

INTRODUCTION TO THE THEMATIC BLOCK

Valentina Gulin Zrnić
Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research

The articles in this year's thematic section of *Etnološka tribina* derive from research conducted within the bilateral project *Urban Futures: Imagining and Activating Possibilities in Unsettled Times* (Croatian Science Foundation – Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency, 2020–2024), led by Saša Poljak Istenič (Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts) and Valentina Gulin Zrnić (Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research). This urban ethnological/cultural anthropological project is dedicated to the in-depth study of future-making in selected Croatian and Slovenian cities. Future-making refers to a comprehensive understanding of the elements that are combined in imagining, anticipating, and perceiving the future – cognitively, discursively, and affectively – as well as the modalities of everyday life and engagement that involve a particular relationship to futures. This process of urban future-making is analyzed from top-down (strategic documents and visions of specific cities) and bottom-up (civil associations and initiatives) perspectives, as well as from individual/personal perspectives (experiences, expectations, practices). The “future” as a (new) object of study in ethnological/cultural anthropological terms is considered culturally and contextually dependent and, together with notions of probabilities and possibilities that are inherent to the future, sets the stage for exploring multiple urban futures – desired and undesired, official and alternative, supported and resisted, contested, challenged, as well as invisible, “silenced,” or “stolen.”

The articles are part of the project research and deal with various issues of future-making in cities in Slovenia and Croatia, namely a comparative analysis of ideas of urban development and imagined futures in the European Capital of Culture programmes in two cities – Rijeka (ECoC 2020) and Nova Gorica (ECoC 2025) (Veselinovič and Škrbić Alempijević); participatory practices and the “right to the city” in deindustrialized Maribor, with a particular focus on the initiatives and activities of NGOs and cultural workers (Vodopivec); the transformation, rise and decline of two interconnected sites of formerly strong industry – Gojlo and Kutina – during the 20th century (Rubić); the possibilities of imagining a common future in the town of Koper and other towns along the Slovenian-Italian border with deep ethnic divisions and hidden traumas – especially when these possibilities are considered through the collaboration of cultural anthropologists and psychotherapists with the inhabitants (Hrobat Virloget); the challenges of living in the island town of Hvar burdened by overtourism, the circumstances that led to it, and the conse-

quences of such tourist practices in the local context (Čapo); urban gardening in Ljubljana, which is presented through an informal initiative and its decade-long history, showing that the politics of a sustainable urban future might initially spark social and ecological change, but the diligence of maintenance and the ethics of care as conditions for long-term sustainability become the necessity (Horolets, Schwell, Poljak Istenič). Besides research results, all articles deal with theoretical concepts and methodological considerations in the context of futures research. More on the published work and activities of the *Urban Future* project can be found on the website www.citymaking.eu.