ideas where we really loosened up and dreamt a little.”

— Elena

“I saw my old self in the students who attended the second workshop. Nice feeling.”

— Cyril

“There was an interesting dynamic between participants that unveiled during the workshop. For instance, kept calling Marc “Monsieur” (because he’s a professor) and wanted to let him always speak first, and Cyril kept pointing out that there was no hierarchy here. Also, Cyril was very much enjoying the flipped situation, where he was in charge while Marc and I were participants. Very interesting. Towards the end of the workshop, we all felt more equal.”

— Diala

REFLECTION

SCAFFOLDING + LEARNING CURVE

THE IMPACT

NEW GROWTH



“Cyril is falling a little behind on his schoolwork because of this project. But that’s fine, because he’s learning a lot and he’s trying to share his learning with the class. He really sees the value of the work.”

— Diala



“Team brainstorming is extremely helpful, because different perspectives are discussed. In my studies, the only person I work with is my tutor, and it’s a one-way discussion really.”

“Usually, I tend to undermine unrealistic ideas, but I now realize how useful they are as they open up to more creative ideas and concepts that are really ‘out of the box’.”

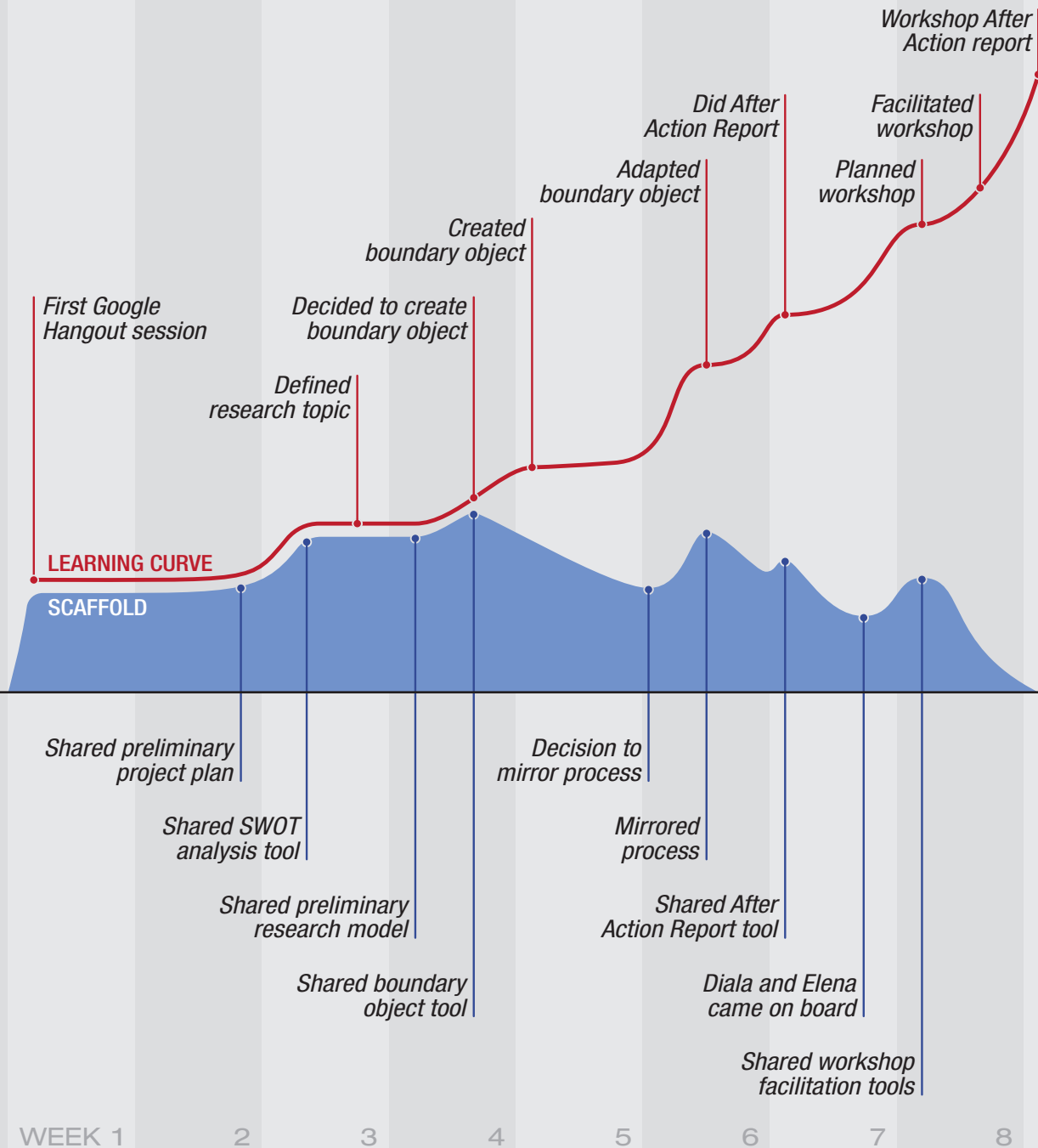
“We have a course where we were supposed to make a survey, I was the one proposing something new à la boundary object.”

