

# TREBA ČUTI, VIDJETI I DOTAKNUTI

## Može li etnografija razgraditi naracije straha?

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Rad tematizira društvene, spoznajne i afektivne posljedice razornog potresa koji je pogodio područje Banije 29. prosinca 2020. godine. Prirodna nepogoda se ne razumijeva samo kao katastrofa nego i kao svojevrsna katarza koja je otkrila slojeve političkog zanemarivanja, teške prošlosti i duboke povezanosti čovjeka s prirodom. Autorica interpretira (posredovane i etnografski zabilježene) osobne naracije o prirodnoj nepogodi, ruinizaciji i regeneraciji, solidarnosti i međusobnom razumijevanju kao temelj za oblikovanje novih afektivnih zajednica i pokretanje procesa kojima se razgrađuju nacionalne (i nacionalističke) naracije i postiže osnaživanje zajednice. Metodološki okvir rada obuhvaća participativnu etnografiju, teorije usmenog pripovijedanja (Bausinger 2018 [1958]; Borland 2021; Bošković-Stulli 1984; Ranke 2018 [1967]; Rudan 2020, Shuman 2005), osjetilnu etnografiju (Bendix 2000, 2005) i ekološku spoznaju “duboke međuovisnosti čovjeka i svih stvari koje ga okružuju” (da Silva i Neuman 2018). Autorica zaključuje da seljani, kohabitirajući s prirodom, ali i oviseci o njoj, na jedinstvenom iskustvu nepogode grade smisao tako što uspoređuju ovu katastrofu s drugim primjerima ljudske patnje i oblikuju je u narativni obrazac koji “od alegorijskog čini osobno, od lokalnog kozmičko” iskustvo (Shuman 2005).

Ključne riječi: potres na Baniji, etnografija nepogode, prirodne vs. društvene katastrofe, naracije ruinizacije i revitalizacije, osjetilna etnografija, narativna demokracija

*The concept of progress must be grounded in the idea of catastrophe. That things are “status quo” is the catastrophe.*  
(Benjamin 2003: 184)

*Nigdje nije moguće susresti toliko tuge koja se neprestano pretvara u ljubav, nego na Baniji. Zapisujem tu ljubav iz ruku koje dodiruju stabla poput djeteta, koje dodiruju životinje poput djece, zemlju.*

(Herceg 2022)<sup>1</sup>

Ovu raspravu započinjem provokativnom tezom Waltera Benjamina da katastrofa nije čin prirode, nego ljudskog nedjelovanja – nesposobnosti, nemoći, nedostatka volje i znanja da se udarac prirode pretvori u obnavljanje života, u razvojni ciklus. Metafore potresa, prijeloma, preokreta i obrata česte su u društvenoj i intelektualnoj povijesti kao oznake revolucionarnih pomaka i preskoka. A da bi se iz ruševina stvorio nov materijalni i duhovni temelj zajednice potrebno je mnogo napora, elana

<sup>1</sup> Monika Herceg, “Reportažni esej: Hrabrost preživljavanja na Baniji”, 3. ožujka 2022., <https://express.24sata.hr/top-news/reportazni-esej-hrabrost-prezivljavanja-na-baniji-25665-express.24sata.hr> (pristup 5. 3. 2022.).

i imaginacije. Potreban je duhovni “napor dohvaćanja, posezanja, obraćanja, dohvaćanja nečega što nije prisutno, nečega što se pojavljuje samo kao obzor mogućnosti” (Ahmed 2014: 204). Pjesnikinja Monika Herceg će reći da je potrebno i puno ljubavi – ljubavi prema zemlji i plodovima zemlje, životinjama i biljkama koje kao jedinstven mikrouniverzum tvore obitavalište ljudi u ruralnim područjima. Ljubav je širok pojam za afektivnu i moralnu privrženost, skrb i brigu prema ljudskim i neljudskim životinjama, stvarima i objektima koji tvore egzistenciju seljana u prostoru i vremenu<sup>2</sup> i koji se “pričavanjem svaki put iznova aktualiziraju” (Marks 2015: 195). Potres u ovom radu interpretiram kao prirodnu nepogodu (koja je 28. i 29. prosinca 2020. godine pogodila Petrinju i brojna druga mjesta na Baniji), ali i kao metaforu za egzistencijalnu potresenost, za iskustvo zajednice suočene sa strahom, smrtnošću, ranjivošću tijela, ali i s uzajamnom ovisnošću, “uviđanjem vlastite muke u muci drugoga” (Nussbaum 2019: 445) koja “zamišljanju zajednice” daje novu kvalitetu.

