



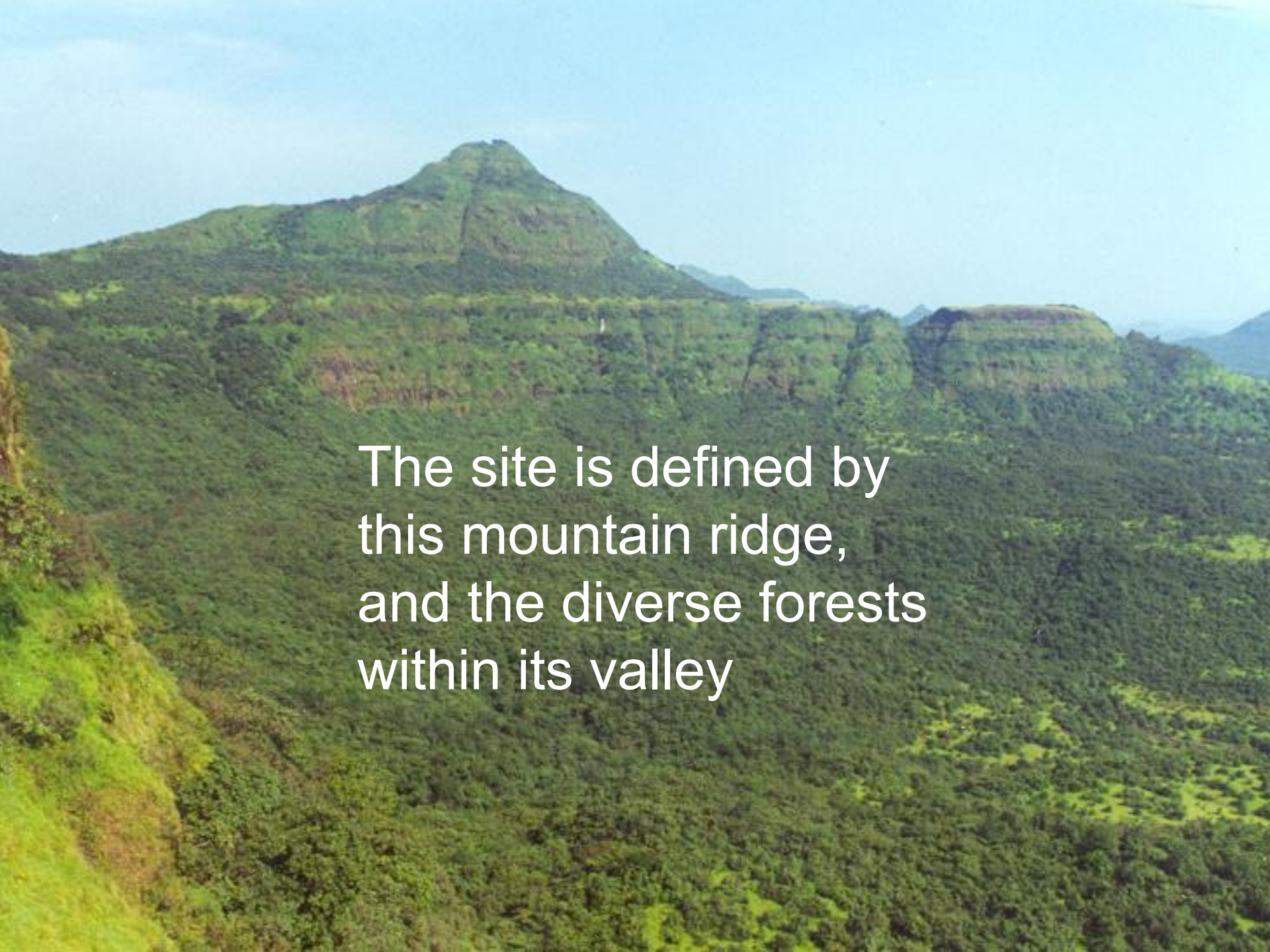
Western Ghats



Shillim lies within the Western Ghats of India, in the Sayhadri Range in Maharashtra. The Ghats are a UNESCO World Heritage site, and a biodiversity hotspot

A scenic landscape photograph showing a wide valley with a prominent flat-topped mountain (mesa) in the distance. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds. The foreground is filled with green vegetation and some purple flowers. The text is overlaid on the lower half of the image.

The owners wanted to preserve a small patch – 2000 acres – of this fragile area as development threatened to destroy the ecology and character. They acquired 3500 acres, with the intent to develop a small part of it as a resort

A photograph of a mountain landscape. In the background, a large, rounded mountain peak rises above a series of lower, flat-topped ridges. The entire landscape is covered in dense, green forest. The sky is a pale blue with some light clouds. The text is overlaid on the lower right portion of the image.

The site is defined by
this mountain ridge,
and the diverse forests
within its valley



The site is desert-like in the summer



And inundated during the monsoon. This is the small village, Biodchil Wadi, that sits in the valley.



There is a tremendous
range of landscapes, from
the high ridge and buttes







To the high benches







And then down to the forest



There are many
endemic species
of plants and
animals that occur
only in this area of
the Western
Ghats

