

# ON THE SIDE OF PREDICTABLE

## Visioning the Future in Serbia

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In order to be able to contextualize and understand social worlds, anthropologists pay close attention. We observe how individuals and communities relate to each other and to their ideas. We study the intimate and subjective, as well as the large-scale cosmologies by which people make themselves and the world. Our participatory methods and reflective analysis document the complex, intricate, patterned, and also random aspects of people's reasoning and actions. These activities, on anthropology's part, supposedly offer not only critical descriptions of the present (on its historical trajectories), but possible intimations of a society's future. Anthropological analysis, in other words, not only describes but also anticipates. This position paper focuses on the notions of anticipation, predictability, and possibility in anthropology. It asks what methodological and theoretical assumptions are built into our ways of making predictions about our field sites. It invites the reader to consider the effects certain anticipatory practices have for the people and phenomena we study as well as for the discipline. Centrally, the paper proposes different ways of attending to visions that anticipate the future. By reflecting on my ethnographic and analytical journeys in Serbia, I attempt to explain why I currently make so much of questions of predictability and possibility in both the field and the discipline. My desire is to open up a discussion on the value of cultivating attention to what seems to emerge on the side of predictable.

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*The value of social science lies in its asking questions about the apparently  
unthinkable, the emergent, the pending and the unseen.*  
(Stewart 2013: 36)

I have always been interested in how people deal with time – how they embody and think of their pasts and presents and what expectations they have concerning their futures. My anthropological work, amongst other things, explores, in a number of dimensions, the unforeseeable development of Serbian society in the aftermath of the wars of the 1990s.<sup>1</sup> In 2002 I started investigating narratives, practices, and politics of reconciliation in post-conflict Serbia, as these were practically brought about through DNA identification of the war missing and the repatriation of their dead bodies. I worked with, amongst others, critics of the former Yugoslav wars, relatives

<sup>1</sup> Almost all the phenomena I've attended to ethnographically were located in Serbia. I have, however, conducted lengthy comparative anthropological work in Tasmania and in Switzerland, as well as shorter ethnographies in Slovenia and India.

of those who had gone missing, victims, war profiteers, perpetrators, and many who regarded themselves as mere bystanders. Over the course of this research, many of my respondents expressed continuous discomfort at how far they were still emotionally possessed by the war and its effects. I tried to understand the experience typically termed “post-conflict” and to question its concept, while decoupling it from its temporal and ideological framings. Other research projects in Serbia have covered the “medicalization” of conflicts, accounts of paranoia, ethnographies of mental health and neocortical defence, of rivers and water resources, and studies of contemporary social entrepreneurship (Petrović-Šteger n.d., 2006, 2009, 2013, 2016a, 2016b, 2018, 2020).

This material, collected over 18 years, took stock of the scenes and processes, the narratives and practices, through which my respondents conceived their intimate and collective conditions in fraying times. Serbian society, as reflected in countless interviews, was ridden with scenes of exhaustion, poverty, dissent and frustration, but also harboured creativity and ambition. Even today, many in and outside Serbia see the place as deeply traumatised. People I work with claim to feel exhausted not only on account of the 1990s wars, or because of the conflicts’ economic or psychological consequences, but as a result of Serbia’s current “political and mental ecology”. The majority describe their material and psychic environment as impure, stagnant, and treacherous. Many insist they live in a structurally compromised country governed by a self-involved, self-indulgent clique that rewards group membership above competence and self-confidence above expertise. These interlocutors feel continuously hectored by their political and economic leaders, whom they describe as despotic and predatory. Irony, cynicism, feelings of humiliation, and a lack of hope towards almost everything saturate many everyday conversations (Petrović-Šteger 2013, 2016a, 2020; also Petrović, T. 2015; Rajković 2018).

Over the last six years or so, I witnessed a number of situations and conversations that capture even more intensely people’s uneasy relationship to the state of their society. Feeling vulnerable for too long, they question both their self-regard and ambition as well as their own foreignness in relation to the place they live. A number of people I’ve worked with seem despondent. They see no way in which they could relieve their systemic exclusion and the discrimination they face, as the forms by which these operate seem to be constantly changing. Some have toned down their political views and retreated into private life. Others complain that the effect of living in an ever-more corrupt state breeds in people a sort of self-contempt. These respondents are preoccupied with the risks of self-pejoration and self-distrust, and especially their intergenerational effect. A third group, one could say, refuses to negotiate with corruption and has been protesting. Hundreds of thousands of people have taken to the streets since 2016 against Aleksandar Vučić (elected Prime Minister in 2014 and President in 2017) and his political and ideological cohort, whose authoritarian rule is identified by many as being behind the country’s current societal, political, moral, and economic malaise.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Many protesters though believe that their efforts are useless, as Serbia’s President seems assured of the support of the EU, besides other political players worldwide. While many Serbs experience him as intimidating autocrat, the EU and other politicians laud him as region’s primary force for stability.

Serbia further faces what the media dub a demographic disaster. Various studies report the population has shrunk by 8.42% since the demise of Yugoslavia (with statistics recording more deaths than live births; see Judah 2019). A country of 6.96 million (excluding Kosovo), Serbia is expected to lose almost a quarter of its population by 2050, as the young and the skilled emigrate for jobs. Even well-situated and relatively established people, who survived the wars, and subsequent decades of lack and political abjection, are now looking to leave their homeland, tired and repulsed with the regime. What can be expected of people in this state of continuous chagrin and (self-)deception?

## Assumptions

Similarly, perhaps, to most of my respondents, media and policy discourse often portrays Serbia as doomed. Its main presupposition is that the country still operates under a particular temporal regime – (post-)conflict and in a period of crisis or precarity. Scholarly interest in Serbia, despite some shifts in the past decade, has likewise been preoccupied with the “symbolic geography” of the region (Todorova 1997), as this finds expression in the transitions from socialism to post-socialism, Yugoslav to post-Yugoslav, and conflict to post-conflict.<sup>3</sup> The dominant, even stereotypical, representation of the region in the academic literature, media, and popular culture remains that of a tinderbox, a sort of powder keg always about to explode (for criticism, see Todorova 1997; Burawoy and Verdery 1999; Bjelić and Savić 2001; Dunn and Verdery 2011; Dzenovska and Kurtović 2018).

Ideas of the social that resort mainly to the political, economic, or religious rest on particular assumptions about what it means to make a world. These ideas, certainly, can fund invaluable insights, but they also tend to coalesce habitual ways of seeing their subject matter, thereby locking their human objects into stereotypical, predictable patterns. Presuppositions about individuals, societies, and regions based exclusively on these modes of analysis distort them; furthermore, they exert ideational, narrative, or representational control, even when they are purporting to analyse.

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<sup>3</sup> In fact, classical anthropological and social scientific analysis of Serbia, and of the Balkans generally, still tend to focus either on these countries' socialist pasts or on the fallout from the region's conflicts of the 1990s. These regional approaches have linked productively to studies of identity, nostalgia, conflict, postsocialism, nationalism, colonialism, transitional justice, etc. (Čolović 2002; Bjelić and Savić 2002; Đerić 2006; Jansen 2000, 2009, 2014; Dawson 2009; Naumović 2009; Greenberg 2011, 2014; Petrović, T. 2010; Longinović 2011; Živković 2011; Jašarević 2012, 2015; Gordy 2013; Banović 2016; Jovanović 2016; Brković 2017; Bošković 2017; Jelača, Kolanović and Lugarić 2017; Rajković 2018; Gregorić Bon 2019). Even so, both foreign observers and local commentators portray southeast Europe, and Serbia in particular, as unusually plagued by war, crisis and strife. These constructions have specific and serious theoretical and policy consequences, in facilitating understandings of the region that variously “balkanize”, “orientalise”, “exoticise” and “other” or “selfother” it (Bakić-Hayden 1995; Hayden 1996, 2014; Goldsworthy 1998; Liotta 2005; Đerić 2006; Kiossev 2010; Stojanović 2010; Obad 2013, are just a few studies that have criticised this tendency).

It is worth remembering the coercive function of analysis in a fieldsite where many feel demoralized because their past is so heavily politicised. The same people worry, too, that their future (in political, economic, and moral terms) is foreordained. That it has been hijacked – preemptively preconceived – by both local and international policymakers’ expectations.

Indeed, if the past – a national past – is experienced as impaired, and the present as deficient or humiliating, how does one think about and act toward the future? Detecting people’s frustrations in the ways they confront and narrate the times in which they live, I’ve made a conscious decision to move away, ethnographically, from the predominant themes of political and economic hopelessness that go hand in hand with a mentality of self-defeat. I started to wonder what attempts at transforming Serbs’ individual and collective experiences were out there. What had I missed? What had the encoded assumptions of anthropology overlooked? My interest in the practical, ideological, and emotional investments of people’s projects envisioning a different Serbian future is what underlay a comparative anthropological research I designed and led from 2016 to 2019. The research team considered a range of social entrepreneurs in Serbia, Albania, and Slovenia. We focused on social entrepreneurs (as well as their critics and observers), understanding the entrepreneurs, on their own self-presentation, to have a capacity to respond, actively and innovatively, to the idea that their times required immediate, pragmatic and real restructuring. Theoretically, this contributed to a study of expectations, illuminating ideas of hope, failure, doubt, and conviction in south-east Europe, as these assumptions come into play when people ruminate on and plan for the future (Gregorič Bon 2018; Kozorog 2018; Petrović-Šteger 2018, 2020; Šimenc 2018; Vodopivec 2018).

An important research finding pertaining to Serbia was that, when discussing their ideas about the future, a number of social entrepreneurs and other respondents departed from a typical language of precariousness (even when talking about the effects of living in volatile times) and instead invoked notions of “good”, “care for society”, “clarity”, “vision”, and “healing”. Indeed, some appeared to be seeking some sort of societal (as well as spiritual) transformation. This was a change that could not at once be captured by any corresponding advance in political, economic, or religious forms.

Another unexpected finding was that the people with the clearest short-term plans wanted to leave Serbia. The time-framework of immediatism (“at once!”) and of a revolutionary (political) break is one through which they imagined change. Those interested in societal transformations and in staying in Serbia, however, professed an equal interest in Serbia’s future and its pasts – pasts predating the 1990s, and even socialist Yugoslavia! Many felt as if they needed to understand more of their own collective psyche and societal patterns as it were, and to tap into the memories of previous generations in order to re-earth and reshape present-day “Serbia’s collective mind”. In the cases I documented, respondents invoked “the past” not so much as an explanatory tool or way of validating their everyday practices, but rather as a means of learning, understanding, and self-resourcing. Their visionary futures are

often conceived from the viewpoint of a (imaginary or selected) past (see Petrović-Šteger 2018, 2020).

I argue that these practices of imagining alternative social scenarios are critical,<sup>4</sup> because of their unusual distance from mainstream thinking in which present time is read as a scarce, frayed, or even threatening category. Moreover, they are vital to the possibility of inner processes of transformation and societal healing – as they gesture toward the notion that the conditions in which a life is lived *cannot be predicted* and are *conceivably changeable*.

## Visionary imaginaries and alternative scenarios

Wanting to further understand how people's conceptions of the past and future may connect up to the social transformations in which they would like to participate, I have begun a new line of research. The aim is to further examine, contextualize, as well as step away from narratives and practices that read Serbian society primarily through politicized assumptions, while also paying more attention to ideas and visions that inform collective consciousness and possibilities for societal change. It is quite possible that shifts in people's ideas about the past (and future) portend psychological and structural change. This ongoing study looks at individuals, collectives, and movements that frame alternative views of Serbia and the world, not only through political activism but also through other intentional community projects, as well as scientific, and spiritual activism. I collaborate with, and follow the work of, various architects, public health planners, educators, cosmologists, biological archaeologists, and inventors. Other interlocutors include public intellectuals, traditional musicians, athletes, herbalists, and painters. These individuals of different ages and life experiences all seem to be able to surpass their vocational identities when considering possibilities for change in how society might view itself. The research follows people and ideas whose imaginative capacities regarding societal transformation seem bigger than politics or economics and extend into realms of coherence, order, morality, aesthetics, the sacred, and inspiration.<sup>5</sup>

A set of questions may be suggestive here: What is the basis on which one can make a significant difference to societal self-understanding so that, in retrospect, this intervention will count as a cause? What characterizes individuals and groups will-

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<sup>4</sup> For nuanced anthropological accounts of revolutionary, leftist imaginaries that analyse people's need to reimagine and reform their political situation in the aftermath of socialism, past or recent conflicts see Yurchak 2006, 2014; Channell-Justice 2019; Kurtović 2019; Kurtović and Sargsyan 2019. The current research, however, wishes to observe scenarios that in many ways rest on, but also seek to go beyond, granting the political causes and consequences of socio-historical transformation.

<sup>5</sup> These spirited individuals may not represent a dominant tendency in Serbia, but they certainly exist. My aim is not to produce a series of contemporary hagiographies, nor portray quixotic idealists or influencers. Premised on the outcomes of previous research, the goal is to follow people and ideas capable of tapping into, rethinking and communicating both the archaic, intuitive and subliminal, as well as the rational, pragmatic and novel aspects of a culture, while reflecting a conception of how societal transformation could unfold.

ing to step out of shared time – an exhausted, or infertile, after-time – and tap into, or even twist, longer historical perspectives while projecting into the future? Who do people in contemporary Serbia see as visionary? Who is trusted for their energy, care, imagination, and resourcefulness? Whose and what visions are recognized as capable of refiguring and realigning people's environment to what is taken to be their collective good? How are social abundance and stability imagined? How are these ideals communicated?

The idea of visions and the visionary is too inchoate to lend itself to straightforward ethnographic examination. One usually calls people “visionaries” in hindsight when they become historical figures – when enough time has passed to be able to “evaluate” their worldviews and practices as “visionary”. For the lack of a more nuanced word, and in order to bring some specificity to the key concept, I identify visionary practices as those capable of offering conceptual tools and scripts for action that escape the usual etiquettes of mainstream and countercultural thinking and acting, but which are also oriented towards collective wellbeing. In other words, visionary practices, in this reading, potentiate experiences that may lead people to see and act in the world in substantially altered ways.

Anthropology has dealt with visionaries, but almost always by association. It seems that opening one's mind to visionary knowledge is unusual, even among those most receptive to it, as Gananath Obeyesekere (2012) claims, and even within a discipline renowned for critically confronting the pressures of hyperrationality in academia.

In most anthropological writings, the term “visionary” is deployed in an intangible and metaphorical sense. Visionary experiences are understood as visions, dream-visions, trances, and “fantastic scenarios appearing before [the] eyes of the awakened” (Obeyesekere 2012: 2). They are also used less as a concept and more as a descriptor in analysis, thus illustrating, for example, the quality of certain practices of leadership (van Knippenberg and Stam 2014), idealism, or utopian thought (Moore 1990; Jameson 2005; Wright 2010; Cooper 2014). It is almost exclusively in the context of the anthropology of religion and shamanism that the concept is treated as a phenomenon in its own right and as something worth examining and theorizing about (for studies of prophets and spiritual writings, see Eliade 1964; Evans-Pritchard 1964; Comaroff 1985; Benz 2002; for studies of fatalism or self-fulfilling prophecy, see Empson 2011; da Col and Humphrey 2012; for a study of visionaries, mystics, pseudoprophets and contactees, see Freixedo 1992). These contributions often identify visionaries as holders of some special, awakened, or indigenous knowledge (Madigan 2004; Hufford 2010), or those who, at times, use traditional medicine borrowed from various magical and religious contexts for healing and visionary purposes (see Barbira-Freedman 2014; Rodger 2018).

This research departs from Obeyesekere's conception of visions, which, in his thinking, arise only when consciousness is dimmed and in the absence of active, ego-directed “aphoristic thinking” (Obeyesekere 2012: 6). On the contrary, I believe the dialectics of consciousness and culture go deeper: The visionary is not merely privy



to the imagination when reason has been balked or fallen into abeyance. Connections between the visionary and the rational are more complex than that. This study links studies of visionary practices with studies of activist ideational practices, and it involves acts of conscious inspiration and imaginative projection. It examines a range of registers and technologies through which visionary imaginations of the future attempt to mould the socio-historical in Serbia (and beyond).

Imagination in anthropological parlance is conceived of in many ways: as a mental act, immaterial knowledge, experiential and embodied reality, as well as *qua active* force or shared commitment, as these can play into historical transformation (see Kearney 1988, 1998; Cocking 1991; Preston 1991; Crapanzano 2004; Severi 2004, 2015; Sneath, Holbraad and Pedersen 2009; Graeber 2012; Gibson 2014; Harris and Rapport 2015; Bloch, M. 2016). Visioning is also portrayed as a means of making sense of the world and as an activity that re-motivates observation and engagement (Ingold 2014: 395). As such, in the context of ethnographic (if not always theoretical) practice, it is understood simply enough as a methodological *a priori* (Casey 1976, 1977, 2003; Comaroff and Comaroff 1992; Schäuble 2016).

The research honours those studies that examine contemporary historical junctures in which it seems especially important to be “hopeful” about the world, given a state of both crisis and, potentially, a beginning (see Bloch, E. 1995; Harvey 2000; Zournazi 2002; Hage 2003; Miyazaki 2004, 2006; Guyer 2007, 2009; Graeber 2007; Reed 2011a; Narotzky and Besnier 2014; Bryant and Knight 2019).

This project seeks to identify the events, processes, and individual and collective conditions that are recognized as capable of making a *difference* or yielding change. Arjun Appadurai (2000) has similarly recognized the role of the imagination in both understanding and bringing about change. His take on imagination, for example, as a social practice portrays it as central to all forms of agency and to fields of possibility that are globally defined (Appadurai 1996: 31, 2000, 2013). There has to be room, theoretically, in anthropology, for an applied notion of imagination as a resource for, and even as a form of, social activism. Recognising how imagination makes change both possible and legible, it is important to make further explicit connections between visionary imagination and processes of memory that are vital for the preservation and transmission of cultural patterns and traditions (Wagner 1981, 2018; Robbins 2010). In this sense, this study aims to understand what purposeful imagining may create and how it affects social order.

Furthermore, visionary practices may be scrutinized as forms of inspiration (see Reed 2011b) or prophetic invention (Sarró 2019), thus lighting the way to sociocultural change. Who are the individuals or collectives that others look to mitigate or relieve unfortunate social, spiritual, economic, and political circumstances? What are the practices that inspire, influence, and have a continued impact on people's actions and ways of perceiving? Building on my present experience, I believe that in imagined, wished-for, and experienced fields of possibilities, no political or economic solution could ever be compatible with or satiate imaginative social demands. Not all social revolutions call for militant political reforms (see Friedmann 1971).

Even if political revolutions often call for changes of mindset, the political seems to be where one sees that change happening last.

This research also studies ethnographies of visionary futurists (Bernstein 2019), visionary activists in revolutionary religious contexts (Christian 1995; Arzyutov 2018; Pedersen 2019), and ethnographies of “radical alterity” (Hage 2003, 2009, 2015). It learns from ethnographies dealing with anthropological understandings of modern metaphysics (see Battaglia 2012; Descola 2013; Latour 2013; Viveiros de Castro 2014; Escobar 2018), different politics informed by cosmopolitical awareness (Stengers 2005, 2018), and the relationship to the unseen (in the context of faith, tradition, and spiritual practice, see Deloria 2006) that is not limited to the possibilities – political, economic, or ecological – reserved for it by the present neo-liberal global order (see Skafish 2014).

Significantly, these themes are tied to questions of what it means for people to know themselves not only on a personal but also on a cultural level. This study thus reads anthropological and other literature on communal and historical consciousness and the collective psyche (Gadamer 1979; Buck-Morss 2000; Lear 2006; Clark 2006, 2012; Stewart 2017), the psychological dynamics of insecurity (Masco 1999), and hence further explores research interest in mental hygiene and health at a time of reduced economic opportunity and political abjection (Petrović-Šteger 2013).

The work is centrally motivated by the questions of how ideas become incorporated in an emergent order and how they gain prominence and become prioritized in a collective psyche or mind. This question of how an organism (e.g. an idea or meme) exists in and shapes its environment (e.g. collective mind) is very much a Batesonian question. My scholarship is deeply inspired and shaped by readings of Gregory Bateson’s opus (2000 [1972], 2002 [1979]; Bateson and Bateson 1988; Bateson and Donaldson 1991) and his recursive epistemology (see also Petrović-Šteger 2019). Bateson postulates (2000 [1972]: 381) that *any difference that makes a difference in some later event* is an analogue of the cause of that differentiation process. By following Bateson and other anthropological studies of relationality (Strathern 1991, 1992, 2019), this project frames visionary imagination as a mode of reframing social practices. The hope is to understand the patterns of mental phenomena that might enable or inhibit social transformation. I am not just interested in what is rationally sustainable in the short term, but also in less explicit visions that are more tenuously connected to their sociocultural settings and which recommend more ambiguous actions.

## Patterns that connect

In a time marked by hopelessness and exhaustion, and in a place deemed to exist in a time of post-conflict stasis, it is vital to attend to people’s needs for self-reflection, for evaluations of what is socially good, and for alternative conceptions and modes



of action. By studying visionary and transformative practices in these contexts, this research wants to understand the ways and motivations of visionaries who are often educated individuals and materially capable of leaving Serbia, yet are willing to stay put and contribute new conversations and practices. What are they aiming to achieve, and who are they committed to becoming? This is a research objective worth investigating on its own, in a country imprinted by trauma and deep distrust in the state, while the rest of the world migrates.

