

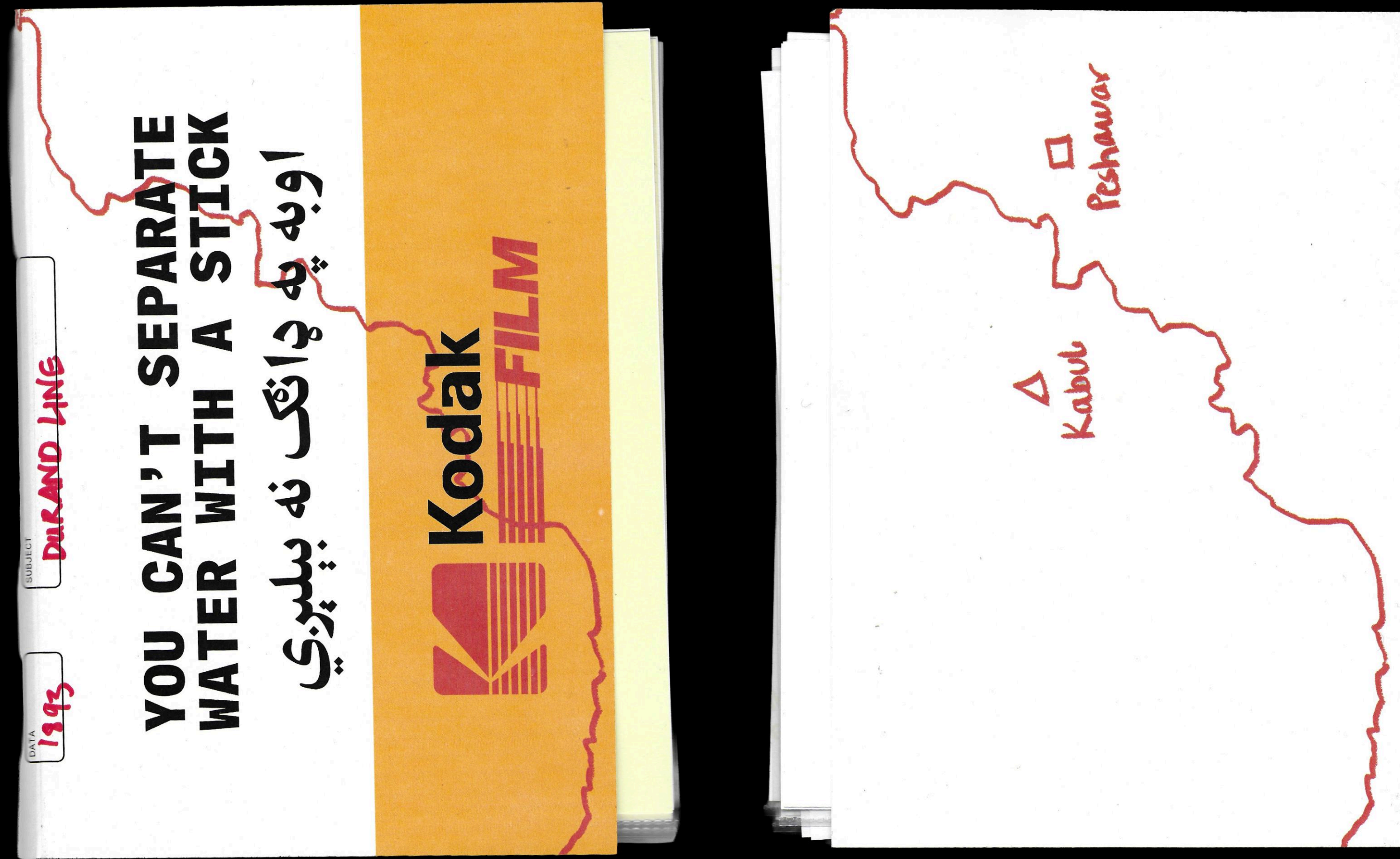
# UNIT 3 – BRIEF 2 / WEEK 2

## PROJECTIONS<sub>2</sub>

*Haris Mahmood*

# YOU CAN'T SEPARATE WATER WITH A STICK

Counter-Archive as a Photo Album

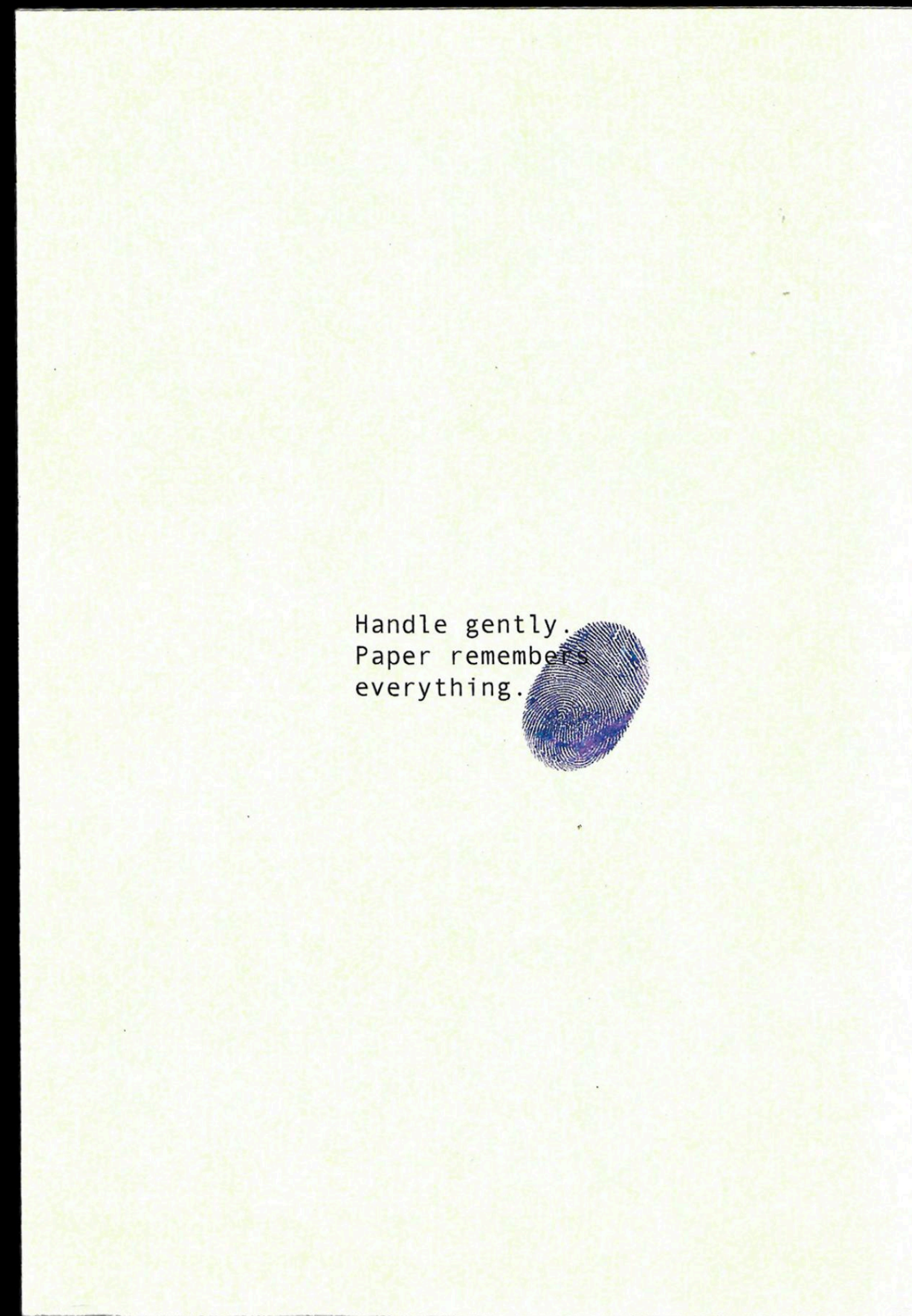
