

Campus in Camps
Collective Dictionary

RELATION

العلاقة

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جامعة في المقيم

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CAMPUS IN CAMPS

Campus in Camps is a two-year experimental educational and project oriented program, engaging the participants from the West Bank's refugee camps in an attempt to explore and produce new forms of representation of camps and refugees beyond the static and traditional symbols of victimization, passivity and poverty. The program aims at transgressing, without eliminating, the distinction between camp and city, refugee and citizen, center and periphery, theory and practice, teacher and student.

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The “Collective Dictionary” contains definitions of concepts considered fundamental for the understanding of the contemporary condition of Palestinian refugee camps.

The terms proposed emerged as a result of actions and active dialogs with the camp community. Written reflections on personal experiences, interviews, excursions, photographic investigations, and so on constitute the starting point for the formulation of more structured thoughts.

The Dictionary is both the reference and conceptual framework for all Campus in Camps projects, interventions and endeavors.

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Introduction

Saleh Khannah

Since the idea of *Campus in Camps* emerged and I became one of the fifteen participants, I began thinking about a project to be implemented in Arroub camp. I thought of many different ideas until finally deciding that I wanted to focus on the Ancient Roman pool in Arroub. Seeing as it is an extremely important part of our patrimony, I strongly believe that we should take care of it.

First of all, I asked myself what I knew about this pool? This question pushed me and the rest of the group to begin searching and collecting information regarding the structure. We found an amazing map proving that there was an aqueduct connecting the pool in Arroub with Solomon's Pools in Irtas – both parts of an incredible system which supplied water to Jerusalem. The idea to walk along the ancient aqueduct originated from Giuliana's first visit to Arroub. In line with the term *relation*, which I decided to work on, a group composed itself and decided to start the trek. We began the 30 km walk on Wednesday October 24th at 6 am. It was a journey about exploring, learning, enjoying, feeling, discovering, analyzing and so forth.

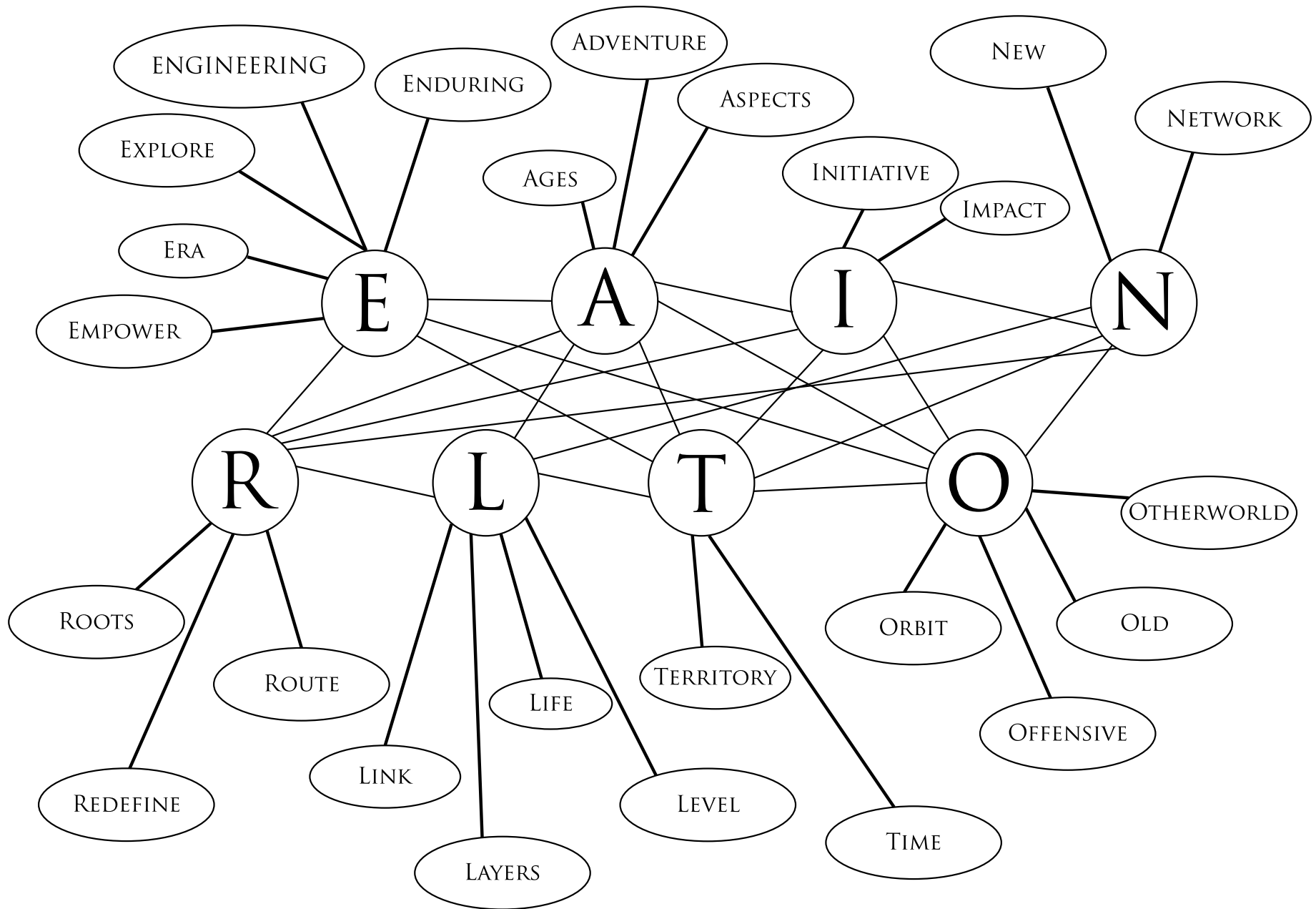
After gathering preparatory information about our trip, the group shared the data with the other participants of *Campus in Camps* and invited everyone to join us. Some accepted to come regardless of the possible difficulties; others refused due to the long distance that they felt would be too difficult to cross. We decided at least to give it a go.