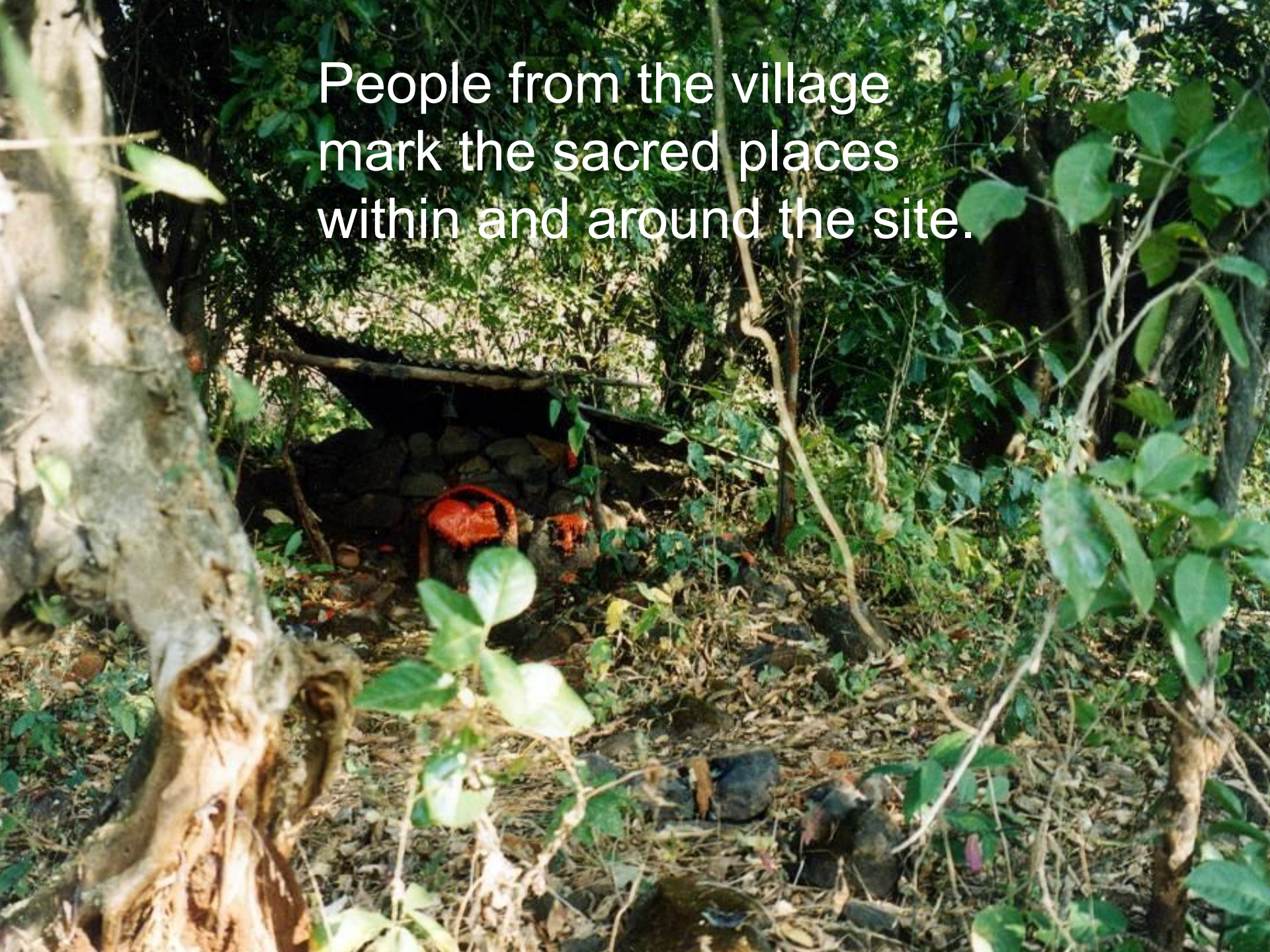




Within the forest are mature stands of trees that are considered sacred groves. They are home to a range of species and layers of plants from trees to ground-plane plants that create a diverse microclimate.

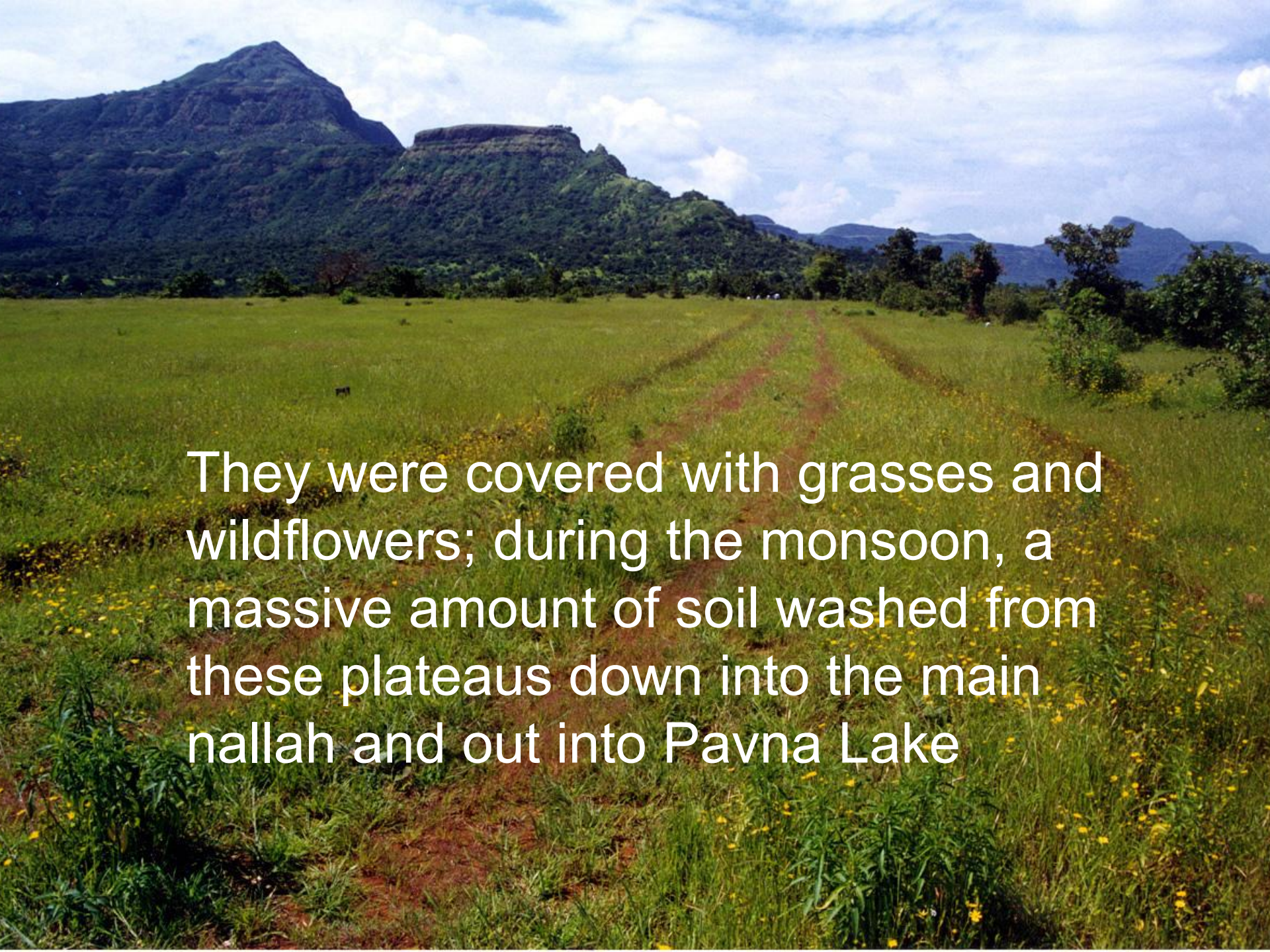


People from the village
mark the sacred places
within and around the site.



The forest opens out to long plateaus that were denuded when planning work commenced on the site in 1997.