It is important to note that this research adopts a critical but not starstruck position in relation to these ideational and world-making practices. In these terms, the study is conceived of as not only a work of description but also as a theoretical and ethnographic experiment. Will anything come of the visionaries' visions?

Another important question that the study addresses is whether "visionaries" are always promoting social good, and if so, "whose" social good? Many exclusionary, communalist-type visions for social change in Serbia – for instance, forming ideal communities by expelling outsiders – claim visionary inspirations. In certain references, their pseudo-cosmological social philosophies can be hard to distinguish from more genuine potential visions. Moreover, as we know, visionaries are not always ill-understood, romanticized do-gooders with a limited sphere of effect in administrative or governing terms. Further, how can the researcher avoid anointing as "visionary" those ideas of the collective future and of change she agrees with? Change usually comes from people collectively being brought to recognize the obvious – in other words, from people who recognize that the injustices they experience and talk about have become unignorable, too plain, too obvious, too factual, or too difficult to contest anymore and, in one sense, the opposite of "visionary".

Trusting that a researcher can avoid a sort of academic suspicion and condescension toward the concept of the visionary in Serbia, this study posits a need to decouple social visions (as these are potentially transformative) from practical politics. In my view, we should resist politicized understanding as the naturalized mode for analyzing Serbian (or any) society; this political science mode risks preempting and stabilizing certain categories through which Serbs' current sense-making practices are evaluated and in which their later ideas may be deduced. Any reading of Serbia that pivots mainly on the country's everyday politics will keep essentializing the place as a primarily post-socialist and post-conflict environment. Moreover, in my view, in the context of Serbia, social change will not necessarily originate in the realm of the political. It might end up there, but it will not originate there.

The research wagers that some alternative voices, not yet entirely subsumed into leftist or rightwing political identities, might offer genuine alternatives to imagining the country as having sunk into a state of precarity and hopelessness. It is true that some political and economic anthropology can imagine the future, and it is true, or more than true, that politics and economics are in themselves unpredictable. But in a place like Serbia that is heavily marked by all kinds of stereotypes, predictions that prefer certain political and economic markers remain tricky. This is especially because some Serbs, including those in whom this research takes the closest interest,

understand Serbian history as going back much further than 30 or 80 or even 150 years. Moreover, some of my interlocutors challenge the very notion of time. They suggest we should rethink our concepts of time altogether and perhaps teach ourselves how to understand life events and processes from the perspective of *eternalism*, as in the coexistence of the past, present and future. This necessarily challenges aforementioned uses of ideas of hope and hopelessness. To begin with, by paying more attention to cognition rather than signaling, we might come closer to identifying which ideas permit dynamism in a particular social situation. These ideas, as garnered in interviews and other forms of ethnographic data-collection, may exhibit, in Bateson's term (2002 [1979]), *patterns that connect*.

The interest here is not only in the predictive power of ideas. Anthropological analysis could concern itself with enlarging the space of social possibility through documenting the different ideas people have of their collective futures. This proposition is not new, of course, and reflects longstanding concerns about identifying, acknowledging, and grappling with "the art of the possible" in its various guises (see Guyer 2009). Yet it still seems to me that many analyses seem to skip the important question of how we as anthropologists account for our own foregrounding of the ideas by which social worlds are known and created. To whom do we listen? And to which idiom(s)? This research proposes cultivating an attention to unexpected configurations of ideas as individuals and social and state processes align in new ways.

The future is not merely a temporal category but also a context that we invest with our own predictions, hopes, demands, and needs. Besides taking stock of what builds out of observable facts, anthropology, as this position paper suggests, should seek to attune itself to what hibernates (while seeking expression) in mindsets and social conditions.



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## The Road from Imagination to Politics

Maja Petrović-Šteger's powerful essay reminds us of the necessity of imagination for envisioning and enacting social change. Like her entrepreneurial interlocutors, Petrović-Šteger's analysis pivots between the present and multiple possible futures: paths that might be taken as well as futures foreclosed by our current ways of seeing and inhabiting present. The essay asks: What do anthropologists take for granted about the categories (of politics, sociality, ethics, creativity) that structure our analysis? How do categories shape the world, take on weight, and in turn pin people to histories not of their own making? Petrović-Šteger is also attuned to the way that concepts work infrastructurally: they help us shape, actualize, and communicate imagination. Such a project is all the more urgent, she argues, when those categories perpetuate normative understandings of politics, economics, and society. Such categories produce, rather than reflect, the failures of those to whom they are applied. Moving beyond them requires, as she writes, "people and ideas whose imaginative capacities regarding societal transformation seem bigger than politics or economics and extend into realms of coherence, order, morality, aesthetics, the sacred, and inspiration".

I am inspired by and deeply sympathetic to this project. My own research has long attended to how scholars, policymakers, and others deploy notions of failure as a strategy of normative governance. Yet, in reading this essay, I also found myself wondering, *what comes next?* This may sound like precisely the predictive, social scientific question that Petrović-Šteger's eschews. So perhaps "*what*" is not the correct question... but rather "how?" How do creative imaginings become politics? How does popular will become political authority? How do nascent conversations and imaginative experiments become the conditions for collective solidarity and action?

When Petrović-Šteger points to the poverty of institutions in contemporary Serbia, she notes, "[I]n imagined, wished-for, and experienced fields of possibilities, no political or economic solution could ever be compatible with or satiate imaginative social demands. [...] [I]n the context of Serbia, social change will not neces-

sarily originate in the realm of the political. It might end up there, but it will not originate there.” It is this gap between imagination and politics that intrigues me. It would be naïve to think that political, legal, or economic institutions will save us, or that institutions ought to endure at all costs. Petrović-Šteger is convincing on this point, echoing a growing scholarship in anthropology that analyzes liberal institutions, concepts, and categories and the violence they perpetuate (Beliso-De Jesus and Pierre 2020; Povinelli 2011; Lowe 2015; Dzenovska 2018). But does this mean abandoning institutions and politics altogether? Institutions are artefacts of human creativity after all: they emerge from praxis – the knitting together of human action wedded to social and ethical commitments expressed in material and discursive form; and enregisterment (Agha 2005), regimented modes of talk through which participation and intervention in those fields count as recognizable. Patterns, like institutions, do not just happen. People make patterns, both as epistemological frameworks and intentional political action.

As I have written elsewhere, this attention to institutions, patterns, and communication is a central dynamic of much social change: not “what is to be done, but how will we (and others) know if we have done it?” (Greenberg 2020). Activism often relies on commensuration and translation across modalities of power. If social change may not originate in politics, yet may end up there, how do expressions of possibility morph and move? How can people nurture and sustain creativity as the basis of collective action? How does imagination live and endure as a communicative framework that shapes the conditions under which alternatives can be spoken, recognized, and shared?

The way that the meaning of protest shifts is an illustrative example. As I discussed in my book (Greenberg 2014), and several articles (Greenberg 2006, 2012, 2016; Greenberg and Spasić 2017), battles in Serbia over who has the right to the city and what protest means were about asserting alternative forms of sovereignty. Protestors channeled human energy and creativity into interpretative frameworks through which people might make claims, not just to solidarity but also to political power. The significance of such creative energy was not only that it offered an alternative expression of popular will and resistance. It was also an energy that could be translated into influence over the mechanisms of formal rule. This process changed both the meaning of protest and the institutions of governance at the same time. This was not an easy or romantic story. As I document, the meaning of protest shifted after the year 2000 alongside the framing of gendered and classed bodies in the streets. Whether a group of people is “the people” or “a mob”, a security threat, or an exclusive band of elites depends on a dynamic interpretative framework. Establishing the hermeneutics of politics is itself the work of politics. As Petrović-Šteger so powerfully shows, the experience of politics in the process of such shifts can sap the creativity that fueled earlier aspects of social change.

In thinking through how we get from imagination to politics, it is hard for me not to focus on home. America is bracing for an authoritarian coup. The capture of legal institutions, the corruption of political sovereignty by corporate cash, voter

suppression, racism, and police violence have never been more clear. What lessons might Americans learn from imagination and politics elsewhere? One could easily substitute America for Europe in Igor Štik's (2014) comment on the lessons of the Bosnian Plenums. They represent "Europe's future: ungovernable populations, exhausted by austerity measures and left to their own devices after the collapse of remnants of the welfare state – a state with no prospect for growth, run by elites of dubious, if any legitimacy who deploy heavily armed police to protect themselves against ordinary citizens" (ibid.). At the same time, Štik argues, they also represent not just the slogans of normative democracy, but also genuine experiments in democratic alternatives from the ground up. The lesson I take from Štik and others who have written about imaginative experiments in democracy in the region (Razsa 2015; Kurtović and Hromadžić 2017; Garić-Humphrey 2020) is that social change requires vernacular institutionalization: willing creative expression into being in ways that are sustainable but also translatable across modalities of politics, economy, society, and governance.

On the eve of our impending coup, I wonder what imagination and experimentation look like in the U.S. As a country, our imagination of democracy is dominated by liberal formations (such as elections), which are premised on a demobilization and sapping of creativity. Democratic imagination flourishes – Black Lives Matter protests, cross coalition organizing between labor and community groups; Strike debt and occupy movements; undocumented youth movements and their allies, to name only a few. What we are missing is not imagination, but the mechanisms and practices to bridge the gap between "the origins of social change" and where it might "end up". In other words, what is absent – or beyond imagination – is the mechanisms for translating forms of sovereignty across modalities of power and governance.

Political, social, legal, and economic institutions do not only police and produce the status quo. People also engage institutions as pathways and pivot points for the circulation, translation, and uptake of forms of action across variegated spaces. Sovereignty, human creativity, and even imagination are like electric current: Energy requires converters to move across differently constituted social and political domains and institutional membranes porous enough to receive that flow and convert it into other kinds of energy. Left stagnant, without a destination, it dissipates. Politics is in part the work of creating conditions under which extra-institutional creativity can move, live, and endure through collective action over time. Perhaps democratic frameworks and ethical commitments are possible through other means and visions. We might imagine a future for justice and accountability outside the institutional parameters of state power and sovereignty, governance, and judicial authority on which contemporary normative democracy rests. But I still believe reshaping the social fabric at scale requires some kind of institutional engagement, even if that means reconceptualizing institutions from the ground up. Perhaps it is a failure of my own imagination that I am not ready to give up on such a politics just yet.

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## Transformative Potentials of Regional Ethnographies of Crisis or a Plea for a Local Anthropology of the Future

We would like to thank the editorial board of *Etnološka tribina* for the opportunity to participate in the discussion initiated by our colleague, Maja Petrović-Šteger. Her paper invites us, in very specific local and regional contexts and in this particular moment, to examine the concepts of predictability and possibility. It asks us “to consider the effects certain anticipatory practices have for the people and phenomena we study as well as for the discipline”. In particular, it invites us to examine the transformative potential of these concepts.

As invited discussants we would like to stress our starting points and some issues that have arisen over the course of our own research, which is very similar to what Maja Petrović-Šteger conducted in Serbia over an extended period of time. When researching post-industrial work in Sisak as part of the project, “The Transformation of Work in Post-Transitional Croatia”,<sup>6</sup> there were several things we focused on: the consequences of long-term unemployment among former industrial workers; new and mostly precarious forms of post-industrial work; and the transformation of the city itself, which has undergone considerable de-industrialization from 1990 onward. The ethnographic material we gathered through interviews led us to work along the lines of the very same topics Petrović-Šteger discussed in the first part of her paper. One such topic was the permanent existential crisis in the narratives of the older generation for whom work and life as they had known them had been irrevocably lost. The same was true for a group of middle-aged adults who no longer had anywhere to work and had placed their hopes on a life outside Sisak and even Croatia.

When we focused on the narratives of our interlocutors, who clearly marked a rupture in their lives before and after the industrial collapse, we found they primarily lingered on stories of a “better past” and a “stagnated present”. This led us to the conclusion that the residents of Sisak saw their city as a place without a future. It looked to them like it was a place where they were simply surviving and just “killing time”. It wasn’t until we had almost completed our fieldwork, and with encouragement from within (via a conversation with a local journalist), that we began to realize that in searching for particular narratives, we had created a discourse about the city and work that omitted a full range of speech. Therefore, we began to search for interlocu-

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.transwork.eu/naslovnica/> (accessed 29. 8. 2020).



tors who had decided to live and work in a post-industrial city by choice rather than out of necessity. We were particularly interested in creative, community oriented and solidary practices our now mostly younger interlocutors initiated or were involved in. These practices were one of the ways in which they were building their futures in the present. They offered us a new direction for our research that was geared toward social actors and processes related to envisioning and creating personal and societal wellbeing through future-oriented action. Their narratives were sometimes progressive in the sense that they envisioned a fairer and more equal social future, or they took a pragmatic view of the past for the sake of the “survival of the forms of their social, relational, material, and economic environment” (Ringel 2014: 56). Thanks to them, we were no longer using our ethnography to simply capture a portrait of a society in crisis; instead, we were called to recognize and describe other temporal orientations. “Anticipation, expectation, speculation, potentiality, hope, and destiny – all represent differing depths of time and different, though often related, ways in which the future may orient our present” (Bryant and Knight 2019: 2).

This connects us with the second part of Petrović-Šteger’s paper. We share with her, first and foremost, an understanding of anthropology’s role and purpose, which is to problematize and include a reasoning of the future as part of ethnographic research. This means that when speaking of the future and not just of the past, a part of the reason can be found for why individuals and communities describe their present in a particular way. We also enter into this part of our commentary by closely following the idea that the times we live in necessitate consideration of the “problematic”, “critical”, and “anticipatory”, as Petrović-Šteger urges; and that it is necessary to find and bring attention to the potential for change. However, the sort of state-of-the-art nature of the introductory paper leaves some open questions such as with whom the author discusses, or rather how she sees, the tasks involved in the ethnographic research she proposes. Other open questions encompass problems such as who these visionaries are that she would like to include in her research and how the concepts of “transformation”, “possibility”, and “predictability” would be used in practice in this kind of research. This makes it difficult to imagine how the proposal relates to the concrete and the real. We will, therefore, allow ourselves an equally general, yet somewhat more radical position, concerning anthropology’s roles in researching the future. We will build on the paper we are responding to, but with less restraint and academic caution than exercised by Petrović-Šteger.

We believe that, in our work, it is important to (co)act as a “contemporary” (Agamben 2011), and to sometimes use academic activism to further those social issues we feel are crucial and which are not yet a part of the mainstream. We should then detect which of these are not being raised, are being avoided, or are uncomfortable (cf. Stewart 2013: 36 in Petrović-Šteger). Participating in such a debate means using an academic venue to resist connecting local anthropology to a temporal classification that denies the contemporaneity of the national subject of ethnography (cf. Pels 2015 for the colonial subject). Although we ourselves resist the traditional understanding of ethnography that places its subject in the past and views it conser-

vatively, even for us the future has often slipped out of focus. It was the introduction of the concept of “multi-temporality” (cf. Pels 2015: 788) that helped and enabled us to perceive emerging phenomena in our research. This, however, does not mean that we should ignore the narratives of an unusual and visceral present determined by the past and devoid of anticipation, and which, as Petrović-Šteger explains, has dominated the horizons of local ethnography. These narratives were indeed built around the notions of fatigue, impoverishment, dissatisfaction, frustration, challenges, powerlessness, helplessness, defeat, weakened and meaningless protests, and without ideas concerning change or the future. We primarily understand and interpret the narratives of the crises as the consequence of a period whose political, economic, and religious discourse has been both essentialized and disoriented. This is also a period that, due to an “imposed” fixation on the past or the present, has lost a dimension of a near future and has become exhausted by “imposed presentism” or “fantastic futurism” (Guyer 2009; Ringel 2018). Introducing multi-temporality and turning toward an anthropology of the future means, for the two of us, breaking with the anthropological understanding and thinking of the past as being intrinsic to the consideration of ways in which communities shape their lived, socio-cultural landscapes (see Appadurai 2004: 61). But it also means that we are calling for a continuation of advocacy for societal changes in the spirit of the humanities (such as many feminist anthropologists and researchers of, for example, globalization, migration, post-colonialism, etc. have been practicing in our own societies and academic cultures for a considerable period of time).

Sarah Pink and Juan Francisco Salazar have recently tried to show that the idea of the future is embodied in the present and how important it is for understanding the present moment of the subjects we research (Pink and Salazar 2017: 4). An examination of the place of the “future” in the discipline is presented in the “Futures Anthropologies Manifesto” (2017) and, in so doing, answers a key question for any discipline: What is its subject matter, and how should it be approached? The manifesto advocates for a concept of “the future” as a “new” subject in anthropology. But what are these “futures”, and what are they as envisioned by the manifesto? What is this new value presented in the manifesto, which suggests a different approach to the subject matter of anthropology? First and foremost, it’s not about one future, but rather many possible, different, plural, challenging, complex, controversial, unsure, accumulated “futures” that stand and could come along with others (ibid.). They are approached through intervention, multi-sensorially, performatively, materially, by questioning them and playing with them, by breaking down obstacles, confronting them, collaborating with other disciplines, and by a transnational and transdisciplinary hybridization of insights (ibid.). These futures are “emergent” and “indeterminate” (see Salazar et al. 2017), but we know that this future subject – the future as a subject – is, in a way, already here. It’s evolving, and the discipline needs to be open to the possibilities this subject brings. We know that “things futural” should be included in its analysis (Ringel 2020), and this refers to the deeds, actions, and ideas in the present that have an intention of capturing the period that comes next.

Maja Petrović-Šteger asks what it is that we can (and should) investigate today and in this space of ours and in our local, national, or regional ethnographies. She asks about things which “inform collective consciousness and possibilities for societal change”. She also shows how the subject should be handled. By exploring “alternative voices”, anthropological tools carve out a space of “alternative imaginariums” in the future of Serbia. A potential framework of hope, “a place of difference”, a space of possibilities, and socio-cultural changes are recorded. It inspires, influences, and essentially enables imagination. With these ideas, Petrović-Šteger moves closer to what is required in future anthropologies as laid out by Pink and Salazar (2017). However, she fails to explain whose alternative imaginaries these are, what they are like, what social changes are involved, or to whom this space of possibilities belongs. And, lastly and oddly, she completely avoids connecting her ideas with the construct of an “anthropology of the future”.

In the end, Pink and Salazar claim that a futural anthropology should be “more daring, open, and interventional”, descriptive, and analytical as well as critical, radical, and with “the capacity to engage” (Pink and Salazar 2017: 4). Similarly, Felix Ringel (2020: 364) would recently, correctly, observe that anthropologists “should take up the challenge of unpacking these futures”. This is why we do indeed believe that the form of research proposed by Petrović-Šteger on imagination, expectation, anticipation, and all things futural would be an exceptional contribution to local and regional ethnographies of the future(s). For the two of us, the final goal of such research is to establish a radical change in perspective for local anthropology, which, in place of the existing, assigned, completed, and traditional research subjects (and especially recreated national, religious, and neoliberal teleology that has become the new eschatology of post-Yugoslav ethnic elites), instead promotes, recognizes, names, and opens up space for a more just, solidary, and communal society (and anthropology). If we return to the initial concept of crisis, which has marked our societies for decades, this means it is necessary for us to include equally research into causes, experiences, and survival of crisis, *and* finding potential resolutions for these through action directed toward the future, both in the narratives of our interlocutors and in the writings we produce. Thus, by making an academic and activist’s plea for local anthropologies of the future, we would cease being an ethnography of crisis that simply provides confirmation of a status quo; we would instead become a discipline whose regional ethnographies of crisis would be committed to its own transformative potential.

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## Future-Snatchers and Their Tactics

Maja Petrović-Šteger seeks to describe “change that could not at once be captured by any corresponding advance in political, economic, or religious forms”. She argues that existing images of the region as precarious, flawed, and exhausted perpetuate the very condition they describe, and she chooses to follow her interlocutors’ “visioning” attempts to break free from such determinism “on the side of predictable”. Emergent practices of making a small change, she argues, are at once attempts at societal healing and a practical step that makes further difference. In this opening to the unknown, as it were, hers is a response to the calls to go beyond the limits of neoliberal critique and its “dark anthropology”, and move towards “an anthropology of the good” (Robbins 2013; Ortner 2016).

I concur that we should not limit our interpretative thinking with critiques of political economy. As I have argued elsewhere, people are aware of, participate in, and commit to the hegemonic frameworks they see as undoing, and it is only by recognizing the multiscalar nature of their demoralization that we can begin to image any new alternatives to the status quo (Rajković 2018). I also second Petrović-Šteger’s insight that the future is up for grabs in Serbia, despite the common narrative of being stuck. However, this is so for a plethora of actors, whose opposing visions latch onto one another. In this regard, I suggest that the zone of potentiality should be reconnected back to the political – not to control its potency, but to fully describe what is at stake in all emergent projects. Visionary reworlding is not outside of or opposed to politics; it is the very material of battles for hegemony.

