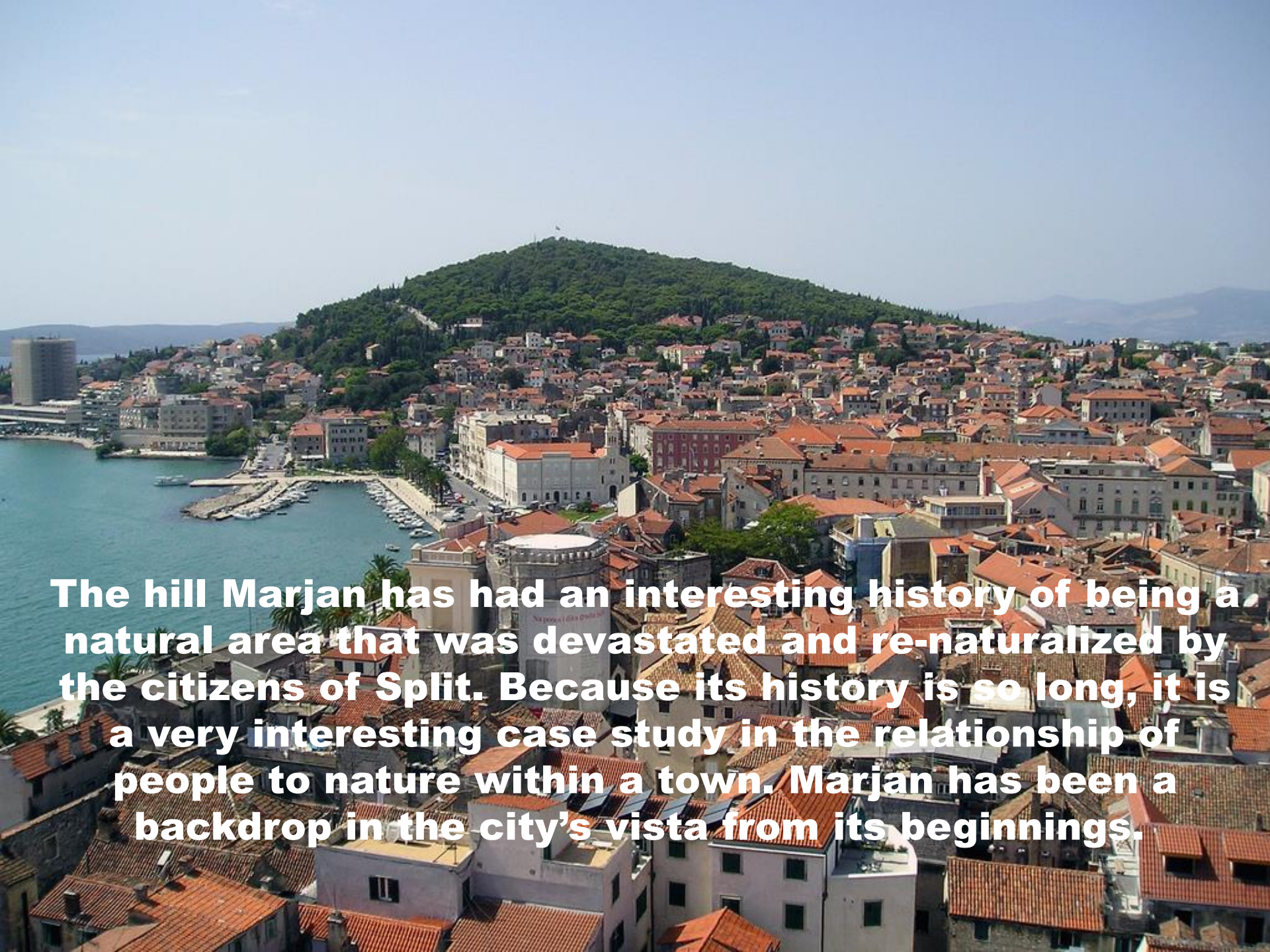


# MARJAN PARK IN SPLIT, CROATIA



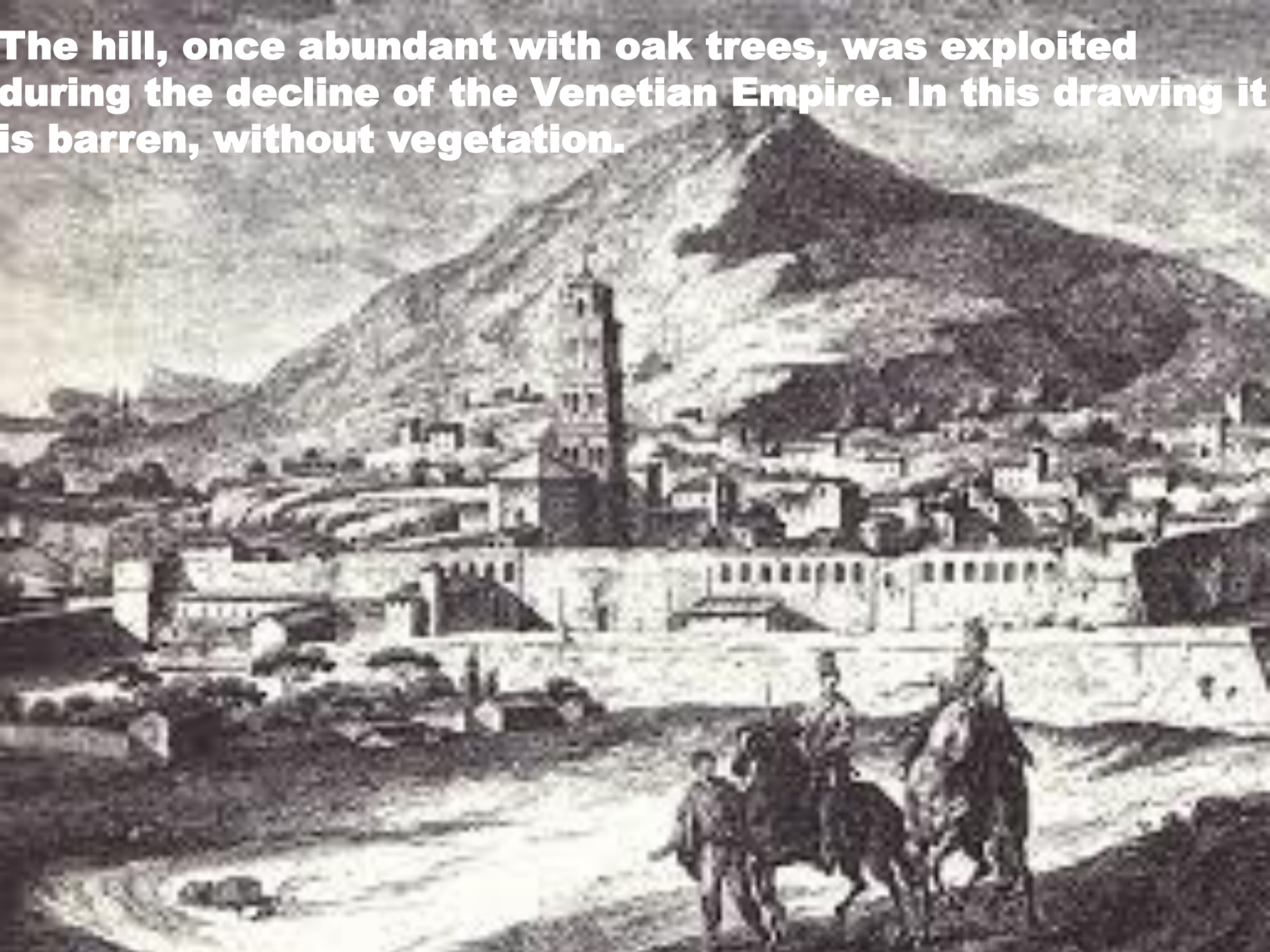




**The hill Marjan has had an interesting history of being a natural area that was devastated and re-naturalized by the citizens of Split. Because its history is so long, it is a very interesting case study in the relationship of people to nature within a town. Marjan has been a backdrop in the city's vista from its beginnings.**