The group was great. We supported each other and operated as a team. When you work with people who love what they are doing, you feel more comfortable and powerful. And this power can overcome many obstacles.

The idea of the walk came from the notion of doing what you enjoy doing most. For me, going on long walks is one of my daily habits and I especially enjoy moving through open spaces in the middle of nature.

The experience of walking and searching for these ruins is something uncommon in our times and this is important for me. It is a way for me to build my own knowledge and learn through practice.

This walk trip is the first practical step related to the project I intend to do in Arroub camp.



Between point A and B

Matteo Guidi, Giuliana Racco

During our first visit to Arroub Camp in September, we were introduced to two particularly exceptional elements: the stadium and the Ancient Roman pool.

We were amazed, as most people are, to learn about the network – the aqueduct – that once connected the springs of Arroub to Solomon's Pools, finally bringing water to Jerusalem. This ancient structure (now for the most part destroyed) places two contemporary camps Arroub (near Hebron) and Dheisheh (near Bethlehem) in relation to one another; and these camps are likewise both related to Jerusalem via this conduit constructed by the Romans – ancient colonizers of the area – crossing territories which are at times prohibited to the locals – Palestinians – due to the current situation of rule.

– Giuliana

During a second follow-up visit to Arroub in October, what struck me most was our walk around the green areas surrounding the camp.



The route Saleh usually walks around Arroub camp during his free time

Saleh explained how he enjoys walking in nature – sometimes with friends – and how in doing so, he feels connected to the landscape around him. We went to the nearby agricultural college and followed some parts of the aqueduct, fascinated by how we were relating to people from the distant past through the stones they laid, still in place today.

Subsequently, we began looking for maps of the ancient aqueduct system. Saleh said that somewhat recent maps were available since during the British mandate the conduit was used to supply water to Jerusalem during a drought.



The Ancient Roman pool in Arroub and the beginning of the aqueduct.

Using these maps and Google Earth, with Saleh we began piecing together this exceptional route that we wished to follow simply by walking.

What interested us about this project is how it touches upon a simple everyday practice, such as walking, one of Saleh's favourite pastimes, to then develop into something which read through the filter of the concept of "relation" – in this case – becomes an investigation into man's connection with nature and the landscape, the link between the past and the present, between two periods of colonization, between one point and another, between one camp and another, passing through contended lands.

– Matteo

Walking is a simple everyday action. It is a moment of reflection. When we walk we think: thus, could we say that walking and thinking "walk" together? When we walk we communicate, first with ourselves, then with the environment. When we walk we are writing history.