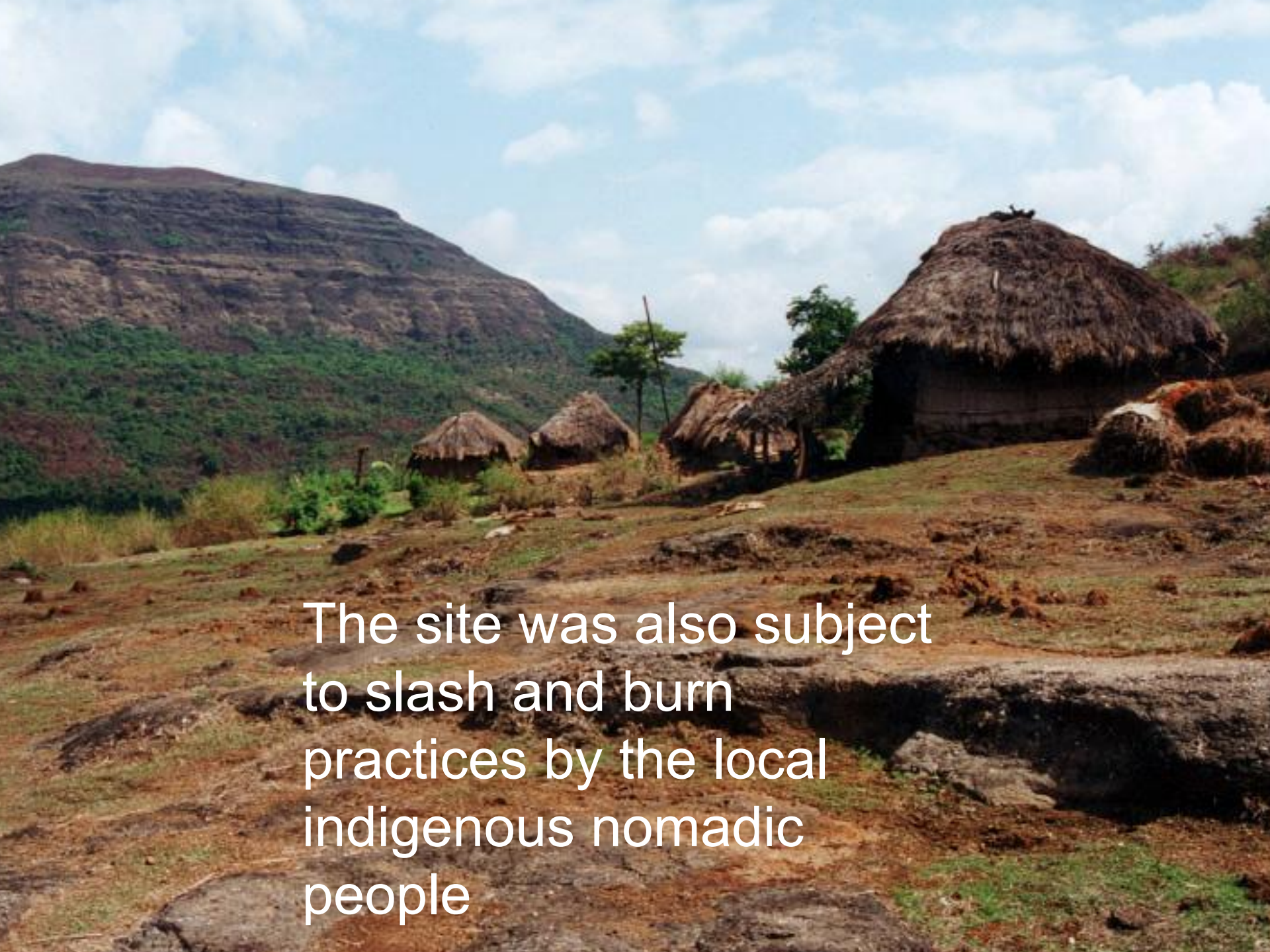
They were covered with grasses and wildflowers; during the monsoon, a massive amount of soil washed from these plateaus down into the main nallah and out into Pavna Lake

This was the condition of the
lower slopes, grazed by
cattle for many generations

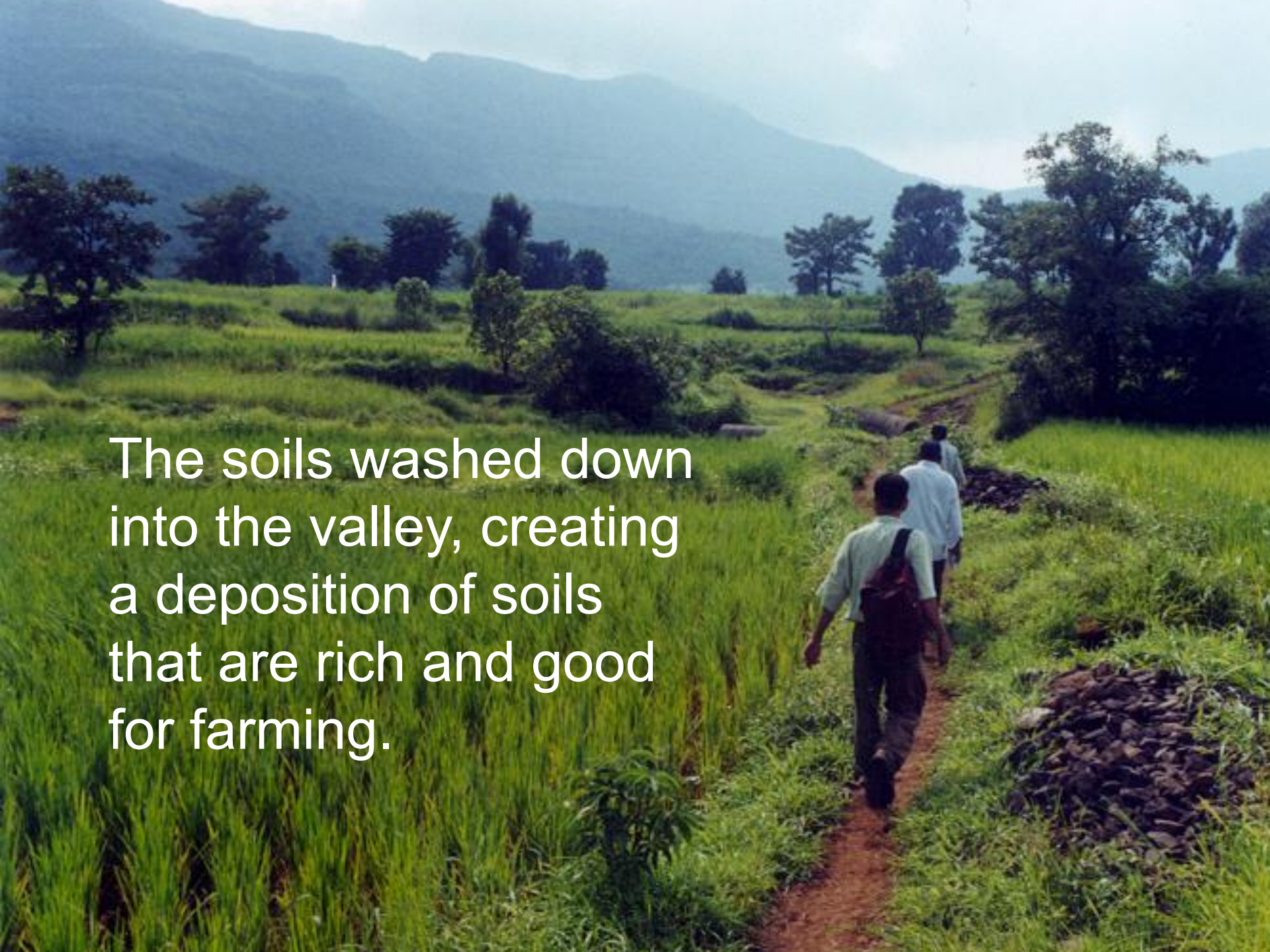






A photograph of a traditional village with several thatched huts. The huts have steeply pitched, conical roofs made of dried grass or straw. They are situated on a grassy, slightly elevated area. In the background, a large, rugged mountain with a flat top rises against a blue sky with scattered white clouds. The foreground shows a dirt path and some low-lying vegetation. The overall scene suggests a rural, possibly nomadic, settlement in a mountainous region.


The site was also subject
to slash and burn
practices by the local
indigenous nomadic
people

A photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground, a dirt path leads through a lush green valley. Three people are walking away from the camera along the path. The valley is filled with tall grass and scattered trees. In the background, there are large, hazy mountains under a cloudy sky. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

The soils washed down
into the valley, creating
a deposition of soils
that are rich and good
for farming.



A rice field in the monsoon

A high-angle photograph of a lush, green landscape. The foreground is filled with dense, vibrant green foliage and trees. In the middle ground, several terraced rice paddies are visible, separated by low, earthen berms. These berms are dotted with various types of trees, including some that appear to be fruit trees like mango and jackfruit. The background is a steep, densely forested hillside, also covered in green vegetation. The overall scene is a beautiful representation of a rural, agricultural landscape.

