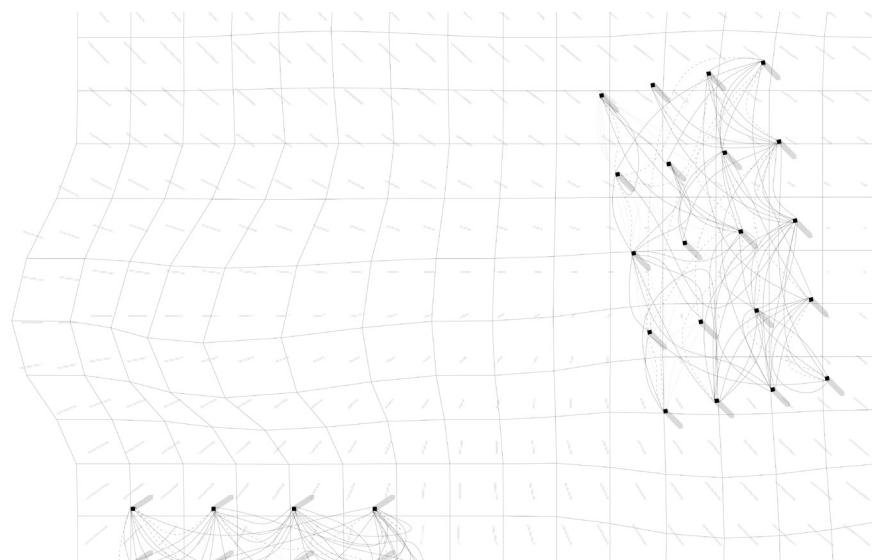


NARRATIVES

INVISIBLE CITIES OF SKOPJE



Gjorgjievski Nikola

CONTENT

Introduction	5
Narratives	
Galloping Stripes	6
Twin Cities and Herbalism	8
A City of Endless Waste and Recycle	10
“Perpetuum Mobile” Islands	12
A Wareframe Landscape	14
A Water Ritual	16
Credits	19

This is a story about a city that is not. It is about architecture that is not. Don't ask me what the city is about, I can only tell you about what it isn't. It is not about crystals and concrete. It is a city without figures and only grounds. Actually, it is not a single city. Half a dozen cities coexist and mutually support one another. The people in the cities establish connections to sustain the city's life, whether by rails for endless waste or pipes connecting bathrooms, we may never know. It is a city with no walls and I don't know if I can call it a city because it's never finished and at times it looks demolished. However, it always lives. It has a very strong metabolism. What makes the metabolism so strong is also unknown but rumour has it that amongst the richest of people are those with pepper growing plots.

GALLOPING STRIPES

The frontier of this city keeps on moving like a stream in the landscape. *"An act of pilgrimage in the mountains"*. It travels across the lowlands of the vast terrain in an organized stripe fashion until it meets the ruins of another city. When this happens, it protrudes inside the limit of the newly found metropolis and then expands by reversing. The traveling society is ambiguous and has no single culture or one god. They adapt to new circumstance of social infrastructures and different field conditions. The stripe remain never rooted and its value is always associated with the landscape in its close proximity. Flexible but never temporal. Once the boundary is completed it remains indeterminate and uncertain until the coming of the birds. It is believed that once a year the druids from the "landscapes beyond" send scripts with instructions describing what the strip ought to become. On the parchment there is always a message that reads " Many organisms in the nature practice mimesis as a survival tool ". This is a subtle warning that the inhabitants of the stripe take dearly by heart and work accordingly with the instructions. Once the task is completed the stripe prepares itself for the next great adventure. The local people from the new metropolis are invited to join the ride. On a Sunday morning, the inhabitants pack their belonging:
a compass, a map, boots and raincloaks, hammers and shovels.
And off the stripe continues towards the next ruins in the terrain vague,
until the next day of the arrival of the birds.