— Cyril

SCAFFOLD & LEARNING CURVE

Through this project, I collaborated with Lebanese students on a design project outside their standard school curricula, and demonstrated to them the value of a human-centered approach by scaffolding their educational experience.

And what I mean by scaffolding is what others might refer to as coaching or mentoring, or in other words, providing support to young people who don't have the necessary expertise.



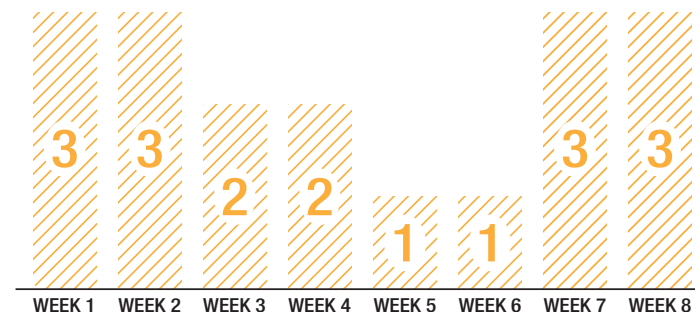
THE IMPACT

In February, I started collaborating with three designers (2 students, 1 recent graduate) to tackle the issue of design education in Lebanon.

It was easy to trigger their interest and engage them in the beginning, especially because the topic was so relatable, but it was very difficult to sustain their engagement level. Seeing the number of collaborators drop was frustrating, but it was no surprise: working with someone who lives on a different continent can be a little disheartening, especially when the project's outcomes seem “blurry.”

It's clear that the members dropped out right when the project got a little more real and it became unfamiliar: new territories can be intimidating. But once a little success was seen in Cyril's work, it was easy to get more people on board and support the project.