The paddies are separated by berms
where the villagers have grown fruit
trees such as mango and jack fruit



After the harvest the rice fields traditionally were burned, a practice that was expedient, economical, and believed to increase the fertility of the soils. These practices also have environmental costs.



The lowest point on the site is the nallah where all excess water flows. Water remains in the nallah through December







The small village, Bodchil Wadi,
that sits at the valley floor.



At the central square: a temple
and a ceremonial seating
platform surrounding a tree





Signs of human settlement thread through the landscape, as with these markings of sacred places



And this rice threshing terrace

The lessons of how to live with little are many – this woman can dig down four feet in 40 degree weather to extract land crabs.



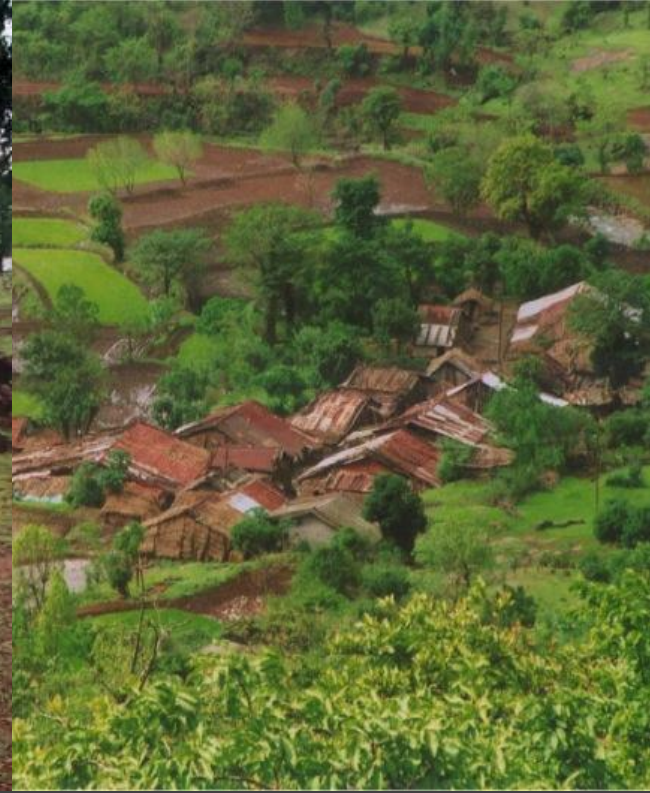


This is what the site looked like from the government road before any construction



A team of designers, engineers, horticulturists assembled for the planning process. The architect and landscape planner were from the US; all others were Indian

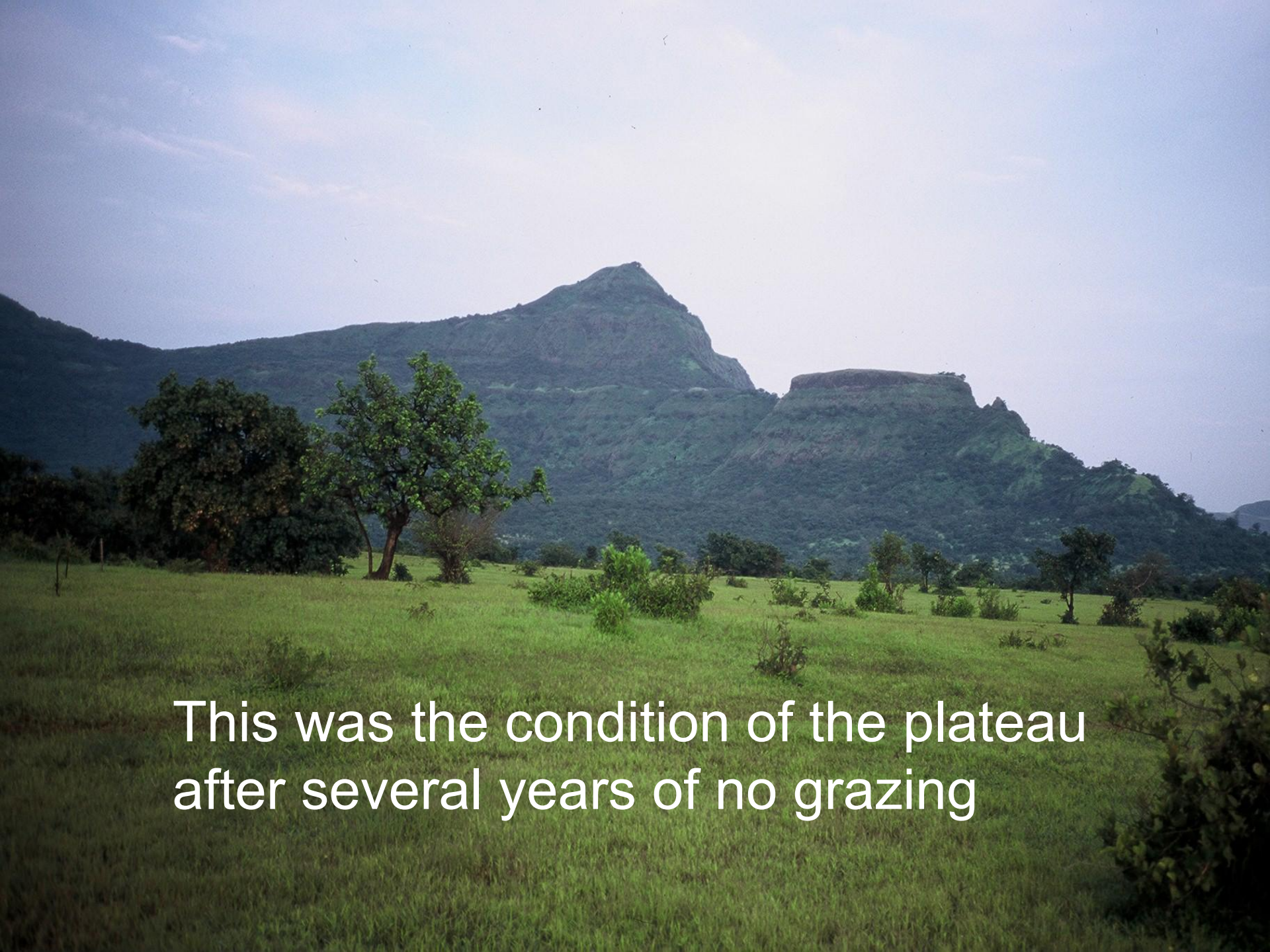
The planners dispersed the program over the disturbed areas of the site – the rice paddies and the eroded slopes. They used the aerial as the base for the plan, so they would always be able to see the existing landforms and vegetation massings



They started construction with conservation work, trenching over a thousand meters of contour trenches, slowing water down and allowing vegetation to take hold, also recharging groundwater



Gulley plugs slowed water around the nallahs, encouraging revegetation around the waterways.



