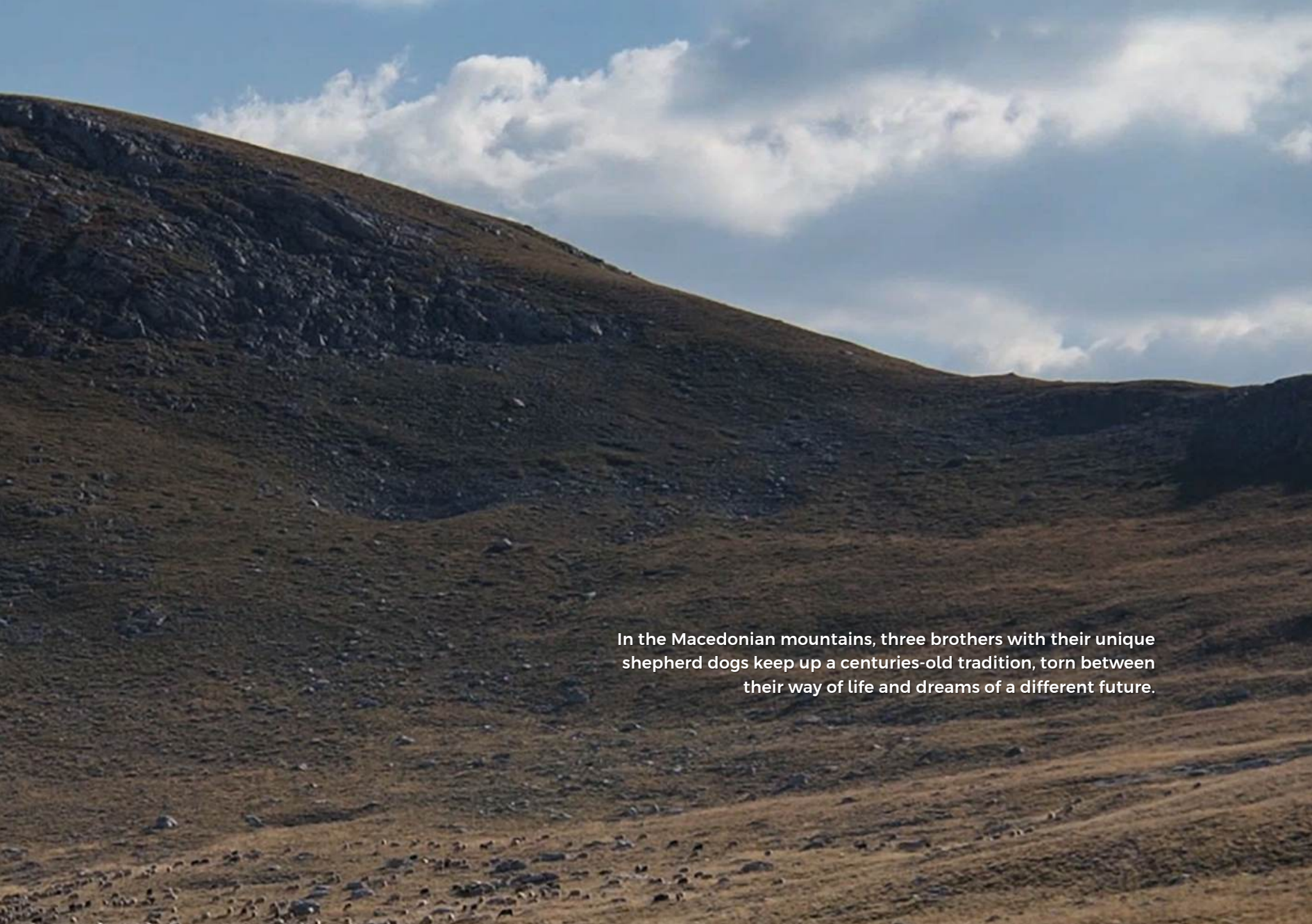

the mountain won't move
a film by petra seliškar
petra pan film, cinephages productions & ppfp



In the Macedonian mountains, three brothers with their unique shepherd dogs keep up a centuries-old tradition, torn between their way of life and dreams of a different future.