October 23, 2012



With Saleh and Diego, we arrived in Arroub on the eve of our planned trek. Descending from the service taxi, Saleh looked out for us, like a worried parent, as we crossed the street. We were about to enter his camp and we were there to develop a project together. Perhaps his sense of responsibility concerning us was increasing precisely at that moment. We were greeted at the entrance by the sight of two armed soldiers. We immediately went to the headquarters of the popular committee and met Ismael who would accompany us as our cameraman. Saleh showed us the rooms where we would sleep for the night within the Popular Committee building, and Ibrahim called to say he would be arriving shortly with falafel and bread. As we waited for Ibrahim, we began organizing the management of the cameras and video equipment for the documentation of our journey. When Ibrahim showed up, he called his brother. Though he was born and raised in Arroub, before moving to Doha (near Solomon's Pools) where he currently lives, Ibrahim rarely visits the camp. His brother invited us to dinner at his house, where we continued organizing the next day's voyage. After eating we headed back to the Popular Committee headquarters through the silent alleys of Arroub and purchased some foodstuffs for the next morning. Saleh reminded us that there was no need to buy water, that he would procure it for us, after all Arroub was named

after the springs that provide water to the surrounding area. Back at the popular committee, we prepared for bed, setting our alarms and falling asleep in a silence punctuated by the occasional barking of dogs at different ends of the camp.

October 24, 2012

We meet at dawn and head for our departure point, the pool. The sun has risen and we begin documenting the incredible site. As with all ancient monuments and ruins, it produces the incredible effect of putting one in direct relation to the civilization that created it, and particularly to those whose hands laid the stones. Who were the workers? Where were they from? How long and hard did they work? How many of them worked in order to produce this incredibly complex and sophisticated system that connected a number of distant points, transporting water across a landscape which has repeatedly been contended and is still today the site of huge conflict?

– Giuliana

The beginning of our course is peppered with small farms, at times there are houses laid directly on the previously existing canal. Moving around, tracking, we encounter families beginning their workday. We continuously stop and wait for Ibrahim who seems unable not to stop, speak and spend a while with

everyone we encounter, at times taking photographs. I am stricken by his insatiable and genuine desire to relate to people.



As we slowly snake our way past the last remaining houses, the landscape becomes increasingly arid. We often lose track of our guide, our thread connecting us to history, connecting one place to another, only to find it time and again. At times we run into areas blocked off by fences – private properties or areas for agricultural development aid projects. We have to work our way around them, relocating our path.

Saleh and Ismael prove to be incredibly able at finding the traces, at times locating them when we feel they have been irretrievably lost, by slipping their hands in cracks of stones and discovering levigated surfaces. We are impressed by this communication with a material which to our deaf hands would reveal



nothing. As the day progresses, the sun rises and we shed layers of clothing, soon covering our heads.

– Giuliana

Any premature hesitations I had about the journey dissipate as I realize that I am moving through a landscape with people who are able to read it and reorient themselves, leaving me just to enjoy the view and take photographs.



Finally by midday, after six hours of steady walking, we reach a quarry. Here all traces of our aqueduct have been destroyed by bulldozers and other heavy machines, careless of history and of the hands which painstakingly laid down this immense network. None-

theless the site is awesome and we move through it, taking it in.



An article published by the Ma'an News Agency on November 4, 2010, stated that Israeli soldiers had entered the stone quarry near Beit Fajjar and issued an order to Hisham Dirieh, the quarry owner, demanding he suspend operations on the grounds that the quarry was operating illegally in an area under Israeli administration. According to Dirieh, the quarry is in Area B (under Israeli military control and Palestinian Authority civil control). However, a Civil Administration spokesman claimed that the quarry was situated in Area C land within the occupied West Bank under Israeli civil and military control. Dirieh continues his operations to this day, despite the orders and damage to his equipment. Stone quarrying is perhaps the most lucrative industry in the entire West Bank.

As we search in vain for the track we spot the Palestinian water authority and descend to fill our bottles. We ask the guard at the facility about the path, but he has no information to give us, so we decide to sit under an olive tree and have lunch. After this we continue walking and searching for the aqueduct. We head for the roadway, passing families harvesting olives along the way. As we look at our maps, an olive green jeep pulls up behind us. Three soldiers get out and begin asking us why we are there, what we are doing. They don't seem to believe us when we explain our mission. We show them our maps and finally, not really convinced, they leave us. "Be careful. It's not safe for you around here" one advised us as they enter the jeep and drive off.



After walking for eight hours, we are getting tired. We vote and decide to suspend our trek – at more or less the halfway point – to be resumed at a later date.