**The hill, once abundant with oak trees, was exploited during the decline of the Venetian Empire. In this drawing it is barren, without vegetation.**

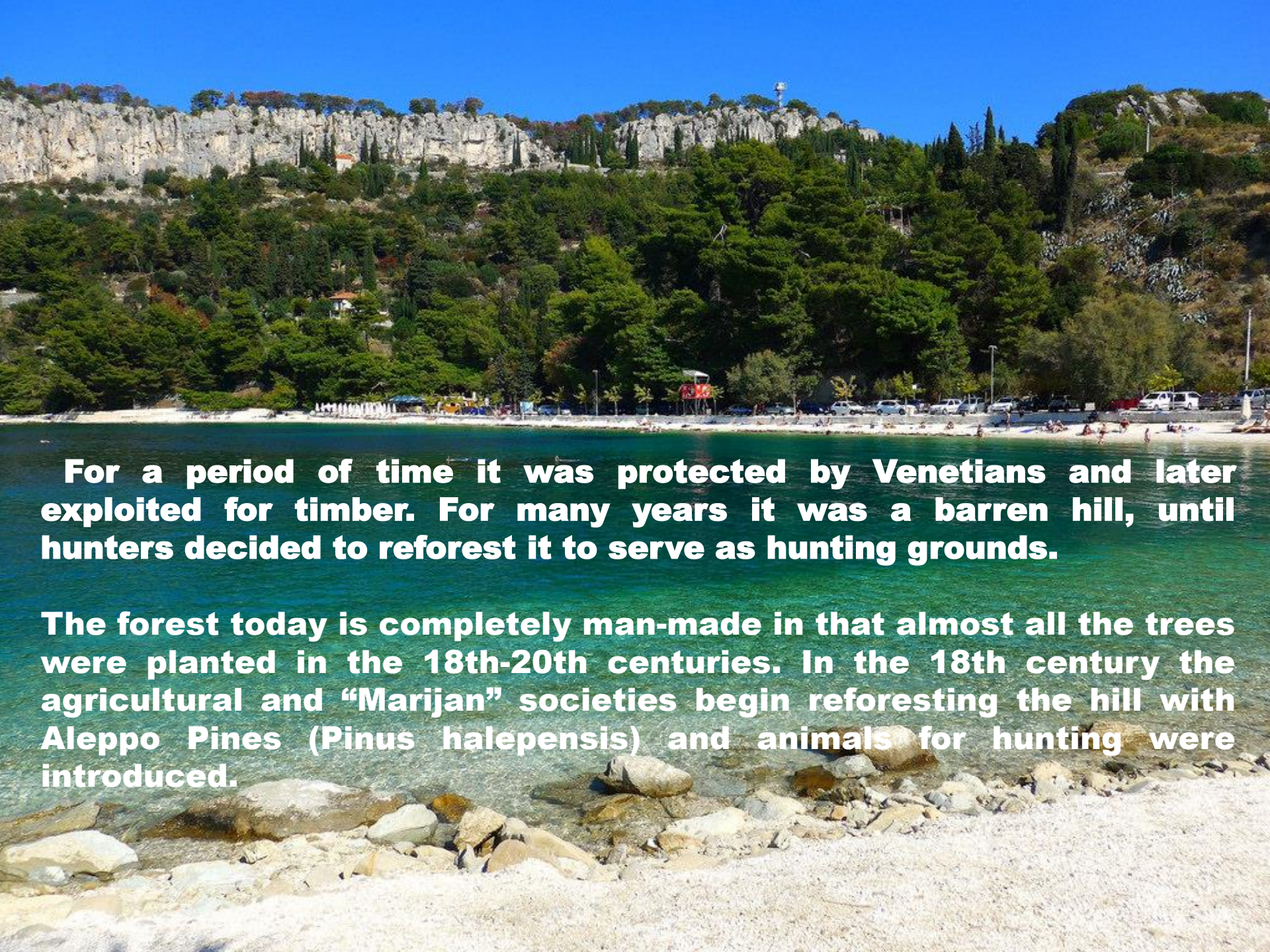






**Prehistoric people lived in the oak forest on Marjan, as did solitary monks.**

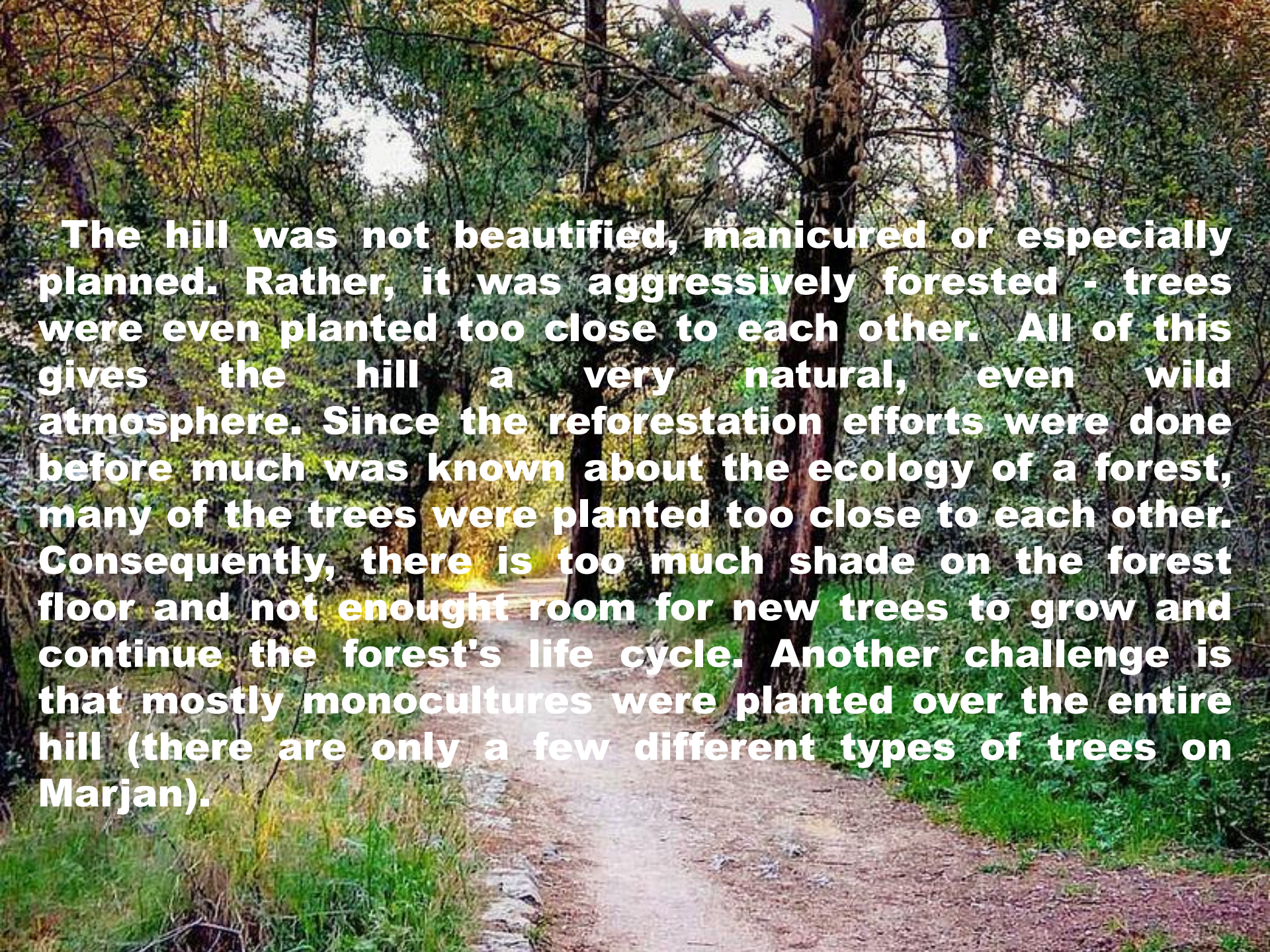




**For a period of time it was protected by Venetians and later exploited for timber. For many years it was a barren hill, until hunters decided to reforest it to serve as hunting grounds.**


**The forest today is completely man-made in that almost all the trees were planted in the 18th-20th centuries. In the 18th century the agricultural and “Marijan” societies begin reforesting the hill with Aleppo Pines (*Pinus halepensis*) and animals for hunting were introduced.**



A dirt path winds through a dense forest. The path is light brown and leads into the distance, flanked by green grass and low-lying plants. Tall trees with green foliage line the path, creating a canopy overhead. The scene is bright and natural.


**The hill was not beautified, manicured or especially planned. Rather, it was aggressively forested - trees were even planted too close to each other. All of this gives the hill a very natural, even wild atmosphere. Since the reforestation efforts were done before much was known about the ecology of a forest, many of the trees were planted too close to each other. Consequently, there is too much shade on the forest floor and not enough room for new trees to grow and continue the forest's life cycle. Another challenge is that mostly monocultures were planted over the entire hill (there are only a few different types of trees on Marjan).