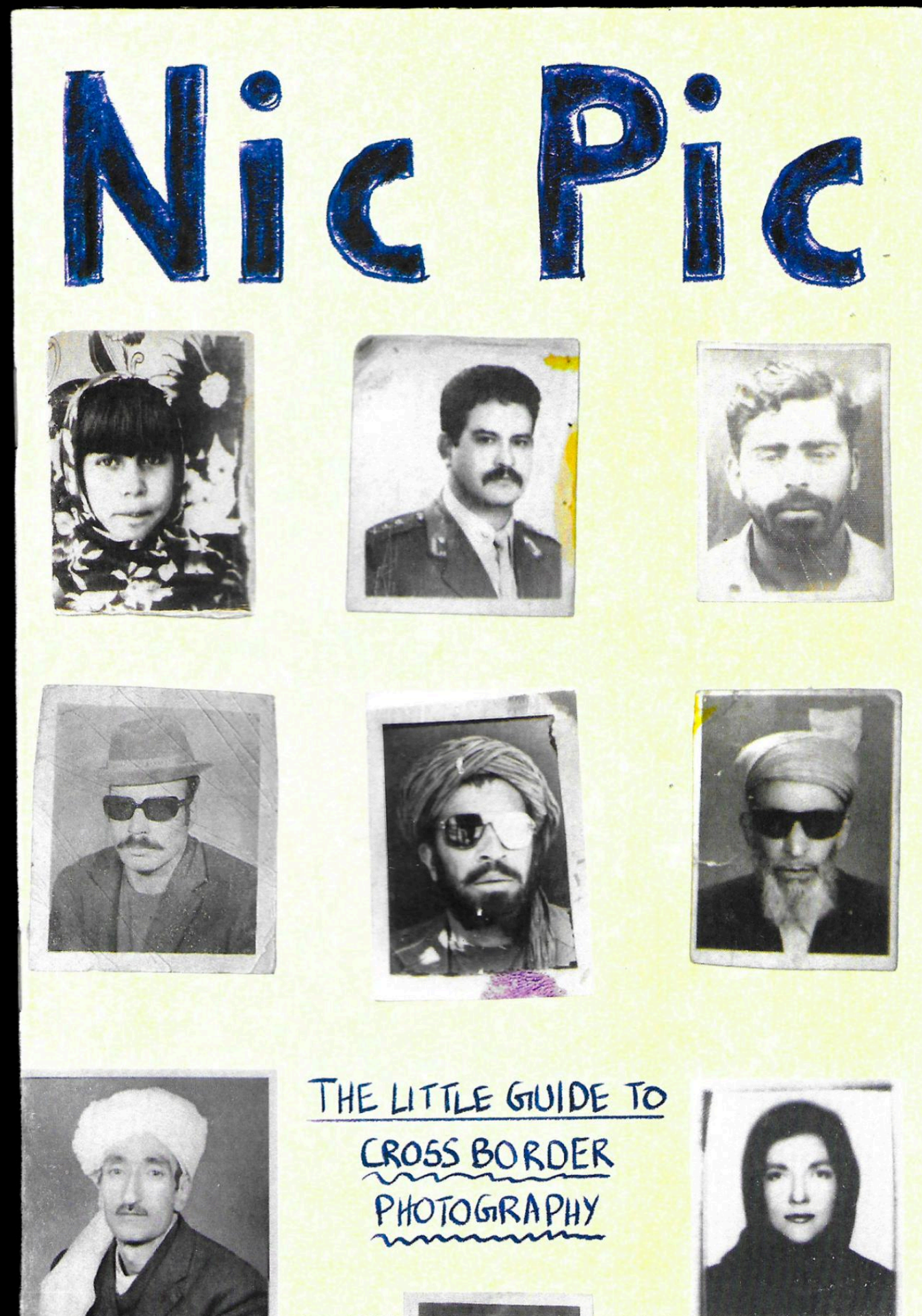


A counter archive packaged as photo album that shared poetry from both Afghanistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa paired up with photographers taken by Pukhtun Photographers from Afghanistan and Pakistan.