The Mountain Won't Move

A film by Petra Seliškar
Slovenia, France, North Macedonia
2025 / 91 min / DCP / Color / 2:1 / 5.1
Language: Macedonian & Albanian
Subtitles: Slovenian, French, Macedonian, English

Produced by
Petra Pan Film (SLO), Cinéphage Productions (FR), PPFP (MK)
In co-production with RTV Slovenia

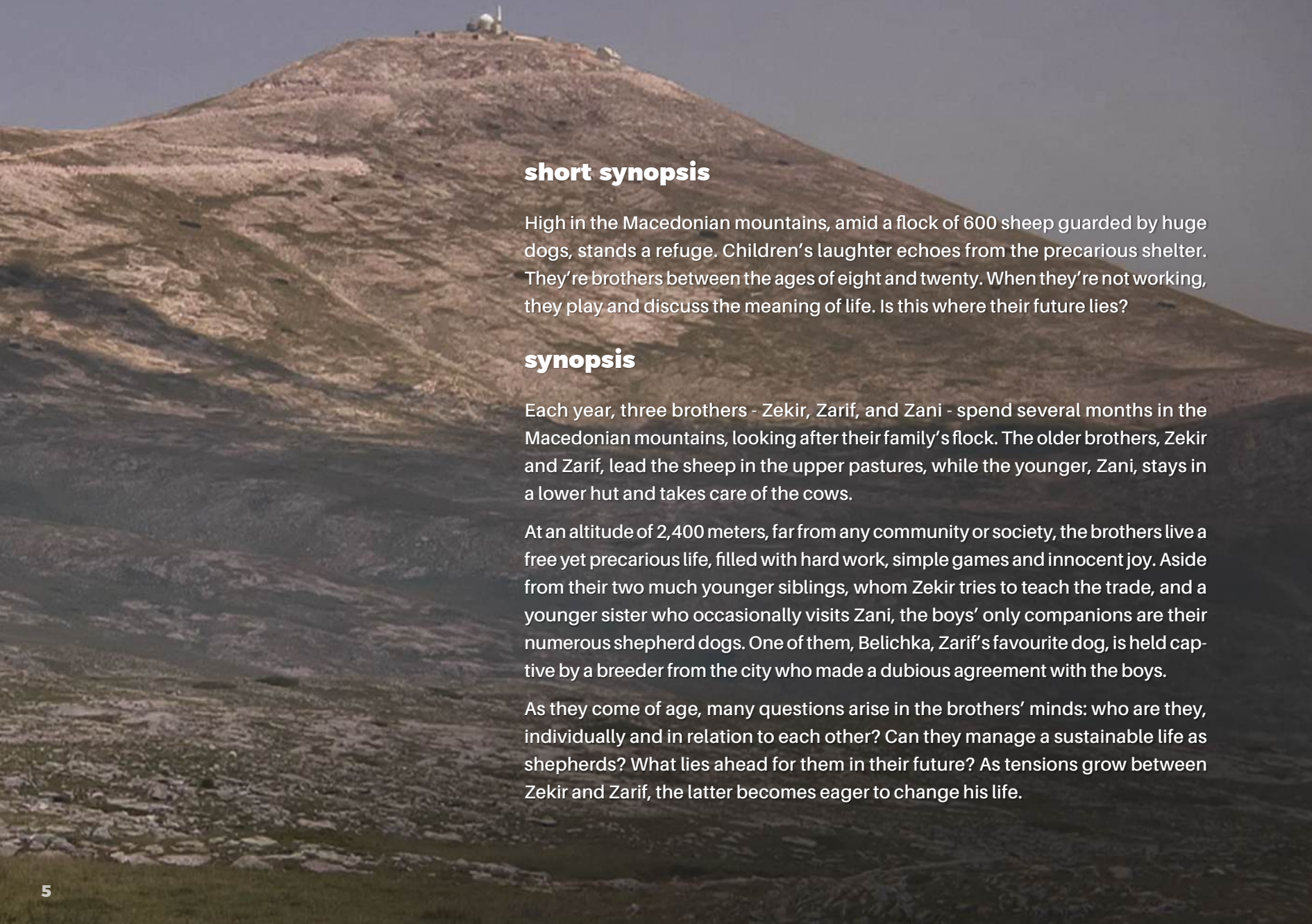
Director: Petra Seliškar
Writers: Petra Seliškar, Tancrède Rivière
Cinematographer: Brand Ferro
Editors: Laureline Delom, Sashko Potter Micevski
Music: Iztok Koren
Sound designer: Vladimir Rakić
Foley artist & sound effects editor: Vera Galešev
Producers: Petra Seliškar, Victor Ede, Sara Ferro
Executive producers: Brand Ferro, Ivana Naceva