TEAM ENGAGEMENT



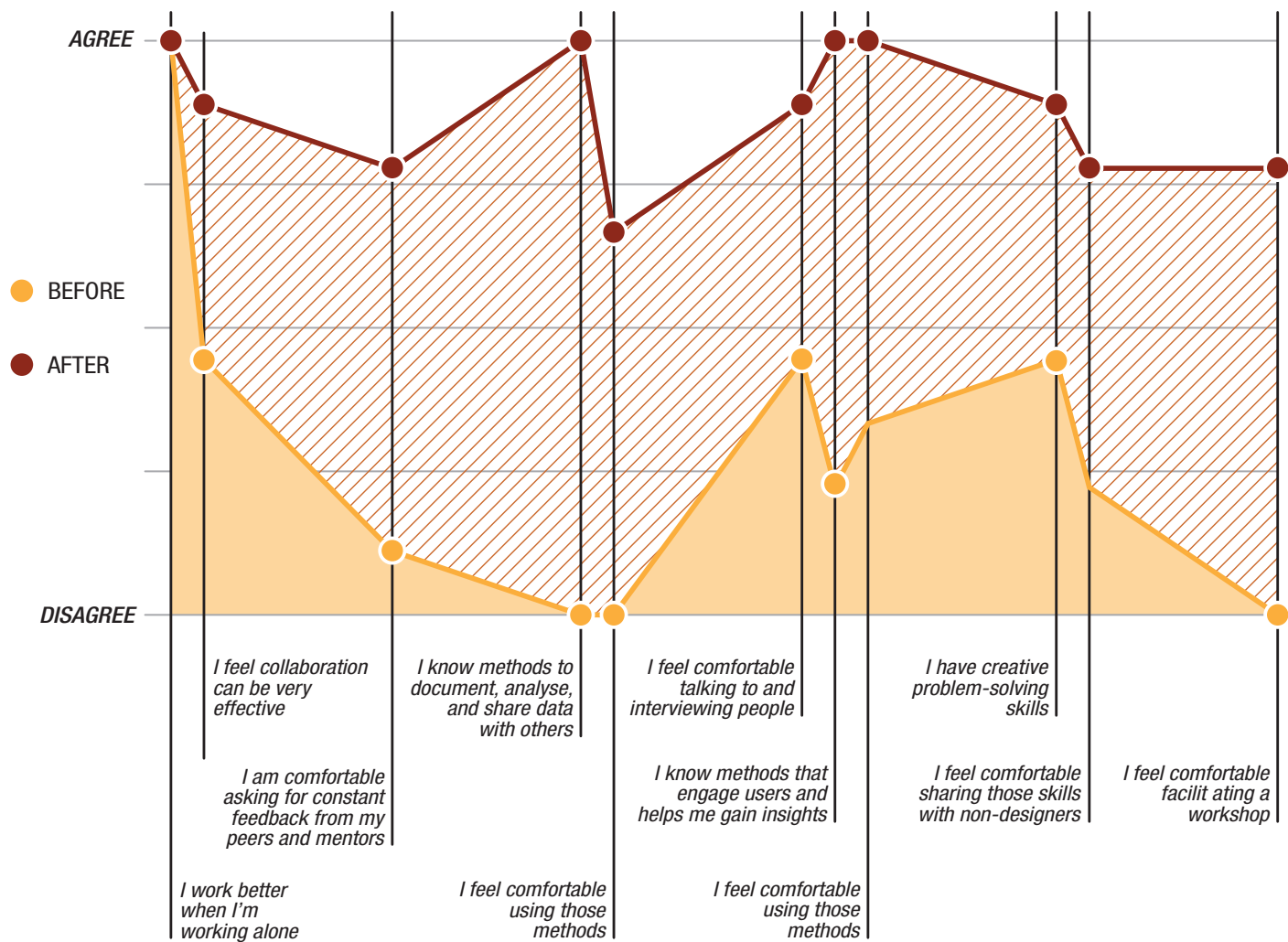
As Marshall Ganz puts it: we see a problem, we feel the need to act, we commit, and then we act.