41°99'73"N



21°42'80"E

PROGRAMMED SURFACES AS METABOLIC INFRASTRUCTURES

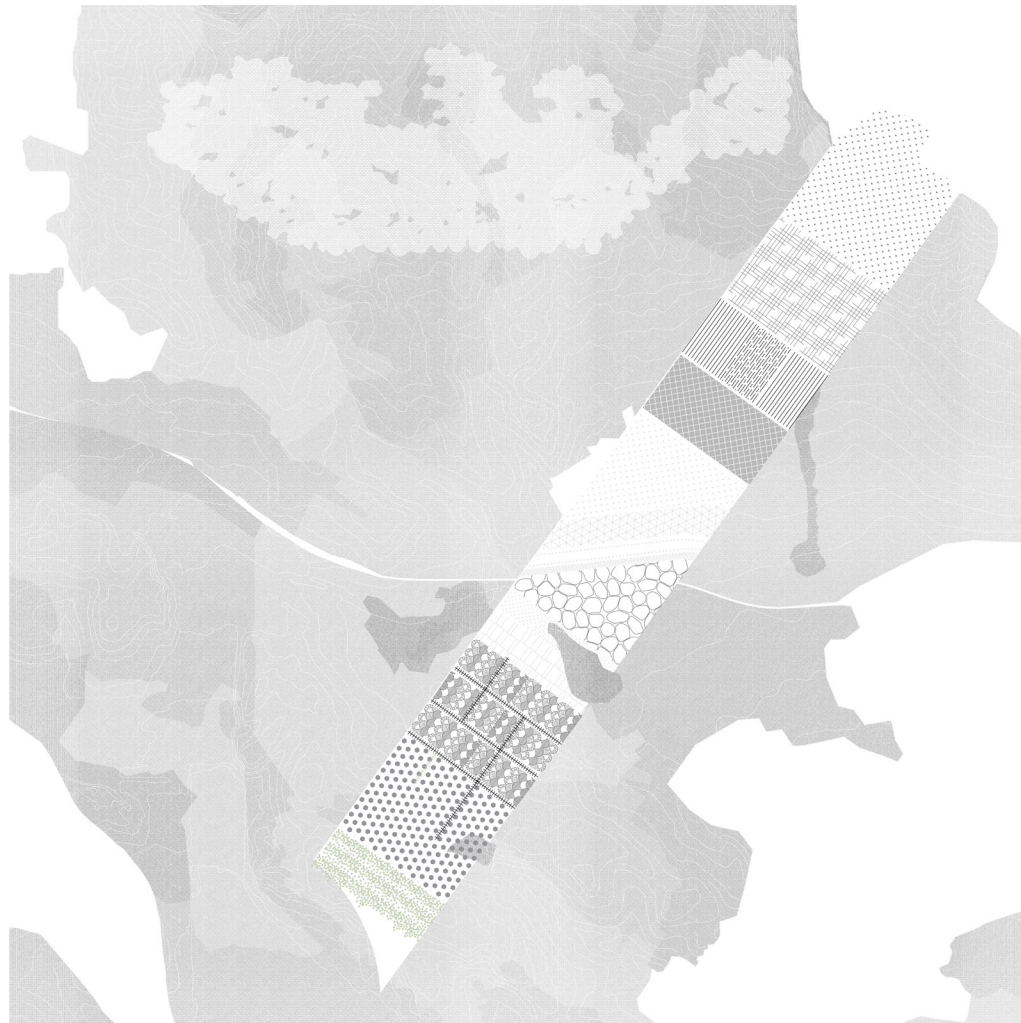
TWIN CITIES AND HERBALISM

"The study of botany and use of plants intended for medicinal purposes"

There are no clear paths in this city due to the abundance of flora. However, the inhabitants can always find their way between the plants because they easily recognize their properties and can orientate accordingly within the landscape. This is an empirical knowledge because if you are kid in this city you first interact with the plants and flowers before you learn how to properly write or speak. However, two types of grounds can be found in this city. The land is divided with twin strips south to north and an outrebound motorway east to west. When the plants are omnipresent it is easy to loose track of space if the visitor is not good at reading floras. At the entrance of the city there is a map which explains the whereabouts of different species. It is quite unintelligible to read all those Latin names but a fairly good interpretation suggests that south of the strip one could find zones of phytoremediating fields filled with plants the purify the chemical soils. Moving towards the north, one can find plants that intensify the growth of organic food. However, on the map there is a diagonal line that reads as an assembly line for the transpiration of food, herbs and spices. Nevertheless, visitors never seem to find this track when the forests of plants are at their pick. The twin stripes also move around the landscape when their remediation job is done. The people from the city transplant certain species to other polluted grounds and this is why the city has no heavy walls or anchored structures. It is in the spirit of the city to move and expand similar to the metabolic cycle of the plant.