Keywords
Human interest, Children, Teen, Animals, Coming-of-age, Tradition, Rural life, Environment, Culture

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short synopsis

High in the Macedonian mountains, amid a flock of 600 sheep guarded by huge dogs, stands a refuge. Children's laughter echoes from the precarious shelter. They're brothers between the ages of eight and twenty. When they're not working, they play and discuss the meaning of life. Is this where their future lies?

synopsis

Each year, three brothers - Zekir, Zarif, and Zani - spend several months in the Macedonian mountains, looking after their family's flock. The older brothers, Zekir and Zarif, lead the sheep in the upper pastures, while the younger, Zani, stays in a lower hut and takes care of the cows.

At an altitude of 2,400 meters, far from any community or society, the brothers live a free yet precarious life, filled with hard work, simple games and innocent joy. Aside from their two much younger siblings, whom Zekir tries to teach the trade, and a younger sister who occasionally visits Zani, the boys' only companions are their numerous shepherd dogs. One of them, Belichka, Zarif's favourite dog, is held captive by a breeder from the city who made a dubious agreement with the boys.

As they come of age, many questions arise in the brothers' minds: who are they, individually and in relation to each other? Can they manage a sustainable life as shepherds? What lies ahead for them in their future? As tensions grow between Zekir and Zarif, the latter becomes eager to change his life.





interview with the director Petra Seliškar

by Vladan Petković

How did you discover the protagonists? Where exactly is the story taking place?

In 2017, my friend, Finnish producer Kristiina Pervilä, came to Makedox, a documentary film festival that I was organising in Skopje. She asked Brand Ferro, who was later the DoP on the film, to help her find working Šarplaninac dogs, also known as Sharr dogs, that she was fascinated with. This is only possible up on the Šar Mountains. Marjan, a breeder and later one of our protagonists, took her on horseback to Solunska Glava, the highest peak. When she came back four days later, by the look on her face I immediately knew there was a story to be told. Actually, not so much a story but a possible way of life that exists so close to ours, and which we know so little about.

The Zekirov family are outcasts in their own community. They live an ascetic and traditional life, too much so even for the inhabitants of their home village, Gorno Jabolčište, closest to Solunska Glava. It's a huge village, with a thousand kids in the school, and at least one member of each family works abroad. They mostly identify as Albanian, while the Zekirov kids aren't even sure how to spell their name.

The boys really live in *bachilos*, makeshift huts on different altitudes of the mountain, with the sheep and the dogs, and go to the village maybe five times a year. They are simple farmers from the earth – not oriented towards financial gain but living a full life and having good relationships with everyone. This is partly because this is all they have ever known and was passed on to them from generations of shepherds before them. Such pure and honest souls are rare.

How did you approach them when you started to make the film?