This was the condition of the plateau
after several years of no grazing



And this approximately five years later



More active measures were taken to stabilize and replant after disturbance

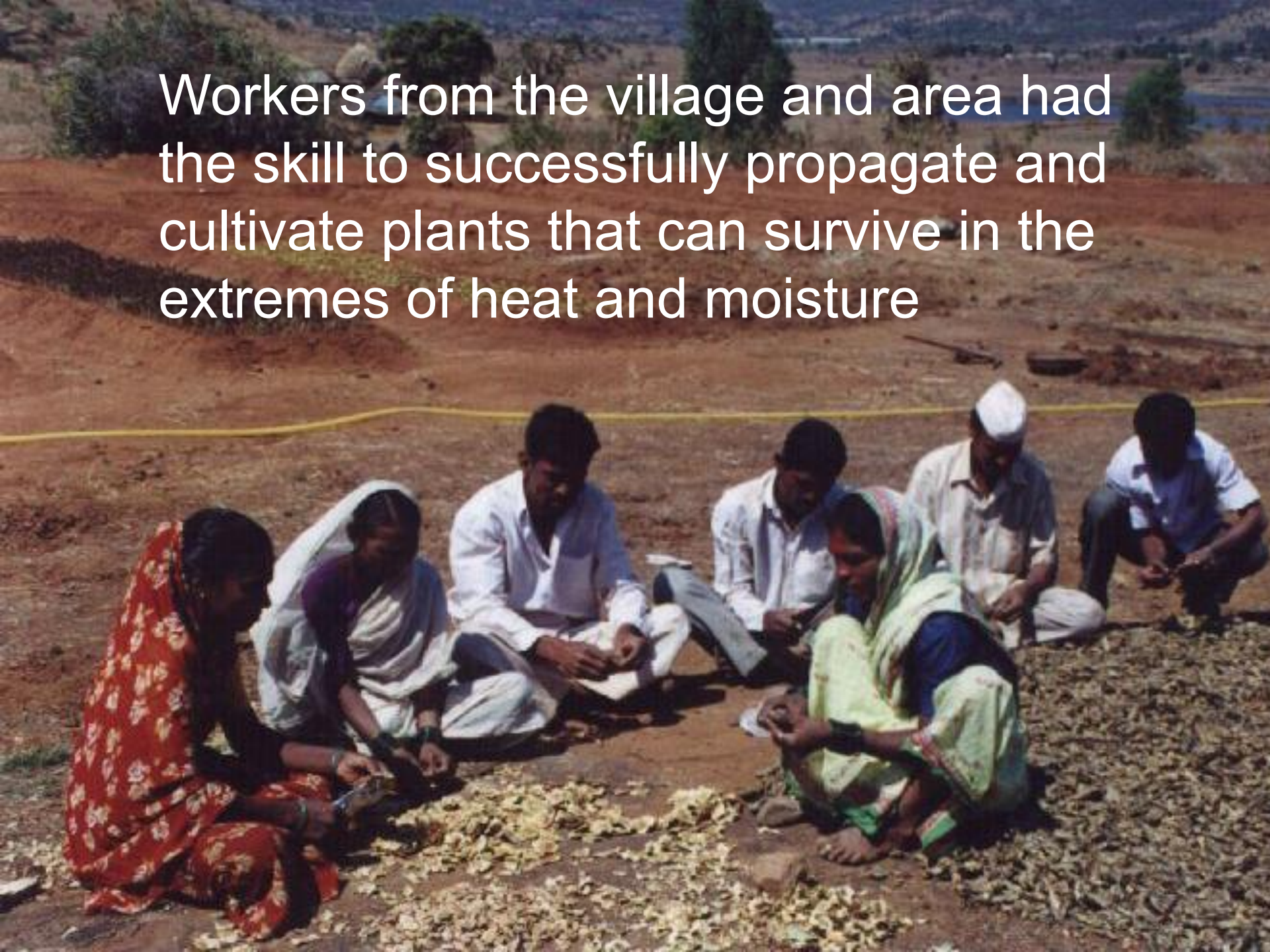


A nursery was started in 2002; around one hundred thousand plants were planted each year to revegetate the slopes and provide shade for the resort



The nursery was started by a team of Indian horticulturists led by an English horticulturist who had been practicing in India for decades

Workers from the village and area had the skill to successfully propagate and cultivate plants that can survive in the extremes of heat and moisture