**



A paved path winds through a dense forest of tall, mature pine trees. The path is shaded by the trees, with sunlight filtering through the canopy. In the foreground, a man and a woman are walking towards the camera. Further down the path, other people can be seen walking and sitting on benches. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and scenic.

**Today, the result of this reforestation is an aged pine forest that is everyone's favorite place to spend the weekend. Its cultural value comes from these layers of history which tell its story.**





**The potential of the hill as a habitat for many different species is enormous, because the hill has many different micro-climates and differing make-ups of the soil. For instance the southern side is sunny, steep with deep fertile soil. The northern side is often in the shade and has shallow, less fertile soil. Another challenge is that, though the forest is beautiful and only a fifteen minute walk from the downtown, programs, trails, sports and educational facilities are almost entirely absent.**





**The best indication of a bright future for the park is that the locals are very fond of it and protest whenever new construction occurs (though most construction is forbidden by zoning laws). In this sense, any improvements made to the park would be a very popular measure and could count on volunteers from all areas of the city.**



**The strategy I would advocate for would be to first recruit a team of scientists or landscape architects that understand the ecology of a pine forest.**

**They would then have to come up with a plan for decreasing the forest density, introducing new diversity in plant types, and helping the forest transition from a dying one, to one which can regenerate itself as a natural forest would.**

**It would also be important for the scientists to make the best use of all the micro-climates Marjan hill offers.**

**Together with the scientists, landscape architects could understand the potential for these new areas of the forest and research (perhaps through a city-wide survey) which programs are most missing in Split, and how these could be incorporated into the forest.**

**They would consider light, atmospheres, colors and other factors resulting from new planting, to decide where to place programs and new public spaces.**

**The greenhouses could be refurbished and given an educational purpose for school trips. The question of the dilapidated zoo would also have to be addressed. Perhaps a sanctuary for migrating birds from northern parts of Europe could be considered as a more natural type of "zoo".**

**It would also be important to consider the recent spike of tourism in Split and how tourism could benefit the forest. Could there be activities, bike rentals, tours or diy workshops for tourists and locals that would serve as fundraisers for financing the diversifying of the forest on Marjan?**

**Most importantly, any efforts would have to include the local community and be a back-and-forth communication of ideas**