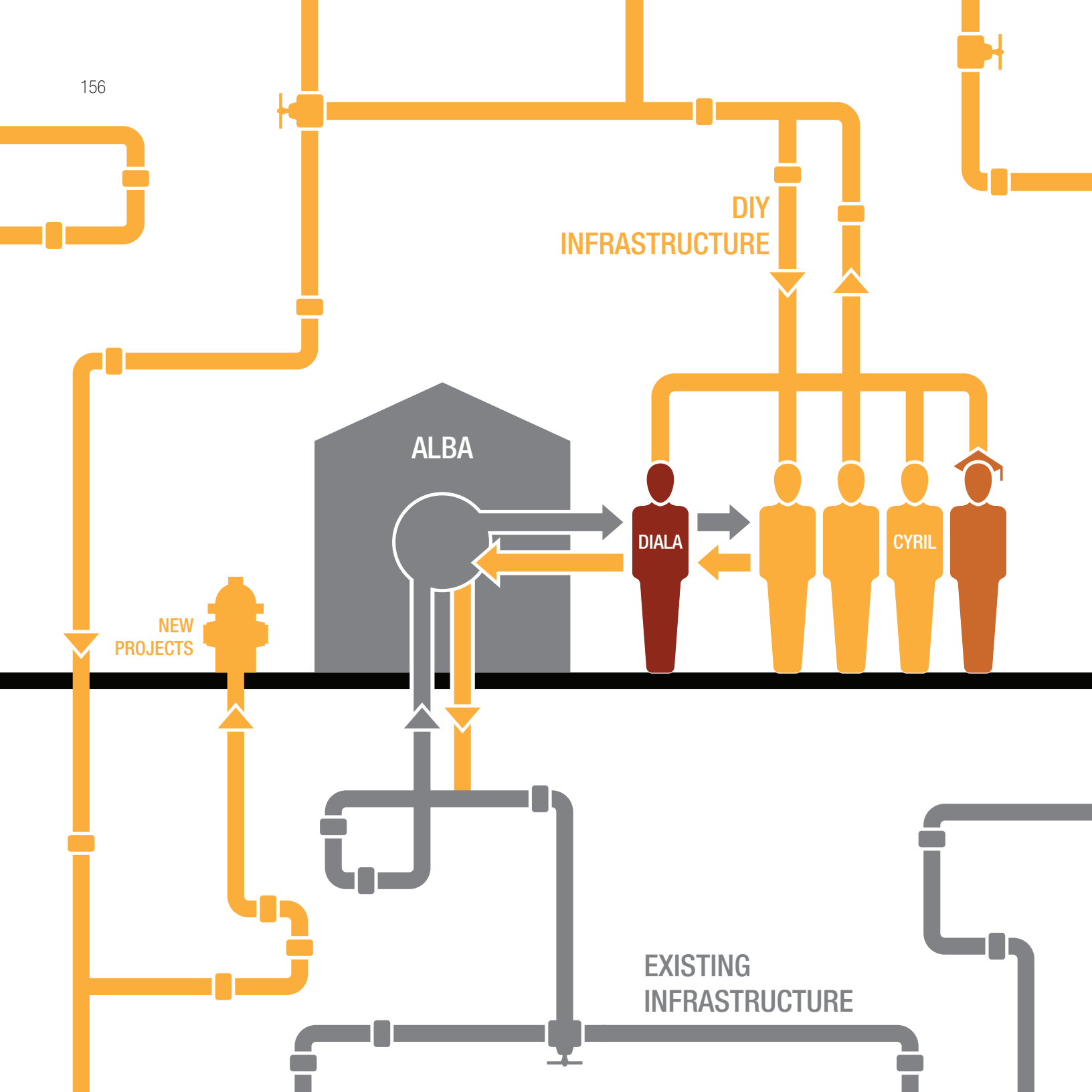
My ultimate goal to change design education in Lebanon might be a little arrogant, but change starts at a small scale and in the community-organizing world, it's measured person to person. My collaboration with Cyril is a demonstration of that.

He now sees design as a process and an approach, rather than just a mere tool to make things "look good," and is eager to share the human-centered methods and tools he learned in the past 3 months with his classmates.

CYRIL'S COMPETENCIES BEFORE AND AFTER OUR COLLABORATION

The greatest change is seen in the methods to document, analyze and share data with others. Even though Cyril feels more comfortable sharing data and asking for constant feedback from his peers and mentors, he still prefers working alone. This doesn't surprise me, since it reflects his experience working with the team. We started with 4 members, but Cyril was very disappointed when Elias and Hala disappeared, especially right before conducting street interviews. He felt alone and my virtual/online presence did not help. It's rather interesting and could be looked at as a failure of the work, but he has these skills now and can feel confident using them when opportunities arise. In fact, Cyril is now interested in planning and facilitating a workshop during Beirut Design Week 2014, around another social issue.





I see this project as a tweak within the existing infrastructure of design education in Lebanon. ALBA has a very small design program compared to others and the only product design school in Lebanon. Cyril's engagement and eagerness to share his recent learning and new process with his classmates can have a positive impact on the design school, and is a first step towards impacting the design education infrastructure.

“[DIY infrastructures] might represent a possible systemic change [...]. In the case of DIY infrastructure, we might see that individuals and small groups do have the capacity to “exert power on their own,” challenging the radical monopoly of infrastructure.”

— Jonathan Lukens

NEW GROWTH

Early on in my research, I realized creating a new design curriculum — even if I did have the expertise to do so — and attempting to implement it in the existing infrastructure of design education in Lebanon would be extremely difficult, if not impossible. It will, however, be much easier if the members of the institution (i.e. students and faculty) trigger a change that leapfrogs the institutional politics.

Also, tweaks — not necessarily massive and radical changes — within the existing infrastructure of design education in Lebanon can accomplish a lot, and accomplish it much faster than the alternative: attempting to navigate institutional politics to change the infrastructure as a whole.

This is similar to “kaizen”, a Japanese term that refers to a philosophy that focuses upon continuous, incremental change within processes. Although it was first implemented by Japanese businesses after the World War II in order to increase productivity, kaizen has spread throughout the world and is now being implemented in many other environments as a strategy for organizational development.