"Photosynthesis, respiration, and the synthesis and degradation of organic compounds."

41°99'73"N



21°42'80"E

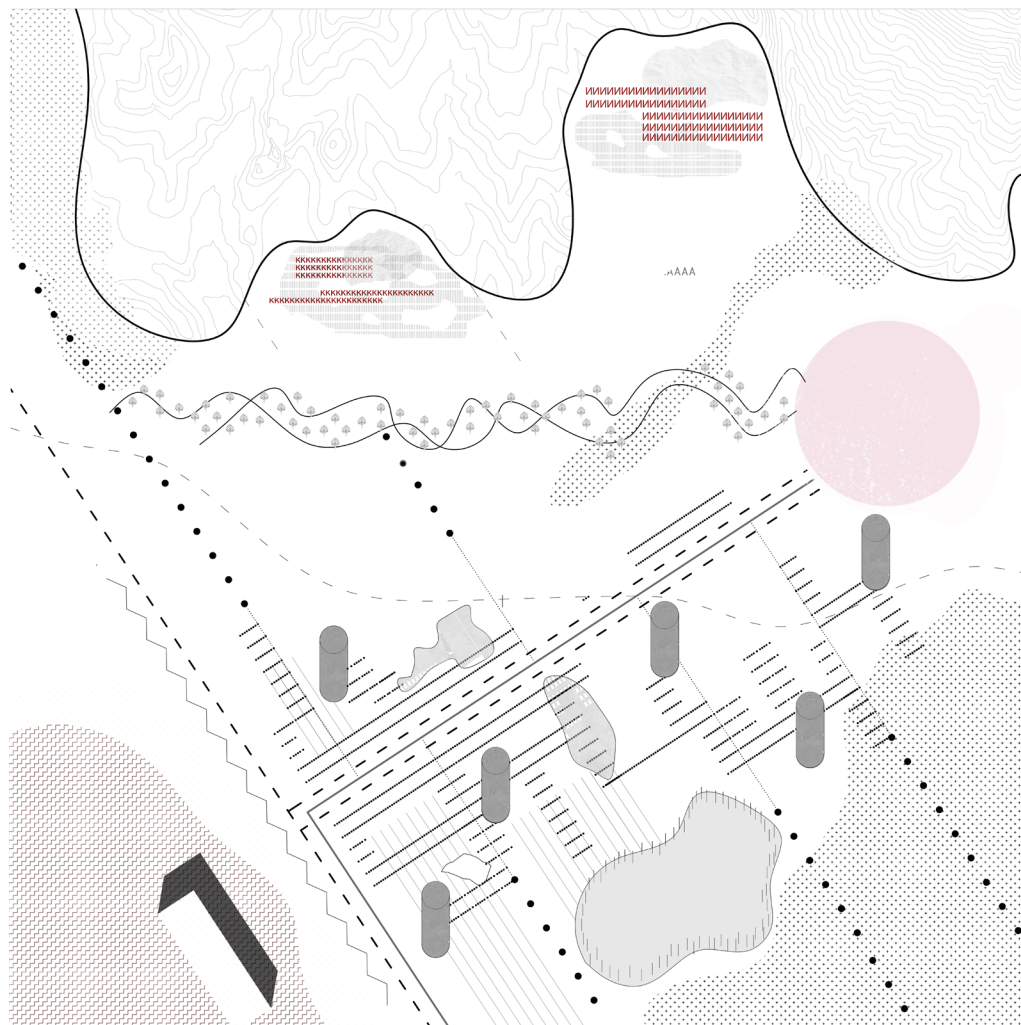
REMEDIAL LANDSCAPES AS METABOLIC INFRASTRUCTURES

A CITY OF ENDLESS WASTE AND RECYCLE

Every window in this city has the same peculiar view. Every house faces the old smelting factory. Blacksmith used to be the main occupation of this society. Over a century ago, at the very beginning of this city, there used to be a large sign at the top of the iron gates. Engraved were the words *"The Ferum townsmen and townswomen are never poor. Work begins at the factory, the extracting of metal from the molten ore"*. While the factory floor represented richness and economical wellbeing, today it is known as the old relic of pollution. To do something about the endless waste accumulation the people in this city built a railway so long that probably no one knows how far it goes. They wake up everyday at four o'clock in the morning and walk to the middle platform where dozens of wagons arrive from the factory. Everybody takes their trash and throws it on top of the wagon, amidst the waste of molten ore. The wagons continue to ride the rails and off they go into the morning mist. For a very long time the dwellers thought to have solved the problem with the waste, until one morning they saw unfamiliar people building railways near their houses. These new people wore green robes and their hands were dirty with mud. The next morning, nobody went to the old middle platform but to the new one. And soon enough, there came a half a dozen wagons. Inside the wagons were hundreds of botanical species in pots. With every pot came an instruction note of how and where to plant the flora. Skeptical that anything can grow on these highly polluted lands, the inhabitants started moving the plants into the open fields.