Firstly, “the future” has a heavy modernist bent in post-Yugoslav space. Once a code for industrialisation, futurism is now an excuse for neoliberal modernity and its state violence. “We are not against progress”, was how the sister of a partisan hero, whose body was to be moved to make way for the reconstruction of the Kragujevac city square, had to justify herself. This was at the beginning of my first fieldwork in 2011, just before the city leaders dubbed the makeover of the Workers Colony into a shopping mall a “historical breakthrough”. And as the Serbian Progressive Party won power a year later, “progress” stories have been inscribed everywhere: GDP statistics, openings of railroads, constructions sites, hospitals. A recent commercial depicted those abstaining from elections as wanting to reset the clock to a political prehistory where dinosaurs roam. “But why would you want to be eaten by a dinosaur?” the commercial asked. “Don’t dwell in the past, vote for the future.”<sup>7</sup> To be a visionary is a must in today’s Serbia: both for the regime in power and all its opponents.

<sup>7</sup> “Nemojte ostati u prošlosti, glasajte za budućnost”, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IL-wUjcl87k> (accessed 16. 9. 2020).

So is the claim of being “outside” politics. Post-Yugoslav *antipolitika* emerged in the early 1990s as a critique of market reforms and multiparty politics and their shifty ways. By the 2000s, however, the trope of “normal people” condemning dirty politicking became unavoidable and, indeed, the hegemonic vocabulary of *all* social action (Jansen 2005; Helms 2007; Spasić and Birešev 2012). Social movements regularly need to profess they are “not being political” to claim any political efficacy at all. Even the president, Aleksandar Vučić, often claims that he is “not interested in politics at all, only in his job”, as if the popular authoritarian economism he is spouting is some kind of post-ideological truth. We must thus discern our interlocutors’ soothing rhetoric and its actual effects. Politics and anti-politics are not opposites, but mutually constitutive performative projects (Candea 2011).

Finally, the pathocentric accounts of the Serbian “collective mind” as immature, disunited, and flawed have been around for a while. But such Balkanist laments have recently been co-opted into popular neoliberal pedagogies that present a change of national character as at once an economic and a moral redemption (Rajković 2015). Consider Vučić’s praise of the Weberian Protestant work ethic as something that Serbs should aspire to: a narrative that reworks the popular litanies about “Serbian flaws” that have been around at least since Archibald Reiss’s (1928) manifesto *Écoutez Serbes!* Any narrative of collective mind, social healing, and mental change should thus be critically inspected in a wider historical trajectory for its relationship to ideology. Practices of self-responsibilisation might not be totalising, but they are always politically generative (Cook 2016). I would thus like the author to go beyond the hope/cynicism binary and describe how the potential and the predictable, the emergent and the inscribed, are continuously drawn together and apart.

I propose that potentiality is the blood of all politics. Future thinking, anticipation, and prefiguration do not happen in a vacuum of the few but instead comprise a “meaningful shared ground” in which all hegemonic and counter-hegemonic projects are fought, to use Roseberry’s (1994) formulation. Particularly in contexts understood as eschatological, I would argue, all social actors tend to anticipate what might come and to bring the future into the present and work with it, as it were. The unpredictable is constantly being foreseen, prepared for, capitalised on, or averted. In fact, in some contexts it is more accurate to speak about *snatching* the future in an agonistic setting in which the enemy constantly lurks over your future plans and seeks to intercept them. “Real production is unexpected and improbable”, argued Serres, “it overflows with information and is always immediately parasited” (Serres 1982: 4). It is with such parasitism in mind that I propose the idiom of future-snatching as central to debates about the future in Serbia. As my research into environmental insurgents shows, the notion of strategic thinking might help us to bridge the *vision* and the *fight* into a politically contextualised, yet still not deterministic, field of battle.

### Stealing the future

Petrović-Šteger mentions the “demographic disaster” in the background of her Serbian conversations. Indeed, the country’s emptying out has turned all politics into

population politics, bringing fears for intergenerational renewal into a burning issue. In an open letter titled “Whose is the future of Serbia?” – itself a pun on the ruling party election slogan – a group of professors from the University of Belgrade’s Faculty of Philosophy critiqued the arrest of student protesters as “a planned attack against society’s future”. The regime’s aim was to silence the unruly youth in order to, as they claimed, speed up Serbia’s immigration and the breakdown of the body social. “They are sending us a message that, once our most valued resource is exiled, only an empty country would remain with a self-proclaimed messiah roaming it, dispensing justice by decree” (Filozofski fakultet 2019). This is the credo of all political fractions in Serbia today: *the enemy is stealing our future*. A king on the rise, a country turning into a desert, a message to decipher, an asset under threat – such are the forms of eschatological reasoning in the making.

The nexus of immigration, generation, and future apocalypse is particularly salient among the Defenders of the Stara Planina Rivers, a loosely defined ecopopulist network that I have been following since 2018. Peasants, activists, scientists, and naturists militate against the development of small hydropower plants, a carbon-neutral technology that nevertheless induces violent “green grab”. Like Petrović-Šteger’s visionaries, the river defenders also borrow from the *longue durée*, pre-Yugoslav past to imagine future alternatives for mountain revival. They are not captured by either the left- or the right-wing scenes, but speak to the anxieties of both. The riverine “biological minimum”, for example, gets read as the harbinger of the “population minimum”, a systematic squeezing out of all life from the country. Trout and crabs get portrayed as the suffering companions of aging peasants, un(der)employed urbanites, and their (un)born children, inasmuch as they are all left to die out, voiceless and waterless. For this picture, the movement proclaims: first we defend the rivers, then we revive the mountains (Rajković 2020).

Petrović-Šteger argues that anthropological analysis “not only describes but also anticipates”. And so do our interlocutors, but often in an agonistic way. A common belief around the part of the Balkan Mountains in southeast Serbia, known locally as Stara Planina, for example, is that various state regimes in the past had urbanized the population to facilitate a water grab in the hinterlands. The real target, they claim, was not electricity but the drinking water and ore in the land. Local investors and their regime-patrons are seen as just puppets of arcane forces, including Chinese capital and EU banks. “The future wars will be cold”, one defender told me, situating the local conflicts within the coming “war for the water”. The moves in such a war are indirect, she said. “It is all like a game of *RisiKo!* – you have to anticipate the enemy’s future moves, just like he is anticipating yours.”

A proxy fight, enemies foreseeing each other’s moves – this evokes the notions of strategy and tactics, military terms that anthropology might draw upon as it studies people’s stances on the coming future. As Latour argues, Anthropocene is, first of all, a state of war declared at a time when the very grounds of modernisation are falling apart. In this regard, the primary question of our time becomes which land to inhabit, and with whom to share it (Latour 2018). Such a stance is shared by the investors and



the eco-resistance connected to Stara Planina, as they both are moved by the questions: What will happen when the cities become uninhabitable? Who will be able to live in the mountains? What are the new abodes of value to discover? Strategies and tactical thinking determine everything in the struggle – from deciding which groups to spotlight and what messages to spin on Facebook, to deciding what to select as the new frontier of struggle – lest the other side gets there before you. In this hunt, the future is not endless to reveal; it is more of a Second Coming, able to save the few.

Neither is that vision always clear. At the outset, the struggle for rivers started as an alliance of actors most directly affected and further generalised into “all who love rivers” as the “source of life”. But this alliance was shot through with many speculative interests all along: a potential to build an ecotourist business on one’s grandparents’ land, room to develop one’s green advocacy CV, a chance to get into the local government. By 2020, stories of lucrative profiteering were so common that they divided the movement, which saw itself both as having achieved a small victory (the powerplants being temporarily called off) and facing a new challenge of a tourism boom. Questions arose: Who will now build on the mountains? Was this the aim all along? Who was the fight really serving? Former comrades disbelieved one another; self-doubt poured in where conviction once stood.

This is the fate of visionaries: one does not always know for whom they are fighting or how their vision will play out in the end. One day, you have an epiphany; another day, you realise you are singing someone else’s tune. The vision and the murk blur since you are never the only one trying to seize the future.

Potential is a mine, and everybody’s digging.

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## Transformative Futures: Visionary Force in a Non-Visionary Era

The future is a tricky issue. By definition, it does not exist. Or rather, as Ernst Bloch (1986 [1959]) underlined in his seminal work *The Principle of Hope*, it only ever does exist as “not-yet”. For a determinist Marxist like Bloch, the “not-yet” was understood as such: he thought he and others could actually predict what is to come and align their thought and representation with this “real” future. We have, I presume, lost this certainty, this ideological luxury of the modern era. Today, all we are left with are the vague hopes for something better – forms of “fantasy futurism”, as Jane Guyer (2007) fortuitously put it.

For that reason, it is more or less anyone’s guess what the future will look like in any given present. That’s its beauty and appeal: its malleability and unpredictability.

That the anthropologist, as any other analyst, is similarly not in a position to predict the future, should not prevent her from entering the conversations her interlocutors have about the future. And the future is, indeed, talked about everywhere, all the time, in all kinds of forms, manners and disguises. That is the other beauty of the future: its overwhelming omnipresence. Once you look for it, you cannot un-see it. But in our times, it is not the real future as such that anthropologists have recently stumbled across. Rather, different ideas, affects and objects of a particular present are given a temporal character that makes them “of the future” by the people whose lives we have the privilege to study. If you think about it, it is really an astonishing mental operation that is deployed in very different contexts very differently. It is not misleading to say that out of all temporal dimensions, human beings spend most energy on the future.

With all her curiosity and intellectual rigour, Maja Petrović-Šteger enters what is by now a well-established area of inquiry in anthropology, and yet manages to offer a new and surprising perspective to the anthropology of the future. At the heart of her provocative piece is a more general question: What is predictable for an anthropologist? I would usually respond to this with another question: If we were able to predict the future, when and why would that be helpful in our analysis? However, that would miss the point Petrović-Šteger is making. Her own search for what she calls “alternative scenarios”, i.e. a different future than the negative one so commonly predicted is deeply embedded in her Serbian informants’ quest for a new vision for their individual yet, importantly, also their collective futures. Visioning – the potentially forceful production of visions of the future – is Petrović-Šteger’s focus and analytical contribution. What she wants to explore is exactly this force particular notions of, and relationships to, the future can acquire. Although their actual effects might only ever be determined retrospectively, it is still important to determine why and how certain representations of the future gain the quality of being “visionary” in any given present.

Conceptual taxonomies are at the core of the subdiscipline and of the anthropology of time in general. First approaches to anthropological studies of the future started with everyday phenomena such as hope (for example, Miyazaki 2004), and were soon encouraged by a much broader interdisciplinary interest in the study of affects. Scholars from different disciplines explored many other affects and their inherent future and more generally temporal logics. Meanwhile, more explicit relations to the future, such as in practices of planning (Abram and Weszkalnys 2013), also shifted our understanding of human existence in time towards an acknowledgment of the diversity with which human beings relate to the future. In my own work (Ringel 2018), I have mapped these different presentational and non-presentational relations to the future in a context not too different from Petrović-Šteger’s: a post-socialist, postindustrial shrinking city in East Germany. In this ethnography, I further develop Jane Guyer’s (2007) invaluable conceptual toolkit of “near” and “distant” futures, “enforced presentism”, etc. Recently, Bryant and Knight (2019) have focused even more explicitly on the different modes of relating to the future, dedicating single chapters to anticipation, expectation, speculation and so on.

What makes Petrović-Šteger's idea of visioning so intriguing is that I am not sure yet on which side of the ideal-typical divide it falls: Is it an intuitive, unreflected, unconscious and affective way of relating to and "doing" the future or a well-established, concrete, detailed representation of an alternative future? Or both at different points in time? Here is where her Batesonian approach becomes most interesting: Indeed, how do these relations to the future emerge and gain political, social and imaginative force? And how can their emergence and spread be traced and tracked (no pun intended)? In fact, how do they come by in the first place against all odds, when, as she underlines, the recent pasts seem to stand so much in their way? Now these questions seem to go beyond what is usually approached as matters of temporal agency – a form of agency that can tell us so much about human relations to the future (Ringel and Moroşanu 2016; Flaherty, Meinert and Dâlsgard 2020), and allow new takes on the conceptualisation of the politics of time and the future.

Initially, I was sceptical about the idea of using visions as an analytical array into futurity. As a German Chancellor once famously stated: "Whoever has visions should go see a doctor!"<sup>8</sup> However, the more I think about it, the more I can relate to Petrović-Šteger's engaged approach. Inspired by affect theorists like Kathleen Stewart (2007), I can see how she wants to attend to what is actually happening "on the side of predictable": something that gives a glimpse of the future in its state of potentiality, that is geared towards the future without assurance, but that at the same time is leaning towards the predictable and is gathering form and force. These unstable, increasingly felt and formulated relations to the future are a promising start. Their initially "inchoate" (cf. Carrithers 2007), opaque, indistinct, seemingly even supernatural form and force, however, are not only telling with regards to the future they aspire to, but also with regards to the present in which they occur.

My own presentist approach to time does something similar: For me, the anthropology of the future is never technically about the actual future-to-be, but it is always about the present in which these futures are articulated.<sup>9</sup> The present (and its many futures) I was studying in an East German city was not too dissimilar from the Serbian futures Petrović-Šteger explores. Visions of my fieldsite's future were only ever bleak. The city was predicted to shrink further, and amidst all the predictions of doom and gloom, many of its inhabitants would have agreed that their city had lost all hope and all futures. But in this context, too, many of my interlocutors were demanding new visions for the city's future. They wanted concrete plans and inspiring leadership. But if I am not wrong, these modern versions of visions are not entirely what Petrović-Šteger is after. Rather, her ethnographic focus is directed at a modality of relating to and also studying the future that looks at shifts in what she calls collective mindsets – intimations of what might not have shown its real effects, yet qualifies as visionary nonetheless. Her eyes are on the actual, even if subsequent, societal transformations and their conditions of possibility that allow the emergence of these alternative scenarios in the first place.

<sup>8</sup> Helmut Schmidt: "Wer Visionen hat, sollte zum Arzt gehen."

<sup>9</sup> Incidentally, the same can be said about the past, with a few fine adjustments.

In my own ethnographic context, one of the conditions for a different relationship to the future involved taking a detour of sorts, something that I think Petrović-Šteger could also consider: Many of my informants, too, lacked the language and sometimes even the capacity to think of or desire a different future. If at all, they thought, things would only ever get worse, not better. Those in power, while potentially less corrupt than in Serbia, were also not providing any conceptual tools or actual ideational substance to envision the postindustrial future beyond the city's current demographic, social and economic decline. My interlocutors' socialist-modernist past had lost its ideological weight; their more recent postsocialist past was only associated with right-wing violence and urban demise. However, rather than getting entangled in widespread problematisations of the future, many of my friends from the field first had to engage in what I can only describe as a deproblematisation of their city's existence in time – its past, present and future.

There is a luxury – another one, this time – in our own crisis-ridden era in not having to think about the future too much: being at ease with oneself in the present and fencing off the legacies of the past. For some, this form of futurity, or lack thereof, at first glance seems highly unpolitical. However, I wonder whether these are the futures that some of Petrović-Šteger's informants are also looking for. If created in the present, would they count as visionary? Or would they be seen as being devoid of politics and transformative force?

# REPLY

## Maja Petrović-Šteger

I thank all my discussants for their commentaries. They engaged with the position paper in the most collegial, open-minded way. It was a delight to learn how much our work shares and how our fieldwork experiences – if not always our interpretations – echo each other.

In the initial paper, my main caution was against anthropologists being overhasty in characterising the mediators of socio-historical change. The suggestion was that, when documenting a society's travails, along with the changes it attempts to undergo, we should stay or "tarry with" the imaginary and not appropriate it too quickly for the language of the political. This is a point I would make in general, but it holds particularly for ethnographers of Serbia, which is a society too often read through politicized assumptions. The political as a mode of analysis enjoys a certain representational hegemony over Serbian life, both for Serbian citizens and their observers. This is in itself a good reason to resist it. Readings of Serbia that pivot on its everyday politics tend to further construct its temporality in a predetermined manner. The effect of these political readings is to stabilize Serbia as essentially post-socialist and post-conflict. An anthropologist concerned with the region's potential for change, my paper suggested, might valuably supplement her attention (to what emerges in the political sphere) with an interest in ideas and "visions", as these inform collective consciousness in ways that are not evidently political. The paper proposed an ethnography of the visionary and of "visioning" in Serbia as a corrective to stereotypical representations of the country as archaic, depleted and doomed to conflict. It sought to orient itself not just to what the public sphere – the formally "political" – does not know, but also to what anthropology, and in particular the committed anthropologist, does not know either. Studying how certain modes of imagining the self, the good and time align people with a social world provides an opportunity to reflect on assumption-making practices as they relate both to Serbs and to those observing them, the anthropologists.

My reading of the commentators' responses is that they are not entirely comfortable with this project. My response will try to identify the main points of difference.

### Making the imaginary matter

I am guessing that all the contributors would agree there are no such things as neutral ethnographic data or impartial analysis. Ethnographic experience influences the

direction of analysis. Furthermore, how an anthropologist gathers data and composes ethnographies reflects her (or his) values. The “what” of our data comes after the “how” of our information collection to such a degree that our observations and conclusions are sometimes no more than a function of our biases and exclusions.

My research is about Serbia. But let us try, if we can, to decouple the signifier “Serbia” and its din from a theoretical position intended to have broader currency. Serbian politics (even in its conflicts), as many of my discussants will agree, has the effect of invalidating any appeal to anything beyond politics to the extent that its interpreters could be wary of that call and could find the concept of the “non-political” – and even that of “the future” – rather vacuous. Confronting this cynicism might, in turn, motivate an interest in the visionary or imaginative as such. Just because Serbia is perceived as being deeply politicized in its self-understanding and representations does not restrict the researcher to these aspects of its social life. As ethnographers we should be especially careful that our articulations of our subjects’ practices are not reduced to our commentary on their political affiliations and the state’s party politics. Anyway, the issue is not with whether (that is, whether or not) the concepts and practices we describe are political, but with the “modalities” (see Greenberg) by which the pre-political connects to political and public life.

Evidently, everyday national (and international) politics has an enormous impact on Serbs’ wellbeing (which has been a focus of my previous ethnographic work). At the same time, as Greenberg and Potkonjak and Škokić agree, the political as a medium of genuine change seems to many people as hollowed out. Whether considering the past, present or future, people often regard formal politics (i.e., government, formal institutions of power, the frenzied media coverage of party politics, a state of emergency and its normalization) not only ineffective but perfidious.<sup>10</sup> The “political” to my informants does not seem to be an adequate designator of a range of other experiences (and hopes) that are vital in their lives and which join up with larger interpersonal, social and natural systems. Furthermore, the ethnographic work underpinning my position paper’s theory is not about critics of the government. It focuses rather on individuals and collectives concerned with renewing their personal and societal resources in a different way altogether.

Here in fact may be a difference between me and the commentators in terms of whom we study. Rajković investigates river guardians and power plant workers in the Balkan Mountains in Southeast Serbia, whose imaginations and daily political actions are necessarily entangled. Greenberg studies pro-democracy activists in Serbia whose criticism of the everyday political, as she correctly says, may be both consequent upon and formative of political conditions. Ringel follows how the citizens of post-socialist Hoyerswerda, the fastest-shrinking German city, relate to the future. Potkonjak and Škokić take up the relationship to work, time and creativity of the residents of postindustrial Sisak in Croatia. The political valence of my informants’ envisioning (e.g. creating a national network of orphanages with the best, elite teachers in the country; educating people about history by taking them on tours of under-

<sup>10</sup> I am not ruling out there being some genuinely transformative politicians in Serbia, but I have yet to meet them.



ground infrastructure and catacombs; creating unusual libraries of herbal medicine, and thus rethinking environmental taxonomies; connecting Orthodox sacred music with health, etc.) is more thoroughly indeterminate. The question for me of what critical work the imaginative and the visionary can do may be more genuinely open.

How the emergent emerges has to do with how the political is constituted in its recognition. This is a “vernacular institutionalization”, to use Greenberg’s term, or a popularization that depends on a shared “hermeneutics”. I agree with her when she writes that “social change requires [...] willing creative expression into being in ways that are sustainable but also translatable across modalities of politics, economy, society, and governance”. Yet may I remind my readers that none of my interlocutors claim to be apolitical? They profess political leanings, seek autonomy, have economic relations and, just by dint of their profession or activism, form part of various institutions and networks. They have jobs and are positioned economically. Their social, intellectual and (if they are lucky!) financial capital means they have to grant the force of ideological and political endowments in their lives. However, all of them feel that systemic politics has come to impoverish them. It holds them too tightly and constrains their vision. In consequence, they have started to consciously avoid framing their criticism, actions and any statement of their desires by using an untrustworthy political syntax. Their conception of the political is of a machine that grinds down whatever is fed into it and then spits it out. They do not anticipate being “redeemed” by the political (or by a politicised version of the eschatological), and instead envision a parallel system of thinking and acting.

