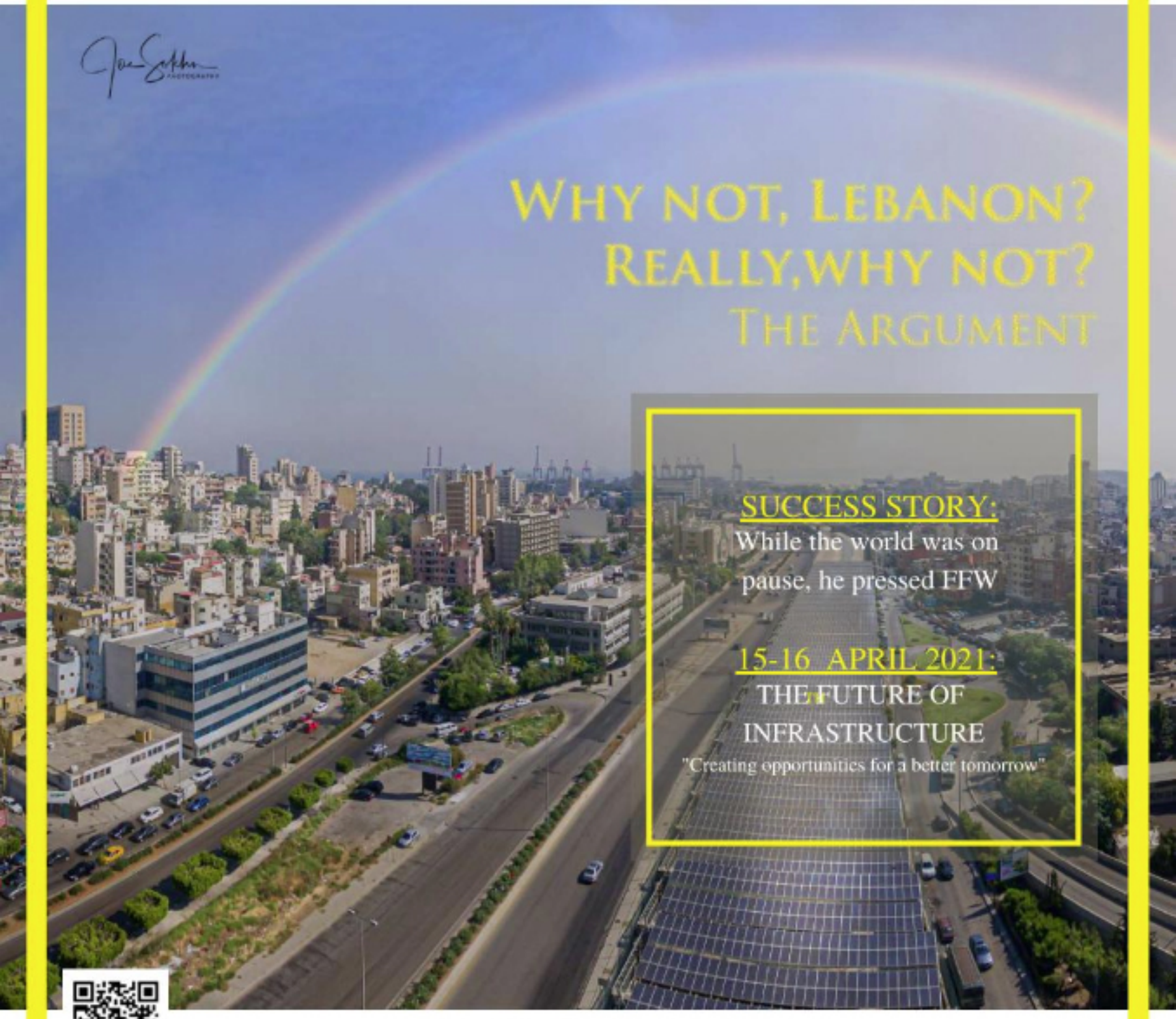
THE EXCLUSIVE

Lebanon's Energy Pulse
Extensive Editorial Supplement



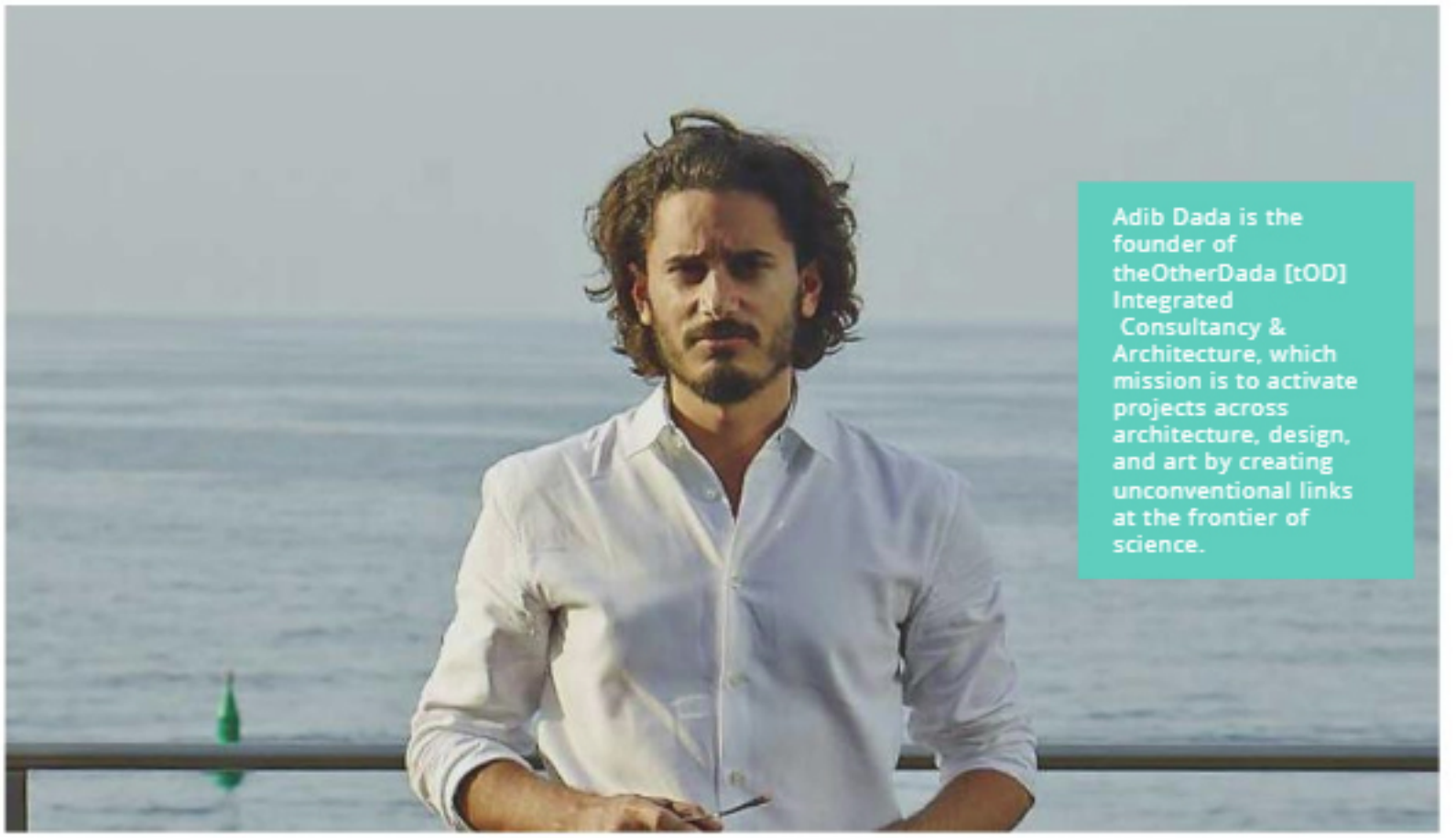
WHY NOT, LEBANON?
REALLY,WHY NOT?
THE ARGUMENT

SUCCESS STORY:
While the world was on pause, he pressed FFW

15-16 APRIL 2021:
THE FUTURE OF INFRASTRUCTURE
"Creating opportunities for a better tomorrow"

BEIRUT RIVERLESS

A holistic approach, based on systems level and biomimicry thinking.



Adib Dada is the founder of theOtherDada [tOD] Integrated Consultancy & Architecture, which mission is to activate projects across architecture, design, and art by creating unconventional links at the frontier of science.

What made you think of the concept Beirut Riverless?

The installation of a solar array over Beirut River in 2013. While the project is a great win for the renewable energy sector, it signaled another nail-in-the-coffin for the river, the communities alongside it, and the natural environment. Beirut RiverLESS is a research and action project studying the transformation of Beirut River from a natural ecosystem to a waste infrastructure, discharging into the Mediterranean sea. Beirut RiverLESS proposes a set of urban interventions with the power to transform an urban blight into a healthy socio-economic success-story.

"Communities need to stop thinking of the river as a dirty canal."