One way that Cyril and others like him can "challenge the radical monopoly of infrastructure" is through a grassroots movement where people are learning and sharing human-centered design methods and tools through collaboration and practice. In the following growth model, steps 1, 2, and 3 are the steps I've already taken. Steps 4, 5, and 6 are the next steps moving forward.

1 WORKSHOP IN JANUARY

Created initial network of design students, graduates, educators and professionals;
These stakeholders support the work and are willing to participate

2 THESIS PROJECT

Demonstrated to a student the value of HCD through practice;
Shared design tools and methods with student;
Proved validity of working with students outside school curriculum

3 WORKSHOP PROTOTYPE

Student facilitated a design workshop around a human-centered problem;
Student shared newly acquired design tools and methods with workshop participants;
Proved grassroots method successful

4 FIRST SET OF HCD PROJECTS

A participant in previous workshop sees the value of HCD;
Participant facilitates own workshop and shares newly acquired design skills and methods with others, for the love of design

Possible parameters:
Workshop happens during the school year so that students apply design tools and methods to academic projects
Facilitator could receive a budget to plan and run the workshop

5 SECOND SET OF HCD PROJECTS

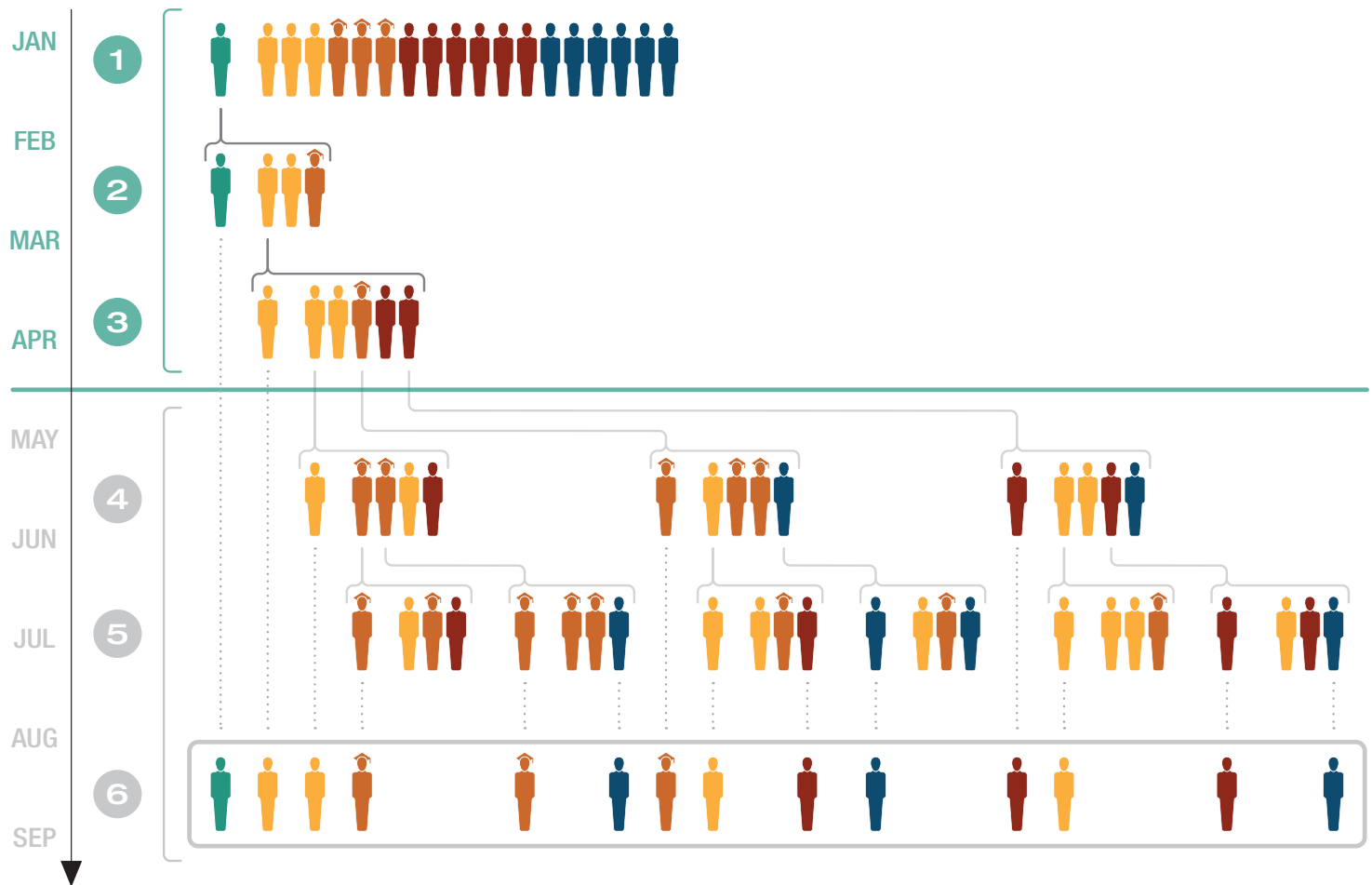
A participant in previous workshop sees the value of HCD;
Participant facilitates own workshop and shares newly acquired design skills and methods with others, for the love of design

