



September 13th, 2018

To my dear friends at Project Wadi Attir,

As I leave my position at The Lab, I am reflecting on just how far we have come together. When I began this job five years ago, it was difficult to tell fact from fantasy—Michael spoke of a project in the Negev, staffed by an impressive, committed community who was building the project from the ground up. He spoke of innovations in stakeholder engagement, community relations, technology design, and ecosystem restoration. He spoke of a deep wisdom in individuals close to the project in the fields of holistic herbal healing, cheese-making, education, and more. But the photos I saw were of a mostly empty plot of land, newly bulldozed. What was he seeing there that I couldn't yet see?

Five years and several trips later and this vision—the vision to which you all have given life and shape, given so much of yourselves—is fully evident. I watched in utter amazement as each of you took on challenging tasks and enormous amounts of responsibility, attempting things under pressure that you were doing for the very first time. Every time I visited the site, I found it unrecognizable from my previous visit. There were always new faces, new programs, new animals, new buildings, new innovations, new *life*. And all of this despite deep and complex challenges, both in the project itself and in the greater environment, in the Negev and in the country as a whole.

Recently, at a goodbye dinner at The Lab, someone asked me what the best part of this job was. I could say without hesitation that it was meeting and working with all of you. Seeing the way that you have risen to this challenge, now running the premiere cultural and sustainability center in the Negev, brings me great pride, as well as hope (a seemingly endangered resource in the region). I know your families and communities feel the same. Beyond that, getting to know you as people and not just professionals—your senses of humor, your passions, your varied talents and strengths—has been enormously important to me personally. As I move on to become the editor of a magazine called *Jewish Currents*—a magazine which will afford me the opportunity to continue working towards equality and justice in Israel/Palestine—I think of all of you, leading the way.

Project Wadi Attir is an exemplary demonstration of The Lab's mission to expand prospects and produce positive impacts on people and ecosystems worldwide. Though I am leaving my role, I will forever remain your cheerleader and friend. You are always welcome to reach out to me for any reason, even just to say hello, and I will, of course, come and visit you on my next trip to Israel. Though we have come so far to get to this point, I know that the journey of Project Wadi Attir is only just beginning. I believe completely in the ability of this team and I can't wait to see what you will do next!

With love,

Arielle Angel