

TRANSFORMATIONS, DECLINE, AND (IMAGINED) FUTURES OF GOJLO AND KUTINA

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The paper presents and examines two localities – Gojlo and Kutina in Croatia – and their spatial, temporal, material, and social transformations throughout the twentieth century to the present. The two localities are linked geographically and by a “shared fate” – as planned cities/settlements for industrial purposes and the extraction of natural resources. After the depletion of resources, the crisis of raw materials, and the transformations of political and economic systems, these localities both experienced spatial and social stagnation and degradation. Gojlo suffered decay, and Kutina has experienced partial deindustrialization. The research questions focus on the dynamic relationship between space/place, time, and top-down urban planning. Critical analysis invokes, and relies on, the concepts and research fields of the (post)industrial city, industrial monoculture, placemaking, anthropology of the future, multiple temporalities, and an anthropology of optimism.

Keywords: Kutina, Gojlo, ethnography, futures, planned cities/settlements

Introduction¹

Every time I travel the 80 kilometers from Zagreb to Kutina (a 40-minute drive on the highway), I am impressed by an industrial chimney, which looks as though it cuts through the clouds, surrounded by an endless plain. The chimney, which marks that I’m close to Kutina, always imparts the same feeling of immensity and prominence – or at least the prominence it once had, when built over half a century ago.

The people of Kutina say: *When I see the chimney, I know I’m home.* Feelings of attachment, closeness, and home are often associated with Petrokemija, the fertilizer company whose chimney is a strong materialization of the former “golden age” and a sense of belonging, but also the city as it is today – “waiting,” “floating,” “wandering,” as inhabitants describe it. Periods when no smoke comes from the chimney frequently signify a standstill, stagnation, crisis, and fear of losing their jobs among locals. At the same time, periods when the chimney is inactive have been colloquially observed and interpreted as times when certain types of edible mushrooms – ones that have not been seen in the surroundings for a long time – appear in Kutina and on the slopes of the nearby Moslavačka Gora.

¹ I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their appreciable critical and constructive comments that improved and sharpened the argumentation and presentation.

This paper concerns the spatial, temporal, material, social characteristics, and transformations of two localities – Gojlo and Kutina – throughout the twentieth century to the present. Today, Gojlo is administratively classified as one of the Kutina municipality's villages, seven kilometers from the center of Kutina. These two localities are linked geographically and through a shared fate: they were built one after the other as planned cities/settlements to serve national economy. They were spatially and socially deprived by the depletion of natural resources, crises in global raw material prices, and economic and political discontinuities.

The research questions in this paper focus on examining the dynamic relationship between space/place, time, and the consequences of top-down urban, economic, and social planning dependent on an industrial monoculture. One question that guided the research was: How are futures created and narrativized in contemporary everyday life? What thoughts and visions of the future influenced the creation and heyday of these two cities/settlements, and how have they evolved in the face of contemporary stagnation and crisis? Do the residents' visions of the future differ from those held by the city's governing bodies, and how do these deindustrialized, post-socialist brownfield areas lay the foundation for economic and social rejuvenation in everyday life? Is the normalization of limited future prospects evident in local narratives, and if so, why? I observe the topics through the concepts of (post) industrialization, place-making, urban anthropology, anthropology of optimism (Willow 2023), anthropology of the future, and multiple temporalities while relying on works on the future as a cultural construction (Arjun Appadurai 2013; cf. Gulin Zrnić and Poljak Istenič 2022: 143) about constructing collective futures (Gulin Zrnić and Poljak Istenič 2022: 148). I also rely on ethnographies of (post)industrial cities, ethnographies that embrace disconnection, declining places, shrinking (green) spaces, and ambiguities of polluted landscapes (cf. Vaccaro, Harper, Murray 2016). Research questions about the future are considered through the optics of these two localities' development strategies and the lived experience of the residents whose narratives are analyzed, i.e., through discrepancies between institutionally envisioned futures (strategies) and life (practices) that deviate from such futures.

Ethnographic research

The qualitative research was carried out during a dozen multi-day visits to Gojlo and Kutina in 2020-2023 as part of a bilateral academic ethnological and cultural-anthropological project in four Croatian and four Slovenian cities that investigates various future-making processes, understandings, and the “modalities of engagement ... toward futures in everyday life” (Gulin Zrnić and Poljak Istenič 2022: 162).² My

² This article is written as part of the Croatian and Slovenian bilateral scientific project “Urban Futures: Imagining and Activating Possibilities in Unsettled Times” (Croatian Science Foundation, IPS-2020-01-7010; Slovenian Research Agency J6-2578); principal investigators Ph. D. Valentina Gulin Zrnić and Ph. D. Saša Poljak Istenič; the project's web page: <http://www.citymaking.eu>

fieldwork, a few times conducted with colleague Valentina Gulin Zrnić, consisted of participation in cultural, educational, organizational, management, and economic events of the city administration, local institutions, and civil society organizations and monitoring the media reporting on the wider microregional area. Multiple interviews and conversations were conducted with about thirty interlocutors, young, middle-aged, and elderly people – experts and laypersons. Interviews often led to relationships developing into friendships over the three-year period. Contact was maintained at home, in cafés, during birthday celebrations, or by attending cultural events together. During my repeated visits, my perception of Kutina has transformed into a place of multi-layeredness and rural-urban hybridity, full of people familiar to me. Every time I left and arrived in Kutina, I felt that I was getting to know and love Kutina more and more.