My commentators seem to take these attestations of the imaginary, which try to take place parallel to the political, in different ways. For Rajković, it might be a ruse: a disavowal of the “fight” in order to battle more adeptly. For Greenberg, it might, too, be a tacit “work of politics”, interpretable as such at certain junctures. Ringel might urge that however “intuitive” or “affective” the vision, it will have political engagements in the present.<sup>11</sup> Certainly, I do not see my work as an attempted rebuttal of scholars urging a throughgoing political anthropology of Serbia (or its present). My claim is not that the political is shorn of imagination (for instance, being nothing more than horse-trading), nor is it that the imagined is free of political content. Rather, following my interlocutors in some of their moments, I do not regard the political (or the economic or religious) as a domain exclusively capable of creating and effecting social transformation. My ethnographic work has sharpened my interest in how the political in our lived cultures and shared time is made to matter and to be palpable or sensibly real. Everyone, including ethnographers, seems to see “politics” everywhere. Almost any network of practices with an institutional structure will fall into that category *qua* object of analysis. Yet what is the sense of calling politics “real” but other faculties of mind and societal practices “less real”? Who arbitrates the real in our shared realities?

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<sup>11</sup> Although I am otherwise inspired by the work of Kathleen Stewart, as Ringel supposes, in this text and research I am attempting to be in dialogue with Charles Stewart’s excellent work on historical consciousness and dreaming (see Palmié and Stewart 2016 and Stewart 2017).

This is a larger anthropological question connected to how categories carve the world. In their attempt to be ever more secular and objective, ethnographers seem to be habitually chary of attributing facticity and social effect to the imaginary (see, for example, Potkonjak and Škokić). The issues here are of threshold conditions (similar to the earlier concern with the modalities of making the political commensurable with the non-political). When does visioning become visible enough to become analyzable? This is a question characterising both our objects of analysis and our attention itself. It is easy to be drawn to objects after they have appeared and to movements or expressions of opinion after they have manifested themselves. But in what forms were they inchoate? And might we have seen them earlier? How do certain imaginative relationships to the future emerge and gain social recognition in the first place? Who is a “visionary”?

In documenting alternative social scenarios vouched for by “visions”, this work does not put forward a study of otherworldly fantasies. It is concerned with worldly strategies tied to historically specific ideas, acts and people. I am talking about plans for a “near” future, not about the wishful phantasmagoria of people with no country left but the imagination. My visionaries’ visions entail pragmatic interventions into the social fabric, even when they have features preventing them from being readily shared and (sometimes) understood. The project, within anthropology, of approaching the imaginary as potentially history-making rather than only projective is certainly not new (Alatas 2019). One such effort has been to account for a certain epistemological and ontological privileging of the imaginary (say, in visions and dreams) in everyday life (Taneja 2018; also Tedlock 1987; Mittermaier 2011; Stewart 2017). Studies have also reflected how perceiver-dependent realities structure social situations insofar as agents have the power to bring a shared material reality into correspondence with their visions (West 2008).

My current research features architects, herbalists, philosophers, archaeologists and others who want to contribute to what they imagine is the social good. Unlike Potkonjak and Škokić, though, whether or not I am their “contemporary”, I am not their “co-actor”. It is not clear to me what social impact my interlocutors will have. My impulse, too, is to resist the premature “coding” of their ideas and actions politically (which typically means in terms of moral partisanship). Rajković is correct that the future does not emerge “deterministically”, even if it always comes out of a given “context”. But it is not reasonable to measure the effectiveness of visions in terms of their political success or failure. In this sense, they are not concerned with “battles for hegemony” or to “snatch” or commandeer the future; they are not immediately partisan and would be resistant to any implicit gendering of struggle (see Rajković). If anything, my interlocutors seem to be very careful about not seeking to validate their visions in political terms. The visions seem to be about finding sustenance and not about competing for visibility, resources or power-broking.

Bateson wrote in 1972:

They say that power corrupts; but this, I suspect, is nonsense. What is true is that the *idea of power* corrupts. Power corrupts most rapidly those who believe in it, and it is they who will want it most. (Bateson 2000 [1972]: 494)

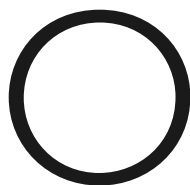
My respondents shun wire-pulling and are not interested in their visions displacing those of others. I thus understand the visionary as requiring subjects to step out of routines of predictable responses and regimes of shared imaginaries. Unlike political commentators, these visionaries do not attempt to soothe worries by calculating the effect of one thing on another. Unlike many ethnographers, they do not work just with the known (objects, people, things, beliefs), but with what is partially known, unknown and only incipiently realised. There is a value in anthropologists holding back from trying to make their interlocutors' practices immediately intelligible, say by sequencing their operations artificially or classifying them under given categories (of "political", "economic", etc.) and jumping to conclusions about their sustainability. We would do better to take away from anthropology the idea that the future is entirely unpredictable and unknown. To quote Gregory Bateson yet again:

Not only can we not predict into the next instant of the future, but, more profoundly, we cannot predict into the next dimension of the microscopic, the astronomically distant, or the geologically ancient. As a method of perception – and that is all science can claim to be – science [...] is limited in its ability to collect the outward and visible signs of whatever may be truth. *Science probes; it does not prove.* (Bateson 2002 [1979]: 27)

Anthropology aims to be both time-bound and timeless in describing what is of real importance in the societies we study and how they make sense of themselves. What is probable, possible and impossible are socially marked, and the markers and terms by which one moves into the other shift. This happens through hard-to-detect forms of agency in making the imaginary matter.

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When the editorial board of *Etnološka tribina* invited me to contribute a text, I did not anticipate the richness of the debate that would follow. I am indebted to all the editors for their close reading of the text, but especially to the editor-in-chief, Petra Kelemen, for her professionalism and the warmth with which she has coordinated these exchanges. In writing this paper, I benefited greatly from reviewers' and discussants' comments and encouragement. Financial support from the Slovenian Research Agency (ARRS, research core funding no. 18930) enabled me to carry out the research.



# ONOME ŠTO PREDVIDLJIVO NE OBUHVAĆA

## Zamišljanje budućnosti u Srbiji

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Da bi mogli kontekstualizirati i razumjeti društvene svjetove, antropolozi pomno promatraju. Promatramo kako se pojedinci i zajednice odnose jedni prema drugima i prema svojim idejama. Proučavam intimno i subjektivno, kao i kozmologije velikih razmjera pomoću kojih ljudi ostvaruju sebe i svijet. Naše participativne metode i reflektivne analize dokumentiraju kompleksne, zamršene, uobličene, ali i nasumične aspekte ljudskog razmišljanja i djelovanja. U antropologiji takve aktivnosti nude ne samo kritičke opise sadašnjosti (na njihovim povijesnim putanjama) već i moguće nagovještaje budućnosti nekog društva. Drugim riječima, antropološka analiza ne samo da opisuje nego i predviđa. Ovaj rad razmatra ideje predviđanja, procjenjivanja i mogućnosti u antropologiji. Propituje koje su metodološke i teorijske pretpostavke ugrađene u antropološke načine predviđanja, odnosno opisa i posljedne analize naših terena. Istražuje kakve učinke imaju prakse anticipacije, kako na ljude i fenomene koje proučavamo tako i na disciplinu. U središtu rada su prijedlozi različitih načina pristupanja vizijama koje predviđaju budućnost. Reflektirajući o svojim etnografskim i analitičkim putovanjima po Srbiji, nastojim pojasniti zašto sam trenutačno posvećena pitanjima predvidljivosti i mogućnosti i na terenu i u disciplini. Želja mi je potaknuti raspravu o vrijednosti pažnje usmjerene na ono što predvidljivošću ne možemo obuhvatiti.

**Ključne riječi:** društveno samorazumijevanje, društvene transformacije, vizionari, predviđanje budućnosti, teorijske pretpostavke, Srbija

*Vrijednost je društvene znanosti u njezinu postavljanju pitanja o onome što se čini nezamislivim, onom nastajućem, u tijeku i još neviđenom.*  
(Stewart 2013: 36)

Uvijek me zanimalo kako ljudi pristupaju vremenu – kako utjelovljuju i promišljaju svoju prošlost i sadašnjost i što očekuju od budućnosti.<sup>1</sup> Moj antropološki rad, među ostalim, istražuje razne dimenzije nepredvidljivog razvoja srpskog društva nakon ratova devedesetih godina 20. stoljeća.<sup>2</sup> Godine 2002. počela sam istraživati

<sup>1</sup> Prevoditeljica Mirna Herman Baletić prevela je tekst koji sam izvorno napisala na engleskom jeziku. Ovim putem zahvaljujem joj za prijevod. U tekstu sam napravila minimalne dodatne izmjene.

<sup>2</sup> Gotovo svi fenomeni koje sam etnografski istraživala locirani su u Srbiji. No, provodila sam i opsežna komparativna antropološka istraživanja u Tasmaniji i Švicarskoj te kraće etnografije u Sloveniji i Indiji.

niz materijalnih praksi, narativnih strategija i politiku pomirbe u poslijeratnoj Srbiji, konstruiranu oko posmrtnih ostataka nestalih. Suradivala sam s kritičarima konflikta na području bivše Jugoslavije, žrtvama, rodbinom nestalih, počiniteljima zločina, ratnim profiterima te brojnim drugim osobama koje su se smatrale pukim promatračima. Tijekom tog istraživanja mnogobrojni su sugovornici izrazili osjećaj nelagode zbog toga što su i godinama nakon ratova još uvijek bili izrazito emocionalno opterećeni konfliktima i njihovim posljedicama. Nastojala sam razumjeti ono što obično nazivamo “postkonfliktnim” iskustvom i preispitati taj koncept, razdvajajući ga od njegovih vremenskih i ideoloških pretpostavki. Drugi su istraživački projekti u Srbiji uključivali opise “medikalizacije” postkonfliktnog društva, etnografije mentalnog zdravlja, paranoje i tzv. neokortikalne obrane, etnografije rijeka i vodnih resursa te studije suvremenog društvenog poduzetništva (Petrović-Šteger [s. a.], 2006, 2009, 2013, 2016a, 2016b, 2018, 2020).

Materijal prikupljan tijekom osamnaest godina zabilježio je prizore i procese, narative i prakse pomoću kojih su moji sugovornici razumijevali svoja intimna i kolektivna iskustva u teškim vremenima. Brojni intervjui i promatranja oslikavali su koliko je srpsko društvo opterećeno prizorima iscrpljenosti, siromaštva, otpora i frustracije, ali istovremeno i poticano kreativnošću i ambicijom. Čak i danas mnogi u Srbiji i izvan nje smatraju da je zemlja, kao i cijela regija, duboko traumatizirana. Moji sugovornici žale se na izmorenost ne samo zbog ratova koji su se vodili 1990-ih te njihovih ekonomskih i psiholoških posljedica već i zbog “političke i mentalne ekologije” današnje Srbije. Mnogi vlastito materijalno i fizičko okruženje opisuje kao nečisto, ustajalo, pa i podmuklo. Tvrde da žive u strukturno kompromitiranoj državi kojom upravlja samodostatna i samodopadna klika koja nagrađuje stranačku pripadnost nauštrb sposobnosti i samouvjerenost nauštrb stručnosti. Ti sugovornici imaju osjećaj da su ugnjetavani od strane političkih i ekonomskih lidera, koje opisuju despotskim i predatorskim. Svakodnevni razgovori prožeti su ironijom, cinizmom, osjećajem poniženja i nedostatkom nade (Petrović-Šteger 2013, 2016a, 2020; također Petrović, T. 2015; Rajković 2018).

Tijekom proteklih šest godina svjedočila sam situacijama i razgovorima koji još intenzivnije prikazuju koliko mučno moji sugovornici doživljavaju stanje u kojem se nalazi njihovo društvo. Predugo ranjavani, često preispituju svoje samopoštovanje i ambicije, kao i osjećaj otuđenosti prema državi u kojoj žive. Dio ljudi s kojima radim zaista se doima duboko utučenim. Ne nalaze načina kako razriješiti osjećaj sistemske isključenosti i diskriminacije jer se čini da se takvi oblici društvenog funkcioniranja stalno mijenjaju. Neki su utišali svoje političke stavove i povukli se u privatne živote. Drugi se žale da život u sve korumpiranijoj državi posljedično stvara svojevrsni samoprijezir. Ti su sugovornici u isto vrijeme opterećeni posljedicama izostanka samopouzdanja i samoprijekora, a posebno njihovim učinkom na mlađe generacije. Moglo bi se reći da treća grupa odbija pregovarati i protestira. Stotine tisuća ljudi od 2016. godine izlaze na ulice prosvjedovati protiv Aleksandra Vučića (izabranog za premijera 2014. godine i za predsjednika 2017. godine) i njegove političke i ideo-

loške strukture, čiju autoritarnu vlast mnogi smatraju uzrokom trenutne društvene, političke, moralne i ekonomske malaksalosti.<sup>3</sup>

Usto, Srbija je suočena s onim što mediji nazivaju demografskom katastrofom. Mnogobrojne studije svjedoče da je broj stanovnika od raspada Jugoslavije opao za 8,42% (sa statistikom koja bilježi više umrlih nego živorođenih; v. Judah 2019). Očekuje se da će Srbija, u kojoj živi 6,96 milijuna stanovnika (bez Kosova), do 2050. godine izgubiti gotovo četvrtinu stanovništva zbog emigracije mladih i obrazovanih u potrazi za radnim mjestima. Čak i dobro situirani i relativno etabrirani ljudi, koji su preživjeli ratove i desetljeća neimaštine i političkog beznađa koja su uslijedila, sada traže način da napuste svoje domove, umorni i zasićeni režimom na vlasti. Što očekivati od ljudi koji se nalaze u stanju neprekidnog poniženja i (samo)zavaravanja?

## Pretpostavke

Ne samo moji sugovornici već i medijski i politički diskurs često opisuju Srbiju kao zemlju osuđenu na propast. Glavna pretpostavka takve prognoze je da država još uvijek funkcionira u okvirima specifičnog vremenskog – (post)konfliktnog – režima te u razdoblju krize ili prekarnosti. Znanstveni interes za Srbiju, unatoč određenim pomacima u proteklom desetljeću, ponajprije je bio usmjeren na “simboličku geografiju” regije (Todorova 1997) koja se izražava kroz tranzicije iz socijalizma u postsocijalizam, iz jugoslavenskog u postjugoslavensko te iz konfliktnog u postkonfliktno.<sup>4</sup> Regija je u znanstvenoj literaturi, medijima i popularnoj kulturi dominantno, čak i stereotipno, predstavljena kao svojevrsno bure baruta koje u svakom trenutku može eksplodirati (za kritički osvrt v. Todorova 1997; Burawoy i Verdery 1999; Bjelić i Savić 2001; Dunn i Verdery 2011; Dzenovska i Kurtović 2018).

Ideje o društvenom koje se oslanjaju uglavnom na političko, ekonomsko i religijsko proizlaze iz specifičnih pretpostavki o tome kako se svijet stvara. Kao takve zasigurno mogu uroditi neprocjenjivim saznanjima. No one su također sklone tome da objedinjuju uobičajene načine promatranja, katkada zarobljavajući subjekte proučavanja u stereotipne i predvidljive obrasce. Pretpostavke o pojedincima, društvima i

<sup>3</sup> Mnogi prosvjednici doduše smatraju da je njihov napor uzaludan s obzirom na to da izgleda da srpski predsjednik uživa potporu Europske unije kao i drugih svjetskih političara. Iako ga velik broj građana Srbije doživljava kao zastrešujućeg autokrata, Europska unija i drugi političari hvale ga kao primarnog nositelja stabilnosti u regiji.

<sup>4</sup> Klasična antropološka i društvenoznanstvena analiza Srbije i općenito Balkana i dalje se usmjerava ili na socijalističku prošlost tih država ili na posljedice konflikata u regiji tijekom 1990-ih. Ti se regionalni pristupi produktivno povezuju sa studijama identiteta, nostalgije, konflikta, postsocijalizma, nacionalizma, kolonijalizma, tranzicijske pravde itd. (Čolović 2002; Bjelić i Savić 2002; Đerić 2006; Jansen 2000, 2009, 2014; Dawson 2009; Naumović 2009; Greenberg 2011, 2014; Petrović, T. 2010; Longinović 2011; Živković 2011; Jašarević 2012, 2015; Gordy 2013; Banović 2016; Jovanović 2016; Brković 2017; Bošković 2017; Jelača, Kolanović i Lugarić 2017; Rajković 2018; Gregorić Bon 2019). Međutim, i strani promatrači i lokalni komentatori jugoistočnu Europu, a posebice Srbiju, opisuju kao izrazito obilježenu ratom, krizom i sukobima. Takve konstrukcije imaju specifične i vrlo ozbiljne teorijske i političke posljedice, omogućujući razumijevanja regije koja je “balkaniziraju”, “orijentaliziraju”, “egzotiziraju”, i “čine drugim” ili “čine da sama sebe čini drugim” (Bakić-Hayden 1995; Hayden 1996, 2014; Goldsworthy 1998; Liotta 2005; Đerić 2006; Kiossev 2010; Stojanović 2010; Obad 2013 samo su neki od radova koji kritiziraju takvu tendenciju).



regijama koje se temelje isključivo na tim modelima analize izobličavaju ih. Usto, na taj se način vrši idejno, narativno i reprezentacijsko upravljanje etnografskim materijalom, čak i kada za cilj ima analizu.

Valja razmisliti koliko takva analiza može djelovati prisilno na terenu gdje su mnogi ionako demoralizirani zbog svoje izrazito politizirane prošlosti. Isti ti ljudi zabrinuti su da im je i budućnost – u političkom, ekonomskom i moralnom smislu – predodređena. Da im je oteta, odnosno unaprijed utvrđena, kako lokalnim tako i međunarodnim očekivanjima onih koji kroje politike.

Doista, ako se prošlost – ona nacionalna – doživljava narušenom, a sadašnjost oskudnom i ponižavajućom, kako se onda promišlja budućnost i kako se postupa u odnosu na takva zamišljanja? Shvativši s kakvim se frustracijama moji sugovornici nose, a kako ipak različito pripovijedaju o vremenu u kojem žive, odlučila sam da se etnografski namjerno odmaknem od dominantnih tema političkog i ekonomskog beznađa te opisa društvenog samourušavanja. Pažnju sam usmjerila na pokušaje preobrazbe individualnih i kolektivnih iskustava građana u Srbiji. Pitala sam se što mi je dosad sve promaklo. Što kodirane pretpostavke antropoloških etnografskih i analitičkih alatki nisu zamijetile? Tako sam u sklopu komparativnog antropološkog projekta koji sam osmislila i vodila od 2016. do 2019. godine istraživala praktične, ideološke i emocionalne angažmane ljudi koji tvrde da budućnost Srbije možda možemo drugačije zamišljati. Istraživački tim usredotočio se na društvene poduzetnike u Srbiji, Albaniji i Sloveniji. Razmatrali smo samoprezentaciju društvenih poduzetnika (kao i onih koji ih promatraju i kritiziraju), njihovu sposobnost da aktivno i sadržajno reagiraju na ideju da vrijeme u kojem djeluju iziskuje hitno, pragmatično i stvarno restrukturiranje društva. Istraživanje je doprinijelo proučavanju koncepta očekivanja, osvjetlivši pritom upotrebu ideja nade, neuspjeha, sumnje i uvjerenja, s obzirom na to da ta stanja i pretpostavke oblikuju prakse planiranja budućnosti društvenih poduzetnika u jugoistočnoj Europi (Gregorič Bon 2018; Kozorog 2018; Petrović-Šteger 2018, 2020; Šimenc 2018; Vodopivec 2018).

Važan zaključak vezan uz Srbiju bio je da, kada govori o svojim idejama o budućnosti, određeni broj društvenih poduzetnika i drugih sugovornika odstupa od tipičnog idioma prekarnosti (čak i kada govore o posljedicama života u nestalnim vremenima) te umjesto toga govori o “dobru”, “brizi za društvo”, “jasnosti”, “viziji” i “zacjeljenju”. Artikulacija i prakse nekih od mojih sugovornika navele su me da o njima razmišljam kao da su u potrazi ne samo za ekonomskom već i za drugim vrstama društvene (i duhovne) transformacije. Riječ je bila o promjeni koju sličan napredak u političkom, ekonomskom ili religijskom smislu jednostavno ne obuhvaća.

Drugi neočekivani zaključak ticao se toga da ljudi s najjasnijim kratkoročnim planovima žele napustiti Srbiju. Ti su sugovornici promjenu zamišljali u vremenskom okviru imedijatizma (“odmah!”) i revolucionarnog, prije svega političkog obrata. Oni sugovornici koje su animale dublje društvene promjene i koji žele ostati u Srbiji, međutim, iskazali su podjednaki interes za budućnost i prošlost Srbije (i to prošlost koja je prethodila devedesetim godinama 20. stoljeća, pa čak i socijalističkom razdoblju). Mnogi su izrazili želju za boljim razumijevanjem vlastite kulturne psihe

i društvenih obrazaca. Iskazali su potrebu za oživljavanjem sjećanja i znanja prethodnih generacija kako bi mogli nanovo preoblikovati “kolektivnu svijest u Srbiji”. U slučajevima koje sam zabilježila sugovornici “prošlost” nisu prizivali sa svrhom objašnjavanja ili potvrđivanja svojih uobičajenih praksi, već kao način učenja, razumijevanja i potencijalnog samoobnavljanja. Njihove vizije budućnosti često nastaju iz gledišta, zamišljene ili odabrane, prošlosti (v. Petrović-Šteger 2018, 2020).