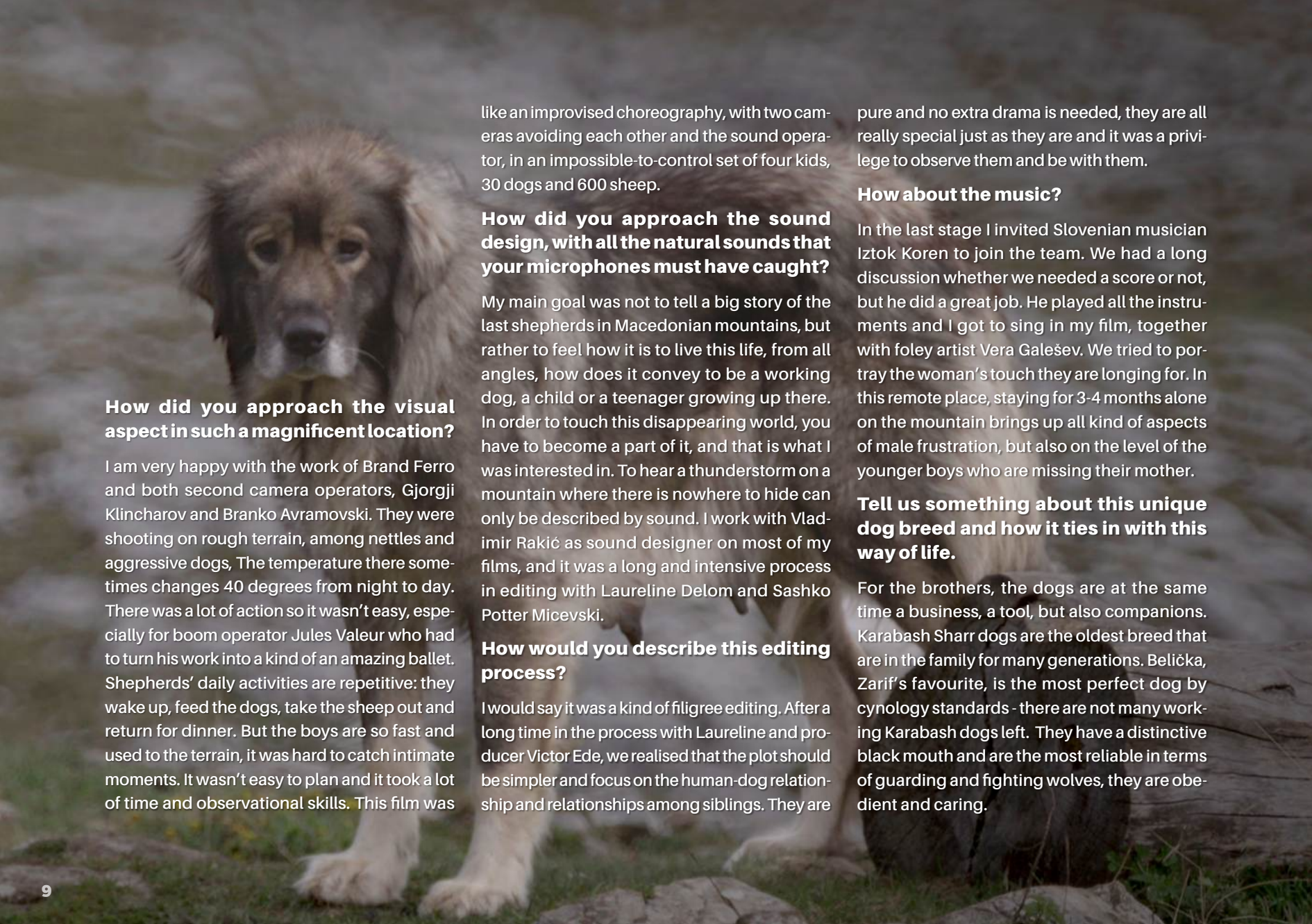
Initially we didn't even know where exactly to find them, these mountain plains are huge and they could have been anywhere. We came to Gorno Jabolčište and inquired, we were lucky and soon found them. It all went smoothly, the father and the grandfather immediately agreed that we can film the kids – maybe because we brought our own kids along. At first I came there with my Western, urban attitude, with questions such as, where are their parents, do these kids go to school, why are they working, look at their living conditions... But they were very open to us. After spending five summers with them, I learned so much about my misconceptions of being a mother: wanting the best for your children but also causing harm to their personal growth by not teaching them how to survive and fail, how to make mistakes.

Was it your conscious decision to not show their parents?

We filmed them all except for the mother, they asked us not to. She doesn't feel comfortable on camera, and also has her hair covered. I opted against showing this aspect of them being Muslim, which is very visible in the village where also the father and grandfather move about, because the family is not very religious and it's not the point of the film. It might mislead the audience into a social-political angle that's really not the issue in their lives nor it is relevant for their lifestyle that I wanted to depict. It was far more interesting to me what these shepherds think about and how they live in close connection to the nature and animals. I was also, as a woman, observing the nature of men in their childhood, adolescence and adult behaviour. It felt as if instead of three boys I was seeing one in different periods of his life, but they are all very different. I felt I was seeing them from a perspective of filmmaker but also of a mother, and understood it was OK if their mother was not present.