I was amused by friends and colleagues' disbelief and amazement concerning my two field sites: *Why Kutina? What is Gojlo? Where is that?* The people of Kutina also wondered why I had chosen their town, as they could not think of obvious research interests. Such questions reflect these two localities' economic, identity, spatial, and social discontinuities. They also highlight a sense of disconnection, turmoil, oblivion, hybridity, peripherality, and temporal and spatial complexities.

Collaboratively exploring Kutina multiple times, Valentina and I often felt disheartened when reconstructing events and sharing impressions at the end of each field day. Even after multiple visits to Kutina, no clear theme had crystalized for our research through interviews and city tours.³ For a long time, we were unable to attribute a dominant feature that would clearly differentiate Kutina. Petrokemija, although mentioned in every conversation in Kutina, remained physically inaccessible to us. One evening, a retiree provided us access to the strictly controlled, impressively large industrial space, using his ID to pass us through the gate. We were lacking key ethnographic content and often failed to secure the kind of field encounters every ethnologist desires. Ideally, one interviewee, leads to another through a chain of recommendations, gradually “opening up” the field and topics while establishing a network of interviewees – were this a business endeavor, a successful multi-level marketing salesperson was clearly missing.

However, in ethnographic research, things do not always follow expected sequences, and aspects of fieldwork often dynamically combine those initially obtained with those that are hidden, discovered later; both tangible and intangible aspects (Scobie 2023: 114–115); “somewhere between the said and unsaid of anthropological method” (Collins 2023: 31). Ultimately, what drives research, perhaps most significantly, are all “the silences, the absences, the deletes, the suspicion, the assumptions, the refusals to participate, and more” (Scobie 2023: 115). It was only

³ This feeling of incompleteness, dispersion, and lack of identity in Kutina was intensified when comparing it to other Croatian cities and localities within the project: Hvar is completely defined by tourism, apartment rentals, and seasonality; Rijeka is strongly marked by its recent cultural projects that gained momentum within the overarching European Capital of Culture 2020 project; Zagreb has the recent change in local city government and the topic of the earthquake and post-earthquake reconstruction, while also serving as a cultural, economic, political, and social center of the nation.

when we realized that we had been desperately trying to “tame” and “structure” Kutina, all the while missing out on all its ambivalences, hybrid nature, dynamics, and complexities, all the continuities and discontinuities (spatial, social, historical, and economic) that shape this city into a peculiar mosaic, that we could continue our research. Visiting Gojlo, marked by its former industrial monoculture, further directed our research perspective and interpretation toward Kutina as a city of continuity and discontinuity, rural-urban hybridity, and negotiations between industry and new urban features. We recognized Gojlo as connected geographically and through a common fate with Kutina. That understanding (the past and present, past futures, and unrealized futures) of Gojlo provides excellent help in researching Kutina’s future.

Gojlo

For people outside the microregion, Gojlo is an unknown location. At the same time, for its few older residents, Gojlo is a celebratory place “of the fortunate classes” (cf. Kideckel 2008: 20), a former place “of presence of the future” (cf. Anderson 2010), a Croatian oil region from the first half of the twentieth century (Pasarić 2002: 5; Uroda Kutlić 2022), a starting point for worker self-management in oil and gas production. In the mid-twentieth century, immediately after the end of World War II, oil and gas extraction flourished in Gojlo. In addition to investments aimed toward the production and exploration of oil and gas, the personal, communal, cultural, sports, housing, and social needs of the residents of that time were also heavily financed, which led to a standard of construction that the residents were proud of. The emic narrative often emphasizes that people would come to Gojlo to see a miracle, “water coming out of the wall” – referring to an indoor plumbing, and “black gold” from the earth – referring to oil.

A more precise conversation revealed that Gojlo experienced a rapid ascent and even faster decline, a maximum of three decades from its construction and prosperity to its demise: Ore had been mined there since 1930, oil was discovered in 1941; the exploitation of oil from 1945 to the 1950s meant that the drilling sites reached maximum exhaustion and profitability; sports activity in Gojlo started in 1947 with clubs numbering 250 members; housing construction grew continuously during the 1950s and 1960s. After that, the investments stopped, and the oil field was abandoned.