Tvrdim da su takve prakse zamišljanja alternativnih društvenih scenarija od ključne važnosti<sup>5</sup> jer su neuobičajeno udaljene od *mainstream* razmišljanja u kojem se sadašnjost tumači kao nedostatna, potrošena ili čak prijeteća kategorija. Nadalje, one su vitalne jer ukazuju na dinamičnost unutarnjih društvenih procesa i mogućnost društvene preobrazbe. Sugeriraju ideju da se životni uvjeti ipak *ne mogu predviđeti* te da su oni koji se čine beznadnima *zapravo potencijalno promjenjivi*.

## Vizionarski imaginariji i alternativni scenariji

Kako bih bolje razumjela načine na koje koncepcije prošlosti i budućnosti utječu na zamišljanje društvenih promjena koje moji sugovornici žele ostvariti, dodatno sam preoblikovala istraživačka usmjerenja. Cilj je ispitati, kontekstualizirati, ali i odmaknuti se od narativa i praksi koje srpsko društvo tumače prvenstveno kroz politizirane i ekonomske pretpostavke. Namjera je više pažnje posvetiti idejama i vizijama koje čine kolektivnu svijest i društvene promjene mogućim. Osnovna je pretpostavka da promjene načina razmišljanja o vremenu (prošlosti, sadašnjosti i budućnosti) možda nagovještavaju psihološke i strukturne promjene. Moj sadašnji istraživački projekt promatra pojedince, kolektive i pokrete koji kroz ciljane poduhvate unutar zajednice te tzv. znanstveni, ekološki i duhovni aktivizam pokušavaju promijeniti pogled na Srbiju i svijet. Proučavam rad i život arhitekata, osoba koje planiraju javno zdravlje, edukatora, kozmologa, bioloških arheologa i izumitelja. Suradujem s javnim intelektualcima, tradicijskim glazbenicima, sportašima, travarima i slikarima. Ti pojedinci različite dobi i raznolikih životnih iskustava nadilaze svoje profesionalne identitete kada razmatraju mogućnosti za drugačija društvena samosagledavanja. Istraživanje prati ljude čija se zamišljanja društvenog preobražaja dotiču ideja koherentnosti, poretka, moralnosti, estetike, svetoga i inspiracije te se stoga čine važnijima od onih ideja koje obično nalazimo u politici ili ekonomiji.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Za slojevite antropološke opise revolucionarnih ljevičarskih imaginarija koji analiziraju ljudsku potrebu za reimaginacijom i reformom političke situacije nakon socijalizma, prošlih ili nedavnih sukoba v. Yurchak 2006, 2014; Channell-Justice 2019; Kurtović 2019; Kurtović i Sargsyan 2019. Ovo istraživanje, međutim, želi promatrati situacije i događaje koji u mnogočemu prihvaćaju političko kao uzrok i posljedice društveno-povijesnih transformacija, ali ga također žele i nadići.

<sup>6</sup> Ti nadahnuti pojedinci možda ne predstavljaju dominantnu tendenciju u Srbiji, no svakako postoje. Moj cilj nije stvaranje suvremenih hagiografija ili portretiranje donkihotovskih idealista ili influencera. Na temelju rezultata prethodnog istraživanja želim slijediti ljude i ideje koji imaju sposobnost pristupanja, ponovnog promišljanja i komuniciranja kako arhaičnih, intuitivnih i podsvjesnih tako i racionalnih, pragmatičnih i novih aspekata kulture, uz reflektiranje o tome kako bi se društvena transformacija mogla odvijati.

Istraživanje otvara niz pitanja: Koje su osnove za ostvarivanje značajne razlike u društvenom samorazumijevanju tako da bi se u retrospektivi takva intervencija smatrala uzrokom? Što karakterizira pojedince i grupe koji svjesno istupaju izvan okvira kolektivnog vremena – iscrpljenog i neplodnog – i zalaze u dulje povijesne perspektive, pa čak ih i izvrću, projicirajući pritom budućnost? Koga ljudi u suvremenoj Srbiji smatraju vizionarima? Čijoj se energiji, brizi, imaginaciji i snalažljivosti vjeruje? Čije i koje vizije su prepoznate kao one koje mogu preoblikovati i presložiti ljudsko okruženje tako da doprinose kolektivnoj dobrobiti? Kako ljudi zamišljaju društveno obilje i stabilnost? Kako se ti ideali komuniciraju?

Koncept vizije i vizionarskog teško se podvrgava izravnom etnografskom istraživanju. Ljude obično nazivamo “vizionarima” tek naknadno, kada već postanu povijesne ličnosti – kada prođe dovoljno vremena da njihove svjetonazore i prakse možemo “procijeniti” kao “vizionarske”. Zbog nedostatka neke preciznije riječi i kako bih unijela specifičnosti u ključni istraživački koncept, vizionarskima smatram one prakse koje nude svježije konceptualne postavke – postavke koje se ne uklapaju u uobičajene etikete *mainstream* i kontrakturnog razmišljanja i djelovanja, a istodobno su usmjerene prema kolektivnoj dobrobiti. Drugim riječima, vizionarske prakse su one koje omogućuju iskustva koja vode u postupanje i sagledavanje svijeta na suštinski preinačene načine.

Antropologija se bavila vizionarima, no gotovo uvijek na asocijativan način. Izgleda da otvorenost prema vizionarskom nije uobičajena, čak ni među onima koji bi za to bili najprijemčiviji, kako to zamjećuje Gananath Obeyesekere (2012), pa čak ni unutar discipline poznate po kritičkom suprotstavljanju pritiscima akademske hiperracionalnosti.

U većini se antropoloških tekstova pojam “vizionar” koristi u neopipljivom i metaforičkom smislu. Vizionarska se iskustva poimaju kao vizije, snoviđenja, divinacije, transovi i “fantastični scenariji koji se pojavljuju pred očima budnih” (Obeyesekere 2012: 2). Rjeđe se koriste kao koncept, a češće kao deskriptor u analizi, opisujući primjerice kvalitete određenih liderskih praksi (van Knippenberg i Stam 2014), idealizma ili utopijske misli (Moore 1990; Jameson 2005; Wright 2010; Cooper 2014). Koncept se gotovo isključivo u kontekstu antropologije religije i šamanizma tretira kao zaseban fenomen koji zaslužuje istraživanje i teoretiziranje (o proučavanju proroka i duhovnih tekstova v. Eliade 1964; Evans-Pritchard 1964; Comaroff 1985; Benz 2002; o proučavanju fatalizma ili samoispunjavajućeg proročanstva v. Empson 2011; da Col i Humphrey 2012; o proučavanju vizionara, mistika, pseudoproroka i osoba koje su imale paranormalna iskustva v. Freixedo 1992). U tim su tekstovima vizionari često prepoznati kao osobe koje posjeduju neko posebno, probuđeno ili urođeno znanje (Madigan 2004; Hufford 2010) ili kao osobe koje povremeno koriste tradicijsku medicinu posuđenu iz raznih magijskih i religijskih konteksta u svrhu stjecanja vizija radi izlječenja (v. Barbira-Freedman 2014; Rodger 2018).

Ovo se istraživanje udaljava od Obeyesekereove koncepcije vizija koje se, prema njegovu mišljenju, pojavljuju samo kada dođe do pomračenja svijesti i kada izostane aktivno, egom vođeno “aforističko razmišljanje” (Obeyesekere 2012: 6). Naprotiv,

smatram da je dijalektika svjesnosti i kulture dublja: vizionarstvo nije vezano uz imaginaciju samo kada je razum spriječen ili privremeno napušten. Poveznice između vizionarskog i razumnog puno su kompleksnije od toga. Ovo istraživanje prati vizionarske prakse kao dio aktivističkih idejnih praksi te tako razmatra postupke svjesne inspiracije i imaginativne projekcije. Proučava niz registara i tehnologija pomoću kojih vizionarska zamišljanja budućnosti pokušavaju oblikovati društveno-povijesno u Srbiji (i izvan nje).

Imaginacija se u antropološkom rječniku shvaća na različite načine: kao umni postupak, nematerijalno znanje, iskustvena i utjelovljena stvarnost te kao *qua active* sila ili kolektivna privrženost nekoj ideji, i svi ti načini mogu poduprijeti povijesnu preobrazbu (v. Kearney 1988, 1998; Cocking 1991; Preston 1991; Crapanzano 2004; Severi 2004, 2015; Sneath, Holbraad i Pedersen 2009; Graeber 2012; Gibson 2014; Harris i Rapport 2015; Bloch, M. 2016). Vizionarstvo se također opisuje kao način osmišljavanja svijeta te kao aktivnost koja motivira promatranje i angažiranje (Ingold 2014: 395). U kontekstu etnografske prakse (ako ne uvijek teorijske) ono se kao takvo jednostavno shvaća *a priori* metodološkim (Casey 1976, 1977, 2003; Comaroff i Comaroff 1992; Schäuble 2016).

Antropološke studije koje proučavaju suvremene povijesne trenutke u kojima se čini da je izrazito važno biti "pun nade" s obzirom na globalno stanje krize i, potencijalni, novi početak (v. Bloch, E. 1995; Harvey 2000; Zournazi 2002; Hage 2003; Miyazaki 2004, 2006; Guyer 2007, 2009; Graeber 2007; Reed 2011a; Narotzky i Besnier 2014; Bryant i Knight 2019) također su bitne za ovo istraživanje.

Projekt ima za cilj utvrditi događaje, procese te pojedinačne i kolektivne uvjete koji omogućuju *razliku* ili pridonose promjeni. Arjun Appadurai (2000) je na sličan način prepoznao ulogu imaginacije kako u razumijevanju tako i u stvaranju promjene. Na primjer, njegov odnos prema imaginaciji kao društvenoj praksi govori o središnjoj ulozi koju ona ima za sva područja mogućeg i njegovih oblika djelovanja (Appadurai 1996: 31, 2000, 2013). Istraživanje inzistira na tome da u antropologiji, teoretski gledano, mora postojati prostor za primijenjeno poimanje imaginacije kao resursa, pa čak i kao oblika društvenog aktivizma. Prepoznajući kako imaginacija i omogućava promjenu i čini je jasnijom, važno je eksplicitno povezivati vizionarsku imaginaciju i procese sjećanja koji su vitalni za očuvanje i prijenos kulturnih obrazaca i tradicija (Wagner 1981, 2018; Robbins 2010). U tom smislu projekt teži razumjeti što svrshodna imaginacija može stvoriti te kako ona utječe na društveni poredak.

Nadalje, vizionarske se prakse mogu preispitivati kao oblici inspiracije (v. Reed 2011b) ili proročki izumi (Sarró 2019) koji rasvjetljuju put sociokulturnim promjenama. Na koje se pojedince ili kolektive ljudi oslanjaju kako bi ublažili ili razriješili nepovoljne društvene, duhovne, ekonomske ili političke okolnosti? Koje prakse inspiriraju i utječu na ljudsko djelovanje i poimanje stvari? Na temelju sadašnjih saznanja, vjerujem da u zamišljenim, željenim i iskustvenim mogućnostima ni jedno političko ili ekonomsko rješenje nikada ne može biti kompatibilno niti može zadovoljiti imaginativne potrebe društva. Ne pozivaju sve društvene revolucije na militantne političke obrate (v. Friedmann 1971). Iako političke revolucije često pozivaju

na promjenu načina razmišljanja, čini se da je politika prostor u kome se promjene događaju najkasnije.

Istraživanje također proučava etnografije vizionarskih futurista (Bernstein 2019), vizionarskih aktivista u revolucionarnim vjerskim kontekstima (Christian 1995; Arzyutov 2018; Pedersen 2019) te etnografije "radikalne drugosti" (Hage 2003, 2009, 2015). Uči od etnografija koje se bave antropološkim razumijevanjem moderne metafizike (v. Battaglia 2012; Descola 2013; Latour 2013; Viveiros de Castro 2014; Escobar 2018), različitim politikama kozmopolitske svjesnosti (Stengers 2005, 2018) i odnosom s neviđenim (u kontekstu vjere, tradicije i duhovne prakse, v. Deloria 2006) koje nije ograničeno mogućnostima – političkim, ekonomskim ili ekološkim – sadašnjeg neoliberalnog globalnog poretka (v. Skafish 2014).

Važno je napomenuti da su navedene teme povezane s pitanjem što ljudima znači poznavati se ne samo na osobnoj nego i na kulturnoj razini. Stoga ovo istraživanje izučava antropološku i drugu literaturu o zajedničkoj i povijesnoj svjesnosti i kolektivnoj psihi (Gadamer 1979; Buck-Morss 2000; Lear 2006; Clark 2006, 2012; Stewart 2017), psihološkim dinamikama nesigurnosti (Masco 1999), te dalje razvija moj istraživački interes za mentalnu higijenu i zdravlje u vremenu ograničenih ekonomskih mogućnosti i političkog malodušja (Petrović-Šteger 2013).

U samom se središtu istraživanja nalazi pitanje kako se ideje ugrađuju u nastajući poredak i kako dobivaju na važnosti. Kako postaju prioriteti u kolektivnoj psihi ili umu? Pitanje kako neki organizam (npr. određena ideja ili mem) biva u svom okruženju i oblikuje ga (npr. kolektivni um) uvelike je pitanje na tragu Batesona. Moj je znanstveni rad snažno inspiriran i obilježen stvaralaštvom Gregoryja Batesona (2000 [1972], 2002 [1979]; Bateson i Bateson 1988; Bateson i Donaldson 1991) i njegovom rekurzivnom epistemologijom (v. i Petrović-Šteger 2019). Bateson (2000 [1972]: 381) iznosi postavku da je *svaka razlika koja čini razliku u nekom kasnijem događaju* analogna uzroku tog procesa diferencijacije. Slijedeći Batesona kao i druga antropološka razmatranja relacionalnosti (Strathern 1991, 1992, 2019), projekt vizionarsku imaginaciju definira kao način razokvirivanja društvenih praksi, u nadi razumijevanja obrazaca unutar kojih idejni fenomeni omogućuju ili sprečavaju društvene promjene. Ne zanima me samo ono što je kratkoročno racionalno održivo, već i manje eksplicitne vizije tananije povezane s društveno-kulturnim okolnostima. Upravo one potiču višeznačna djelovanja.

## Obrasci koji povezuju

U vremenu obilježenom popriličnom iscrpljenošću te u prostoru koji se nalazi u postkonfliktnom zastoju, ključno je posvetiti se alternativnim načinima razmišljanja i djelovanja, potrebi ljudi za samorefleksijom i njihovom razumijevanju društvenog dobra. Proučavajući vizionarske i preobražajne prakse u tim kontekstima, istraživanje pokušava razumjeti motivacije vizionara koji su često obrazovani pojedinci, ma-

terijalno sposobni napustiti Srbiju, a koji su ipak spremni ostati i doprinijeti novim praksama življenja i načinima komunikacije. Što namjeravaju postići i što žele postati? U zemlji obilježenoj dubokim nepovjerenjem u državu, u vrijeme dok ostatak svijeta migrira, to je istraživačko pitanje od posebne važnosti.

Potrebno je naglasiti da istraživanje u odnosu na spomenute ideje i svjetotvorne prakse zauzima kritičku poziciju i nikako ne poziciju opčinjenosti ili očaranosti. U tom je smislu ono zamišljeno ne samo kao opis već i kao teorijski i etnografski eksperiment. Hoće li išta proizaći iz vizija tih vizionara?

Drugo važno pitanje kojim se istraživanje bavi tiče se toga unapređuju li zaista "vizionari" društveno dobro i ako da, "čije" društveno dobro? Mnoge isključive, *à la* komunalističke vizije društvene promjene u Srbiji – na primjer, stvaranje idealnih zajednica isključivanjem autsajdera – tvrde da su vođene vizionarskim inspiracijama. U nekim se aspektima njihove pseudokozmologijske društvene filozofije teško razlikuju od vjerodostojnijih potencijalnih vizija. Nadalje, kao što znamo, vizionari nisu uvijek krivo shvaćeni, romantizirani dobročinitelji, s ograničenim područjem utjecaja u administraciji ili upravljanju. Osim toga, kako znanstvenica može izbjeći situaciju da "vizionarskim" proglaši one ideje o kolektivnoj budućnosti i promjeni s kojima se slaže? Promjene se obično dese tek onda kada ljudi prepoznaju očito, drugim riječima, kada shvate da se nepravde kojima su izloženi i o kojima govore više ne mogu ignorirati, da su utemeljene na činjenicama i da se moraju prekinuti. Međutim, čin kolektivnog prepoznavanja onoga što je očigledno upravo je suprotan "vizionarskom".

Vjerujući ipak da možemo izbjeći svojevrsnu akademsku sumnjičavost i snishodljivost u odnosu na koncept vizionarstva u Srbiji, istraživanje utvrđuje potrebu da se vizije o društvu (baš zato što su potencijalno transformativne) razdvoje od praktične politike nekog društva. Mišljenja sam da bismo se trebali oduprijeti politiziranom poimanju kao prirodnom, odnosno naturaliziranom načinu analiziranja srpskog (ili bilo kojeg) društva. Politološko rezoniranje unutar antropologije (i uopće) riskira političko prisvajanje i stabiliziranje kategorija kroz koje se evaluiraju postojeće prakse osmišljavanja svijeta u Srbiji i unutar kojih se mogu deducirati njihove potonje ideje. Razumijevanje Srbije koje naglasak stavlja na njezinu dnevnu politiku ili ekonomiju i dalje će je esencijalizirati kao primarno postsocijalističku, postkonfliktnu i prekarnu. Osim toga, moje je mišljenje da u kontekstu Srbije društvena promjena neće nužno doći iz političke sfere. Možda će u njoj završiti, ali teško da će iz nje krenuti.

Istraživanje računa na to da alternativni glasovi, koji još uvijek nisu u potpunosti podvedeni lijevom ili desnom političkom opredjeljenju, mogu ponuditi istinske alternative zamišljanju Srbije kao zemlje koja je zaglabila u apatiju. Istina je da politička i ekonomska antropologija može zamišljati budućnost i istina je, ili više od istine, da su politika i ekonomija nepredvidljive. Međutim, u državi poput Srbije koja je duboko obilježena raznim vrstama stereotipa predviđanja koja prevagu daju određenim političkim i ekonomskim pokazateljima škakljiva su. Pogotovo zato što određeni broj Srba, uključujući one koji su ključni za ovo istraživanje, smatra da srp-



ska povijest seže puno dalje od posljednjih trideset, osamdeset ili čak i sto pedeset godina. Osim toga, neki moji sugovornici dovode u pitanje samo poimanje vremena. Predlažu da bismo trebali preispitati koncepte vremena i možda početi razumijevati životne događaje i procese iz perspektive *eternalizma*, odnosno supostojanja prošlosti, sadašnjosti i budućnosti. To neizostavno preispituje ranije spomenute ideje nade i beznađa. Ako, za početak, više pažnje posvetimo procesima spoznaje, a ne samo signalizacije, možda ćemo lakše utvrditi koje ideje čine određenu društvenu situaciju dinamičnijom. Upravo te ideje ukazuju na ono što Bateson (2002 [1979]) naziva *obrasima koji povezuju*.

Naglasak ovdje nije postavljen samo na predskazujuću snagu ideja. Antropološka analiza mogla bi proširiti perspektivu iz koje razmatramo društvene mogućnosti upravo dokumentiranjem zamišljanja osobnih i kolektivnih budućnosti. Takva ideja, naravno, nije nova. Odražava dugogodišnju potrebu da se utvrdi, potvrdi i uhvati ukoštac s "umijećem mogućeg" u njegovim raznim oblicima (v. Guyer 2009). Ipak, čini mi se da mnoge analize zaobilaze značajno pitanje, a to je kako ne samo sugovornici već i mi kao antropolozi objašnjavamo vlastiti izbor koncepata pomoću kojih razumijevamo i sagledavamo načine na koje se društveni svjetovi spoznaju i kreiraju. Koga slijedimo? Koga slušamo? Čijim idiomima i idejama dajemo prednost? Pojedinci, društvo i država uvijek se iznova preslaguju na nove i neočekivane načine. Ovaj članak i šire istraživanje predlažu da se s posebnom pažnjom posvetimo nepredviđenim i nepredvidljivim idejnim konfiguracijama koje nastaju u tim procesima preslagivanja.

Budućnost nije samo vremenska kategorija već i kontekst koji čine naša vlastita predviđanja, nade, zahtjevi i potrebe. Osim bilježenja onoga što proizlazi iz evidentnih, primjetljivih činjenica, antropologija bi trebala stremiti i tome da slijedi ono što u načinima razmišljanja i društvenim uvjetima hibernira, dok traži način da se obznani.