It attempts to de-flatten the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, by sharing cross-border voices and the rich sentiments of people towards each other from both sides of the border.

# Nic Pic

storytelling based guide



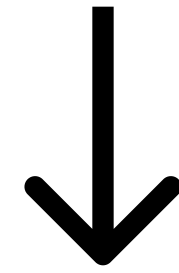
**A story-telling based guide** that narrated how images travelled between Kabul and Peshawar under the Taliban regime where photography was restricted.

Through the Afghan Box Camera and the smuggling of film across the border, the work foregrounds informal infrastructures of connection that transcended the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

# Line of Enquiry

Updated

HOW CAN CONFLICT RIDDEN BORDERS BE  
REIMAGINED THROUGH VISUAL STORYTELLING?



HOW CAN CONFLICT RIDDEN BORDERS BE  
REIMAGINED **VISUALLY** THROUGH **NARRATIVE**  
**IDENTITY?**

# Narrative Identity

## Definition

Narrative identity is the idea that people understand who they are by constructing their lives as stories;

connecting memories, experiences, and cultural contexts into a coherent narrative.

Research is always  
about

finding the most  
tailor-fit terms.

Opposite to the baggiest  
of terms, which  
allow you to do  
whatever you  
want.

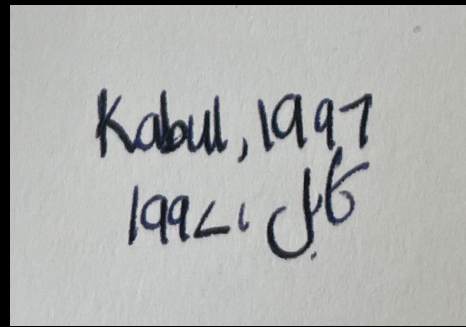
# Narrative Identity

Relevance

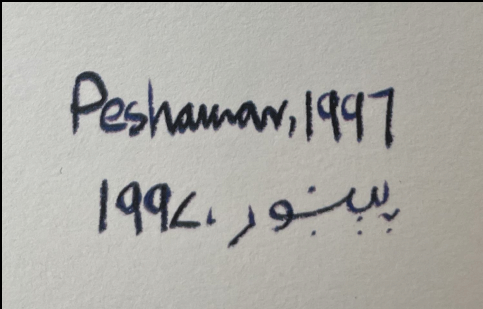
The visual remapping of the border allows for identity to be treated as something shaped through storytelling rather than fixed.

By working with borders, archives, and lived experiences, it explores how stories construct, frame, and erase identity.

In doing so, it becomes an active attempt at understanding how these interactions influence my understanding of my own personal identity.



Kabul, 1997  
کابل، ۱۹۹۷



Peshawar, 1997  
پشاور، ۱۹۹۷

# Abstract

Why is this Important?

## Context

- Borders as products of colonial and imperial systems that continue to structure the present
- Ongoing geopolitical instability exposes how fragile and selectively enforced these systems are - Israel violating boundaries, Pakistan attacking Afghanistan
- The Global South experiences these tensions as lived reality - speaking from a Pakistani, Pashtun position shaped by proximity to conflict and division

WORLD • ISRAEL

## Israel army says it established 'Yellow Line' in Lebanon, as in Gaza

The demarcation line in southern Lebanon is similar to the one separating its forces from territory still held by Hamas in Gaza. The Israeli military said that it had already struck suspected militants approaching its troops along the line.

Le Monde with AFP

Published on April 18, 2026, at 2:16 pm (Paris) · 1 min read



Novara Media

## Israeli Minister Announces 'Border Expansion' in Palestine, Lebanon and Syria

10 April 2026. Photo: Reuters/Ronen Zvulun. An Israeli minister has announced his government's plan to expand the country's...

2 weeks ago



France 24

## Focus - Residents pay the price as Afghanistan-Pakistan border remains closed

The border between Pakistan and Afghanistan has been completely closed for six months, a direct consequence of the conflict between Kabul...

17 hours ago



# Abstract

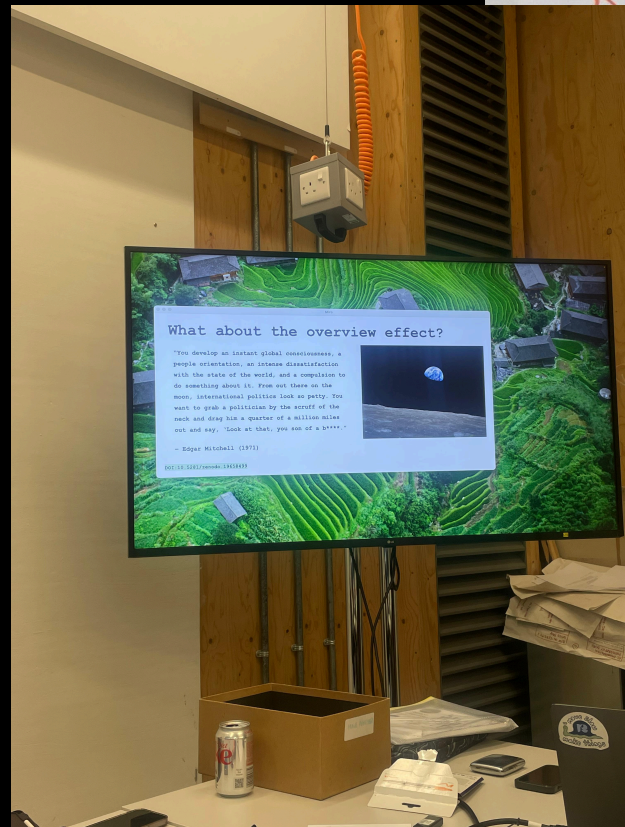
Why is this Important?