Soon they realized that the air was cleaner and the food started to taste like normal. They never saw the men with the green robes again, but the more wagons of waste they sent, the more pots of plants they received.

41°99'73"N



21°42'80"E

RAIL SYSTEMS AS METABOLIC INFRASTRUCTURES: LIGHT RAILS, ASSEMBLY LINES...

“PERPETUUM MOBILE” ISLANDS

Enter the island, dwell in the island, exit the island. An archipelago of myriad islands, almost everywhere across the landscape yet at a considerable interstitial distance. Maybe they have landed via parachutes or maybe they have been here since the beginning of time but what is certain is that they exist. The metropolis starts with an island and ends with an island, and this is neither here nor there. The relationship between the start point and the terminus keeps on changing and nothing ever looks rooted to the earth. It's hard to describe where the new city will begin. What makes this difficult is the fact that the borders of the city are almost always opaque and sometimes even invisible. One cannot measure a boundary with inches or meters but rather with thoughts, ideas, emotions, sound, air and human. This is a city of greater agility. The landscape keeps changing as people keep moving. Almost no one has a neighbor for longer than a few months. The citizens of this city never seem to stay in only one island for too long. They travel along the archipelago, entering islands of various programmes, and when they get bored they exit and go on. But an island is never empty. When ten people leave other ten come. A *“perpetuum mobile”*. Even though the dwellers are moving they are all always here. Trapped but free. Old and young. Visiting or staying. Here is the new beginning, here is the last ending.