This is a very remote area, how did the filming go? How long did you stay with them?

There are no roads there, no mobile network, driving up there even in an off-road vehicle is difficult as after the snow melts, it leaves the barely existing paths very rough, over many huge rocks. Sometimes it takes eight hours to cross 20 km on this terrain, especially if it rains – once we got stuck even in a military vehicle designed especially for such purposes. When it snows, you simply have to wait it out and sometimes that can take a week. We visited them many times over five summers, sometimes staying for a week or two, and in the last two years with a crew of eight people, which is rather large for a documentary production. This was necessary because of this difficult access and the need to adjust to the weather.



How did you approach the visual aspect in such a magnificent location?

I am very happy with the work of Brand Ferro and both second camera operators, Gjorgji Klincharov and Branko Avramovski. They were shooting on rough terrain, among nettles and aggressive dogs, The temperature there sometimes changes 40 degrees from night to day. There was a lot of action so it wasn't easy, especially for boom operator Jules Valeur who had to turn his work into a kind of an amazing ballet. Shepherds' daily activities are repetitive: they wake up, feed the dogs, take the sheep out and return for dinner. But the boys are so fast and used to the terrain, it was hard to catch intimate moments. It wasn't easy to plan and it took a lot of time and observational skills. This film was like an improvised choreography, with two cameras avoiding each other and the sound operator, in an impossible-to-control set of four kids, 30 dogs and 600 sheep.

How did you approach the sound design, with all the natural sounds that your microphones must have caught?

My main goal was not to tell a big story of the last shepherds in Macedonian mountains, but rather to feel how it is to live this life, from all angles, how does it convey to be a working dog, a child or a teenager growing up there. In order to touch this disappearing world, you have to become a part of it, and that is what I was interested in. To hear a thunderstorm on a mountain where there is nowhere to hide can only be described by sound. I work with Vladimir Rakić as sound designer on most of my films, and it was a long and intensive process in editing with Laureline Delom and Sashko Potter Micevski.

How would you describe this editing process?

I would say it was a kind of filigree editing. After a long time in the process with Laureline and producer Victor Ede, we realised that the plot should be simpler and focus on the human-dog relationship and relationships among siblings. They are pure and no extra drama is needed, they are all really special just as they are and it was a privilege to observe them and be with them.

How about the music?

In the last stage I invited Slovenian musician Iztok Koren to join the team. We had a long discussion whether we needed a score or not, but he did a great job. He played all the instruments and I got to sing in my film, together with foley artist Vera Galešev. We tried to portray the woman's touch they are longing for. In this remote place, staying for 3-4 months alone on the mountain brings up all kind of aspects of male frustration, but also on the level of the younger boys who are missing their mother.

Tell us something about this unique dog breed and how it ties in with this way of life.

For the brothers, the dogs are at the same time a business, a tool, but also companions. Karabash Sharr dogs are the oldest breed that are in the family for many generations. Belička, Zarif's favourite, is the most perfect dog by cynology standards - there are not many working Karabash dogs left. They have a distinctive black mouth and are the most reliable in terms of guarding and fighting wolves, they are obedient and caring.



Belička is a family treasure, and when Marjan took her to Skopje it started a big argument between the brothers. Dogs stick to their masters and it was clear that Zarif's connection with Belička was strong, so when she was taken away, he lost interest in this business.

Their real purpose is to stay on the mountain because this is the only way to have dogs freely guarding their sheep. Mountains are their home and they can't function among large groups of people, so there is no way to have these dogs in the village. So the brothers stay in one *bachilo* during the summer and another one for the winter. The main reason they continue to have a strong dog pack is because no wolves can touch their sheep. It happened that a wolf killed 30 sheep, not for food but just to get revenge on the dogs.

How do you see the fact that this way of life is slowly disappearing?