## Relevance to Graphic Design

- I am trying to argue for a more situated practice ; which makes use of **personal histories as legitimate sites of knowledge production.**
- The project argues that designers or communicators should move beyond neutral authorship by **engaging with their own positionality**, using design not only as a tool for representation but as a means of re-articulation.
- Personal is political - by bringing our own personal identities into question and seeing how they shape the world around us - **understand and respond to systems of oppression and power**

# Mapping Kings Cross

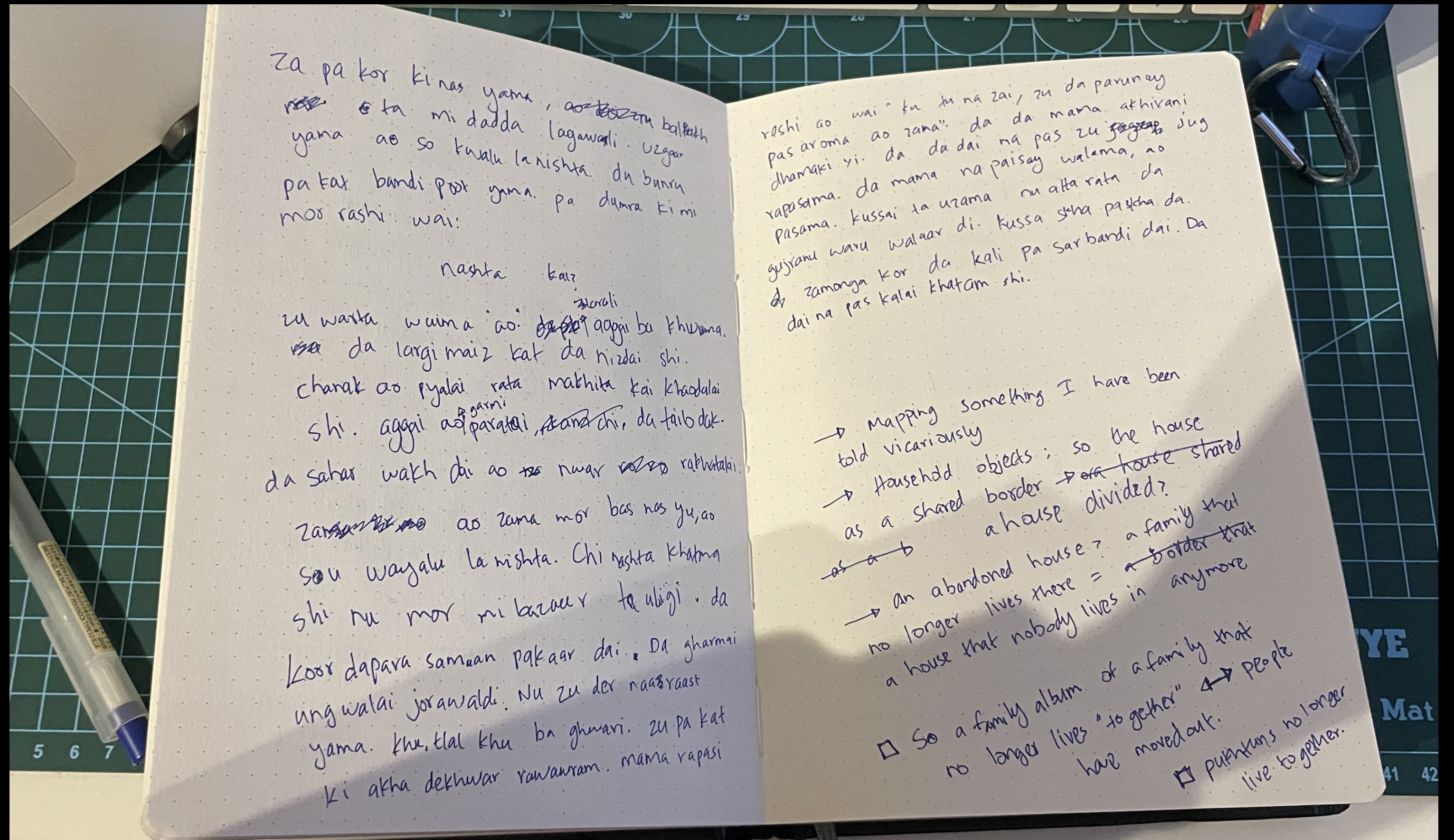
Cross Year Studio



# Writing Exercise

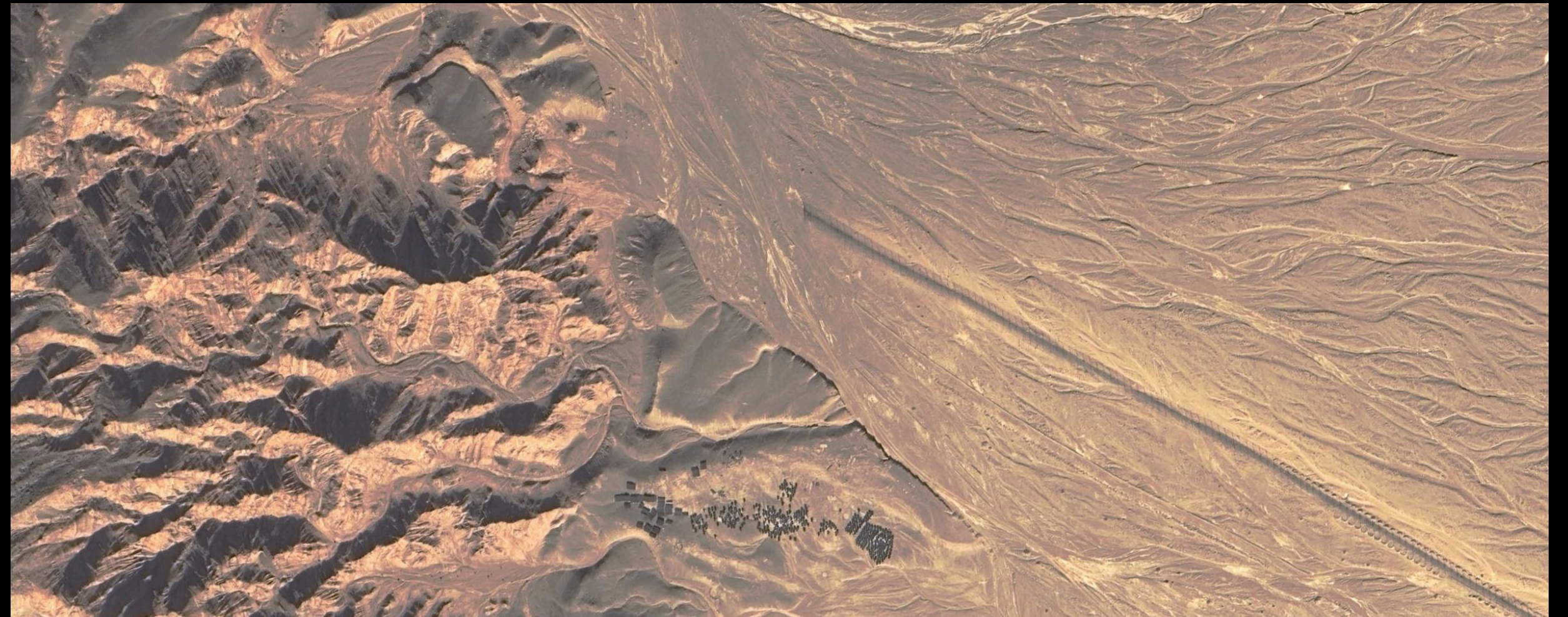
## Iterations

I tried to reimagine how spending a morning in my village was like and I tried to write it down in Roman Pashto



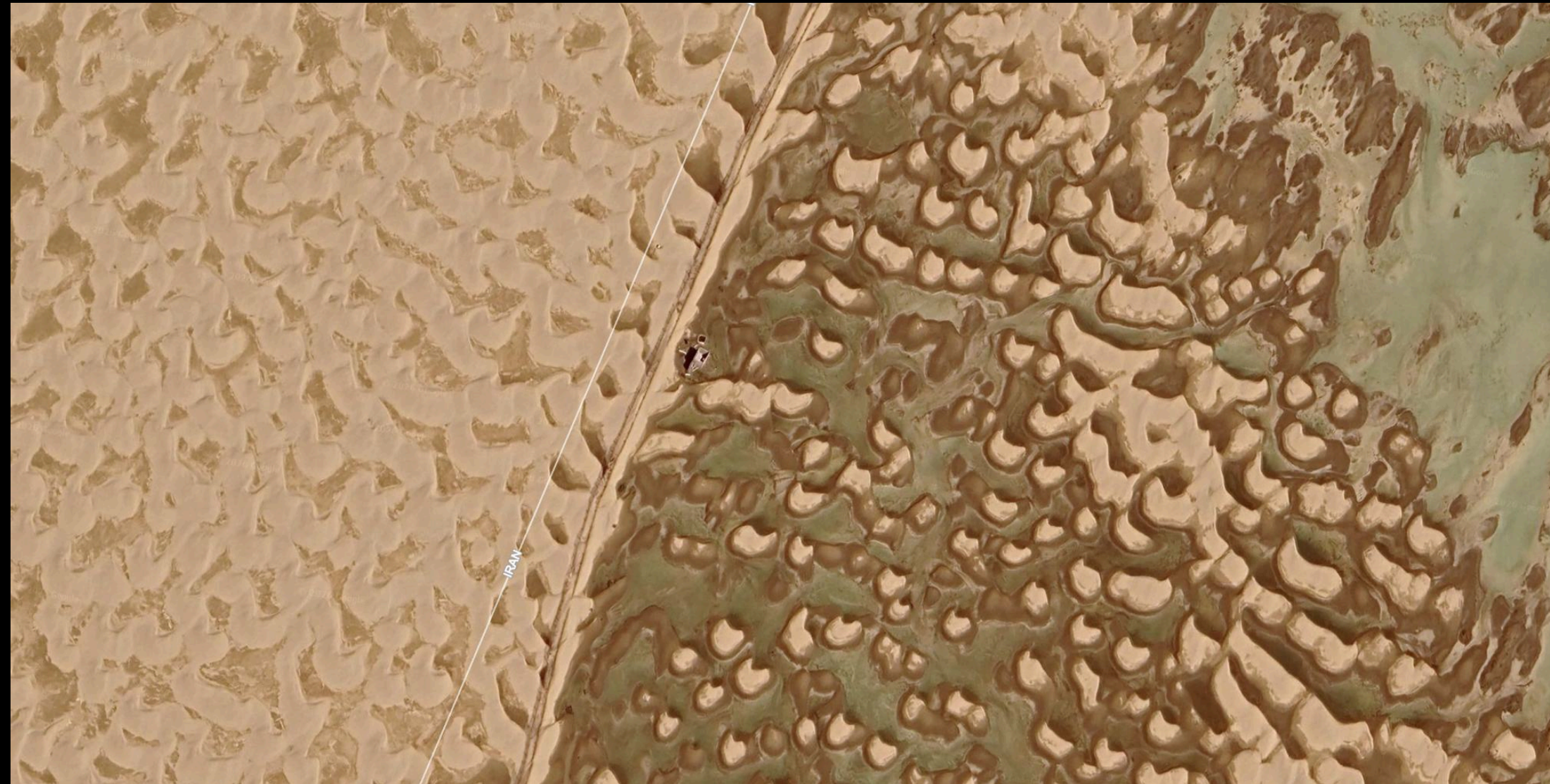
# Mapping the Western Border of Pakistan