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21°42'80"E

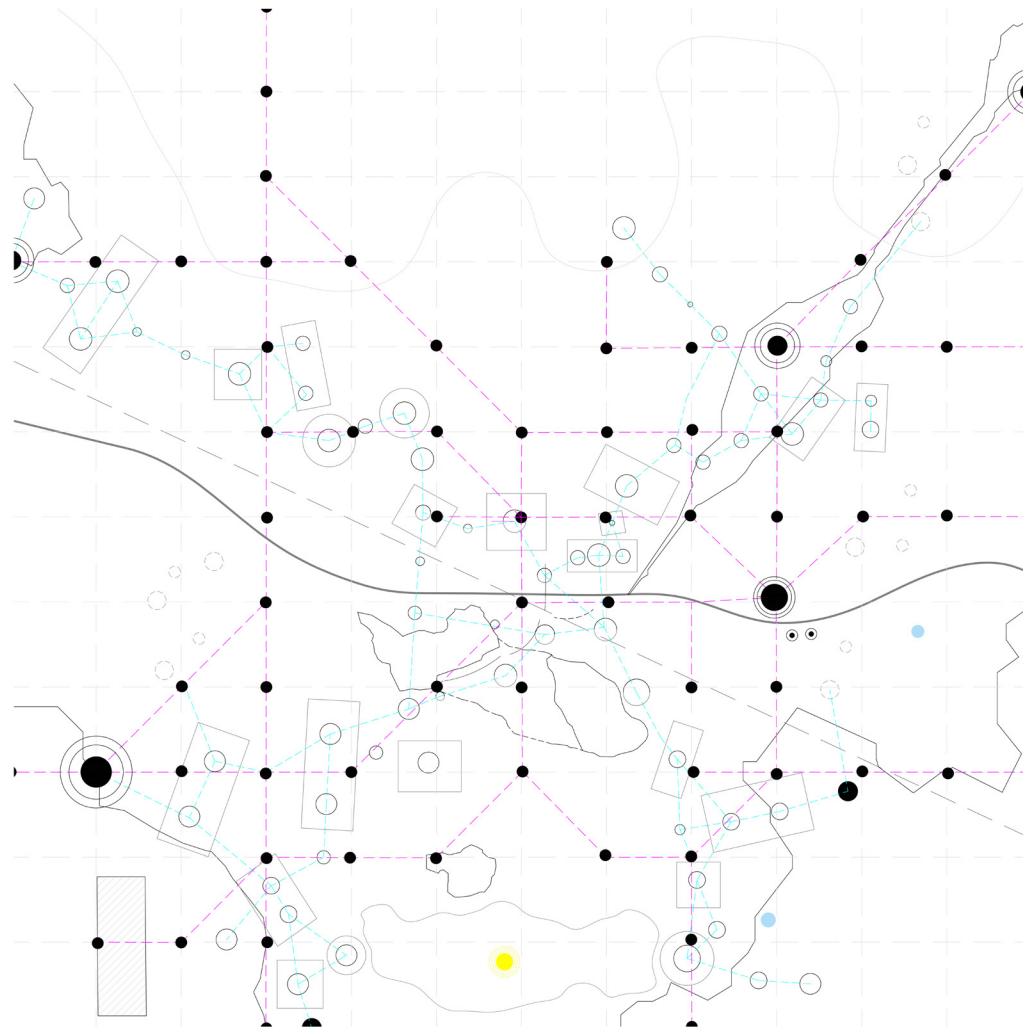
MEGAFORMS AS URBAN LANDSCAPES, A METABOLIC SYSTEM

A WIREFRAME LANDSCAPE

Visitors in this city are amazed at how much one can find in the countryside. First comes forth the relationship between the landscape and the functional. This is a place of ubiquitous interventions while each being natural, non-ordinary and allusively permanent. When the landlords describe these interventions as ephemeral they leave the visitors feeling confused. It is told that the essence of these reproductive soils can be found in the sky. While the visitors remain incredulous, they begin to notice the objects which are connected with cables. The protruding gondolas transport users and goods and they represent the metabolism in this landscape. There is a large production happening in this area. It is driving the economy of the metropolis. *"Growing, maintaining and selling of organ foods"*. This city is also a home of many animals. One can find cows and horses moving through the vast grasslands.

There is also a rumor that a rhino lives somewhere near the mountain. The visitors learn many new things, directly from the educational parts, as well as indirectly if they decided to temporarily live in this very unconventional place. It is a city where the people are always looking up, and they are never bored. By looking up, the users see the future and everything that comes with it. It is powered by a renewable source of energy – the sun. Every single building is covered with enough solar panels to produce energy for itself and more for export. And, there are silos that collect the waste from all the production, from the animals, and this is further converted into other types of energy – BIOMASS. The transport is very easy and functional, using gondola lifts for the biggest part. The gondola ride connects the local region with the mountain and the periphery of the feral grounds.