On the edge of the quarry

– ph. Matteo Guidi

We want a good life, and we have something to propose

Diego Segatto

A personal relationship

When I consider why I'm here in Palestine, living and working in a refugee camp, I cannot escape the fact that I have been greatly influenced by my father's personal history. Born in 1925 in Northeast Italy, Giovanni was the seventh son of a virtually dispossessed family of farmers. Raised in the piteous post-war conditions, he later faced the hardships of the Second World War. His tensions became mine, transforming me into a stubborn freethinker, intent on sowing seeds and supporting practices that focus on the person.

The Palestinian-Israeli struggle is both a final outcome of a national political vision of the nineteenth century and the direct result of a worldwide conflict of the twentieth century. As we approach Arroub refugee camp on a Tuesday night at 7.20 pm, we pass a pair of soldiers positioned to control everyone entering or leaving the camp, ready to intervene but also reminding us of what I have just stated, like their

comrades and separation devices spread throughout the West Bank.

A physical dimension

I first accepted Saleh's invitation to participate in a walk through the fields as a brief escape from the office routine. I enjoy exploring through walking, and this is something we have in common. The plan was to follow the ancient aqueduct, built by the Romans to supply water to Jerusalem, starting our trek from the springs of Arroub and ending at Solomon's pools in Irtas (Bethlehem) close to Dheisheh refugee camp. So, for me, the symbolic aspect concerning the connection of two important remnants of the past and the two contemporary refugee camps came only as a second thought, far from my first aim. Thus, my relation originated from a physical urge.



Farming fields near Arroub



Following the Roman aqueduct

While walking and climbing through the vivid green farm areas and the arid rocky terrains, I was able to completely forget the tensions of this land. I enjoyed its rich offerings of movement and unstructured scapes: here and there villages spotted the distance and the moist valley below presented a fruitful yield – an endless, flat, green snake amidst brown and white hills. I was feeling the change of temperature, from the cold 6 am breeze to the warmth of 8 am, to the heavy heat of the hammering sun of noontime. My body was sweating, my skin darkening and my legs working... my breathing accompanied the rhythm of my heart's increasing beats. Water was precious company, collected by our guide in reused Coca-Cola bottles.

I remembered an interview with Joseph Beuys, the shamanic father of community art, speaking about religion and the origin of its term: from Latin,



Roaming, following some visible traces, map in hand

with reference to re-lego meaning “to re-connect” but also “to read again”. The last time I read this interview was in 2003, while visiting and exploring Brasilia on foot, walking for kilometers and kilometers, finally losing the rare magazine that I had bought in Milan.

A group dimension

We were six: five from Campus in Camps and one cameraman. This experience allowed me to discover surprising aspects of my colleagues and gave me the chance to meet an amazing person: Ismael, our cameraman. Rather than just grabbing equipment and shooting us, he was there to enjoy the moment together with us. Climbing like a cat over the rocks, he anticipated our movements in humble silence, at times almost disappearing in order to catch the best scenes and respect our “mission”.

My colleagues seemed to switch from a professional demeanour – which, most of the time, forces people to follow a protocol of behavior and engagement – to a more natural modality of mutual support, exchanging observations and advice, looking out for the needs of the others, finding their own spaces in a shared experience, having fun, feeling healthy. I felt a shift, within us and among us. And we expressed this sensation at the end of the day. I think all this helped enhance a deeper relationship.



Clear remnants

An historical dimension

As I said above, the Roman aqueduct initially was not my primary concern, yet I learned to love it and care for its traces – sometimes very clear, more often than not hidden by the soil or destroyed, frequently erased by time and human interventions such as



Discovering the track when we thought it was lost

roads and houses. Fixing our attention on the old stone conduit was fundamental for not getting lost in our attempt to reach our destination. And time after time it revealed its intriguing workings which allowed water to be pushed up rather than only flow down. *How did they manage to cover such a distance? How long did the construction last? Did they work through the night?* These were some of the many questions that arose during our walk.

It is astonishing how enthusiastic you become when you discover some remnants after having lost the track; just as how disappointed you are when a giant stone quarry appears before you, breaking the harmony of the landscape, deleting kilometers of ancient knowledge. On the top of the hill stood the extracted stones that provide the South West Bank (and Israel?) with most of its tiles and façades: and since industrial construction is ceaseless, it eats the

hill, eroding the land, gnawing through our *fil rouge*.
Once again an awesome vision produced itself from the sudden change of context: entering the quarry itself was like discovering future ruins. What will become of this space once its resources are exhausted? Something between a natural environment and an ancient holy architecture: precise cuts, gaping holes



Encountering the stone quarry



Who owns this possibility to radically change the land?

and abandoned stone blocks shaped the hill into a maze of roads, stairs and squares, into a scenario beyond human scale.