Possible parameters:
Workshop happens during the school year so that students apply design tools and methods to academic projects
Facilitator could receive a budget to plan and run the workshop

6 A COLLECTIVE

A collective of design students, graduates, educators, and professionals who appreciate the value of HCD is born;
Collective further explores the value of HCD in Lebanon;
Collective develops short-term design programs (bootcamp);
Collective continues creating design awareness by organizing events

Possible needs:
A space to hold workshops/events;
Funding/budget



“Grassroots organizations grow stronger to the extent that their leaders go out and engage more people. It’s all about building as broad a base as you can.”

— Marshall Ganz

Bringing together an independent collective of students, designers, professionals and partner institutions that will explore the value of human centered design in Lebanon is what I had planned for.

But I learned from my collaboration with the small team that social change starts at a micro level and that sustainable change takes time and requires seeding.

The project did, however, create a framework for building an innovative DIY design education model that plugs into the existing infrastructure of design education.

BACK MATTER

POSTSCRIPT

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

BIBLIOGRAPHY & CREDITS

POSTSCRIPT

The feedback I received from the attendees of my thesis defense presentation raised an important point: making a clear distinction between human-centered design methods and tools, and the intention of social impact. There's the problem that's discovered in a project brief and then there's the approach to tackle that problem.

Students/designers can use a human-centered approach to design a magnificent chair for example, but that won't necessarily have any social impact. The intention is to give these students/designers the tools to trigger social impact. But if there's no career path in Lebanon for students who are just interested in solving social problems, then maybe it's not design schools that we should be targeting: there might be other groups of people — not necessarily designers — who might use this approach to tackle some of these wicked problems.

This is why it's important to have these HCD projects/ collaborations outside students' school curricula, which my is what my model allows. However, having the option to practice this approach within the school — even if it's on project briefs with no social impact — can better shape designers and give them the ability to find social issues outside their school and address them. They can

still go out and get the same design jobs in the market, but they would use a better approach.

It is not just about giving people the tools to identify problems and practice a human-centered process, but identifying the *right* problems to solve. In Lebanon, many of the unaddressed problems happen to be social in nature.

Another point that was raised was *how* I demonstrated to Cyril the value of the human-centered design process, and created the conditions for him share it with his classmates and the attendees of the workshop. Cyril had seen in our first workshop how people react to and engage with different group activities and what the possible outcomes could be. Discussing a number of other possible activities gave him the option to pick and choose the methods he thought were most useful, and adapt them to his specific context.

It's a “show, don't tell” approach I adopted. I demonstrated a process; he practiced it; he modified it as I scaffolded his experience; and then he became a teacher. This is similar to the “coaching” or “training the trainer” models, that are not only applicable to Lebanon.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Ad hoc

As defined by Wikipedia:

Ad hoc (Latin for "for this") generally signifies a solution designed for a specific problem or task, non-generalizable, and not intended to be able to be adapted to other purposes.

Agency

The extent to which individuals believe that they can control events that effect them.

Bottom-up Approach

As defined by Wikipedia:

The piecing together of systems to give rise to more complex systems, thus making the original systems sub-systems of the emergent system.

Boundary object

A physical element that creates a common ground between parties by facilitating a conversation or a dialogue. It is a neutral, inanimate object that becomes something to point at and refer back to while putting the parties involved at ease and helping them feel comfortable discussing a personal and maybe sensitive topic.