# KOMENTARI

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## Put od imaginacije do politike

Snažan tekst Maje Petrović-Šteger podsjeća nas koliko je imaginacija nužna za zamišljanje i provođenje društvenih promjena. Poput njezinih sugovornika poduzetnika, analiza Maje Petrović-Šteger kreće se između sadašnjosti i višestrukih mogućih budućnosti: putova kojima bi se moglo krenuti i budućnosti koje su nam nedostupne zbog načina na koje trenutačno promatramo i nastanjujemo sadašnjost. Rad postavlja pitanje što sve antropolozi uzimaju zdravo za gotovo kada je riječ o kategorijama (politike, društvenosti, etike, kreativnosti) koje strukturiraju našu analizu. Kako kategorije oblikuju svijet, dobivaju na važnosti, a zauzvrat vezuju ljude za povijesti koju nisu sami stvorili? Petrović-Šteger je svjesna i načina na koji koncepti funkcioniraju infrastrukturno: pomažu nam oblikovati, aktualizirati i komunicirati imaginaciju. Tvrdi da je taj projekt tim nužniji kada te kategorije perpetuiraju normativna shvaćanja politike, ekonomije i društva. Kategorije o kojima je riječ ne odražavaju neuspjeh onih na koje se primjenjuju, nego ih proizvode. Odmak od njih zahtijeva, piše Petrović-Šteger, "ljude čija se zamišljanja društvenog preobražaja dotiču ideja koherentnosti, poretka, moralnosti, estetike, svetoga i inspiracije te se stoga čine važnijima od onih ideja koje obično nalazimo u politici ili ekonomiji".

Projekt me inspirira i svesrdno ga podržavam. Svoja istraživanja dugo vremena posvećujem tome kako znanstvenici, kreatori politika i drugi koriste ideje neuspjeha kao strategiju normativnog upravljanja. Ipak, čitajući ovaj tekst, zapitala sam se i *što slijedi*. To može zvučati upravo kao predvidljivo društvenoznanstveno pitanje koje Petrović-Šteger izbjegava. Stoga, možda pravo pitanje nije *što*, nego *kako*. Kako kreativne imaginacije postaju politika? Kako volja naroda postaje politički autoritet? Kako razgovori u nastajanju i imaginativni eksperimenti postaju preduvjeti kolektivne solidarnosti i djelovanja?

Petrović-Šteger ukazuje na oskudnost institucija u suvremenoj Srbiji i napominje: "[U] zamišljenim, željenim i iskustvenim mogućnostima ni jedno političko ili ekonomsko rješenje nikada ne može biti kompatibilno niti može zadovoljiti imaginativne potrebe društva. [...] [U] kontekstu Srbije društvena promjena neće nužno

doći iz političke sfere. Možda će u njoj završiti, ali teško da će iz nje krenuti.” Intrigira me upravo taj jaz između imaginacije i politike. Bilo bi naivno misliti da će nas političke, pravne ili ekonomske institucije spasiti ili da bi institucije trebale pod svaku cijenu ustrajati. Petrović-Šteger je po tom pitanju uvjerljiva, zrcaleći rastući broj antropoloških istraživanja koja analiziraju liberalne institucije, koncepte i kategorije te nasilje koje oni perpetuiraju (Beliso-De Jesus i Pierre 2020; Povinelli 2011; Lowe 2015; Dzenovska 2018). No, znači li to da institucije i politike trebamo u potpunosti napustiti? Institucije su ipak artefakti ljudske kreativnosti: one proizlaze iz prakse – tkanja ljudskog djelovanja povezanog s društvenim i etičkim obvezama izraženim u materijalnom i diskurzivnom obliku te upisivanja u registar (engl. *enregisterment*, Agha 2005), tj. kontroliranih načina govora kroz koje participacija i intervencija u ta područja bivaju prepoznatljivima. Obrasci, kao što su institucije, nisu nešto što se pojavljuje samo od sebe. Ljudi stvaraju obrasce, i kao epistemološke okvire i kao intencionalno političko djelovanje.

Kao što sam drugdje pisala, ta pažnja posvećena institucijama, obrascima i komunikaciji ključna je dinamika većine društvenih promjena: ne “što treba učiniti, nego kako ćemo mi (i drugi) znati jesmo li to učinili” (Greenberg 2020). Aktivizam često počiva na razmjernosti i prevođenju između modaliteta moći. Ako društvene promjene možda ne nastaju u politici, ali u njoj mogu završiti, kako se ekspresije mogućnosti mijenjaju i kreću? Kako ljudi mogu njegovati i održavati kreativnost kao osnovu kolektivnog djelovanja? Kako imaginacija živi i ustraje kao komunikativni okvir koji oblikuje uvjete u kojima se alternative mogu izgovoriti, prepoznati i dijeliti?

Ilustrativan je primjer način na koji se mijenja značenje prosvjeda. Kao što sam pokazala u svojoj knjizi (Greenberg 2014) i u nekoliko članaka (Greenberg 2006, 2012, 2016; Greenberg i Spasić 2017), u bitkama koje su se u Srbiji vodile oko toga tko ima pravo na grad i što znače prosvjedi riječ je bila o utvrđivanju alternativnih oblika suvereniteta. Prosvjednici su usmjerili energiju i kreativnost u interpretativne okvire kroz koje bi ljudi mogli uputiti svoje zahtjeve, usmjerene ne samo solidarnosti nego i političkoj vlasti. Značaj takve kreativne energije nije samo u tome što je ponudila alternativni način izražavanja volje naroda i otpora. Radilo se i o energiji koja bi se mogla prenijeti u utjecaj na mehanizme formalne vlasti. Taj je proces istodobno promijenio i značenje prosvjeda i institucije upravljanja. To nije bila ni lagana ni romantična priča. Kao što sam zabilježila, nakon 2000. godine značenje prosvjeda se promijenilo, kao i uokvirivanje rodno određenih i klasificiranih tijela na ulicama. Smatra li se neka skupina ljudi “narodom” ili “ruljom”, sigurnosnom prijetnjom ili ekskluzivnom elitom ovisi o dinamičnom interpretativnom okviru. Uspostavljanje hermeneutike politike samo je po sebi političko. Kao što Petrović-Šteger snažno pokazuje, iskustvo politike u procesu takvih promjena može iscrpiti kreativnost koja je poticala ranije aspekte društvenih promjena.

Razmišljajući o tome kako od imaginacije dolazimo do politike, ne mogu se ne fokusirati na svoju zemlju. Amerika se priprema za autoritarni udar. Zarobljavanje pravnih institucija, korupcija političkog suvereniteta korporativnim novcem, supresija birača, rasizam i policijsko nasilje nikada nisu bili očitiji. Što Amerikanci mogu

naučiti iz imaginacije i politike u drugim krajevima svijeta? U komentaru Igora Štiksa (2014) o lekcijama naučenim iz bosanskih plenuma Europu se lako može zamijeniti Amerikom. Plenumi u Bosni predstavljaju “budućnost Europe: narode kojima se ne može vladati, iscrpljene mjerama štednje i prepuštene snalaženju nakon propasti ostataka socijalne države – države bez mogućnosti za rast, vođene elitama sumnjivog ili nikakvog legitimiteta koje do zuba naoružanu policiju šalju na ulice da bi sebe zaštitile od običnih građana” (ibid.). Istovremeno, tvrdi Štiksa, oni ne predstavljaju samo slogane normativne demokracije već i autentične eksperimente demokratskih alternativa odozdo prema gore. Od Štiksa i drugih koji su pisali o imaginativnim eksperimentima u demokraciji u regiji (Razsa 2015; Kurtović i Hromadžić 2017; Garić-Humphrey 2020) naučila sam da društvene promjene zahtijevaju vernakularnu institucionalizaciju: voljnu kreativnu ekspresiju na načine koji su održivi, ali se također mogu prevesti u razne modalitete politike, ekonomije, društva i upravljanja.

Uoči udara koji nam predstoji pitam se kako u SAD-u izgledaju imaginacija i eksperimentiranje. Kao država, demokraciju zamišljamo dominantno kroz liberalne formacije (kao što su izbori) koje se temelje na demobilizaciji i uništavanju kreativnosti. Demokratska imaginacija cvjeta – prosvjedi Black Lives Matter, organiziranje koalicija radničkih grupacija i skupina na razini zajednica, pokreti Strike Debt i Occupy, nedokumentirani pokreti mladih i njihovi saveznici samo su neki od primjera. Ne nedostaje nam imaginacije, nego nemamo mehanizme i prakse pomoću kojih možemo premostiti jaz između “onoga gdje će društvena promjena krenuti” i onoga gdje bi mogla “završiti”. Drugim riječima, ono čega nema ili se nalazi onkray imaginacije su mehanizmi za prijenos oblika suvereniteta na razne modalitete vlasti i upravljanja.

Političke, društvene, pravne i ekonomske institucije ne samo da nadziru i proizvode *status quo*. Ljudi također uključuju institucije kao putove i prekretnice u cirkulaciji, prijenosu i preuzimanju oblika djelovanja u različitim prostorima. Suverenitet, ljudska kreativnost, pa čak i imaginacija slični su električnoj struji: energiji su potrebni konverteri kako bi se mogla kretati različitim društvenim i političkim domenama i dovoljno porozne institucionalne membrane koje mogu primiti taj protok i pretvoriti ga u druge oblike energije. Ako stoji i ako nema odredišta, energija se raspršuje. Politika je dijelom stvaranje uvjeta u kojima se izvaninstitucionalna kreativnost može kretati, živjeti i ustrajati kolektivnim djelovanjem tijekom vremena. Možda se demokratske okvire i etičke obveze može ostvariti pomoću nekih drugih sredstava i vizija. Mogli bismo zamisliti budućnost pravde i odgovornosti izvan institucionalnih parametara državne vlasti i suvereniteta, upravljanja i pravosudnih vlasti na kojima počiva suvremena normativna demokracija. Ali još uvijek vjerujem da preoblikovanje društvenog tkiva zahtijeva neku vrstu institucionalnog angažmana, čak i ako to podrazumijeva temeljito drugačije shvaćanje institucija. Možda je neuspjeh moje imaginacije što još uvijek nisam spremna odustati od takve politike.

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## Transformativni potencijali regionalnih etnografija krize ili zagovori za lokalnu antropologiju budućnosti

Zahvaljujemo uredništvu *Etnološke tribine* na prilici da se uključimo u raspravu koju otvara tekst kolegice Maje Petrović-Šteger. Riječ je o tekstu kojim nas se poziva da sada, neposredno i ovdje, u našim lokalnim i regionalnim kontekstima, propitamo koncepte predvidljivosti i mogućnosti. Poziva nas da razmotrimo “kakve učinke imaju prakse anticipacije, kako na ljude i fenomene koje proučavamo tako i na disciplinu”. Posebice, transformativne potencijale tih koncepata.

Kao pozvane sugovornice istaknule bismo svoja polazišta i neka pitanja koja nam se nameću pri čitanju teksta Petrović-Šteger, a kroz koja smo prolazile i u našem istraživačkom radu, vrlo bliskom Majinim istraživanjima u Srbiji koja je provodila kroz duži vremenski period. U istraživanju postindustrijskog rada u gradu Sisku, u okviru projekta “Transformacija rada u posttranzicijskoj Hrvatskoj”,<sup>7</sup> fokus nam je bio usmjeren na posljedice dugotrajne nezaposlenosti bivših industrijskih radnika, ali i na nove oblike, uglavnom prekarnog, postindustrijskog rada, kao i na transformaciju grada koji je tijekom i nakon 1990-ih prošao intenzivnu deindustrijalizaciju. Sadržaj građe koju smo prikupile intervjuima omogućio je da nam teme kojima se bavila Petrović-Šteger, a koje opisuje u prvom dijelu svoga teksta, budu bliske. To su teme poput permanentne egzistencijalne krize u narativima starije generacije, za koju su rad i život kakve su poznavali bili nepovratno izgubljeni, odnosno krize u narativima srednje generacije koja više nije imala gdje raditi i koja je nadu polagala u život izvan Siska, pa i Hrvatske.

Usredotočenost na narative naših sugovornika koji su jasno označavali vremensku rupturu života prije i poslije propasti industrije, zadržavajući se uglavnom na pričama o “perspektivnoj prošlosti” i “konzerviranoj” sadašnjosti, gotovo je rezultirala istraživačkim zaključkom da stanovnici Siska svoj grad smatraju gradom bez budućnosti, u kojem preživljavaju i jednostavno “ubijaju vrijeme”. Tek pri kraju istraživanja, i poticajem izvana (razgovorom s lokalnim novinarom), osvijestile smo da tragajući za takvim narativima gradimo diskurs o gradu i radu koji ispušta cijelu jednu paletu govora. Stoga smo krenule u potragu za sugovornicima koji su svoj život i rad osmislili u postindustrijskom gradu i to ne iz principa nužde, već izbora. Posebice su nas zanimale kreativne, solidarne i komunalne prakse u koje su se uključivali

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.transwork.eu/naslovnica/> (pristup 29. 8. 2020.).

ili koje su oblikovali naši, sada mahom mladi sugovornici. Te su prakse bile jedan od načina na koje su gradili svoju budućnost u sadašnjosti, a nama istraživačicama ponudili su novi smjer istraživanja okrenut k društvenim akterima i procesima koji ipak pronalaze načine da zamišljaju svoju i dobrobit zajednice te djeluju kroz nabudućnost-orijentirane akcije. Njihovi su narativi ponekad bili progresivni u smislu vizioniranja pravednije i ravnopravnije društvene budućnosti ili su, pak, u ime “opstanka njihova društvenog, relacijskog, materijalnog i ekonomskog okruženja” bili pragmatično okrenuti k prošlosti (Ringel 2014: 56). Zahvaljujući njima, ni mi više nismo svojom etnografijom dohvaćale samo portret društva u krizi, već smo bile pozvane da prepoznamo i opišemo i drugačije temporalne orijentacije. “Anticipacija, očekivanje, nagađanja, potencijal, nada i sudbina – sve [te orijentacije] predstavljaju različite dubine vremena i različite, iako često povezane, načine na koje budućnost može usmjeriti našu sadašnjost” (Bryant i Knight 2019: 2).

To nas povezuje s drugim dijelom teksta kolegice Petrović-Šteger, s kojim, prije svega, dijelimo razumijevanje uloge i svrhe antropologije da propita i uključi u svoja istraživanja rezoniranja o budućnosti. To znači da se u govoru o budućnosti, a ne samo o prošlosti, nalazi dio odgovora zašto pojedinci i zajednice na specifičan način opisuju svoju sadašnjost. Isto tako, u ovaj dio našeg komentara ulazimo kroz bliskost s idejom da je vrijeme u kojem živimo potrebno promišljati “problemski”, “kritički”, i “anticipativno”, kako apelira i Petrović-Šteger, te da je u njemu nužno pronalaziti i isticati potencijal za promjenu. Međutim, programatski format, odnosno svojevrsni “pregled istraživanja” uvodnog teksta rasprave mjestimice ostavlja otvorenima pitanja s kim autorica raspravlja, odnosno pregovara oko uspostave svog novog predmeta istraživanja, tko su vizionari koje želi uključiti u istraživanje, na što se praktično pojmovi “transformacije”, “mogućnosti”, “predvidljivosti” vezuju, a što nam donekle sužava prostor “dijaloga s konkretnim” u tekstu. Stoga ćemo si dopustiti jednako načelan, ali ponešto radikalniji stav o ulozi antropologije u istraživanjima budućnosti, nadovezujući se na tekst koji komentiramo, ali s manje ograda i znanstvene opreznosti no što to čini Petrović-Šteger.

Smatramo da je u našem radu važno (su)djelovati kao “suvremenik” (Agamben 2011), a ponekad i akademskim aktivizmom poticati ona društvena pitanja koja osjećamo krucijalnim, a koja još nisu dio *mainstreama*, zatim detektirati koja su to nepostavljena pitanja, zaobilazna pitanja ili neugodna pitanja (usp. Stewart 2013: 36 prema Petrović-Šteger). Sudjelovati u takvoj raspravi znači akademski se opirati vezivanju lokalne antropologije za temporalnu klasifikaciju kojom se zapravo niječe su-vremenost nacionalnog subjekta etnografije (usp. Pels 2015 za kolonijalni subjekt). Iako se i same opiremo tradicionalnom shvaćanju etnografije koja svoj subjekt smješta u prošlost i gleda na njega konzervativno, i nama je budućnost nerijetko izmicala iz fokusa. Tek nam je uvođenje koncepta “multitemporalnosti” (usp. Pels 2015: 788) pomoglo i omogućilo da sagledamo emergentne i najavljujuće pojave u našim istraživanjima. To, međutim, ne znači da trebamo zanemariti narative o neo-bičnoj, visceralnoj sadašnjosti koja je određena prošlošću i lišena anticipacije, a koja je, kako objašnjava Petrović-Šteger, dominirala obzorom lokalnih etnografija. Pri-

čanje o krizi kao o vremenu izmorenosti, osiromašenja, nezadovoljstva i frustracije, izazova, nemoći, beznađa, poraza, oslabljenog ili obesmišljenog protesta i izgubljene ideje promjene, u svakom slučaju vremenu bez budućnosti, ponajprije razumijemo i interpretiramo kao posljedicu vremena čiji je politički, ekonomski i religijski diskurs istovremeno esencijaliziran i dezorijentiran. To je i vrijeme koje je zbog “nametnute” fiksacije na prošlo ili trenutno izgubilo dimenziju bliske budućnosti i koje se iscrpljuje u “nametnutom prezentizmu” ili “fantastičnom futurizmu” (Guyer 2009; Ringel 2018). Uvođenje multitemporalnosti i okretanje antropologiji budućnosti za nas dvije znači dokidanje antropološkog razumijevanja prošlih vremena i promišljanja o prošlosti kao konstitutivnih za razmatranje načina na koji zajednice oblikuju svoj življeni sociokulturni krajolik (v. Appadurai 2004: 61) te nastavak zagovaranja društvene promjene u duhu humanistike (poput mnogih feminističkih antropologinja, istraživača npr. globalizacije, migracija, postkolonijalizma itd. koji to prakticiraju u našim zajednicama i akademskim kulturama već dugi niz godina).

Sarah Pink i Juan Francisco Salazar pokušali su nedavno pokazati da je ideja budućnosti utjelovljena u sadašnjosti te koliko je važna za razumijevanje sadašnjeg trenutka subjekata koje istražujemo (Pink i Salazar 2017: 4). Propitivanje mjesta “budućeg” u disciplini najavljuje tekst “Manifest budućih antropologija” (“Futures Anthropologies Manifesto”, 2017) i pritom odgovara na dva ključna pitanja svake discipline – što je njezin predmet i kako mu pristupati. Manifest budućih antropologija zagovara “nov” antropološki predmet u konceptu “budućnosti”. No što su to budućnosti i kakve su one u vizijama manifesta i što je to novo vrijedno manifesta, što upućuje na drugačiji pristup antropološkom predmetu? Prije svega ne radi se o jednoj, nego o, među ostalim, više mogućih, različitih, pluralnih, izazovnih, kompleksnih, kontroverznih, nelinearnih, cirkularnih, nemogućih, nesigurnih, nakupljajućih “budućnosti” (ibid.). Njima se pristupa intervencionistički, multisenzorno, performativno, materijalno, preispitujući ih, igrajući se s njima, propitujući ih, rušeći prepreke, konfrontirajući ih, kolaborirajući s drugim disciplinama, hibridiziranjem uvida transnacionalno i transdisciplinarno (ibid.). Takve su budućnosti “emergentne” i “neodređene” (v. Salazar et al. 2017), ali znamo da je taj budući predmet, odnosno predmet budućeg na neki način već ovdje, da evolviraju i da disciplina treba biti otvorena prema mogućnostima koje predmet donosi, da treba uključiti “buduće stvari” (engl. *things futural*) u svoju analizu (Ringel 2020), pri čemu se misli na djela, radnje i ideje u sadašnjosti, a koje u sebi imaju intenciju zahvaćanja vremena koje slijedi.

Maja Petrović-Šteger postavlja pitanje što je to što bismo mogli (i trebali) istraživati danas na ovom našem prostoru, u našim lokalnim, nacionalnim ili regionalnim etnografijama, a da “čin[i] kolektivnu svijest i društvene promjene mogućim”. Ona pokazuje i kako se tim predmetom treba baviti. Istražujući “alternativne glasove” antropološkim se sredstvima ostvaruje prostor “alternativnih imaginarija” u budućnosti Srbije, bilježi se potencijalni okvir nade, “mjesto razlike”, prostor mogućnosti, društveno-kulturna promjena, inspirira se, utječe se, odnosno omogućava se zamišljanje. Tim će se idejama Petrović-Šteger približiti zahtjevima budućih antropologija, koje postavljaju Pink i Salazar (2017). Ipak, zastaje u dijelu koji bi trebao objasniti



kakvi su i čiji ti alternativni imaginarijumi, o kakvoj je društvenoj promjeni riječ te kome pripada prostor mogućnosti, konačno potpuno izbjegava pojam “antropologija budućnosti”.