The quarry as a political scenario

A redefining dimension

Which area were we crossing? A, B or C? After six hours, some of us were already feeling tired and satisfied by the experience. Others would have liked to continue, reclaiming possession of the track, somewhere over there. We descended toward the main road where cars were passing and a water station was visible. Now (after 12.5 km of climbing) the asphalt guided us toward the closest village Marah Rabah, where we took a group decision.



The quarry as an anticipation of ruins

– ph. Diego Segatto

Another change of scenario. Huge fields of olive trees lined both sides of the street, the land was green and vigorous. Entire families underneath and within them, picking olives, watched this strange group, perhaps even settlers in their eyes. We entered in contact with them, greeting and receiving their more or less sincere invitations to join their work. In a narrow span of time, we managed a crossing fraught with emotions, a feeling of stitching together such varied environments in our legs and under our feet.

But where were the Israeli soldiers? As we were looking at our map, a couple of jeeps stopped behind us. I barely had the time to hear the sound of the tires on the road, when I found three fully equipped young men stood before us. “Where are you from? What are you looking for?”. “We’re hikers, walking along the



Along the asphalt snake

path of the ancient Roman aqueduct to Jerusalem... looking for its traces!”. Staring at our ancient map with almost childish expressions on their faces, they seemed surprised and unprepared to deal with our answer. They even tried to help us find new reference points in order to continue our journey. Before leaving, one of them took the time to offer us an eerie piece of advice: “Be careful in this area... you know...”. “Yes we will!” ...be careful of the cars speeding by.

An idea of return

Arroub’s green fields and fresh water springs caress my cheeks each time I enter the area. It has something to offer as a proposal for living, something unique and promising, slow and vast. More generally speaking, it is a proposal for a *right to return* to the land, to move through a natural space and to live in health. The way its green areas are used and shaped by the people provides a vision of a sustainable setting, a way of looking forward to the eventual end of military occupation. Such a vision should be preserved and enhanced by the people themselves so that other activities may one day be carried out in a space that is free from any control or claim by governmental institutions. These practices can be considered an *idea of return*.

Walking around the *wadi* – looking for historical roots or roaming about – is itself another proposal

for living which is included in the right to move freely. Free from fences and roadblocks, free from being checked, free to talk to others and gather together, free to enjoy the relationship between your mind (as a whole organism) and the land. There is a stronger sense which stems from walking with those who love – and do not own or possess – the land: the desire for a good, healthy and free life, something to pursue together: a way of relating with your surroundings with insight.



Unexpected encounter along the walk

Relation

Ibrahim Jawabreh

A relationship with the land. To be aware of this relationship, people have to be familiar with the land.

This experience is not easy, not everyone can do it, this relationship takes the form of a struggle.

I was born in Arroub camp, I lived there for sixteen years, and this is the first time I discovered the surrounding area. The first question that came to my mind is: how can I protect a place that I don't know?

During this journey I noticed that I am a bad struggler.

Epilogue

Giuliana Racco

November 2012

Though it was an incredible sensation to find the traces of the ancient aqueduct, something inside me insisted that our undertaking was incomplete.

And so I was more than glad when, as a group, we decided to continue our walk approximately one week later, from the very spot where we had left off.

This trek, however, proved to be very distinct from the previous one. Firstly, the group itself was different. Due to work obligations Ismail was not able to join us again as our cameraman, nor was Ibrahim with us this second time around.

Nonetheless, we had increased in number. This time we didn't sleep at the camp on the eve of our journey. Instead, we stayed in our homes and rested up meeting at the Bethlehem bus station at 6 am. Also, unlike the last time, our guiding figure Saleh was late by over an hour.

A service took us to the spot where we had ended our last walk and, after setting our recording equipment, we began seeking out the traces of the aqueduct.

This expedition was nothing like the last one. Unable to find the traces immediately, we crossed villages with paved roads. The marked solitude of the first trip was contrasted by continuous encounters with locals during the second. Time and time again we asked for information concerning the Roman aqueduct. Elderly people understood what we were searching for and indicated the distance, a number of *wadis* away: over the hill, to the left, after the second *wadi*.

Moving through the arid landscape we spent hours searching in vain for our conduit.

Then suddenly it appeared, if only for a brief dozen metres or so, but it was excellent. It was far more detailed and grandiose than anything we had found during our last journey.

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