Will they keep this precious knowledge and lifestyle? I can only pray to all the mountain gods to keep them there but I simply don't know. I know it is like a domino effect: if one leaves, others can't handle it without him.

For Zarif and Zekir it is important to find their balance, they were brought up not to be rebellious. Zekir and Zarif now work for younger brothers, and when they are too old for this, the younger brothers will work instead of them. But if they don't have kids before they are 30, the gap will be too big to continue this way. As Zekir says, the mountain won't move, and I can only hope that they will stay, the tradition will continue and I am waiting to be invited to a wedding.





Petra Seliškar, Director, writer & producer

Petra Seliškar is a Slovenian documentary writer, director and producer with a rich experience and singular talent. She has flourished as a filmmaker with profound insight, sensibility, strong narrative force and innovative approaches. Seliškar has the ability to recognise hidden details, and through them discovers and highlights the essence in art, culture, nature and all aspects of life. This is why she dedicated her time on this planet to life's little pleasure, and of course, cinema. She is currently filming her seventh feature length documentary Torso of an Old Cat.

Besides her own works, Seliškar has produced films by acclaimed international filmmakers, including Claudia Tosi, Peter Zach, Francesco Fei, Damian Nenadić, Jean-Robert Viallet, Ineke Smith and Iiris Saaren-Seppälä.

In 2003, Seliškar established the production company Petra Pan Film in Slovenia. She co-founded MakeDox Creative Documentary Festival in Skopje, Balkan Documentary Distribution Network (BDDN), Doc Around Europe festival network, and most recently, the world sales agency Open Kitchen Films. She also works in education and training through platforms such as MakeDox's Docusprouts and Dokumentarnica in Slovenia.

Selected filmography:

Body (director, producer), Slovenia/North Macedonia/Croatia, 2023: Best Documentary at Festival of Slovenian Film, Sarajevo Film Festival, FIPADOC, É Tudo Verdade / It's All True, ZagrebDox, DOK.fest München, Beldocs, Docudays, CinEast, The Silk Road International Film Festival

Farewell (director, producer), Slovenia/North Macedonia, 2020: Special Mention at Dok'n'Ritam Belgrade, Best Music Documentary at Grossman Film Festival, Best Film at LoudSoulMusic Festival Belgrade

My World is Upside Down (director, producer), Slovenia/Croatia/North Macedonia, 2016: Special mention in the Documentary Competition and Best Cinematography in a Documentary Film at Southeast European Film Festival Los Angeles, Best International Documentary at Dok'n'Ritam Belgrade, Best International Documentary at Festival of Mediterranean Cinema Split

Mama Europa (director, producer), Slovenia/Croatia/North Macedonia, 2013: Best Documentary at Tuzla Film Festival; Best Documentary Director Peace Award at Gothenburg Indie Film Fest, Trieste FF, Rotterdam IFF, Sarajevo FF, ZagrebDox, Dokufest Prizren

The Grandmothers of Revolution (director, producer) Slovenia, 2006: IDFA; Jihlava IDFF, Sarajevo FF, Small Stamp at ZagrebDox, Grand Prix at Aster Fest Strumica



Brand Ferro, Director of photography

Brand Ferro is a Macedonian-Cuban cinematographer and producer recognized for significant contributions to the film industry, particularly in the Balkans. He began his career as an amateur, winning top honors at film festivals, which led to a prolific career in cinematography. In 2003, he co-founded Petra Pan Film and later established the MakeDox Documentary Festival. Known for his work on films like My World is Upside Down (2016), Grandmothers of Revolution (2006), Mostar United (2008), Perfect Cirle (2015).



Jules Valeur, Sound recordist

Jules Valeur is a sound recordist with a diverse portfolio. He focuses on short films and documentaries. His notable works include Paris 05:59 / Théo & Hugo (2016) and Goliath (2016). He also contributed as a sound engineer to Summer Time (2020) and The Wanderings of Ivan (2018). He collaborated with the contemporary art school Le Fresnoy and continues to work Petra's on new film Torso of an Old Cat (2025).