Today, it is no longer an oil field. Administratively considered one of the Kutina municipality’s villages, Gojlo is almost uninhabited, featuring the ruins of oil pumping stations and the associated devastated infrastructure. The ruinous settlement is currently home to about fifty people, predominantly retirees and the children of former oil workers, who occasionally organize nostalgic gatherings in Gojlo. Passing through today, you hear the moving stories of the few remaining Gojlo residents who wonder why, amid a global raw materials crisis, no one is using the underground

raw material at their feet. There is still gas and oil in Gojlo – bubbles seep out when the ground is soaked by rain, giving the people of Gojlo a fragile hope that the devastated settlement could undergo a regeneration sometime in the future. The bubbles are a source of fear, threatening explosions that endanger the few remaining residents and mass World War II graves that hold disturbing transgenerational tales.

Kutina

Historically, Kutina went through a “golden age” of modern socialist industrialization and planned housing construction. During this period, the number of inhabitants doubled over the span of a few years, and Petrokemija employed 4,500 people. This was followed by the turmoil of the transition and privatization, the setbacks of the 1990s, and a contemporary post-transition search for identity and attempts at regeneration. Kutina consists of around twenty urban settlements with about 15,000 inhabitants in the city itself and about 20,000 inhabitants, including the wider area, with their numbers significantly decreasing.⁴ It is economically stagnant, and demographically weaker each year. In the 1960s and 1970s, with the establishment of a mineral fertilizer factory, which was among the ten most significant of its kind in the world, the planned town of Kutina was built beneath the mining and oil-producing Gojlo. Thanks to Kutina’s petrochemical industry, people secured jobs and housing there instead of Gojlo. Additionally, events, such as World II/post-war bombings, lack of reconstruction, and new oil fields in former Yugoslavia, led to Gojlo’s decline. Significant investment in Kutina and disinvestment in Gojlo resulted in the growth of one settlement and the demise of another. (cf. Ferguson 2016; Ringel 2018).

Economic, tourist, cultural, small business initiatives, and infrastructure investments are taking place in Kutina, although still on a small scale. At the same time, the nearby town of Gojlo serves as Kutina’s spatialized and materialized warning of a possible dystopian future.

The microregion of Moslavina

When researching cities, it is important, in addition to the temporal aspect, to keep in mind the spatial, regional context. This is especially significant for smaller cities that historically developed and will develop their socio-political existence within regional contexts (Gulin Zrnić, Poljak Istenič 2022: 156). Kutina generally lacks a pronounced regional communication with other cities and settlements in the micro-

⁴ According to the last population census, from 2021, Kutina had 19,601 inhabitants. In the wider area of Kutina, which also includes surrounding rural settlements, ten years earlier it had 22,760 inhabitants. The working-age population (15-64 years) numbers 12,224 (62%) people, and the average age in Kutina is 44.3 years. Source: <https://dzs.gov.hr/vijesti/objavljeni-konacni-rezultati-popisa-2021/1270> (Last visited: 10th September 2023)

region of Moslavina, as well as the broader region that could be assumed to revolve around natural landmarks like Lonjsko Polje Nature Park, Moslavačka Gora, or the Sava River. When this communication does occur, it is occasional and situational, mainly involving cultural and sports programs or the exchange of administrative experiences at the level of municipal authorities, connecting nearby cities. Frequent narrative comparisons of the “success” of cities are also common, as one of the interviewees highlighted: “Novska has a new library, a new gaming technology study program, more well-maintained green areas...”⁵

Gojlo and Kutina, are situated in the continental microregion of Moslavina, which the rest of Croatia mostly only knows for its winemaking tradition and Petrokemija. For decades, wine tourism has shaped the regional identity of Moslavina, with Kutina at its center. At the same time, Petrokemija and the period of socialist urbanism of Kutina are nonexistent in the contemporary tourist and advertising imaginary. Dominant agricultural motifs enforce rurality as the fundamental, in many ways exclusive, identity determining Kutina’s past and present. Concerning self-identification, the architectural legacy of pre-socialist and socialist urbanism is often overlooked in casual discourse, despite the fact that it includes respectable and highly awarded projects of socialist functionalism and modernism (cf. Domljan 1969; Lehaft 2014; Mravunac 2018; cf. Galjer and Lončar 2019).

For the last three decades, the microregion has been divided into three administrative counties: Zagrebačka, Sisačko-Moslavačka, and Bjelovarsko-Bilogorska. This drastic fragmentation is a frequent emic narrative motif, a metaphor for a region without identity and Kutina as a city “with potential,” a city “waiting,” and “a city that could do better.” Locally, it is perceived as an obstacle to the development and self-identification of Moslavina and Kutina through consistent development projects and unique bases and sources of financing, for example, European ones. This fragmentation is also recognized as something that is unaligned with traditional microregional dynamics and communication, and it is connected to “electoral geometry” (Pasarić 2002: 357), a political decision that, after Croatia’s independence in the 1990s, was aimed at statistical manipulation, i.e., reducing the visibility and influence of minority ethnic communities. The eager commitment of many people from Kutina to form a unique Moslavina region, with Kutina as its center, is a future in the past, never realized.