Pink i Salazar nadalje tvrde da antropologija budućnosti mora biti “provokativna, otvorena i intervencionistička”, deskriptivno-analitička, ali i kritička i radikalna te s “kapacitetom za angažiranje” (Pink i Salzar 2017: 4). Slično će i s pravom zamijetiti Felix Ringel (2020: 364), koji kaže da bi i antropolozi trebali “prihvatiti izazov otkrivanja tih budućnosti”. Stoga istraživanje vizionarskih praksi koje predlaže Maja Petrović-Šteger, odnosno istraživanje vizionarske imaginacije kao načina najave, odnosno kao oblika anticipacije ili kao inkorporacije u sadašnjost, smatramo iznimnim doprinosom lokalnoj antropologiji budućnosti. Za nas dvije konačni cilj takvog istraživanja jest uspostava radikalne promjene rakursa lokalne antropologije, koja umjesto zatečenih, predanih, zgotovljenih i tradiranih predmeta istraživanja, posebice rekreirane nacionalne, religijske i neoliberalne teleologije kao nove eshatologije postjugoslavenskih etničkih elita, promiče, prepoznaje, imenuje i otvara prostor za pravednije, komunalnije i solidarnije društvo (i antropologiju). Ako se vratimo na početni pojam krize, kojim su naša društva obilježena već desetljećima, to bi značilo da je nužno da u naš znanstveni rad podjednako uključimo istraživanja uzroka, doživljaja i preživljavanja kriza, kao i pronalaženje mogućih odgovora na njih u djelovanju usmjerenom na budućnost, kako u narativima naših sugovornika tako i u tekstu koji proizvodimo. Tako bismo kroz akademski i aktivistički zagovor lokalnih antropologija budućnosti prestali biti konstatirajuća etnografija krize i postali disciplina posvećena transformativnim potencijalima regionalnih etnografija krize.

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Otimači budućnosti i njihove taktike

Maja Petrović-Šteger nastoji opisati “promjen[u] koju sličan napredak u političkom, ekonomskom ili religijskom smislu jednostavno ne obuhvaća”. Tvrdi kako slike koje regiju prikazuju kao prekaru, manjkavu i iscrpljenu perpetuiraju stanje koje opisuju te odlučuje slijediti svoje sugovornike u njihovim pokušajima da “stvore vizije” kako bi se oslobodili takvog determinizma “o onome što predvidljivo ne obuhvaća”. Mišljenja je da su nastajuće prakse uvođenja malih promjena istovremeno pokušaji usmjereni na društveno zacjeljenje i praktični koraci koji čine daljnju razliku. U takvom otvaranju prema nepoznatom ona, takoreći, odgovara na pozive da se ide onkraj granica neoliberalne kritike i “mračne antropologije” i da se krene prema “antropologiji dobra” (Robbins 2013; Ortner 2016).



Slažem se da svoje interpretacijsko razmišljanje ne bismo trebali ograničavati kritikama političke ekonomije. Kao što sam drugdje pisao, ljudi su svjesni hegemonijskih okvira koje smatraju pogubnima, sudjeluju u njima i obvezuju se na njih, a nove alternative *statusu quo* možemo početi zamišljati samo ako prepoznamo multiskalarnu prirodu njihove demoralizacije (Rajković 2018). Također podržavam mišljenje Petrović-Šteger da je u Srbiji budućnost široko polje, bez obzira na ustaljeni narativ o nemogućnosti promjene. Međutim, to se odnosi na mnoštvo aktera čije se suprotstavljene vizije međusobno isprepliću. U tom smislu predlažem da se područje mogućeg ponovno poveže s političkim – ne da bi se kontroliralo njegovu snagu, već da bi se u potpunosti opisalo o čemu je sve riječ u projektima koji se pojavljuju. Vizionarsko ponovno oblikovanje svijeta nije izvan politike ili njoj suprotstavljeno, nego je upravo materijal u borbi za hegemoniju.

Kao prvo, u postjugoslavenskom prostoru “budućnost” zvuči prilično modernistički. Nekadašnji kôd industrijalizacije, futurizam je danas opravdanje za neoliberalnu modernost i njezino državno nasilje. “Nismo protiv napretka”, opravdavala se sestra partizanskog heroja čije je tijelo bilo potrebno premjestiti zbog obnove gradskog trga u Kragujevcu. To se dogodilo na samom početku mog prvog terenskog istraživanja 2011. godine, neposredno prije nego što su gradski čelnici preobrazbu radničkog naselja u trgovački centar nazvali “povijesnim napretkom”. Godinu dana kasnije vlast je osvojila Srpska napredna stranka, a priče o “napretku” počele su nicati posvuda: statistički podaci o BDP-u, otvaranja željezničkih pruga, gradilišta, bolnica. Jedna je reklama nedavno prikazala ljude koji ne glasaju na izborima kao osobe koje sat žele vratiti unatrag do političke prapovijesti po kojoj tumaraju dinosauri. “Zašto biste htjeli da vas pojede dinosaur?”, pitala je reklama. “Nemojte ostati u prošlosti, glasajte za budućnost.”<sup>8</sup> Danas se u Srbiji jednostavno mora biti vizionar, bilo da ste pristalica režima na vlasti ili njegovih protivnika.

Isto vrijedi za tvrdnju o bivanju “izvan” politike. Postjugoslavenska *antipolitika* pojavila se početkom 1990-ih kao kritika tržišnih reformi i višestranačke politike i njezine nepredvidljivosti. Međutim, do 2000-ih trop “normalni ljudi” koji osuđuju prljavo politikanstvo postaje neizbježan i, doista, hegemonistički vokabular *svakog* društvenog djelovanja (Jansen 2005; Helms 2007; Spasić i Birešev 2012). Društveni se pokreti redovito moraju izjašnjavati kao “nepolitički” da bi imali ikakvu političku učinkovitost. Čak i predsjednik Aleksandar Vučić često tvrdi da ga “politika uopće ne zanima, samo ga zanima njegov posao”, kao da je popularni autoritarni ekonomizam koji propovijeda neka vrsta postideološke istine. Upravo je zato potrebno razlikovati umirujuću retoriku naših sugovornika i njezine stvarne učinke. Politika i antipolitika nisu suprotstavljene, nego međusobno konstitutivni performativni projekti (Candea 2011).

Konačno, patocentrični prikazi srpskog “kolektivnog uma” kao nezrelog, razjedinjenog i manjkavog postoje već neko vrijeme. No, takve su balkanističke jadikovke u posljednje vrijeme pridružene popularnim neoliberalnim pedagogijama koje promjenu nacionalnog karaktera predstavljaju kao istovremeno i ekonomsko

<sup>8</sup> “Nemojte ostati u prošlosti, glasajte za budućnost”, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IL-wUjcl87k> (pristup 16. 9. 2020.).

i moralno iskupljenje (Rajković 2015). Zamislimo Vučićevu pohvalu veberovske protestantske radne etike kao nešto čemu bi Srbi trebali težiti: narativ koji je preinaka popularnih litanija o “srpskim manama” koje postoje najmanje od vremena manifesta Archibalda Reissa (1928) *Écoutez Serbes!* Za bilo koji narativ o kolektivnoj svijesti, društvenom zacjeljenju i promjeni mentalnog sklopa trebalo bi stoga kritički preispitati njegove poveznice s ideologijom u širem povijesnom kontekstu. Prakse utvrđivanja samoodgovornosti nisu sveobuhvatne, ali su uvijek politički generativne (Cook 2016). Stoga bih volio da autorica nađe binarizam nade i cinizma i opiše kako se ono potencijalno i ono predvidljivo, ono što je u nastajanju i ono što je upisano neprekidno privlače i odbijaju.

Stava sam da je potencijalnost imanentna svim politikama. Razmišljanja o budućnosti, anticipacije i znakovi budućnosti ne događaju se u vakuumu nekolicine, već čine “smisljeno zajedničko tlo” na kojem se vode bitke hegemonskih i protuhegemonskih projekata ako upotrijebimo Roseberryjevu (1994) formulaciju. Tvrdim da su posebice u kontekstima koji se tumače kao eshatološki svi društveni akteri skloni predvidjeti buduća zbivanja, prenositi budućnost u sadašnjost i s njom, takoreći, postupati. Nepredvidljivo se neprestano predviđa, za njega se priprema, na njemu se kapitalizira ili ga se izbjegava. Zapravo je u nekim kontekstima točnije govoriti o *otimanju* budućnosti, u agonističkom okruženju u kojem neprijatelj neprestano vreba na buduće planove i pokušava ih onemogućiti. “Prava je proizvodnja neočekivana i nevjerojatna”, tvrdio je Serres, “preplavljena je informacijama i u pravilu je odmah parazitirana” (Serres 1982: 4). S takvim parazitizmom na umu predlažem da idiom otimanja budućnosti zauzme središnje mjesto u raspravi o budućnosti u Srbiji. Kao što pokazuje moje istraživanje okolišnih pobunjenika, pojam strateškog razmišljanja mogao bi nam pomoći da preusmjerimo *viziju* i *borbu* u politički kontekstualizirano, ali ne i determinističko, bojno polje.

## Krađa budućnosti

Petrović-Šteger spominje “demografsku katastrofu” koja se odvija u pozadini razgovora koje vodi u Srbiji. Doista, pražnjenje zemlje pretvorilo je svaku politiku u populacijsku politiku i strahove međugeneracijske obnove učinilo gorućim pitanjem. U otvorenom pismu naslovljenom “Čija je budućnost Srbije?” – što je igra riječi s izbornim sloganom vladajuće stranke – grupa profesora s beogradskog Filozofskog fakulteta kritizirala je uhićenje studenata koji su prosvjedovali tvrdeći da se radi o “smišljenom udaru na budućnost društva”. Kako su tvrdili, cilj režima bio je utišati nepodobnu mladež kako bi se ubrzala srpska imigracija i slamanje društvenog tkiva. “Time nam je svima poslana poruka da će, nakon izгона našeg najdragocijenijeg resursa, ostati samo opustošena zemlja kojom će tumarati samoproklamirani mesija dijeleći pravdu prema vlastitom nahođenju” (Filozofski fakultet 2019). To je kredo svih političkih frakcija u današnjoj Srbiji: *neprijatelj krađe našu budućnost*. Kralj u usponu, zemlja koja se pretvara u pustinju, poruka koju je potrebno odgonetnuti, ugrožena imovina – to su oblici eshatološkog mišljenja u nastajanju.

Poveznica između imigracije, generacije i buduće apokalipse posebno je snažna među članovima labavo definirane ekopopulističke mreže “Odranimo reke Stare planine” koju pratim od 2018. godine. Seljaci, aktivisti, znanstvenici i prirodnjaci prosvjeduju protiv razvoja malih hidroelektrana, odnosno karbonski neutralne tehnologije koja ipak izaziva nasilnu “zelenu otimačinu”. Poput vizionara kojima se bavi Petrović-Šteger, branitelji rijeka također posuđuju iz dugotrajne, predjugoslavenske prošlosti kako bi zamislili buduće alternative za oživljavanje planine. Oni nisu zarobljeni ni ljevičarskom ni desničarskom scenom, već progovaraju o tjeskobama i jednih i drugih. Riječni se “biološki minimum”, na primjer, počinje tumačiti kao nagovještaj “populacijskog minimuma”, odnosno sustavnog istiskivanja svakog oblika života iz zemlje. Pastrve i rakovi prikazani su kao supatnici ostarjelih seljaka, nezaposlenih ljudi u gradovima i njihove (ne)rođene djece, jer su svi ostavljeni bez glasa i bez vode kako bi izumrli. Pokret kaže: prvo ćemo obraniti rijeke, a zatim oživjeti planine (Rajković 2020).

Petrović-Šteger tvrdi da antropološka analiza “ne samo da opisuje nego i predviđa”. Isto vrijedi i za naše sugovornike, ali često na agonistički način. Primjerice, za Staru planinu je uvriježeno mišljenje da su različiti državni režimi u prošlosti urbanizirali stanovništvo samo zato da bi olakšali otimanje vode. Tvrde da prava meta ovdje nije električna energija, već pitka voda i ruda. Lokalni investitori i njihovi zaštitnici na vlasti doživljavaju se samo kao marionete tajnih snaga, uključujući kineski kapital i banke iz EU-a. “Budući ratovi bit će hladni”, rekla mi je jedna braniteljica, povezujući lokalne sukobe s nadolazećim “ratom za vodu”. U takvom se ratu vuku neizravni potezi, rekla je. “Sve je to poput igre Rizik – morate predvidjeti sljedeći potez svog neprijatelja, baš kao što on predviđa vaš.”

Protivnička borba i neprijatelji koji predviđaju međusobne poteze – sve to evocira pojmove strategije i taktike, vojne pojmove na koje se antropologija može pozvati u proučavanju stavova ljudi o nadolazećoj budućnosti. Kao što tvrdi Latour, antropocen je prije svega ratno stanje proglašeno u trenutku kada propadaju sami temelji modernizacije. U tom smislu, glavno pitanje našeg vremena jest koju zemlju naseliti i s kime je dijeliti (Latour 2018). Takav stav dijele investitori i oni koji pružaju otpor na Staroj planini jer ih i jedne i druge pokreću pitanja: Što će se dogoditi kada gradovi postanu nenastanjivi? Tko će moći živjeti na planinama? Koja nova vrijedna prebivališta treba otkriti? U borbi sve ovisi o strategiji i taktičkom razmišljanju – od odluke o tome koje će skupine biti u središtu pozornosti i koje će se poruke prikazivati na Facebooku, do odluke što odabrati kao novu granicu borbe – kako druga strana ne bi stigla prije vas. U tom lovu budućnost se ne otkriva beskrajno; više je riječ o Drugom dolasku koji može spasiti tek nekolicinu.

Ta vizija nije uvijek jasna. Borba za rijeke započela je kao savez onih koji su bili izravno pogođeni, a kasnije je to generalizirano na “sve koji vole rijeke” kao “izvor života”. No taj je savez cijelo vrijeme prožet raznim špekulativnim interesima: netko je vidio potencijal za ekoturizam na svojoj djedovini, netko prostor za razvoj svog ekološkog aktivizma, netko priliku za dolazak na vlast. Do 2020. godine priče o unosnom profitu toliko su bile česte da su podijelile pokret, koji je istovremeno vidio i

svoju malu pobjedu (privremeno odustajanje od projekta elektrana) i bio suočen s novim izazovom u vidu turističkog procvata. Pojavila su se pitanja: Tko će graditi na Staroj planini? Je li to cijelo vrijeme bio cilj? Kome je borba doista služila? Bivši suborci više nisu vjerovali jedni drugima, a sumnja se pojavila tamo gdje je nekad boravilo zajedničko uvjerenje.

To je sudbina vizionara: ne mogu uvijek znati za koga se bore ili kako će njihova vizija naposljetku ispasti. Jedan dan mislite da ste doživjeli epifaniju, a drugi shvatite da pjevate tuđu pjesmu. Zamagljuje se granice između vizija i zamračenja jer nikada niste jedini koji pokušavate zgrabiti budućnost.

Potencijal je rudnik i svi kopaju.

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## Transformativne budućnosti: vizionarska sila u nevizionarsko doba

Budućnost je nezgodno pitanje. Po definiciji ne postoji. Ili radije, kao što je Ernst Bloch (1986 [1959]) naglasio u svom poticajnom djelu *Princip nada*, ona postoji samo kao “još ne”. Kao uvjereni marksist Bloch je “još ne” shvaćao tako: mislio je da on i drugi zaista mogu predvidjeti što slijedi i uskladiti svoje mišljenje i reprezentaciju s tom “stvarnom” budućnošću. Pretpostavljam da smo izgubili tu sigurnost, taj ideološki luksuz modernog doba. Danas nam preostaju samo nejasne nade u nešto bolje – oblici “fantastičnog futurizma” kako je to nenamjerno rekla Jane Guyer (2007).

Zbog toga manje-više svi mogu nagađati kako će izgledati budućnost u bilo kojoj sadašnjosti. To je njezina ljepota i privlačnost: prilagodljivost i nepredvidljivost. Činjenica da antropolog, kao ni bilo koji drugi analitičar, nije u poziciji predviđati budućnost ne treba spriječiti stupanje u razgovore o budućnosti koje vode njegovim sugovornici. A razgovor o budućnosti doista se vodi svugdje, stalno, na sve moguće načine i u svim oblicima. To je još jedna lijepa osobina budućnosti: njezina nevjerojatna sveprisutnost. Ako je potražite, ne možete je ne vidjeti. No, u naše doba ono na što antropolozi nailaze nije stvarna budućnost kao takva. Umjesto toga, različite ideje, afekti i objekti određene sadašnjosti dobivaju vremenski karakter koji čini da pripadaju “budućnosti” ljudi čije živote imamo privilegiju proučavati. Ako razmislite o tome, riječ je o zapanjujućoj mentalnoj aktivnosti koja se u vrlo različitim kontekstima vrlo različito primjenjuje. Nije pogrešno reći da ljudi od svih vremenskih dimenzija najviše energije troše na budućnost.

Svojom znatiželjom i intelektualnom oštrinom Maja Petrović-Šteger ulazi u ono što je sada već uhodano područje istraživanja u antropologiji, a ipak uspijeva antro-

pologiji budućnosti ponuditi novu i iznenađujuću perspektivu. U središtu njezina provokativnog teksta nalazi se općenitije pitanje: što je za antropologa predvidljivo? Obično bih na to odgovorio protupitanjem: kada bismo mogli predvidjeti budućnost, kada i zašto bi to bilo korisno za našu analizu? No, to bi značilo promašiti ono na što Petrović-Šteger ukazuje. Njezina potraga za onim što naziva “alternativnim scenarijima”, tj. budućnošću različitom od uobičajeno predviđene negativne duboko je ugrađena u potragu njezinih sugovornika u Srbiji za novom vizijom njihovih pojedinačnih, ali, što je važnije, i kolektivnih budućnosti. Vizionarstvo – potencijalno snažna proizvodnja vizija budućnosti – fokus je i analitički doprinos Maje Petrović-Šteger. Ona želi istražiti upravo tu snagu koju određene ideje o budućnosti i odnosi prema njoj mogu postići. Iako se njihovi stvarni učinci mogu odrediti samo retrospektivno, ipak je važno otkriti zašto i kako određene reprezentacije budućnosti bivaju viđene “vizionarskima” u sadašnjosti.

Konceptualne taksonomije nalaze se u središtu poddiscipline te antropologije vremena općenito. Prvi pristupi antropološkim istraživanjima budućnosti počeli su sa svakodnevnim fenomenima kao što je nada (npr. Miyazaki 2004), a ubrzo su potaknuti mnogo širim interdisciplinarnim interesom za istraživanje afekata. Znanstvenici različitih disciplina istraživali su mnoge druge afekte i njihovu inherentnu budućnost te općenitije temporalne logike. U međuvremenu su eksplicitniji odnosi prema budućnosti, primjerice u praksi planiranja (Abram i Weszkalnys 2013), također usmjerili naše razumijevanje ljudskog postojanja u vremenu prema priznavanju različitosti s kojom se ljudi odnose prema budućnosti. U svom sam radu (Ringel 2018) ukazao na takve različite prezentacijske i neprezentacijske odnose prema budućnosti u kontekstu koji se ne razlikuje puno od onog kojim se bavi Petrović-Šteger: riječ je o postsocijalističkom, postindustrijskom gradu koji se smanjuje (engl. *shrinking*) u Istočnoj Njemačkoj. U toj etnografiji dodatno razrađujem neprocjenjiv konceptualni alat Jane Guyer (2007) – “blisku” i “daleku” budućnost, “nametnuti prezentizam” itd. Nedavno su se Bryant i Knight (2019) još eksplicitnije usredotočili na različite načine odnosa s budućnošću, posvetivši poglavlja anticipaciji, očekivanju, spekulaciji i dr.

Ideja o vizionarstvu koju iznosi Petrović-Šteger intrigantna je zbog toga što još uvijek nisam siguran kojoj strani tipične podjele pripada. Radi li se o intuitivnom, nereflektiranom, nesvjesnom i afektivnom odnosu prema budućnosti i “činjenju” budućnosti ili o dobro utvrđenoj, konkretnoj i detaljnoj reprezentaciji alternativne budućnosti? Ili je riječ i o jednom i o drugom u različitim trenucima? Upravo tu njezin batesonovski pristup postaje najzanimljiviji: kako se pojavljuju ti odnosi prema budućnosti i kako dobivaju političku, društvenu i imaginativnu snagu? Kako pratiti njihovo pojavljivanje i širenje? Zapravo, kako unatoč svemu uopće dolazi do njih kada im, kako autorica naglašava, nedavna prošlost toliko stoji na putu? Čini se da ta pitanja nadilaze ono čemu se inače pristupa kao pitanju djelovanja vremena – obliku djelovanja koje nam puno toga može reći o ljudskim odnosima prema budućnosti (Ringel i Morošanu 2016; Flaherty, Meinert i Dålsgard 2020) – i omogućavaju nove korake u konceptualizaciji politike vremena i budućnosti.

U početku sam bio skeptičan prema ideji korištenja vizija kao analitičkog puta prema budućem. Kao što je njemački kancelar jednom slavno rekao: "Tko god ima vizije, trebao bi posjetiti liječnika!"<sup>9</sup> Međutim, što više razmišljam o tome, to se više mogu poistovjetiti s angažiranim pristupom Petrović-Šteger. Inspirirana teoretičarima afekta poput Kathleen Stewart (2007), razumijem da se želi baviti "onim što predvidljivo ne obuhvaća": onime što omogućava kratki pogled u budućnost u njezinu potencijalu, što je usmjereno prema budućnosti bez jamstva, ali što istovremeno naginje predvidljivom i dobiva svoj oblik i snagu. Takvi su nestabilni, sve izraženiji i oblikovani odnosi prema budućnosti obećavajući početak. Međutim, njihovi nastajuć (usp. Carrithers 2007), neprozirni, nejasni, naizgled čak i nadnaravni oblik i snaga ne samo da govore o budućnosti kojoj teže već i o sadašnjosti u kojoj se javljaju.

