

A FOREST WALK IN THE HIMALAYAS

Ecological Stress

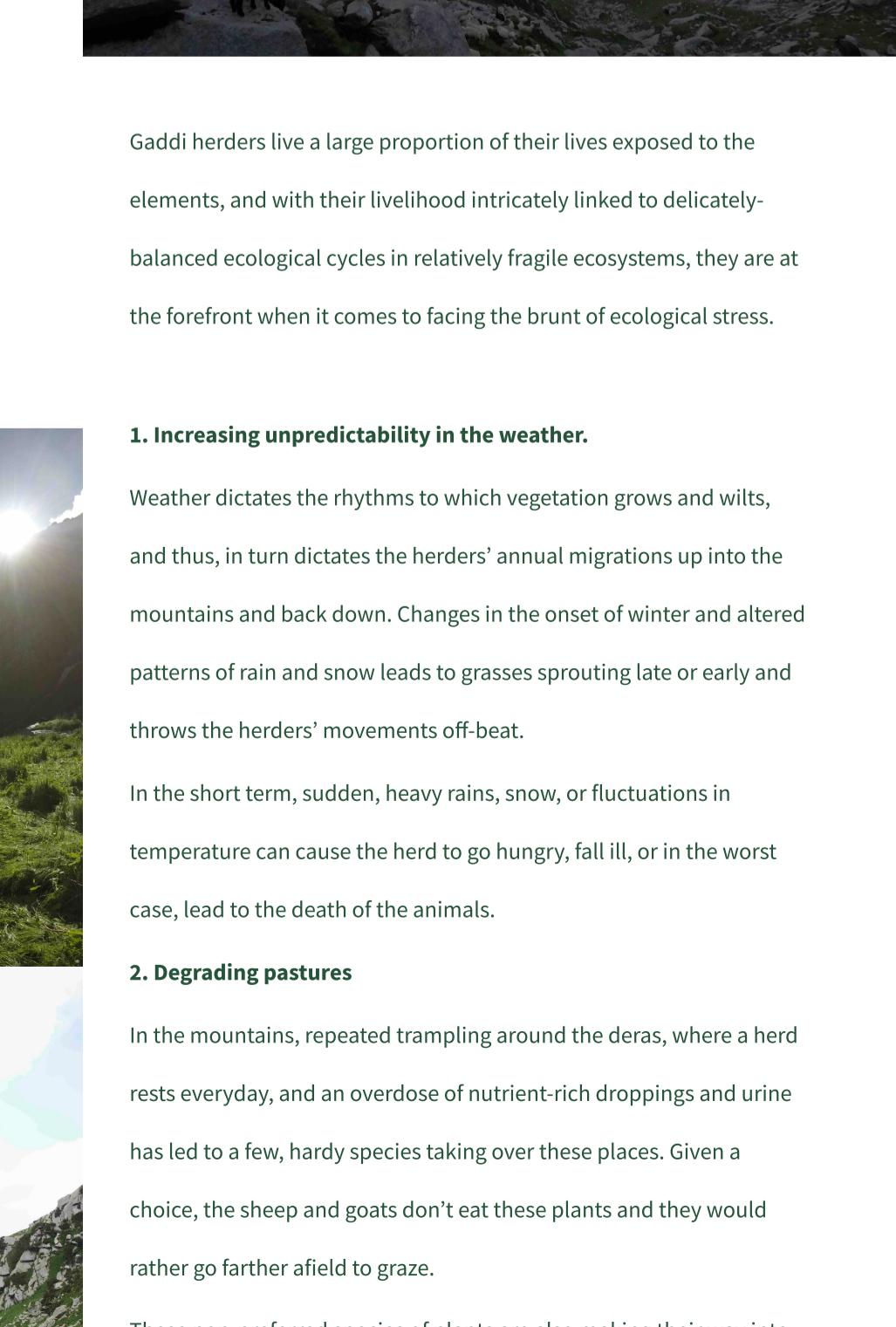
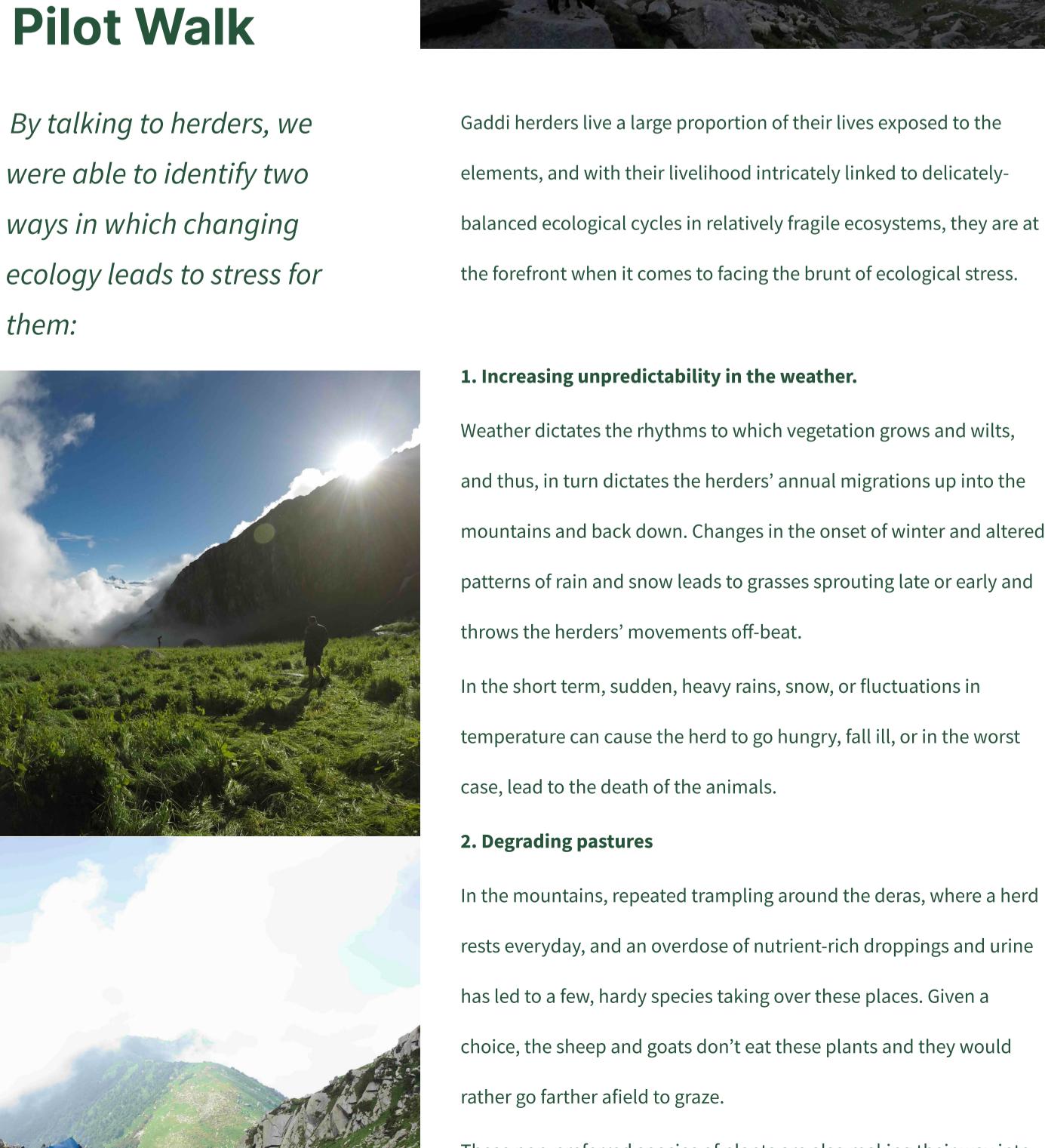
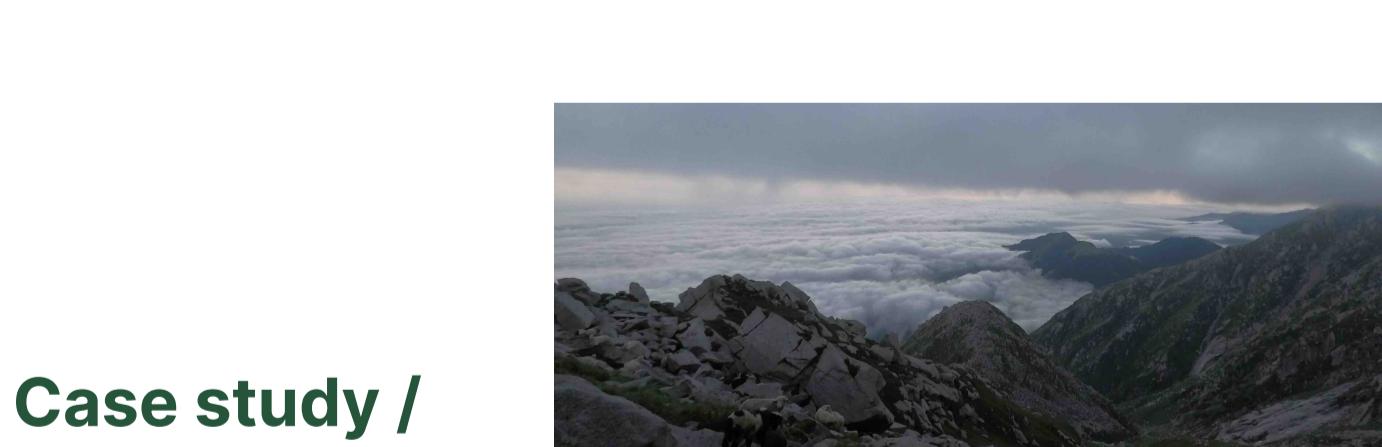
We looked at 'Ecological stress' as the unease or anxiety that can be linked causally to changes in ecology. The Anthropocene has seen rapid changes in ecology that affect us all, but these changes are more relevant and their effects more immediately felt by people who are directly dependent on nature or exposed to its vagaries. A roadside laborer in the city, for instance, would experience global warming more intimately than an office worker. Similarly, rain-dependent agriculture would be more vulnerable to climate change than that dependent of ground water.

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT:

1. How would you characterize Ecological Stress in your field site?
2. Whom would you talk to, and where would you have these conversations?
3. What tools do you think might aid the discussion?
4. Can you think of relevant questions or ways in which the people you are talking to can speak about their environment objectively, through the lens of another?



WRITING ACTIVITY: Write an essay about how ecological changes affect you. Are there activities/behaviours in your daily life that are affected by changes in ecology or climate? It could be something you eat, how you travel, or where you wait for the bus. Are there others who share your environment and are affected differently by the same changes?



Ideating tools for fieldwork

The collaboration between Dr.Nikita Simpson(anthropologist) , Sartaj Ghuman (wildlife scientist), Shyam (mountaineer and a Gaddi shepherd) and Soujanya (new media artist) led to the exploration of the idea of curated nature walks as a research methodology to understand Ecological Distress.

The objectives were to:

- to engage with the semi-nomadic Gaddi shepherd community and understand what their nature of relation is with their ecology, by walking the trails that they take to navigate their herd of sheep and goat across the grazing lands,
- to understand the relation between ecological distress and mental distress in local context,
- to document the conversation, processes and learnings from this walk.