The “proximity” of Moslavina to Zagreb (via the highway) is often, almost like a refrain, regarded as an advantage for Kutina, as something that should link Moslavina with the Croatian capital. In practical and symbolic terms, the “proximity” to Zagreb

⁵ Kutina residents generally consider their green spaces to be more neglected than those in nearby cities of similar size in the Moslavina region and beyond (Garešnica, Virovitica, Novska, Sisak, Daruvar, Nova Gradiška). They frequently associate this with the influx of many “outsiders” to Kutina, during the socialist era, who were employed in the then-growing industrial sector. According to this pejorative interpretation, the population of Kutina is (self) perceived as one that has not developed a “real” sense of belonging to the city and a need to improve their urban environment. That does not mean that Kutina’s citizens did not develop the need to improve the city. They did – just not in environmental terms. (I would like to thank my anonymous reviewer for pointing to this relational ambiguity in public space).

is seen as a measure of worth for smaller cities. Zagreb is “here,” “close,” and “a short time away.” It is often emphasized that Zagreb provides “nearby” economic and educational opportunities. Still, at the same time, this “proximity” seemingly dissolves the social integrity and consistency of Kutina, reduces the social and economic participation of the city’s residents, and shapes patterns that are based on emigration or a tendency to emigrate. All of this hinders a coherent idea of the future development and potential of Kutina, which was apparent in all our interviews. Kutina’s location “near” a larger city is evaluated as an advantage for Kutina, largely in terms of consumer practices; however, Zagreb absorbs the capacities of the smaller city as its working population migrates and many young people move to Zagreb to attend university and do not return to Kutina. Kutina’s proximity to Zagreb does not share the same implications as settlements and cities closer to Zagreb. For example, Sveta Nedelja is only twenty kilometers from the city center of Zagreb instead of eighty kilometers. People in such satellite settlements use of the capital city’s amenities (cultural facilities, supermarkets, healthcare and rehabilitation institutions, educational institutions, etc.) while retaining their place of residence in a smaller town. Some have even permanently relocated from Zagreb to a nearby town but still rely on the capital’s amenities daily. The situation in Kutina is different. Kutina’s cultural institutions (cinema, music school, galleries, museum, etc.) and sports facilities (sports center) were built decades ago, but they lack the financial capacity to maintain and develop them, causing them to fall behind their counterparts in Zagreb. Furthermore, there are no higher education institutions in Kutina except for a private college that mainly offers retraining programs and does not adequately meet the needs of the changing labor market. Moving to the capital (for example, for higher education) typically means a soon-to-be permanent departure of (young) residents from Kutina. In other words, the geographical “proximity” of Kutina to the capital city of Croatia, which is colloquially used to legitimize and define Kutina’s value, is relative. Moreover, it is hard to identify elements suggesting that, apart from dominant consumerist practices (IKEA; shopping malls), Kutina gravitates toward Zagreb or vice versa.

Should Petrokemija fail, Kutina will also fail – narratives of latent decline

Although primarily addressing the dimension of time (temporality), indirectly touching upon the geographical (spatial) dimension, Lauren Berlant discusses cruel optimism as a relationship based on a constant focus on a perpetuating notion. This reification combines space and time, making it difficult to think and act differently:

a fantasy that enables you to expect that this time, nearness to this thing will help you or a world to become different in just the right way. But, again, optimism is cruel when the object/scene that ignites a sense of possibility actually

makes it impossible to attain the expansive transformation for which a person or a people risks striving; and, doubly, it is cruel insofar as the very pleasures of being inside a relation have become sustaining regardless of the content of the relation, such that a person or a world finds itself bound to a situation of profound threat that is, at the same time, profoundly confirming. (Berlant 2011: 2)

This implicit and explicit notion could also be used to interpret the context of contemporary Kutina, which has been marked by uncertainty, latent decline, and a strong dependence on industrial monoculture (Petrokemija) for decades, particularly toward the end of socialism and in the post-socialist era. Therefore, it acts as an unstable economic entity “between coming and becoming” (Collins 2023: 34), as described by the residents of Kutina: Should Petrokemija fail, Kutina will also fail. Or as one middle-aged collaborator, whose parents were employed by Petrokemija, explained the strong and ambivalent relationship of the people of Kutina toward the factory:

We know what Petrokemija means for Kutina and what it meant for Kutina in the past, and what it could mean in the future. If something were to happen to Petrokemija, Kutina would be halved. It would definitely become like some other cities that have been halved, that ceased to exist in the form in which they once existed.