Brainstorming

As defined by The Design Dictionary:

Brainstorming describes a problem-solving technique by a group of people in any field and involves the spontaneous and uncensored contribution of ideas from all members of the group.

Co-creation

Engaging people with different backgrounds and roles to work collaboratively as part of the same team, in order to examine and innovate a given experience.

Co-design (collaborative design)

As defined by The Design Dictionary:

Until relatively recently, design was commonly perceived as a predominantly individual activity; the designer, trained in his or her craft, was expected to identify, frame, and solve a design problem more or less in isolation from others. In the twenty-first century, however, this perception of the design process is becoming increasingly removes from actual practice. Designers today routinely work in teams, collaborating to create processes and products that reflect the different kinds of expertise amongst the team members — and designers who are not skilled as collaborators are increasingly unlikely to be successful.

Competency

As defined by talentalign.com:

A cluster of related abilities, commitments, knowledge, and skills that enable a person (or an organization) to act effectively in a job or situation.

DIY

As defined by Wikipedia:

Do it yourself (DIY) is the method of building, modifying, or repairing something without the aid of experts or professionals.

DIY Infrastructure

Alternative infrastructural systems built by non-experts.

Empathy

As defined by Liz Sanders:

Understanding another person's situation, experience, or perspective, as if it were one's own.

Gamification

As defined by Wikipedia:

The application of typical elements of game playing (e.g., point scoring, competition with others, rules of play) to other areas of activity.

Generative thinking

As defined by Liz Sanders:
Producing ideas, insights and concepts.

Grassroots

a “grassroots movement” springs up spontaneously due to some pressing issue that a community feels needs to be changed or enhanced.

Human-Centered Design

A process in which the needs, wants, and limitations of end users of a product are given extensive attention at each phase of the design process

Infrastructure

As defined by Wikipedia:
The basic physical and organizational structures and facilities (e.g. buildings, roads, and power supplies) needed for the operation of a society or enterprise.

Model

As defined by The Design Dictionary:
The ability to project and idea and make it tangible has made the model an indispensable planning tool (for example of artifacts) since the beginnings of human inventions.

Organizing

Developing relationships, understanding, and action through empathy to build a community around shared values and interests, and building power out of that community.

Product

As defined by The Design Dictionary:
A product is the type of object that human beings produce at any given moment in their history.

Product Design

As defined by The Design Dictionary:
Product design is a practice that involves the creation of objects that are simultaneously functional and aesthetic.

Prototype

As defined by The Design Dictionary:
Prototypes (Greek protos=first) are intended to test the function and performance of a new design before it goes into production.

Scenario

Illustrate a story line describing the context of use for a product or service.

Skills

As defined by talentalign.com:
The ability, coming from one’s knowledge, practice, aptitude, etc., to do something well.

Stakeholder

An individual who can affect or be affected by a project’s outcome.

Synthesis

As defined by The Design Dictionary:
For many designers, synthesis describes the design process itself. Its literal meaning is the combination of a variety of objects, ideas, and/or intentions to produce a new complex whole. The process of design describes in the entry for disciplines describes design’s unique quality of negotiating a range of specialist knowledge and techniques in order to reconcile these into a coherent design artifact.

System

As defined by The Design Dictionary:
System (from Greek word *systema*, meaning a whole compounded of parts) refers to a combination of related parts organized into a complex whole, such as the cosmos, organisms, political or social bodies, or even cognitive constructions such as theory or philosophy.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS (CONTINUED)

Testing

As defined by The Design Dictionary:

Almost all designed artifacts and services have to be tested in some way or another. This is to determine if the design performs as originally conceived and intended or to identify unexpected consequences prior to a design going into final production and distribution, or implementation.

Tools

As defined by The Design Dictionary:

Broadly speaking, a tool is any course of action, occurrence, thought, or object that assists, facilitates, or makes possible another course of action, occurrence, thought or object.

Value

As defined by The Design Dictionary:

Value refers to the relative worth or utility of something.

Wicked Problem

As defined by wickedproblems.com:

A wicked problem is a social or cultural problem that is difficult or impossible to solve for as many as four reasons: incomplete or contradictory knowledge, the number of people and opinions involved, the large economic burden, and the interconnected nature of these problems with other problems.

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