Google Earth



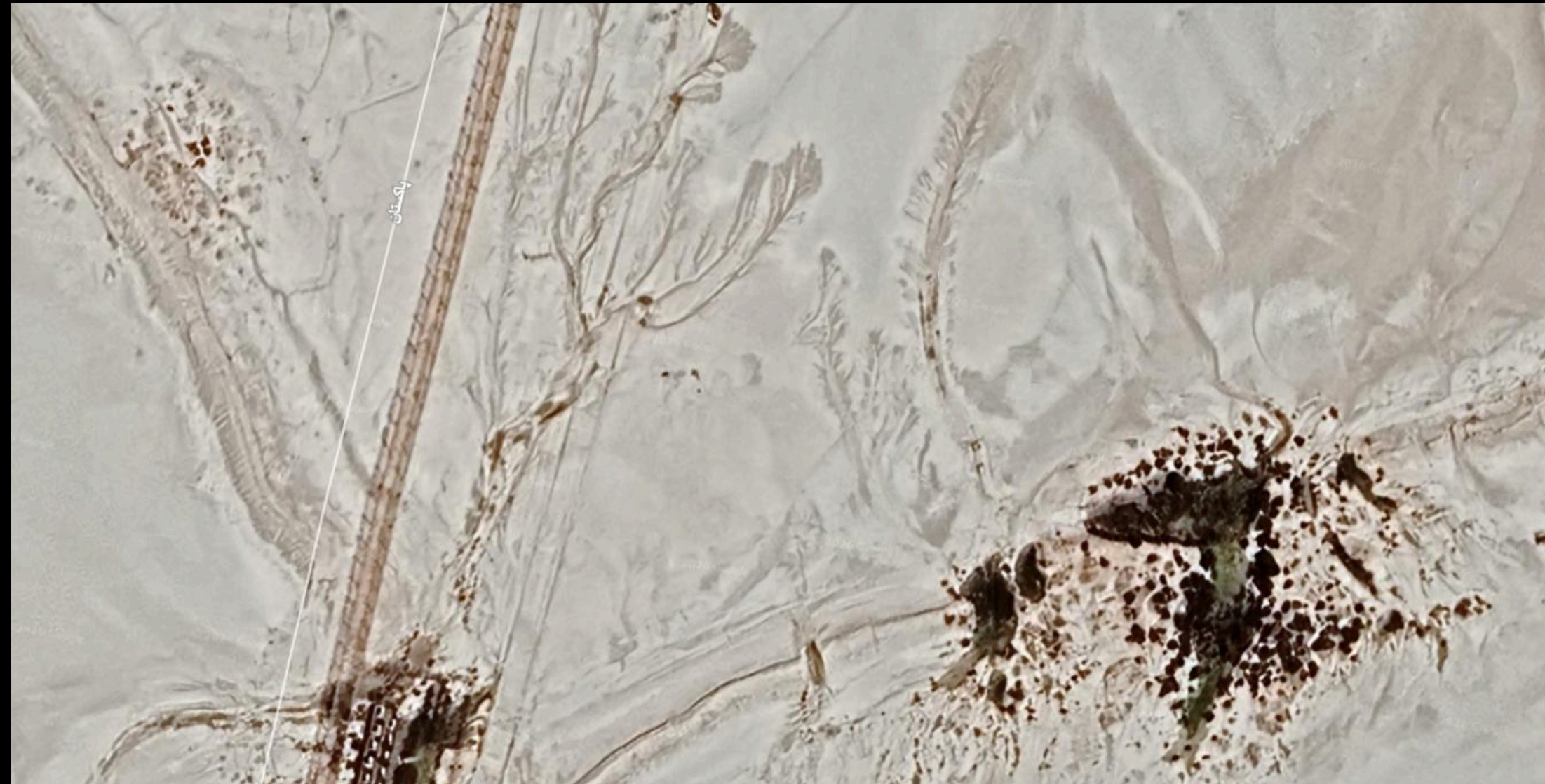
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Google Earth