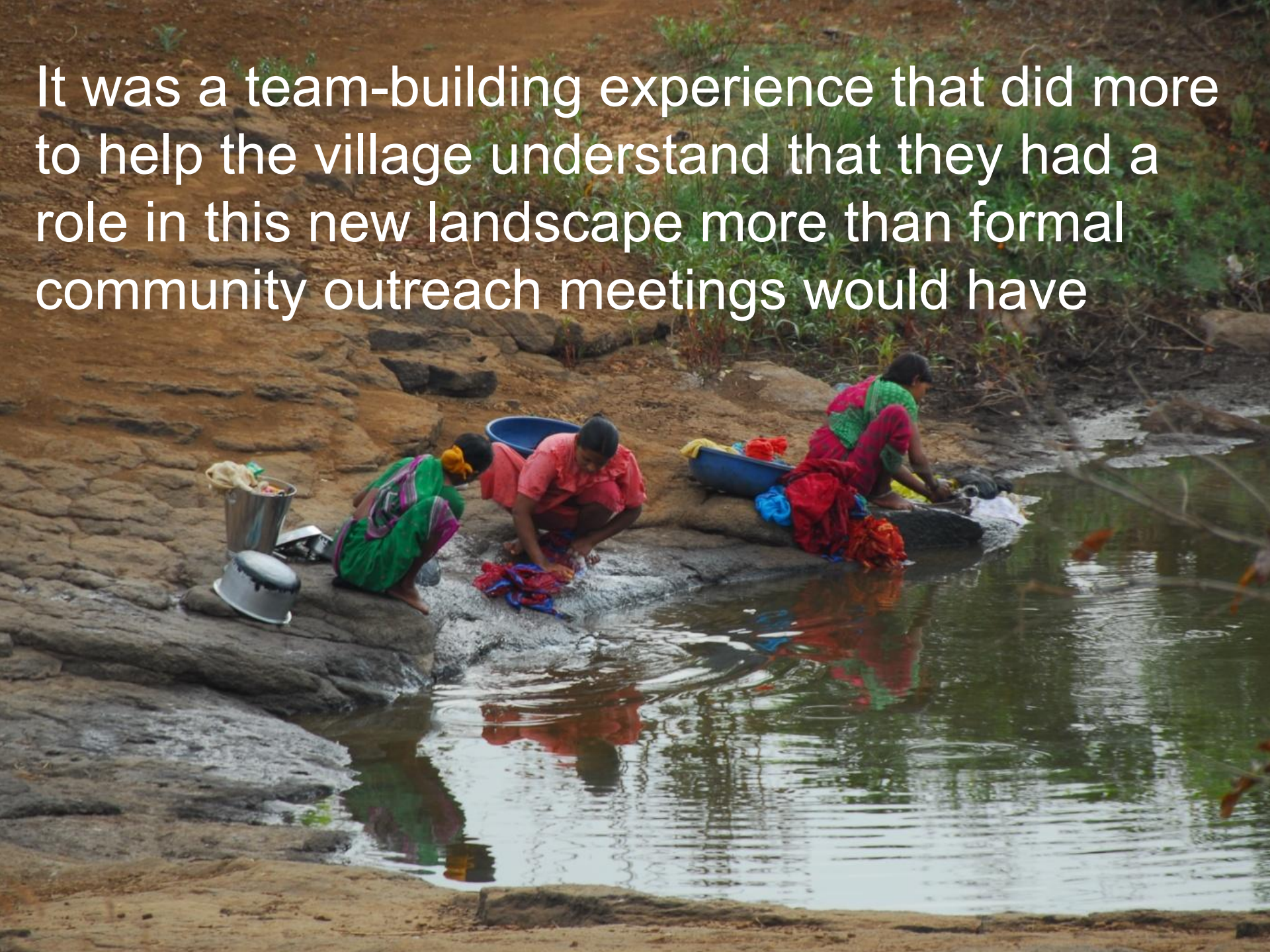




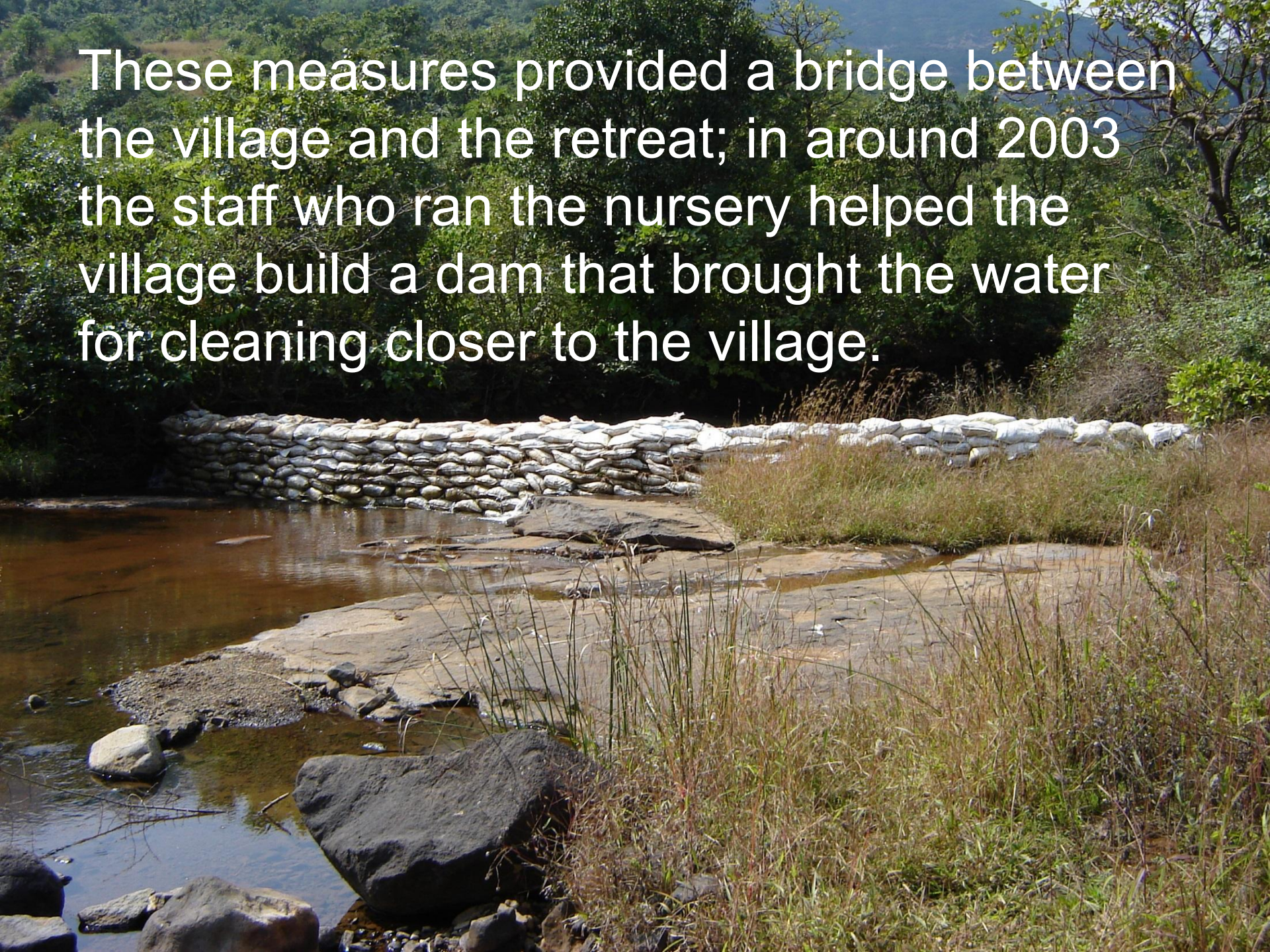
People from the village had been working with the project since early on, as forest guards, guides for the planning team, staff for the site office and campsite; the nursery engaged them as well.



It was a team-building experience that did more to help the village understand that they had a role in this new landscape more than formal community outreach meetings would have




These measures provided a bridge between the village and the retreat; in around 2003 the staff who ran the nursery helped the village build a dam that brought the water for cleaning closer to the village.





The first residential construction on the site was a campsite that served as a field station for the team charged with planning, designing and implementing construction