Petrokemija, founded in 1968 in Kutina, produces mineral fertilizers using natural mineral raw materials, natural gas, atmospheric nitrogen, and oxygen. With an annual capacity of 1.35 million tons, it is a significant factor in the development of the Croatian economy and one of the rare active mineral fertilizer factories in Europe. The city of Kutina was created and doubled in size for the needs of Petrokemija, with residential modernist architecture and spread-out modern communal, educational, health, cultural-entertainment, and sports infrastructure. When looking at a map of the region, one can see that the area of Petrokemija is huge, like a city adjacent to the city.

Once the leading industrial processing factory in Southeast Europe, a third of Petrokemija’s workers were laid off during the 1990s. For three decades, Kutina has struggled with emigration and economic stagnation due to Petrokemija’s varying states of turmoil and uncertainty, including workers’ protests, shutdown risks, production halts, and raw material crises, failure to pivot to new production.

Contrary to advertising-tourist imaginaries, the city’s futures are locally narrativized as directly dependent on Petrokemija, from issues of identity to financial sustainability. There are some doubts and assumptions regarding air and environmental contamination, but only as an issue of less importance. The current mayor regards the issue of Petrokemija’s survival as the most important issue for Kutina, the wider area, and Petrokemija’s employees, but also as a national issue, because Petrokemija is a company partly owned by the state, and the uninterrupted food production in Croatia, depends on the production of mineral fertilizer. This year, a Turkish com-

pany took over as the majority owner of the factory, after a lengthy takeover process. Every such change in Petrokemija's production or ownership path, and several during the last decades, gives rise to plenty of local speculation and uncertainties when the plant is temporarily shut down and restarted. The statement *Should Petrokemija fail, Kutina will fail as well*, which I have heard from all interviewees, is a possible fatal scenario for the city, showing current local incapacities to think about ideas for a future outside that framework. Petrokemija is indeed a strong financial provider for Kutina. Petrokemija participates in financing infrastructure, buildings, programs, and culture of living in the city of Kutina and pays utility and pollution fees.

Celebratory past, historical present, and imagined futures

In Croatian ethnology and cultural anthropology, Valentina Gulin Zrnić and Saša Poljak Istenič have recently addressed the theme of future(s) as a cultural dimension (Gulin Zrnić, Poljak Istenič 2022). The past, present, and future are in dynamic interplay. Time, just like space/place, shapes everyday life and constitutes a relevant cultural-anthropological topic. Temporality is an important conceptual framework for contemplating cities within the aforementioned research project, including the study of Kutina. Gulin Zrnić and Poljak Istenič (2022: 144) describe multitemporality as “the coexistence of different temporalities that are in various relationships of simultaneity, incongruence, overlap, or interweaving, indicating simultaneously ‘multiple and controversial meanings of time’ and the heterogeneity within individual periods and community experiences.” This concept aptly elucidates the complexity of the relationship between Gojlo and Kutina. Succession or causality is not the sole temporal dynamic connecting these two localities: this is not exclusively a case of *one after the other* or *solely one because of the other*. The relationship between these two localities is more complex – multitemporal – and is simultaneous, successive, parallel, and symbolic. Investments in one location meant a lack of investments in the other; there was also the relocation of work and population from one location to another. Nevertheless, these localities coexisted in many ways, one *beside* the other. They also shared booms and busts dictated by global trends. Due to their geographical proximity and while connected by public transportation, there were many individual rationalizations to, for instance, work in one settlement and live in the other. There is also a symbolic connection through the perceptions and reifications of these two localities. Narratives of improvement or decline are constructed by comparing one scenario with the other, a fragment from the past of one location to the present (and imagined future) of the other as if one does not even exist without the other. Many current residents of Gojlo and Kutina have had the lived experience of a “celebratory past” of these localities, which today, narratively and ambivalently optimistically (cf. Berlant 2011; Beckert 2013; Božić Vrbančić 2022; Knight 2023), showing us the ruins of former buildings, legitimizes the assumption and possibility

that something good could happen again in the future and that only good planning, management, and willpower is needed. There is a similar notion expressed in ethnographic research on marginalized communities:

The past would never be constituted if it did not coexist with the present whose past it is. The past and the present do not denote two successive moments, but two elements which coexist: one is the present, which does not cease to pass, and the other is the past, which does not cease to be but through which all presents pass. (Deleuze 1991: 59, according to Scobie 2023: 114)