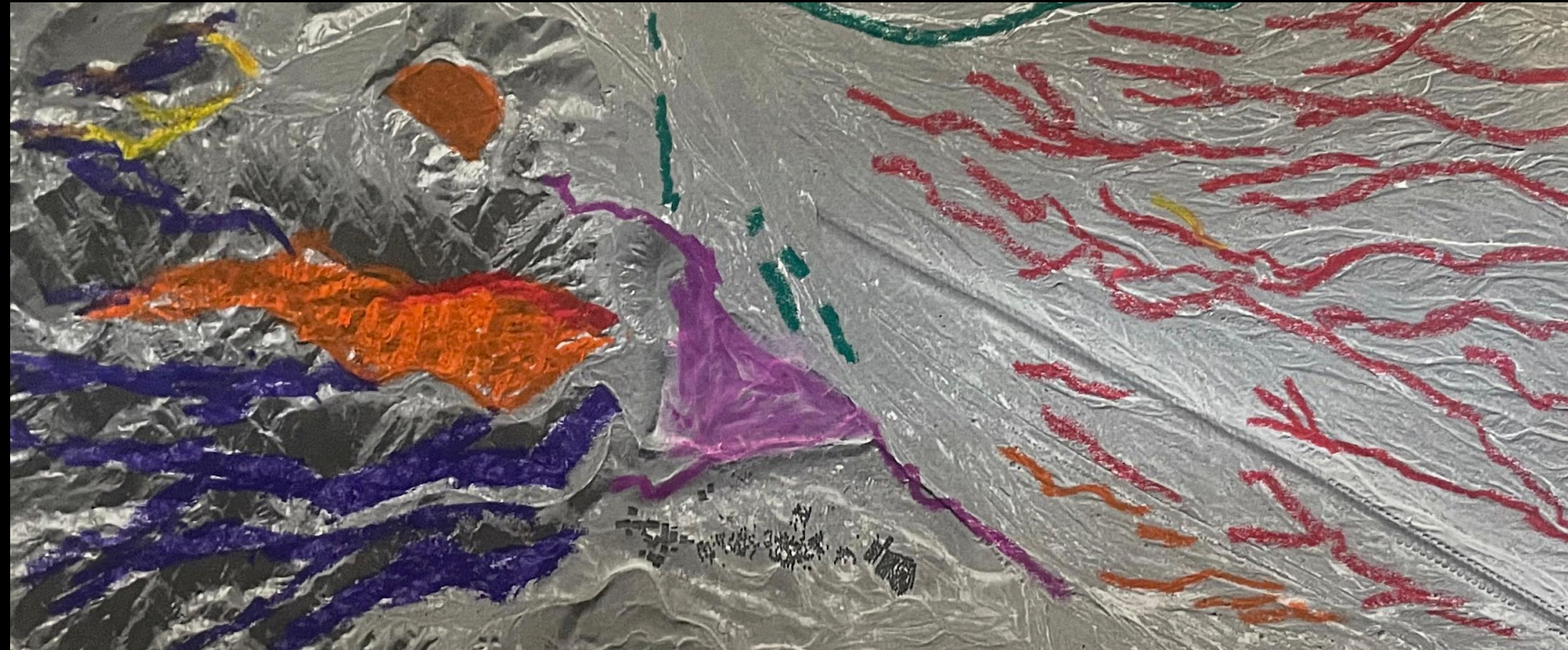
# Mapping the Western Border of Pakistan