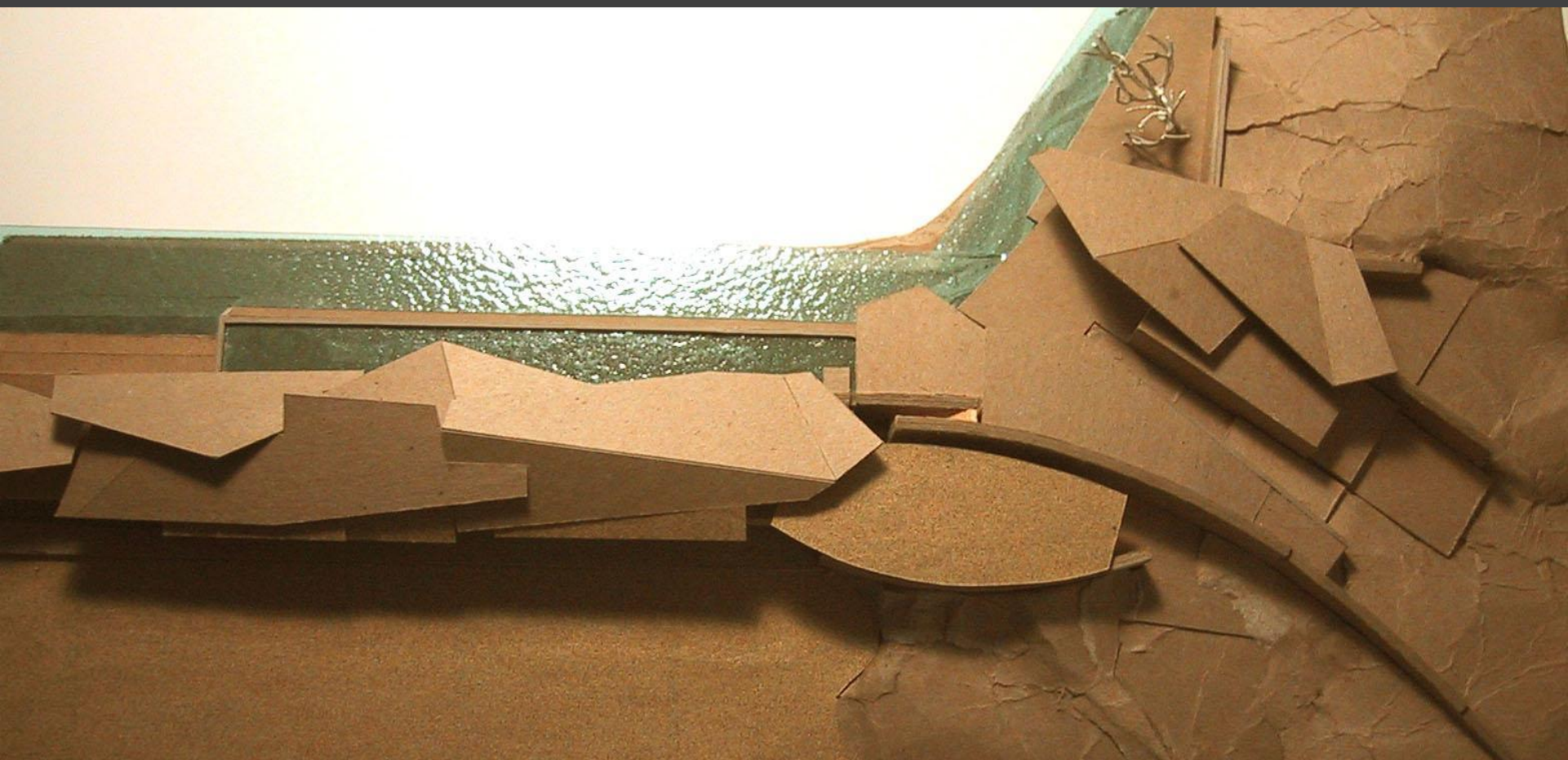


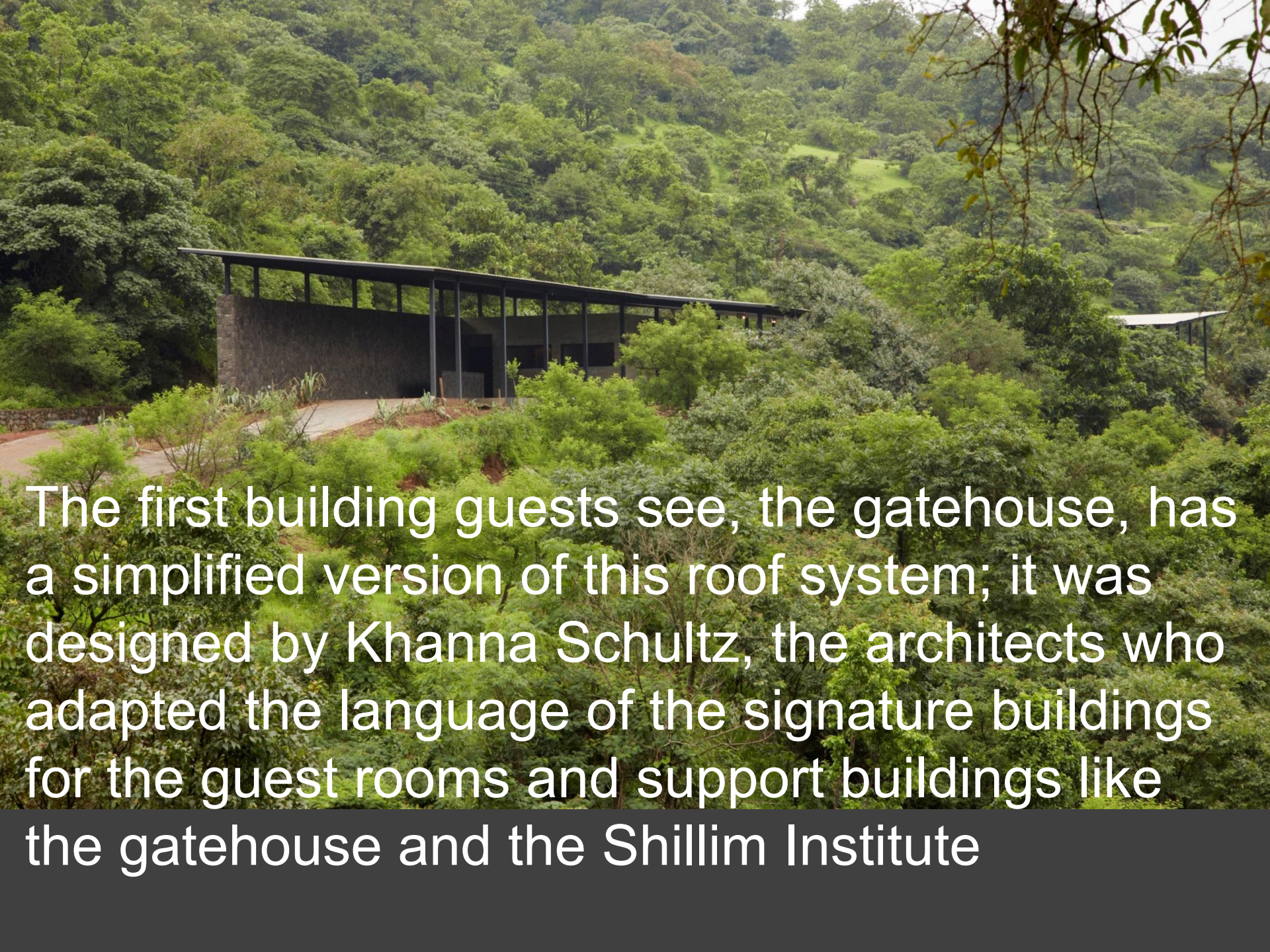
It was also a test run for how to bring energy, water and services to the site



At this time the lead architects, Steven Harris and his associate Tom Zook, tested different ways of developing an architecture that would work in scale with the site. They feared that the big roofs required for the program would blow out the scale of the valley

A system of faceted roofs for the signature buildings like the spa created a language that could then be extended to most of the buildings of the retreat





The first building guests see, the gatehouse, has a simplified version of this roof system; it was designed by Khanna Schultz, the architects who adapted the language of the signature buildings for the guest rooms and support buildings like the gatehouse and the Shillim Institute