The way in which the residents of Gojlo describe the golden age of their town, and the residents of Kutina tell theirs, often takes shape in a kind of historical present tense. They refer to events from the past but speak about them vividly and emotionally, often using the present tense to describe an action or state from the past. This reflects their unresolved relationship with what is being discussed, meaning it is never a concluded period for the person speaking, one that was supposed to have a different future in the past. This relationship materializes in numerous letters, drawings, newspaper articles, etc., as the residents of Gojlo, individually and collectively, repeatedly proposed to the local government to renovate and repurpose ruined buildings or establish some memorial that would “revive” and/or commemorate the glorious economic and social history of the location. In Kutina, the historical present also appears as a narrative trend. There is a common phrase in Kutina, “Every family has, or had, someone employed in Petrokemija.” Even though the current number of Petrokemija workers is less than half of the all-time high, Petrokemija has its place in every conversation in Kutina as a positive-negative protagonist, often taking shape in the historical present, as if the “golden era” of its operation “has a chance” of becoming. This relational element that affectively and narratively invites one part of the past, perceived as positive and sound, still “lives” within us and is not ready to be “locked away in the drawer” of the past. As expected, people talked about Petrokemija in its spacious restaurant area, where the annual meeting of retirees former Petrokemija workers, was appropriately marked. I had the opportunity to attend this event, meet interlocutors, and visit a part of the factory complex that is closed to the public and strictly controlled for a few hours.

Numerous examples of conversations with young residents of Kutina, both in Kutina and elsewhere, illustrate generational differences and dynamics in their perception of the city’s future and their relationship with it. Young people plan to leave Kutina with surprising determination because, as they say, “Petrokemija is not what it used to be,” referring to the current demanding working conditions, working in shifts, reductions in the number of workers, uncompetitive salaries, ongoing business crises, changes in ownership, and so on. I remember a recent interview with a young Kutina graduate, just a few days after her graduation, and her parents at their apartment in Kutina. The young woman, with her freshly stamped degree in humanities, had a firm conviction to leave Kutina permanently. The first thing she did after graduating was buy a bus ticket to Austria. Her parents, who had once

worked at Petrokemija, nodded in agreement and approved her decision. The young woman clearly “read” my facial expression, which revealed sadness and lack of understanding, even though I did not want to make it obvious. She quickly explained that only two people from her elementary school class (about thirty students in the early 2000s) stayed in Kutina to work and live (with high school educations in service industries).

I overheard a similar rationalization in a nearby hair salon. Set against a backdrop of shampooing and hair drying, there was a conversation about life in Kutina and the lives of the hairdressers who had been running their business for over thirty years but had spent a significant part of their lives working abroad, particularly in Germany. They returned to Kutina only in their “golden years.” When my hair was done, and as we were saying goodbye at the door, the hairdresser offered me a piece of advice, essentially wishing me, someone younger than her, well (i.e., encouraging me to leave Kutina and Croatia): “I’m telling you, a one-way ticket!”

Another narrative reflects disappointment and resignation toward present-day Kutina, which, according to this account, is “drifting, wandering,” despite having had a “chance” in the past that the city’s administrative structures repeatedly failed to support and recognize. During the 1970s, and this idea was revisited around a decade ago, some residents of Kutina advocated that Petrokemija should ambitiously shift toward entirely new technologies and more sustainable products:

Three things that Petrokemija produces are needed for food production: fertilizer, water, heat, or thermal energy, which should be used for setting up large greenhouse areas that would be heated and supplied with water. Food would be produced in Petrokemija; everything would be interconnected. Kutina could be, instead of one of the largest producers of greenhouse gases, a producer of agricultural and horticultural products, including tomatoes, cucumbers, and even flowers.

Future directions: Is there life after a decline?

Linear thinking about the future is dominant; it does not espouse the ideas and the residents’ many preferences for brownfield revitalization, visions of “alternative” futures, or futures in the plural. It is not entirely surprising because both Gojlo and Kutina are distinct top-down projects of the “single function’ urban development,” i.e., “single-function planning” (cf. Sennett 2015 [1977]: 297; Mravunac 2018; Dautović 2022) which shows, according to Richard Sennett, a series of impracticalities when “the functional needs of the localized area change historically” because “the space cannot respond; it can only be used for its original purpose, or be abandoned, or be prematurely destroyed and remade.” (Sennett 2015 [1977]: 297). These two localities’ industrial/post-industrial/de-industrial temporalities are not simultaneous, but they are close in time and place/space. So, is there a cause-and-effect relationship be-

tween the formation of pre-industrial, industrial, and post-industrial scenarios and the collective experience of space and time of Gojlo and Kutina? What are the processes and strategies for the modern regeneration of Gojlo and Kutina? Is there life after economic decline? The example of Gojlo gives us a dramatic answer, as Gojlo is a ghost town today, a “soul-constricting” location (cf. Antonakos Boswell 2020: 73). In Kutina, a partly deindustrialized city, power and decision-making are organized in a hierarchical and centralized manner. They are locally perceived as reserved only for small, privileged groups, which results in diverse local responses from the residents: 1) resignation and apathy, 2) emigration (especially among young people), 3) painstaking and persistent opposition – people who bring attention to irregularities in the local environment and advocate, through local associations and social networks, for decentralized city management; for their actions, they struggle locally with social, financial, political, and labor exclusion 4) “exiting” the local framework, i.e., NGO-project or economic reorientation, focusing and financing at the national and wider level (such as associations, foundations and smaller companies that are only registered as having their headquarters in Kutina, while their goals, activities, funding, and users widely transcend the local context). Therefore, there is no single way to cope with everyday life and no single way to rationalize it. If we look at this through a lens of the future, focusing on perceptions and strategies for the future, I will rely here on the insights and interpretations of Daniel Knight: there are not only single “spaces of everyday practice (or ideology) of future actualization” (Knight 2023: 48). As Knight further explains, it is unfair to speak about the relationship of residents to crises and everyday life solely in terms like optimism and pessimism (ibid.). Things are more complex and layered.⁶ In this sense, optimism is also seen in a multifaceted way, as a narrative and practical strategy that may not have its own expressive activist and programmatic contours but can be found in some “hidden” micro-levels of (crisis) everyday life:

Optimism is [...] relocated from the domain of radical change to everyday action, with concrete micro-utopias being bubbles where people consciously play within existing socio-historical and politico-economic structures to protect what is, but without giving up their determination to actualize possibilities of the future otherwise. (ibid.: 53)

The contemporary space of Kutina is characterized by gentrification affects, processes, and ad hoc investments. Ideas from the past are not on the agenda, but coherent new ones have not emerged. In addition, adverse demographic trends are a motive that quickly ends many well-designed and creative cultural programs because it gives

⁶ Knight continues his reasoning for the multilayer approach to the crisis of everyday life (past, present, and future), i.e., “optimistic endeavors in a field of chronic crisis” by viewing optimism as something that “does not have to be a polemic of dark anthropology. Optimistic orientations are not solely the property of anti-neoliberal, anarchic, ‘happy’ movements, but can be somewhat ‘conservative’ or individual while nevertheless offering a view of how the world could be otherwise.” (Knight 2023: 49). Knight further explains: “Optimism as orientation thus escapes oppositional categories of dark and good and destabilizes political agendas polarized as radical and conservative” (ibid. 53).

the program organizers the impression that their efforts have no purpose and are ridiculous. *For whom? There's no one here.* Paradoxically, every time I visit Kutina, I notice that parking lots are multiplying and encroaching on the atmosphere of a “green” Kutina, which dominated my impressions when I first visited the city three years ago. The life of cars indicates the dominant management paradigm in Kutina: parking over pedestrians, even though Kutina is a 10-minute city. Newly built real estate is also multiplying. *For whom?* – is a frequently heard question among inhabitants. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the primary school lost two classes worth of pupils in just one year – families had permanently moved abroad, out of Kutina.

However, several well-designed projects are implemented by the city administration, many of which are financed by European funds (e.g., the *New Bauhaus* project).⁷ However, these projects' fragmentary and short nature does not guarantee transformation. The few decades-old idea of Kutina as a *City of Technology* remained unrealized outside the framework of *Petrokemija*, and the displays set up by the city administration in public spaces still show this logo (*Kutina – City of Technology*) and the present state of Kutina, images that the residents see around them every day anyway. Kutina's lack of vision for the future is demonstrated by these displays that reify past ideas that have not come to pass, aestheticize the present, and then quickly break down due to a lack of electronic maintenance.

The conservation study completed in 2021,⁸ an ambitious interdisciplinary project commissioned by the city administration, should, in principle, serve as the starting point for urban regeneration, especially about the city's Roma settlement, which gives the perspective of strategic and visionary action for the future. However, the local public perceives it as a legitimate foundation for further local clientelistic investments, and while it was being drafted, several registered buildings were already demolished. The aestheticization of public life, through processes of festivialization and gentrification, is visible in the otherwise empty square. The literal nature of the letters spelling out “Kutina,” placed in the square, reflects the crisis of identity and ideas for the future. The main square results from top-down planning, as a market was located there until a few years ago, which has since been moved to the city's outskirts. Protected buildings are falling into disrepair and are not being restored – which is nothing new – more than half a century ago, the synagogue located in the center of the city was destroyed almost two decades after the end of World War II, just like the mill building around thirty years ago. Secession and modern urban housing, as well as traditional wooden architecture, are continuously being destroyed, regardless of their formal status as monuments of culture. This illustrates their futures that did not take place.

European-funded energy and sustainable renovations of public buildings, kindergartens, elementary schools, and the solar-panel-equipped student dormitory are

⁷ See: <https://www.ra-mrav.hr/vijesti/novosti/projekt-grad-kutine-i-ra-mrav-uvrsten-medu-20-najuspjesnijih-izabran-za-financiranje>. (21.11.2023.).