If you had to name the most important challenge lying ahead for the "Beirut RiverLESS" idea to be finalized, what would it be?

A shift in mindset:
Communities need to stop thinking of the river as a dirty canal, and remember the time where their parents and grandparents used to gather along the banks of the river to fish, swim, picnic and coexist.
Ministries and Municipalities need to stop thinking of the river as a waste infrastructure, where the clean water is pumped at source and is replaced by solid waste, industrial effluent, agricultural runoff and raw municipal sewage. Beirut River is a natural asset that could be reclaimed in the same manner as other cities around the world have managed to re-nature their urban rivers and turn them back into functional ecosystems and vibrant spaces for community. This leads to economic empowerment of vulnerable communities and environmental resilience of the city.

What is your strategy of making this dream come true?

A holistic approach, based on systems level and biomimicry thinking. Our

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strategy breaks the challenges down to manageable parts, easy to implement and replicate, soft and hard interventions across cities all over Lebanon. These cover environmental rehabilitation, inclusive urban planning, access to soft mobility, green infrastructure…

One major step we have taken is the planting of 2 dense native urban forests in May 2019, one by the concrete banks of the river in Sin El Fil, and the other in Ghobeiri. The Miyawaki method of afforestation we employ with our partners, is a low-cost, proven methodology that has proven to be successful worldwide. It consists of re-wilding very small to large urban
areas, leftover spaces, roundabouts and sidewalks.

Afforestation is scientifically recognized as one of the most effective ways to mitigate climate change, reduce urban pollution and heat island effect, and restore the natural water cycle. Hence its importance as a strategy alongside Beirut River.

To curtail political and administrative disinterest, our approach is geared towards empowering local communities and businesses to demand action and take ownership of these leftover spaces, turning them into urban forests and vibrant social and economic spaces.

What strategic argument would determine investors to develop Beirut RiverLESS?

Environmental degradation costs. The deterioration of the river and the whole ecosystems related to it, are costing the public sector 485 million dollars per year [as per 2013 data, figure should now be much higher because of recent environmental problems such as coastal landfills and unregulated burning of waste]. The river and its surrounding areas are dead environmental as well as almost-dead economic zones due to the pollution. By cleaning the river and valorizing it, we are jump-starting economic growth and gaining valuable land on both sides of the river. The aim is to do this with a sensitive long-term view to avoid short-term economic gains and urban gentrification, favoring instead a regenerative circular economy.

The positive impacts would also be felt in the tourism sector which has seen a great expansion and move towards slow and conscious eco-tourism.

Which measures would you like to see taken by the authorities /administration to make Beirut RiverLESS a reality?

First and foremost, stop the massive dumping of solid waste, industrial effluent, agricultural runoff and raw municipal sewage. Limit the amount of water pumped at source, to allow the natural water cycle to be restored. Stop the expansion of the solar array over the river. While it may have been a useful pilot project, there are more efficient ways and places to develop such projects while reducing the negative on the neighborhoods and communities. Empower communities to voice their concerns and act upon them to regenerate their neighborhoods.

Recognize and facilitate PPP, offer incentives to companies and individuals to positively impact their surroundings.

We can plant very dense native urban forests for as little as 8,000 dollars per 100 square meters. Forests which will become completely self-sufficient within 2 years. That means 400 native trees and shrubs, which will sequester CO2 and reduce pollution and heat levels. That means a restored natural water cycle, recharging are over-exploited underground aquifers. That means helping Lebanon with its [national voluntary reductions target ??]
formulated at COP21, helping businesses comply with the UN Sustainable Development Goals 11, 13 and 15. That means giving Lebanon a chance to become more resilient in the face of worldwide social, economic and climate crisis.

Help us grow urban forests in Beirut

SUGi is an app which lets users initiate and fund the rewilding of urban areas by planting ultra-dense, biodiverse forests in cities.

This results in cleaner air, lower temperatures, CO2 sequestration, enhanced biodiversity and better human physical and mental health.

With theOtherDada, our local rewilder in Lebanon, we have already successfully funded and planted two patches of forest totalling **500 sqm** with a whopping **2,000** native trees and shrubs! These forests will become completely maintenance-free within **3 years.**

Imagine transforming your corporate HQ garden, Beirut River's banks, abandoned sites, landfills, roundabouts, or any other leftover space into habitats for birds to nest, for fruits to grow, for fresh air to blow, and for the magic of nature to thrive.

Find out more about theOtherDada's work on **theotherdada.com**

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the OtherDada integrated consultancy & architecture

SUGi