Moj prezentistički pristup vremenu čini nešto slično. Mišljenja sam da se antropologija budućnosti nikada tehnički ne bavi stvarnom budućnošću koja će se dogoditi, nego se uvijek bavi sadašnjošću u kojoj su te budućnosti artikulirane.<sup>10</sup> Sadašnjost (i njezine brojne budućnosti) koju sam istraživao u istočnonjemačkom gradu nije se puno razlikovala od srpskih budućnosti koje istražuje Petrović-Šteger. Vizije budućnosti mjesta gdje sam istraživao bile su uglavnom sumorne. Predviđalo se da će se grad dodatno smanjiti, a usred svih tmurnih i turobnih predviđanja mnogi bi se njegovi stanovnici složili da je grad izgubio svaku nadu i sve budućnosti. No, u tom su kontekstu mnogi sugovornici također zahtijevali i nove vizije budućnosti grada. Željeli su konkretne planove i vodstvo koje inspirira. No ako ne griješim, te moderne verzije vizija nisu u potpunosti ono za čime traga Petrović-Šteger. Njezin je etnografski fokus usmjeren na modalitet povezivanja s budućnošću i istraživanja budućnosti koji promatra pomake u onom što naziva kolektivnim načinom razmišljanja – nagovještajima onoga što možda još nije pokazalo svoje stvarne učinke, ali se ipak može smatrati vizionarskim. Njezin je pogled usmjeren na stvarne, iako nadolazeće, društvene transformacije i uvjete koji dopuštaju pojavu alternativnih scenarija.

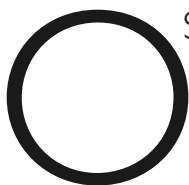
U mom etnografskom kontekstu jedan od preduvjeta za drugačiji odnos prema budućnosti uključivao je svojevrсни zaobilazni put, nešto što mislim da bi Petrović-Šteger također mogla uzeti u obzir. Mnoge osobe s kojima sam razgovarao također nisu znale kako izraziti, a ponekad ni zamisliti ili poželjeti drugačiju budućnost. Smatrale su da se stvari samo mogu pogoršati, nikako poboljšati. Oni na vlasti, iako potencijalno manje korumpirani nego oni u Srbiji, također nisu pružali nikakve konceptualne alate ni idejnu podlogu za predviđanje postindustrijske budućnosti onkraj trenutnog demografskog, društvenog i gospodarskog propadanja grada. Socijalističko-modernistička prošlost mojih sugovornika izgubila je svoju ideološku težinu; njihova novija postsocijalistička prošlost povezivala se samo s desničarskim nasiljem i propašću grada. Međutim, umjesto da se upletu u raširenu problematizaciju budućnosti, mnogi moji prijatelji s terena prvo su se morali pozabaviti onim što mogu opisati samo kao deproblematizaciju postojanja njihova grada u vremenu – njegove prošlosti, sadašnjosti i budućnosti.

<sup>9</sup> Helmut Schmidt: "Wer Visionen hat, sollte zum Arzt gehen."

<sup>10</sup> Usput, isto se, uz poneke male preinake, može reći i za prošlost.

Luksuz – još jedan – našeg krizom obilježenog vremena je u tome da ne treba puno razmišljati o budućnosti: opušteni u sadašnjosti i ograđujući se od ostavština prošlosti. Nekima se taj oblik budućega ili njegov nedostatak na prvi pogled čini izrazito nepolitičnim. Međutim, pitam se jesu li to budućnosti koje traže i neki od sugovornika Maje Petrović-Šteger. Ako su nastale u sadašnjosti, mogu li se ubrojiti u vizionarske? Ili bi se smatralo da su lišene politike i transformativne snage?





## SVRT NA KOMENTARE

### Maja Petrović-Šteger

Veoma sam zahvalna diskutantima na njihovim komentarima. Kolegijalno su se i širokog pogleda uključili u raspravu. Zadovoljstvo je vidjeti koliko toga imamo zajedničkog te kako naša terenska iskustva (ako ne uvijek i naše interpretacije) međusobno rezoniraju.

U inicijalnom tekstu izrazila sam oprez spram brzopletosti s kojom antropolozi ponekad karakteriziraju posrednike društveno-povijesnih promjena. Predložila sam da se pri dokumentiranju društvenih nedaća i promjena kojima društva teže valja zadržati na praksama zamišljanja, na imaginativnom i ne zamijeniti ga prebrzo jezikom političkog. To je teza koju predlažem općenito, ali je posebno važna za etnografe Srbije. Oni, naime, izučavaju prostor koji se prečesto tumači pomoću ispolitiziranih pretpostavki. Političko, tvrdim, kao način analize uživa određenu reprezentacijsku hegemoniju, kako za građane Srbije tako i za njihove promatrače (što je samo po sebi već dobar razlog za analitički otpor). Razumijevanja Srbije koja prenaplašavaju njezinu svakodnevnu politiku time dodatno konstruiraju njezinu temporalnost na specifičan i predodređen način. U takvim političkim čitanjima Srbija je ustaljena kao esencijalno postsocijalistička i postkonfliktna. U tekstu sam predložila da antropologinja koju zanimaju mogućnosti promjene u regiji može korisno nadograditi pažnju koju usmjerava na događanja u političkoj sferi interesom za šire društvene ideje i “vizije”, s obzirom na to da upravo one djeluju na kolektivnu svijest na načine koji nisu očito politički. Predložila sam etnografiju vizionarskog i “vizionarstva” u Srbiji kao korektiv stereotipnim reprezentacijama zemlje koju mnogi vide kao arhaičnu, osiromašenu i osuđenu na sukobe. Tekst se nastojao usmjeriti ne samo na ono što javna sfera – formalno “političko” – ne spoznaje nego i na ono što (još) nisu spoznali ni antropolozi. Vjerujem da istraživanje toga kako određeni načini samorazumijevanja, zamišljanja društvenog dobra i vremena poslaguju pojedince i društvo omogućuje refleksiju o procesima i praksama pretpostavljanja, budući da se oni odnose i na građane Srbije i na one koji ih promatraju – antropologe.

Iz komentara iščitavam da se kolege ne slažu u potpunosti s nekim od mojih analitičkih stajališta. U onome što slijedi osvrnut ću se na glavne argumente u kojima se razilazimo.

#### Vrijednost imaginativnog

Svi komentatori bi se vjerojatno složili da ne postoje neutralni etnografski podaci ni nepristrana analiza. Etnografsko iskustvo samo po sebi utječe na smjer analize.

Nadalje, način na koji antropolog prikuplja podatke i sastavlja etnografske opise odražava njegove vrijednosti. "Što" iz naših podataka proizlazi iz toga "kako" smo podatke prikupili do te mjere da su naša zapažanja i zaključci često u funkciji naših pristranosti i misaonih isključivanja.

Moje se istraživanje bavi Srbijom. No pokušajmo, ako je moguće, razdvojiti označitelj "Srbija" i njegov prizvuk od teorijske pozicije koja teži široj primjeni. Srpska politika (čak i u svojim sukobima), s čime će se komentatori uglavnom složiti, poništava sve što djeluje izvan politike do te mjere da su oni koji je tumače suzdržani pri njezinu definiranju te smatraju da je koncept "izvanpolitičkog" kao i ideja "budućnosti" prilično ispražnjen. Ipak, sučeljavanje s takvim cinizmom bi zauzvrat moglo potaknuti zanimanje za vizionarsko i imaginativno. To što se Srbija percipira kao duboko politizirana zemlja u svom samorazumijevanju i reprezentacijama ne ograničava istraživača na proučavanje samo tih aspekata društvenog života. Kao etnografi trebali bismo biti posebno oprezni da način na koji artikuliramo prakse naših subjekata ne svedemo na komentare o njihovoj političkoj pripadnosti ili stranačkoj politici. U svakom slučaju, pitanje nije jesu li (tj. jesu li ili nisu) koncepti i prakse koje opisujemo politički, nego kroz koje se "modalitete" (v. Greenberg) pretpolitičko povezuje s političkim i javnim životom.

Očito je da svakodnevna nacionalna (i međunarodna) politika ima ogroman utjecaj na blagostanje stanovnika Srbije (tema kojom sam se bavila u prethodnim etnografskim radovima). Istovremeno, s čime se Greenberg te Potkonjak i Škokić slažu, ideja da se u političko može uzdati kao u sredstvo istinske promjene mnogima je posve šuplja. Bilo da razmatraju svoju prošlost, sadašnjost ili budućnost, moji sugovornici često sagledavaju formalnu politiku (tj. vladu, formalne institucije moći, pomahnitalo medijsko izvještavanje o stranačkoj politici, stvaranje izvanrednog stanja i njegovu normalizaciju) kao ne samo nesposobnu nego i perfidnu.<sup>11</sup> Iz njihove točke gledišta "političko" ne obuhvaća čitav niz drugih iskustava i očekivanja koja su od vitalnog značaja u njihovim životima i koja se povezuju sa širim međuljudskim, društvenim i prirodnim sustavima. Nadalje, etnografsko istraživanje i analitička pozicija koje iznosim u članku ne bave se kritikom vlasti. Istraživanje se usredotočuje na pojedince i kolektive koji streme obnavljanju i oživljavanju svojih osobnih i društvenih resursa na neki potpuno drugačiji način.

Možda je upravo izbor suradnika i sugovornika ono što razlikuje moje od iskustava i pozicija komentatora. Rajković istražuje čuvare rijeka i radnike u elektranama na Staroj planini u jugoistočnoj Srbiji čije su imaginacije i svakodnevne političke akcije nužno prepletene. Greenberg proučava prodemokratske aktiviste u Srbiji čije kritike svakodnevne politike, kao što točno utvrđuje, mogu biti i posljedica i formativni element političkih uvjeta. Ringel prati kako se građani postsocijalističke Hoyerswerde, njemačkog grada čija se populacija u cijeloj zemlji najbrže smanjuje, odnose prema budućnosti. Potkonjak i Škokić propituju odnos prema radu, nezaposlenosti, vremenu i kreativnosti stanovnika postindustrijskog Siska. Politička valentnost zamišljanja

<sup>11</sup> Ne isključujem mogućnost da u Srbiji postoje političari koji bi istinski bili za transformaciju, no još ih nisam upoznala.

mojih sugovornika (npr. stvaranje nacionalne mreže sirotišta s elitnim nastavničkim kadrom; educiranje ljudi o povijesti putem obilazaka podzemne infrastrukture i katakombi; uspostavljanje neuobičajenih zbirki biljne medicine čiji nastanak i upotreba nanovo promišljaju ekološke taksonomije; povezivanje pravoslavne duhovne glazbe sa zdravljem itd.) neodređena je na jedan dublji način. Mene kao istraživačicu zanima kako bismo takve vrste djelovanja, omogućene upravo imaginativnim i vizionarskim praksama, mogli proučavati i sagledavati na još otvoreniji način?

Načini nastajanja društvenih ideja svakako su povezani s time kako je političko uspostavljeno i shvaćeno. To je, ako upotrijebim izraz Jessice Greenberg, “vernakularna institucionalizacija” ili popularizacija ideja koja ovisi o zajedničkoj “hermeneutici”. Slažem se s njom kada piše da “društvene promjene zahtijevaju [...] voljnu kreativnu ekspresiju na načine koji su održivi, ali se također mogu prevesti u razne modalitete politike, ekonomije, društva i upravljanja”. Ipak, podsjetila bih čitatelje da nitko od mojih sugovornika ne tvrdi da je apolitičan. Oni priznaju svoje političke sklonosti, streme osobnoj autonomiji, ulaze u ekonomske odnose i, prirodom svoje struke ili aktivizma, čine sastavni dio različitih institucija i mreža. Profesionalno i ekonomski su pozicionirani. Činjenica da raspolažu društvenim, intelektualnim i (ako imaju sreće!) financijskim kapitalom znači da su svjesni utjecaja ideološkog i političkog nasljeđa u svojim životima. Ipak, svi smatraju da ih sistemska politika idejno osiromašuje. Prečvrsto ih zauzdava i ograničava im sagledavanje svijeta. Zbog toga svjesno izbjegavaju uokvirivanje vlastite kritike, djelovanja i izražavanja svojih želja u jeziku politike jer ga smatraju nepouzdanim. Političko doživljavaju kao stroj koji sve na što naiđe proguta, samelje i zatim ispljune. Drugim riječima, ne polažu nadu u to da bi ih političko (ili politizirana verzija eshatološkog) moglo “izbaviti” trenutnih društvenih neprilika. Umjesto toga zamišljaju i stvaraju paralelni sustav djelovanja.

Čini se da komentatori moga rada takva svjedočenja zamišljenog, koja se uspostavljaju paralelno s političkim, tumače na različite načine. Rajković smatra da bi to ipak mogla biti varka: tobožnje odricanje od “borbe” kako bi borba bila spretnija. Greenberg u navedenom također vidi prešutno “djelovanje politike”, koje se tako može interpretirati barem na pojedinim mjestima. Ringel moguće ukazuje da je vizija, makar je “intuitivna” ili “afektivna”, ipak politički angažirana u sadašnjosti.<sup>12</sup> U svakom slučaju, moj rad svakako ne pokušava opovrgnuti znanstvenike koji pozivaju na temeljitu političku antropologiju Srbije (i njezine sadašnjosti). Ne tvrdim da je političko lišeno imaginacije (na primjer, da nije ništa više od političkog mešetarenja), ni da je imaginativno oslobođeno političkog sadržaja. Umjesto toga, slijedeći svoje sugovornike, smatram da političko (kao i ekonomsko i religijsko) nije ekskluzivno područje koje omogućuje i ostvaruje društvene preobražaje. Dosadašnje etnografsko iskustvo izoštrilo je moj interes za to da političko u našim življenim kulturama i vremenu uvijek iznova dobiva na značenju i težini, postaje opipljivo i stvarno. Čini se da svi, uključujući etnografe, “politiku” vide posvuda. Gotovo svaka mreža prak-

<sup>12</sup> Iako sam inače, kao što pretpostavlja Ringel, inspirirana radom Kathleen Stewart, u ovom tekstu i istraživanju pokušavam uspostaviti dijalog s izvrsnim radom Charlesa Stewarta o povijesnoj svijesti i sanjanju (v. Palmié i Stewart 2016 i Stewart 2017).

si koja ima svoju institucionalnu strukturu zapada u tu kategoriju predmeta analize. Ipak, kakvog smisla ima politiku nazivati "stvarnom", a druge sposobnosti uma i društvenih praksi "manje stvarnima"? Tko odlučuje o tome što je stvarno u našim zajedničkim stvarnostima?

Riječ je, naravno, o širem antropološkom pitanju koje je povezano s time kako kategorije oblikuju svijet. U svom nastojanju da budu sekularni i objektivni, čini se da su etnografi uobičajeno oprezni s pripisivanjem faktičnosti i društvenog učinka zamišljenom (v. primjerice Potkonjak i Škokić). Ovdje se radi o pragu i razini preduvjeta da neku djelatnost razumijemo stvarnom (slično ranijem preispitivanju modaliteta kojima političko postaje proporcionalno nepolitičkom). Zaista, u kojem momentu vizionarstvo postane dovoljno vidljivo da bi se moglo analizirati? To je pitanje koje podjednako karakterizira i objekte naše analize i samu našu pažnju. Lako je biti privučen razmatranju stvari nakon što se uobliče, kao i pokretima ili izrazima mišljenja nakon što postanu očiti. No koji su bili njihovi početni oblici? Jesmo li ih mogli ranije uočiti? Kako se određeni odnosi prema budućnosti uopće zamišljaju, pojavljuju i kako postaju društveno prepoznatljiviji? Tko je "vizionar"?

Dokumentiranje alternativnih društvenih scenarija zajamčenih i omogućenih upravo "vizijama" sugovornika ne znači da moje istraživanje predlaže proučavanje nadzemaljskih fantazija. Mene zanimaju povijesno specifični ljudi, njihova djela, ideje i idejne strategije. Istražujem planove za "blisku" budućnost, a ne fantazmagoriju onih koji se ne snalaze drugdje osim u vlastitoj mašti. Vizije proučavanih vizionara podrazumijevaju pragmatične intervencije u društvenu tkivo, pa i onda kada ih odlikuju sadržaji koji sprječavaju njihovo jednostavno širenje i (ponekad) razumijevanje. Unutar antropologije projekt pristupanja zamišljenom kao nečem što potencijalno doprinosi stvaranju povijesti, a nije samo projekcija svakako nije novina (Alatas 2019). Disciplina bilježi različita nastojanja da se objasni epistemološko i ontološko privilegiranje imaginativnog (recimo, u vizijama i snovima) u svakodnevnom životu (Taneja 2018; također Tedlock 1987; Mittermaier 2011; Stewart 2017). Istraživanja su također pokazala kako stvarnosti ovisne o promatraču strukturiraju društvene situacije u mjeri u kojoj akteri imaju moć da zajedničku materijalnu stvarnost povežu s vlastitim vizijama (West 2008).

Moje se istraživanje fokusira na arhitekte, travare, filozofe, arheologe i druge koji žele doprinijeti onome što u svojoj imaginaciji vide kao društveno dobro. Ipak, važno je naglasiti da se, bez obzira na to jesam li "njihova suvremenica" (v. Potkonjak i Škokić), ne smatram njihovom "sustvarateljicom". Zaista ne znam, niti želim pretpostavljati, kakav će društveni utjecaj ljudi koje proučavam imati. Glavna je namjera oduprijeti se preranom "kodiranju" njihovih ideja i akcija u političkom smislu (što obično znači u smislu moralne naklonosti). Rajković je u pravu kada kaže da budućnost ne nastaje "deterministički", iako uvijek proizlazi iz zadanog "konteksta". No, tvrdim da nije razumno mjeriti učinkovitost vizija njihovim političkim uspjehom ili neuspjehom. U tom smislu vizionari koje proučavam ne bave se "bitkama za hegemoniju", praksama "otimanja" i preuzimanja budućnosti; nisu stranački ekskluzivni i pružaju otpor svakoj vrsti implicitnog nadmetanja (v. Rajković). Oprezni su u svo-

jim nastojanjima i ne traže potvrdu svojih vizija u političkom smislu. Čini se da su njihove vizije usmjerene na pronalaženje sredstava za obogaćivanje života, a ne na borbu za vidljivost, resurse ili moć.

Bateson je 1972. napisao:

Kažu da moć kviri; no to je, pretpostavljam, besmislica. Istina je da *ideja moći* kviri. Moć najbrže kviri one koji vjeruju u nju, a upravo oni je i najviše žele. (Bateson 2000 [1972]: 494)

Moji sugovornici izbjegavaju vlast i nisu zainteresirani za to da njihove vizije zamijene vizije drugih. Vizionarsko stoga shvaćam kao način razmišljanja i djelovanja koji od subjekata iziskuje da napuste rutine predvidljivih odgovora i režime zajedničkih imaginarija. Za razliku od političkih komentatora, moji sugovornici ne pokušavaju ublažiti svoju zabrinutost nad društvenim stanjem Srbije preračunavanjem kakve bi posljedice njihove i tuđe intervencije mogle imati. Za razliku od mnogih etnografa, oni ne barataju samo s već poznatim (objektima, ljudima, stvarima, vjerovanjima) nego i s onim što je djelomično poznato, što je nepoznato i tek u povojima. Smatram da je u takvoj etnografskoj situaciji korisno da se antropolog suzdrži od pokušaja da prakse svojih sugovornika učini odmah razumljivima, recimo umjetnim redanjem njihovih operacija ili klasificiranjem u zadane kategorije (“političke”, “ekonomske” itd.) i brzopletim zaključcima o njihovoj održivosti. Bilo bi bolje podsjetiti se da budućnost, usprkos željama da se predvidi, ostaje sasvim nepoznata. Ne samo sugovornicima već i antropolozima. Još ću jednom citirati Gregoryja Batesona:

Ne samo da ne možemo predvidjeti sljedeći trenutak u budućnosti nego, još dublje, ne možemo predvidjeti ni sljedeću dimenziju mikroskopskog, astronomske udaljenog ili geološki drevnog. Kao metoda percepcije – a to je sve što znanost može tvrditi da jest – znanost [...] je ograničena u svojoj sposobnosti da prikuplja vanjske i vidljive znakove onoga što bi moglo biti istina. Znanost *sondira*; ona ne dokazuje. (Bateson 2002 [1979]: 27)

Antropologija ima za cilj istovremeno biti i vremenska i nadvremenska u opisivanju raznolikih načina na koje istraživana društva ostvaruju smisao. Ono što je vjerojatno, moguće i nemoguće društveno je obilježeno, kao i znakovi i uvjeti pod kojima jedno prelazi u drugo. Promjene se svakako događaju i kroz manje očite oblike djelovanja. Sve to pokazuje važnost, vrijednost i težinu imaginativnog.

## Zahvale

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