Google Earth



# Mapping the Western Border of Pakistan

Drawing over the Map



# Mapping the Western Border of Pakistan

Google Earth



# Mapping the Western Border of Pakistan

Google Earth



# Mapping the Western Border of Pakistan

My Village Home



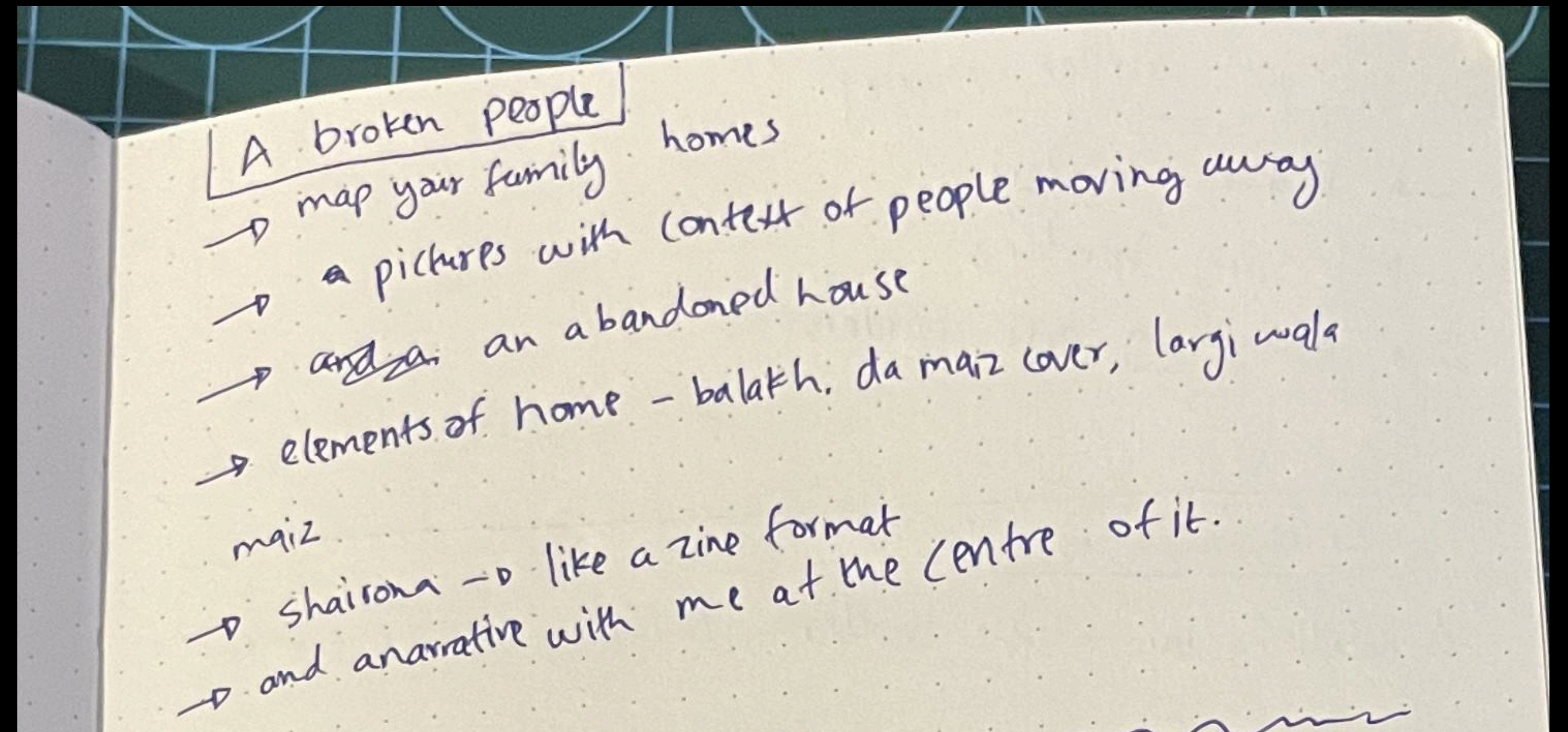
# Moving Forward

## Making

Counter Archive → Family Archive

An attempt to disguise political commentary in the archive as I unfold the story of family and its nuances and draw a contrast with the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. I can be at the centre of it so it reinforces the idea of narrative identity

**Mapping the routes in my village that I took + stories about my family home in my village + cultural artefacts**



# The Banshees of Inisherin

## Political Metaphor



*The Banshees of Inisherin* is set in 1923 and foils as a cutting metaphor for the Irish Civil War. Conflict was everywhere. Even Michael Collins, a hero of the Irish War of Independence (see also the [film adaptation](#) of his story), found himself at odds with many of his countrymen during the subsequent Civil War.

Colm serves as a similar metaphoric vehicle. He has much to lose by chopping-off the very fingers that, he hopes, will play him into musical immortality – as opposed to maintaining the status quo and wasting away his life in a pub, with Pádraic.

Then there's the infamous female spirit in Irish folklore, the Banshee, who is usually identified by her screaming, wailing, or shrieking. She is said to sing when a family member dies or is about to die. This is what makes her screech so creepy and uninvited. In *The Banshees of Inisherin* the role of Mrs. McCormick, the pipe-dirty old woman who the entire town avoids, would be this character. And her dark forebodings did seem to predict when death was on the horizon.

The pets both men own and prize also serve as metaphors. Pádraic becomes inconsolable when he loses Jenny, his miniature donkey (it's no coincidence that the donkey is known as the literal butt joke of the animal world). Colm, on the other hand, owns a Border Collie, widely considered to be the most intelligent dog breed but, also, a dog that strictly abides by the doctrine of its master. In this case, Colm could be seen as a symbol of individualism (a colonial or English ideal). Such doctrine doesn't quite gel with Pádraic nor with the rest of the folk in Inisherin.

# Moving Forward

Making

Mapping the routes in my village that I took + visuals from the family homes in my village + a narrative around my family with images from the family album + visual culture from my village and family artefacts

=

all colliding to narrate a story that serves as the metaphor for the Pak-Afg border



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irth-Day for the first time won a prize on my school. (Sami-ullah). The second time for I won a prize with pride by the position 1st having 683 votes. Delivered to me by Ghulam...  
... prize from my school as regular. The first day... new years, new century and new millennium. The most happiest day of my life. My big contribution having 1 a prize on such a day. I obtained 715 from 850 and second position in the 9th class by the hands of Mr. Sami-ullah (JR/teacher).



# Abstract

Draft / 01

This project asks: *How can conflict-ridden borders be reimagined visually through storytelling?*

It emerges from an interest in mapping, borders, decolonisation and narrative, fields that often intersect yet are typically represented through reductive visual conventions. In dominant cartographic systems, borders are rendered as lines: precise, authoritative and seemingly neutral. This enquiry challenges that visual reduction, proposing instead that borders are dense sites of memory, culture and lived experience.

I engage with this question through the construction of a physical, archive-based publication that adopts the form of a family photo album. This format is not incidental; it is a culturally embedded artefact drawn from my own context. The hardbound cover, inscribed with the name of the border and its timeline, echoes vernacular practices of archiving in Pakistan. Inside, images are accompanied by handwritten-style inscriptions on their reverse, while the inner covers provide contextual framing through xeroxed material. This interplay between surface and depth, front and back attempts to mirror the layered realities of borders themselves.

The project uses the “personal” as a deliberate strategy to mediate the political. By borrowing the intimacy and familiarity of the family album, it creates an entry point into histories of division, displacement and conflict, particularly those shaped by colonial legacies. In doing so, it resists the flattening logic of maps, where borders exist only as abstract demarcations. Instead, the publication assembles stories, cultural references and visual artefacts that expand the border into a narrative space.

This enquiry is situated within a broader geopolitical context where borders continue to be contested, violated and instrumentalised, often along the same imperial lines that produced them. As someone positioned within the Global South, and more specifically as a Pakistani Pashtun, this work is both a critical and personal investigation into how such systems of power is experienced and internalised. Within graphic communication design, this project argues for a more situated practice, one that foregrounds personal histories as legitimate sites of knowledge production. It suggests that designers can move beyond neutral authorship by engaging with their own positionality, using design not only as a tool for representation but as a means of re-articulation. Here, storytelling becomes a method of unmapping and remapping, of re-seeing what has long been rendered invisible.

**DERA MANANA**

*thank you :)*