⁸ *Kutina: Konzervatorska studija*, Ministarstvo kulture i medija RH, Uprava za zaštitu kulturne baštine, Zagreb 2021.

still noticeable in the city, as are the projects carried out in the surrounding recreational environment; a few European-funded projects have been realized, and some project applications are underway. In addition, through recent transformations of work toward a digital economy, Kutina is becoming a place where, for the past ten years, successful companies have started appearing, exporting, and innovating products and technologies (e.g., hydrogen-based solutions) or which perform a specific part of production (e.g., mobile-phone chips), or are preparing to undertake a solar power plant project. Besides, whether cultural and creative industries (cf. Kozorog 2023) have the strength to act as saviors for an economy is unknown. Still, city authorities, in principle and peripherally, believe they align with modernity and regeneration. (cf. Kozorog 2019)

Conclusion

The paper examined the dynamic and multilayered relationship and consequences of top-down urban, economic, and social planning, dependent on industrial monoculture, through the optics of various strategies of two localities and the lived experience of the residents whose narratives are analyzed. Discrepancies between institutionally envisioned futures (strategies) and life (practices) that deviate from such futures are examined through the concepts of (post)industrialization, place-making, urban anthropology, anthropology of optimism, anthropology of the future, and multiple temporalities. The analysis also relied on works on the future as a cultural construction and ethnographies of (post)industrial cities. These ethnographies embrace disconnection, declining places, shrinking (green) spaces, and ambiguities of polluted landscapes. Futures are created and narrativized in contemporary everyday life variously seen and/or hidden, verbalized and/or non-spoken, materially/infrastructurally recognizable and/or symbolically shaped and intangibly present. Futures imagined in the past, i.e., thoughts and visions of the future of these two cities/settlements in their golden age, were grounded on the industrial monoculture, which had its beginnings and declines. The peculiarities and shared characteristics of Gojlo and Kutina lie in uncertainties, disconnections, and discontinuities, spatial, temporal, and ideological. The past is simultaneously a place of pride and despair. Both localities are characterized “by the present soaked in the past” (cf. Potkonjak, Škokić 2022: 86), by former rapid top-down construction and industrial monoculture that became the center of the industrial region and class politicization (cf. Sennett 2015 [1977]: 54–55). Lateral and multitemporal perspectives that might perceive the future as a non-predefined space for action (Gulin Zrnić and Poljak Istenič 2022: 147) in Gojlo and Kutina did not come into practice. The “proximity” of the Croatian capital is a one-way notion, and it nurtures the peripheral and inferior position of a regional vs. capital city. In Gojlo and Kutina, it is narratively perpetrated as an advantage but dissolves their daily and long-term consistency. While Gojlo

resembles a dystopian ghost town, by no means has Kutina reached complete ruin. However, it has not found a way to reverse the emigration trend by attracting immigrants. Not having a (good, better) future is normalized in emic narratives because coherent new agendas from the local government are still not on the table and have often been characterized by nepotism and corruption. The future in both localities amid these discontinuities occasionally seems bright, close, and certain, organized around the prosperity of the oil field or the factory. At other times, they seem distant and uncertain, with no new agendas on the way. Linear thinking about the future is prevalent; it does not espouse the ideas and the residents' and local governance's many preferences for brownfield revitalization. Richard Sennett sees the lack of ideas and limited perceptions (of the future) in local governance and communities not only sporadically but asserts that this is the temporal foundation for the functioning, but also the disorganization, of all modern societies "built upon the crises of the past" (Sennett 2015 [1977]: 263), especially of atomized cities which in the post-industrial context are still waiting for active citizens and long-term creative solutions to achieve the sustainability of urban livelihoods and transformative change to confront new challenges.

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Preobrazbe, posruća i (zamišljene) budućnosti Gojla i Kutine

U radu se etnološki i kulturnoantropološki opisuju i promišljaju dvije lokacije – njihove prostorne, vremenske, materijalne i društvene transformacije kroz 20. stoljeće. Gojlo i Kutina predstavljaju dvije geografski i "sudbinski" bliske lokacije – nastale kao planirani gradovi/naselja za potrebe industrije i iscrpljivanjem postojećih prirodnih resursa. Nakon iscrpljivanja resursa, u krizi sirovina, te u transformacijama političkih i ekonomskih sustava, Gojlo i Kutina sekvencionalno doživljavaju prostornu i društvenu stagnaciju i degradaciju. Istraživačka pitanja u ovom radu usmjerena su na problematizaciju dinamičkog odnosa prostora/mjesta i vremena te *top-down* urbanističkoga planiranja. Kritička analiza se referira i oslanja na koncepte i istraživačka polja (post)industrijskog grada, industrijske monokulture, stvaranja mjesta, antropologije budućnosti, višestruke temporalnosti i antro-

pologije optimizma. Temelji se na etnografskom istraživanju provedenom u više navrata u periodu od 2020. do 2023. godine. U radu se ilustriraju formativni elementi prošlosti ovih dviju lokacija, njihovo “zlatno” doba, razdoblja ekonomskog i društvenog uzleta te njihova deindustrijalizacija; te se raspravlja o prošlim i sadašnjim (zamišljenim) budućnostima ovih ruralno-urbanih lokacija.

Ključne riječi: Kutina, Gojlo, etnografija, budućnosti, planirani gradovi/naselja