Gjorgji Klincharov & Branko Avramovski , Additional cinematographers

Gjorgji Klincarov, Macedonian cinematographer finished undergraduate studies on the Faculty of Dramatic Arts Skopje, department of Film and TV Camera. Cinematographer of various short, feature and documentary films, he received several awards for cinematography.

Branko Avramovski is Macedonian cinematographer based in Prague. He continues to pursue creative collaborations across Europe, drawing inspiration from his macedonian roots and his life in the Czech Republic.



Laureline Delom & Sashko Potter Micevski, Editors

Laureline Delom is a French editor known for documentary films such as Maîtres (2021), Les soeurs Pathan (2023) and Hors service (2025). Her work highlights her expertise in shaping compelling cinematic stories. She was awarded at various international film festivals.

Sashko Potter Micevski is a film and TV editor and a sound designer (MA at the NFTS in the UK). He is a Daytime Emmy nominee and a Royal Television Society winner. Some of his credits include Body (2023) and the Macedonian hit series Prespav.





Vladimir Rakić & Vera Galešev, Sound design & sound editing

Vladimir Rakić lives and works in Amsterdam. He graduated with a Bachelor of Art and Technology in Sound Design and Composition in Utrecht. He works as a sound designer and music composer on various documentaries, feature and animated films. He is also a sound design coach on various workshops, as well as a guest lecturer at the Dutch Film Academy.

Vera Galešev is a serbian artist, living and working in Amsterdam. She works as a foley artist and sound designer, known for her contribution to animation, documentary and fiction cinema. She is a regular member of live performing "Eef van Breen Group". She aquiered her MA diploma from UDK in Berlin and since then she works as a freelance artist.



Iztok Koren, Music

Iztok Koren is a versatile self-taught Slovenian musician who, with the turn of the millennium, started focusing on almost contradictory musical projects - from solo concepts full of emptiness, to saturated noisy duets and group ethno-folk improvisations. He gets his inspiration from the mystique of his native Prekmurje region, from the persistence of emotions and the constant dance between hope and repetition of history.



Tancrède Rivière, Co-writer

Tancrède Rivière is a French author and doctor of comparative literature. He has been for several years a screenwriting and film development collaborator to various filmmakers and film producers, has served as a jury member in festivals (Makedox, FIPA...) and project writing adviser to documentary film students (Lussas).



Victor Ede, Producer

Victor Ede is a French film producer and editor known for his work in the documentary genre. He is the founder of Cinephage Productions, a company dedicated to producing non-fiction films with a focus on international co-productions. He is know for Kix (2024), Body (2023), La Zone Rouge (2018) and Congo Paradiso (2018). Ede's work focuses on international collaboration, bringing diverse perspectives to documentary filmmaking.



Sara Ferro, Producer

Sara Ferro is a producer from Macedonia. She graduated in PR & Communications and did a Master's in Production. She is working on the development and production of several documentaries and arthouse fiction films.

Since 2010 she has been involved in MakeDox where she is currently serving as Head of Industry and education, and President of the Association.





PETRA PAN FILM

Petra Pan Film is a Slovenian production company founded in 2003 by the film director Petra Seliškar and the cinematographer Brand Ferro. It produces creative documentaries and arthouse fiction films that are committed to individual vision and authorship as well as long term research based topics. In 2010, Seliškar and Ferro established the Festival of Creative Documentary Film MakeDox, a favourite of many documentary filmmakers and audiences who enjoy its uncompromising programming and hospitable, informal atmosphere. In 22 years the company received national and international awards and its films screened at festivals such as IDFA, Sarajevo, Rotterdam, FIPADOC, ZagrebDox,...

CINÉPHAGE PRODUCTIONS

Co-founded by Victor Ede and Jean-Robert Viallet, Cinéphage Productions started to develop and produce its own projects in 2015. The company is based in Marseilles, France. Cinéphage has carried out French-speaking international co-productions with major European public broadcasters, international projects co-developed with partners from Europe, USA and Middle East for TV and theatrical release, and some more local projects from the South region of France.

