Convivial Futures
Public Programme

An exhibition at Qatar Preparatory School (QPS)
and the National Museum of Qatar (NMoQ)

The Work of Being Alive

Life is sustained by the visible work of labour

تستمرّ الحياة بفضل العمل المرئيّ

عملُ أن تكون حيًّا

and invisible work of reproduction

والعمل غير المرئيّ لإعادة الإنتاج



Doha, Qatar
November 2025

SUSTAINABLE DESERT-LIFE Countryside: A Place to Live, Not to Leave

متحف قطر الوطني
NATIONAL MUSEUM OF QATAR

أمة التطور
Evolution Nation

Methods of Nourishment

Some of the most consequential work happens below the surface. Soil repairs structure, hosts microbial symbioses, weathers seeds, stores nutrients, and carries "memory" — traces of rainfall, grazing, disturbance, and regeneration. Desert ecologies teach a different tempo of reproduction: dormancy, waiting, sudden bloom, slow repair. Infrastructure overlays these cycles but does not erase them; life persists in pockets, thresholds, and intervals.

"Every bite carries photosynthesis, irrigation, digestion, fermentation, transport, and kitchen work."

Food systems make these relations tangible. Fertility is not only a chemical input; it is the result of organisms working together across time. Pollinators, composts, microbes, shade, and water circulation become forms of cooperative labour. Even the most industrial sites depend on living processes they cannot fully command: digestion, immunity, bacterial cultures, reproductive timing, metabolic heat.



Shared eating reorients this picture. A tasting is a method of acknowledging dependence. Every bite carries photosynthesis, irrigation, animal digestion, microbial fermentation, transport, kitchen work, and the histories that organised land and labour to make that bite possible. Reproduction is never private. It is collective earthcare: the distributed maintenance of conditions for life.



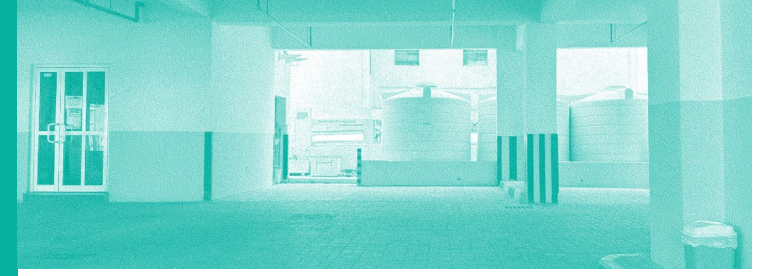
Desert rose crystal found near Rawdat Rashed, Qatar. Formed when gypsum or baryte crystals grow within sandy desert soils, the mineral binds with sand grains as water evaporates, slowly creating rose-like layered structures over long periods. These fragile formations record the quiet geological reproductivity of arid landscapes—mineral precipitation, groundwater movement, and evaporation.

What emerges from the Countryside Exhibition and the Autumn 2025 Convivial Futures programme is a more intertwined view of what sustains life: reproduction as earthcare, labour as metabolism, and care as the infrastructure beneath every food system and conservation claim. Across dates and dairies, soil memory and microbial work, enclosure histories and wage dependency, the same question returned: what does the countryside reproduce — life, or extraction? The work of being alive is never only human, and never only economic.It is the shared labour of bodies, species, waters, and worlds, shaped by governance, property, metabolic processes and the technologies that modulate them. Convivial futures begin where this work is made visible and supported: where commons replace isolation, where technology deepens relation rather than domination,and where nourishment becomes a practice of remembering interdependence.

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Attention turns here to the work that keeps worlds going: reproduction, nourishment, maintenance, care.

Life is sustained by visible labour — building, harvesting, milking, transporting — and by invisible work: seeds waiting years, soils remembering, microbes fermenting, palms fruiting through human care, animals producing under engineered climates. Modern political economies often split this work. Some living beings are prone to reproduce life; others reproduce capital. Access to land and water is severed, and the means of subsistence are repackaged as wage dependency — life bought back through labour.

"The work of being alive is never only human, and never only economic."



(Re)Production: Life's Work, Life's Politics

Every living being labours. Plants metabolise sunlight; microbes cycle nutrients; animals transform feed into milk; palms convert water and heat into fruit. Humans plant, pollinate, repair, carry, cook, clean — keeping things going. Yet the work that sustains life is rarely counted as "the economy." It is treated as background: naturalised, feminised, outsourced, or hidden behind machines.

To name reproduction — soils rebuilding structure, mangroves stabilising coasts, microbial cultures fermenting and decomposing, seedbanks storing futures — is political. It makes visible what maintaining bodies, households, infrastructures, and ecologies actually costs. Dairy relies on its own conditions of life: the reproductive bodies of cows, reorganised through industrial management, insemination, lactation, cooling, veterinary protocols, dashboards translating health into machine-readable signals. Production depends on reproduction — gestation, growth, recovery — yet it is calibrated to compress and extract.

"Reproduction cannot remain invisible. Care is not an afterthought. It is the architecture."

"What kind of economy doesn't destroy people and nature perennially?" — Bram Büscher



Layered highway overpasses near Al Souda North, Doha—modern urban infrastructure multiplying itself across the landscape, channels of mobility and circulation sustaining the continuous reproduction of the city.

Enclosure & Wage Life

The feeling of permanent acceleration — work that never ends, survival tethered to income — did not emerge naturally. It is bound to a long history of enclosure: the conversion of shared land into private property, the severing of subsistence from territory, and the rise of wage dependence as the default condition of survival.

"When subsistence is reserved, people are free only to sell their labour."

When access to land, water, grazing, and gathering is restricted, reproduction migrates into the market. Food becomes commodity; shelter becomes rent; time becomes billable. The countryside becomes a place to leave because the means of life have been reorganised elsewhere. This persists inside contemporary conservation: when protection is built through exclusion — fences, inviolate zones, criminalised subsistence — communities lose access to the very means by which life is reproduced. Forests are "saved" while the people who lived with them are displaced.

Against this, commons practices appear not as nostalgia but as survival technology: shared wells, rotational grazing, seasonal harvesting, collective decision-making, overlapping rights and responsibilities distributed across kinship. They did not eliminate scarcity; they organised life within it.



Date palm grove at Torba Farm, Qatar—rows of cultivated palms shading grasses and understory growth, with green harvest baskets hanging from branches, part of the careful human labour and ecological care that sustains oasis agriculture in the desert.