Upon arrival in mid May, the search began the body of the mobile garden. The Sharaka market had since closed due to the costs of mobility for the farmers and lack of capital in the market. The purpose of the garden shifted towards raising awareness about issues of food sovereignty by traveling from the dense urban center of Ramallah to the small farms of Palestinian villages. My friends and I scoured the town for a suitable car that could push the cart. In the West Bank, cars are labeled by two different plates: yellow and green plates. The yellow plate signifies that the driver does not have a Palestinian ID card. You can pass through most checkpoints, and sometimes a special empty lane is designated for such vehicles. The green plate means that you hold Palestinian ID card, hence mobility is confined to within the separation wall. Having a car with a green plate means that you have to pay not only taxes to Israel, but also to the Palestinian Authority, elevating the price of a vehicle to almost double the price of a non Palestinian ID card. This is how I came to understand the outrageous prices of cars in town, and how with our budget could not afford any of the vehicles. A licensed cart was priced at $5,000--not including the car that would pull it. I always knew that mobility was hindered in the West Bank, but never realized how expensive it is to own a car, pay taxes to two governments, and fuel the car with overpriced gas. Suddenly it became clear why farmers could no longer afford to travel to a market once a week.

In late June, we found a 1979 Volkswagen green plated pickup truck in a refugee camp outside the city of Nablus. With its big beautiful lights, three seats in the front, and “Praise God” stickers that covered the car, we fell in love. The ancient stick shift barely functioned, the windows remained open, the car didn’t lock, and seat belts and air-conditioning were unthinkable luxuries. The truck had two horns, both so obnoxiously loud that the whole town would turn their head and be forced to marvel the its beauty. (In fact I’ve heard these horns are illegal anywhere else in the world). But we named her Dumbo, hoping to find the secret button that would let her fly when she took rests on hills. And fly she did. For the remainder of the summer, the truck traveled from the urban dense center of Ramallah to nearby farms. There we asked about issues of regarding farming and collected seeds if possible, added them to our seed-bank, usually the farmers would then take us to another farm. And while each farm was filled with warmth and laughter, what was alarming is that many did not save seeds. We did however take fruits and saved seeds afterward. Issues of imported seeds that were not suited toward the soil and competition with Israeli products was abundant. Articulating the agricultural problems inevitably caused an air of helplessness, as local farmers had to compete with illegal settlements, lack of water, and the high price of mobility with a Palestinian ID. But as we drove deeper into the problems that entrenched us, our own garden continued to grow along with our morale and the friends that helped cultivate it. “At first I thought you were crazy, but now I think I understand” what my friend Osama and truck driver owner told me once he saw our squash seeds were now blooming with life.

The eruption of squash was a turning point in the project, as life grew so did our optimism and hope. The aesthetic of the truck transformed as well; embroidered pieces representing Palestinian folklore were bought from farmers and then used to decorate the truck seats. Threads of culture, heritage, and intricacy were sown with the seeds in the truck bed. We later decided that the truck would
be painted a light purple color, the same color as *Scabiosa Palestinia*, a local wild flower. On my last day in Palestine, we found an old embroidery dress in this non-traditional color. We had always wanted a local artist to design the truck with embroidery, but when we could not find one my friend Osama later would paint the truck and surprise me by pasting the dress on it. Osama is not in the Sharaka group, as most of the people who helped on the project weren’t, rather just people who were interested in being a part of the creative. Sharaka will be in charge of taking the truck to different schools for each growing seasons. This fall season it will be at a local girls school in Al-Bireh that also just started their own community garden with Sharaka.

**Implications**

The meaning of peace is a very loaded term in Palestine. When asked about the funding of the project, some people asked if Israel had anything to do with the truck farm. Like all things here, peace is defined in terms of the “other”, in the case of Palestinians the occupying force only known for weaponry clad uniforms that directly impede on mobility and greenery. So many ask me, how did this project relate to peace? Peace for me is not a state of passivity, but an active state in which one resists violence. Hence, one method of resisting structural violence is to create life and beauty where it does not belong, in dead space. This project faced the obstacles of any project anywhere in the world would face, but without a doubt the biggest obstacle was making life thrive under a chokehold of military occupation. This truck represented a small act that pushed the boundaries that confine us: borders on roads, greenery, and food sovereignty. Everything from the project except the truck itself sourced form the Palestinian territories, and without this diligent search I would have never found out that brands potting soil sourced from illegal settlements. Although unbearably frustrating to search for local products, once finished I was filled with a certain peace of mind. It was a small affirmation (at least for us as youth) that Palestinians are in fact capable of creation but only by constantly resisting with a resilient and optimistic existence. With the first fruit of labor- or rather squash in our case- came the hope that perhaps a certain peace is in reach.

When the projects initial obstacles left me hopeless, small plants and small smiles proved to be the stepping stones towards that better world where greenery and independence might spill out of a truck and onto the concrete that confines dreams. Truck Farm did not solve the issue that plagues the food system, nor did is the city green thanks to it. But did it something. What started out as an esoteric and whimsical idea ended up being an adventure that introduced me to so many people I would not have otherwise met in my community. It was a small symbol, and a cohesive force that acted like a magnet across social boundaries. Questions of how to start a roof garden became abundant. A few days ago I received an email asking for seeds to start a “revolutionary garden” to be planted in the downtown to protest raising food prices. According to the scientist E.O Wilson, humans adhere to the biophilia hypothesis, in which we innately love living systems. I cannot prove a hypothesis, but Wilson’s ideas did hold true for those who encountered the truck farm. There is a dire need and longing for greenery and independence. Truck Farm was an attempt to associate those two desires as connected. What bloomed was a certain excitement in the seemingly nonsensical. From mechanics to farmers to the city slickers, almost everyone had something to say about the truck farm, with smiles that marveled at the presence of life where it should not belong. In a world in which identifying oneself as a Palestinian is for some controversial, this project represented a non-violent means of expressing culture, biodiversity, ethnobotany and creativity in a humorous vehicle on a tumulus ride to sovereignty.
Truck Farm drives alongside the Separation Wall.

Truck Farm in the Village of Bilin:

Decorated with an embroidered wedding dress in the color of wildflower *Scabiosa Palestina*