PPFP

PPFP is a Macedonian production company established in 2007 and run by Sara Ferro. It is one of the few creative documentary production companies in North Macedonia, focusing mainly on auteur-driven documentary films. It specifically connects various countries to Macedonia and Balkan countries in terms of co-production and distribution. With their approach they are succeeding in finding the right ways to reach audiences also outside of TV channels and traditional cinemas.

supported by

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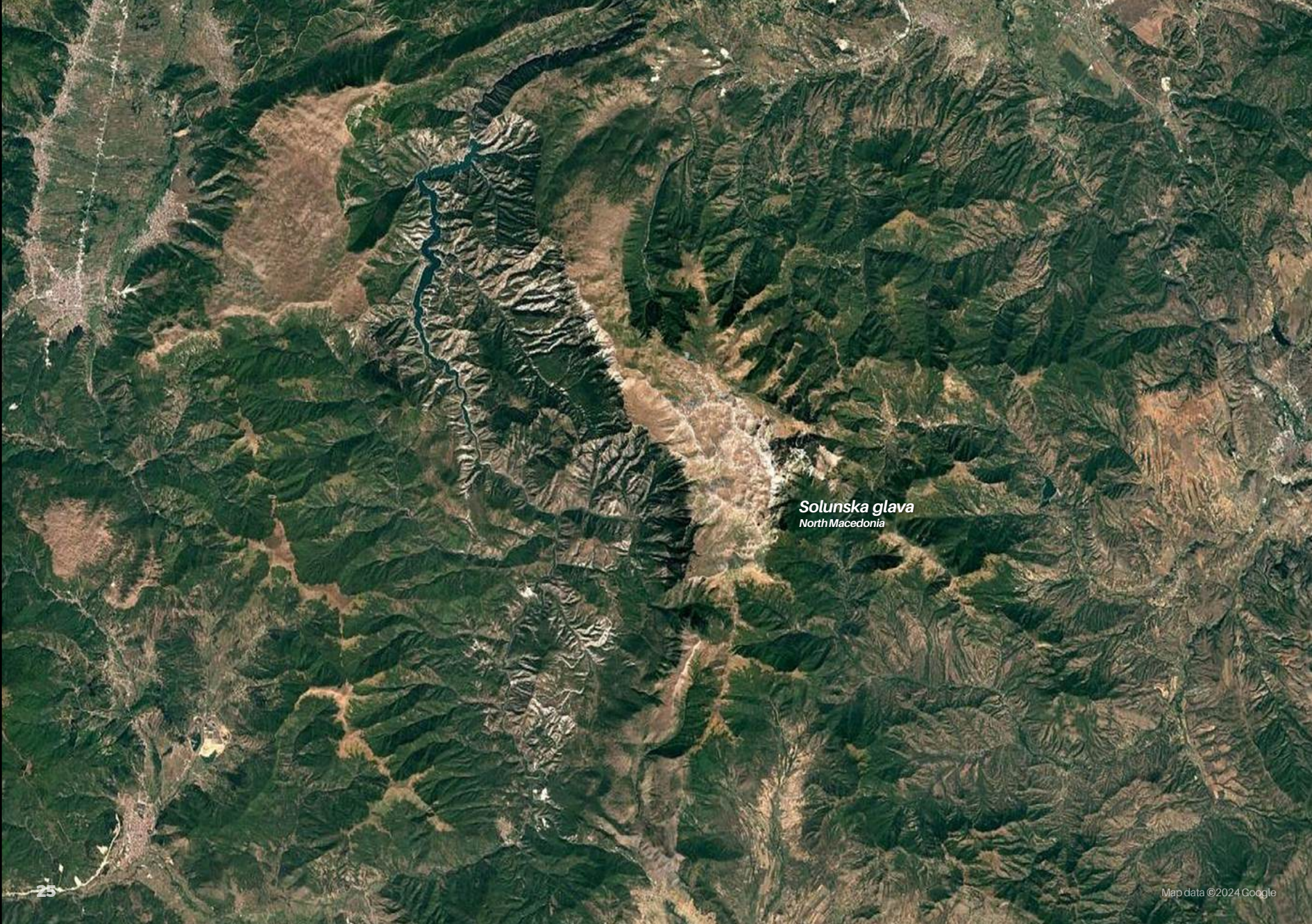











Solunska glava
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