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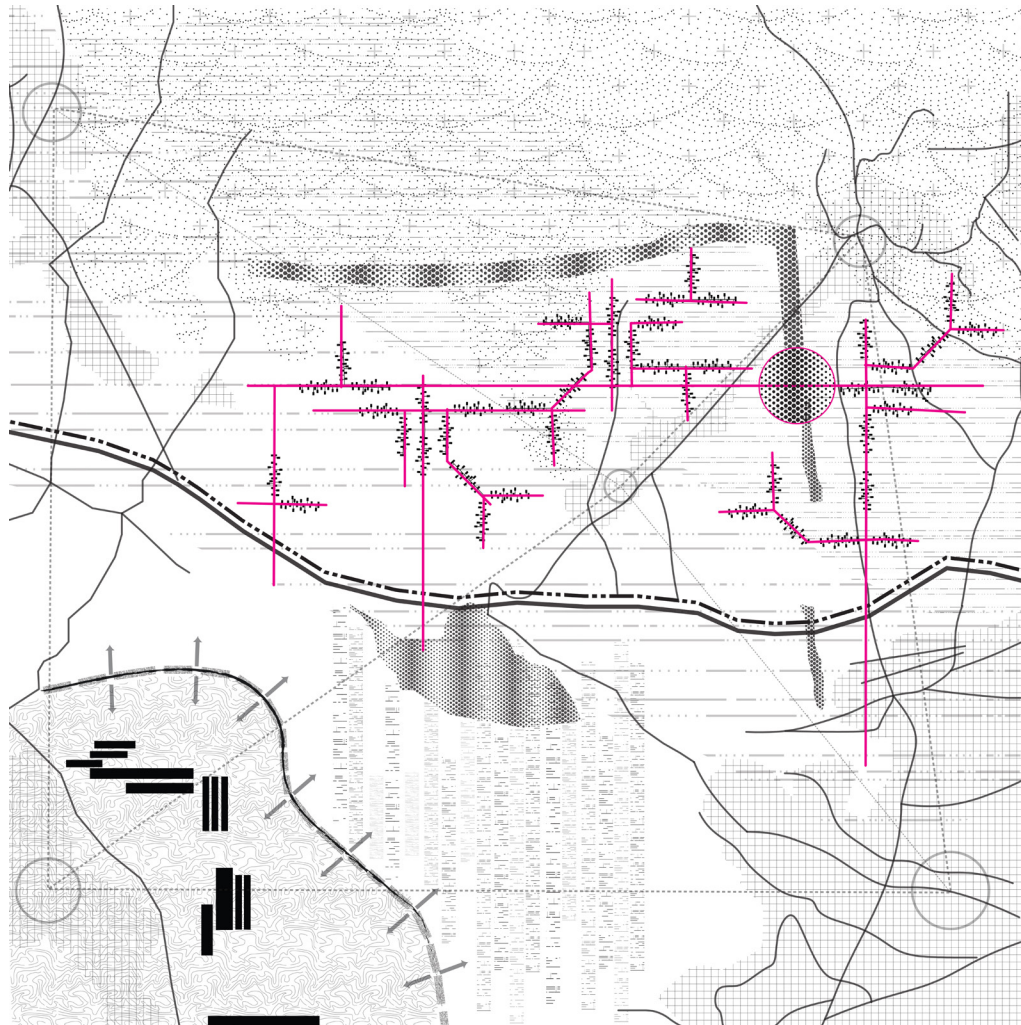
CABLE SYSTEMS AS METABOLIC INFRASTRUCTURES: STRINGS, WIRES, CABLE-CARS

A WATER RITUAL

All of the inhabitants in this city are water pipe experts. Each house has pipes protruding from its walls, roofs, grounds and basements. One my wonder why these elements are around and about. The locals love to retell the story of the pipe city. As told, for many years the inhabitants in this region had attempted to defeat the heavy mountain rain. Their houses, positioned at the very edge of the mountain's periphery, just at the verge of the feral grounds, got flooded every monsoon season. And for as long as they can remember, nothing ever really helped sooth the galloping waters. It was not until one summer's thunderstorm that triggered their imagination. In the period of the calm before the storm, all of the inhabitants started plugging pipes in their houses to reposition the pathway of the water. The houses from the highlands started extending their pipes towards the neighbors below. Neighbor by neighbor, pipe by pipe, they created a vast network of joint piping in an attempt to let the water through. It worked! Now, the storm water is no longer seen as a flaw but rather as a day of celebration, for it brings water to the houses and the field. The citizens started to explore various network possibilities. How they plug and how they transfer the water became the state of the art for this city. Nobody can deny the supreme performativity of the region. Once a dry and decaying region became a lush and fertile landscape. New houses started to plug onto the already existing infrastructures. Today the water networks extend until the lake. Everybody is excited because a storm is coming. The swimsuits are ready. Soon the lake will be full to the brim and everyone can go swimming.

Splash!

41°09'73"N



21°42'80"E

WATER SYSTEMS AS METABOLIC INFRASTRUCTURES: DIKES, DITCHES, LAKES...

Credits for all the drawings go to the students from the studio "Unnatural Ecologies" -
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