The gatehouse perches over the farm fields, and leads you out to the valley

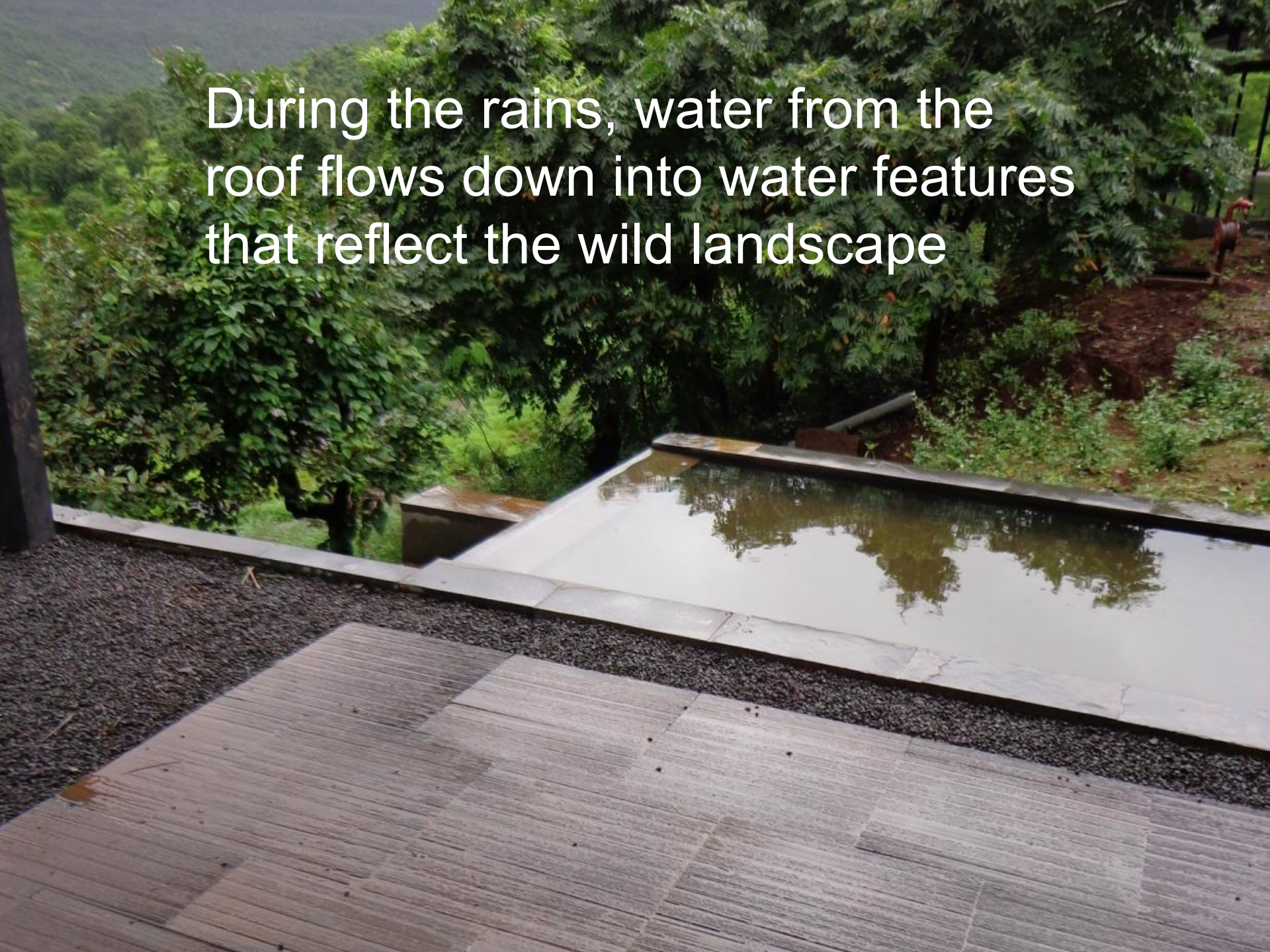


Few trees were cut to make way for new construction, and often they were left in place, as in this courtyard at the gatehouse that was then surfaced with recycled Shahabad stone left over from the construction of the walls.



The domestic landscape and the wilder landscape of the revegetated slopes are intended to work together visually

During the rains, water from the roof flows down into water features that reflect the wild landscape





The Club – the social center with restaurant, wine cellar, library and bar – was sited around a mature mango tree, at the middle bench between the plateau and the valley floor.





















































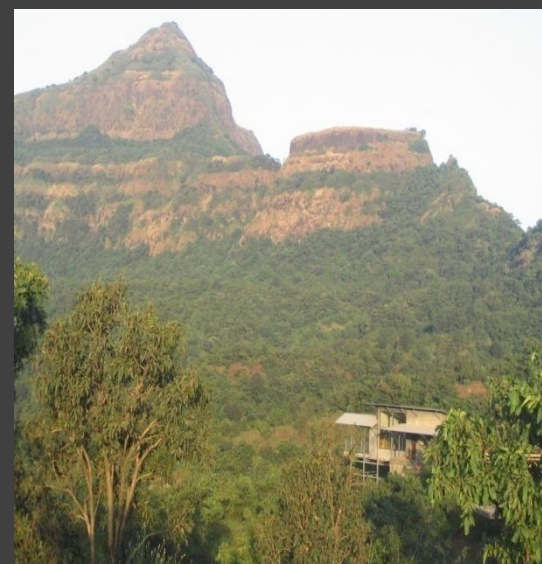






















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scale

A wide-angle photograph of the Shillim Institute campus. The campus is situated on a hillside covered in dense, dry forest. Several buildings with light-colored roofs are visible, some partially obscured by trees. In the background, a large, flat-topped mountain rises against a clear sky. The foreground shows a dirt road and some sparse vegetation.

Shillim Institute













One Landscape

US/Global



The background of the left half of the image is a photograph of a lush green forested hill. A modern building with a flat roof and large windows is situated on the left side of the hill. In the distance, a range of mountains is visible under a clear sky. The text 'WILD BY DESIGN' is overlaid in large, bold, yellow capital letters in the upper left corner.

WILD BY DESIGN

AT THE SHILLIM INSTITUTE

June 10-20, 2016 Maharashtra, India

The SHILLIM FOUNDATION, INC. promotes work that connects individuals and communities to wild and precious landscapes—both in urban and natural environments—through the arts and conservation.

The Shillim Foundation engages communities in experimental interactions between people, artistic media, environmentalism, and landscapes. The purposes of these interactions are varied: to produce works of art, to promote new ideas about the relationship between arts and conservation, and to realize concrete plans to conserve wild environments. The Shillim Foundation's activities include workshops, seminars, and other meetings of conservationists and artists, as well as public presentations, to promote its work in arts and conservation.

WILD BY DESIGN

Inaugural Retreat at the Shillim Institute
June 10-20, Maharashtra, India



Constantine Baecher and Kaitlyn Gilliland: The Body as a Sanctuary

Dancers/choreographers Constantine Baecher and Kaitlyn Gilliland will explore physical and spiritual practices—ritual, meditation, and repetitive movement—used to access the body as a sanctuary. They will investigate ways that energy and emotion take human form, the potential to create dance “steps” from a place of energy/emotion rather than technique/anatomy, and how movement grows, changes and erodes through time and repetition. These studies will respond to the landscape and ethos of Shillim.



Linda Pollak: Photographs

Linda Pollak's photographs reframe landscape—particularly her photographic series on Lower Manhattan streets—in ways that reframe experience. Each photograph is a field of possibilities, in which there is no part of the visible field more or less important than another. The current work embraces the language of every day artifacts and experience, through the complex processes that occur in the urban natural world.

In any one photograph, all the visual elements work together to reveal complex structures: affiliations, between and across species and established categories. At Shillim, Linda Pollak will be discovering a new world of associations through her photographs.



Erin Gee: Listening to the Environment

Erin Gee will draw on the environmental sounds of Shillim, both for inspiration and as sources for the actual sonic structures of the piece. Working with the sound engineer/designer, Joel Gordon, she will listen to the environment in new ways and produce onsite bioacoustic recordings. She will prepare a new work for voice and string quartet while in residence, as well as study the vocal techniques and music of

local musicians, and will collaborate in workshops on deep listening techniques and listening immersion walks.



Vicky Colombet: Immersion in Landscape

Vicky Colombet will immerse herself in the Shillim landscape, walking, looking, and sketching, but also studying the earth and geology of the site and using the natural resources of the site in making her paints. She will also experiment with the impact that resonances of traditional music

will have on the process of creating her works on canvas and paper. Colombet's work is both abstract and suggestive of landscapes, of topographies, of the erosion of the earth and its ephemeral elements. While Colombet questions what can be read as landscape, her surfaces capture a fleeting moment in the life of nature and suggest contemplation.



Conservation: A Roadmap for The Future

A small group of conservationists, private developers, scientists, and NGO representatives will meet for five days to review current trends in conservation and begin to develop a roadmap for conservation in the future. Topics will include public/private partnerships, conservation and

private development, income generation, community organization, and improving information sharing. The participants will develop a manual for landholders on analyzing a site in an efficient and economical way, engaging the appropriate professionals, phasing conservation work, and producing a conservation master plan document. The participants will also interact with the artists—the biologist will work with the sound artist to record the sounds of certain insect species, for example. The interaction of arts and conservation will help reframe conservation as a creative process.



THE GLASS WALL movie
© Caliban Productions