Kad sam započela s istraživanjem pripovjednih oblika i komunikacijskih praksi kojima se posreduje iskustvo potresa, pandemije i socijalne krize, moj je interes bio usmjeren na naracije straha i tjeskobni ton vremena koji dijelimo.<sup>3</sup> Zanimalo me kako prirodne nepogode i pandemija (usp. Jambrešić Kirin 2022), globalna kriza ekonomije, društva i demokracije, urušavanje zdravstvenih i socijalnih institucija, nepovjerenje u znanost i racionalni um, retorika novih podjela, oblikuju atmosferu koju je Martha Nussbaum (2018) nazvala uvodom u “monarhiju straha”. Međutim, što sam dulje razgovarala sa stanovnicima Banije o njihovoj nesreći, gubitku, žalovanju i gnjevu, o svakodnevnom brigama i strepnjama te životnim vrednotama, što sam upoznala, pročitala i odgledala više njihovih životnih priča, uvidjela sam da “afektivni obrat” u humanistici treba odgovoriti i na pitanje “kako možemo teoretizirati pozitivne afekte i politiku dobrih osjećaja”, to jest “kako osjećaji čine stvari dobrima” (Ahmed 2010: 30). Meni se, kao i mnoštvu novinara, volontera, civilnih aktivista i istraživača u ruševnim i zapuštenim banijskim krajolicima, uvijek iznova nametalo pitanje – kako to da nas pomiješani osjećaji s kojima se vraćamo kući istovremeno “peku i griju” poput banijske rakije, kako primjećuje Monika Herceg. Kao što ću tijekom ovog rada pokušati objasniti, smatram da su pripovjedačke izvedbe i usmenoknjiževna baština banijskog *homo narransa* najzaslužnije za ovaj afirmativni osjećaj koji korespondira s onim što Husserl naziva “središtem našeg bića”, ravnotežom afektivne i moralne ekonomije koja aktivira praktično djelovanje (usp. Ahmed 2002: 32). Ukratko, riječ je o pripovjednom načinu samoreprezentacije kao sredstvu opisivanja i oblikovanja spoznajnih, moralnih, emocionalnih i ekoloških praksi sa snažnim uporištem u folklornim i religijskim predodžbama o svrhovitom svijetu,

2 Ekološka i animalistička paradigma te teorije antropocena antropologe sile da iznova preispitaju što je ljudsko, što socio-povijesno, što kulturno-geografsko “u konkretnom prostoru i vremenu” umjesto da slijede biopolitičku i srodne paradigme koje zanima kako se regulira *goli život* “unutar odnosa moći” (Prica 2001: 225).

3 Projekt “Naracije straha: od starih zapisa do nove usmenosti” (2017–2021) financirala je Hrvatska zaklada za znanost. Uz pedesetak izvornih znanstvenih radova, u okviru projekta objavljena su dva tematska zbornika: *Naracije straha* (2019) i *Encountering Fear* (2020). Ovaj je rad prerađeno uvodno izlaganje s 18. kongresa ISFNR-a (*Encountering Emotions in Folk Narrative and Folklife*, 5–8. rujna 2021., virtualni Zagreb).

dobrom životu i dostojanstvenoj smrti, bitno različitima od onih koje promiče zreli informativni kapitalizam. Istraživačev osjećaj ispunjenog i svrhovitog djelovanja unutar “antropologije zajedničkih preokupacija” (Jansen 2020b) može se, naravno, kritički tumačiti i kao profesionalno “samozadovoljavanje”, kao obol “humanitarne ideologiji” civilnog društva ili žal za većom društvenom ulogom. Imajući na umu složenu problematiku tekstualnog reprezentiranja i usustavljanja svakog (etnografskog) iskustva (White 1980), ipak smatram da je upravo način na koji stanovnici Banije/Banovine<sup>4</sup> široj javnosti predstavljaju svoje deprivirane i eliptične živote “to što je afirmativno, što nam daje drugačiji skup zamišljanja onog što se može smatrati dobrim ili boljim životom” (Ahmed 2002: 50). Na tom je tragu i zaključak Marca Augéa da su živa riječ<sup>5</sup> i pripovjedačka sposobnost ono što povezuje etnologa (i folklorista) i njihove sugovornike zaokupljene općim pitanjima sudbine, zaborava i smrti (Ože 2003: 68–69). Premda su načini kritičke fabulacije (usp. Hartman 2008) ovih tema različiti u svakodnevnom i znanstvenom diskursu, doživljaj sve veće međupovezanosti i međusobne ovisnosti veći je no ikad jer su i prijetnje (poput nuklearnog rata) opće i jednoliko raspodijeljene. Dok su se još donedavno teške posljedice klimatskih promjena i ratova smatrale popudbinom “trećeg svijeta”, danas smo: “ušli u doba katastrofa. One su univerzalne po svojim posljedicama jer su i problemi današnjeg svijeta univerzalni” (Okri 2020). A univerzalne su i nagomilane frustracije u znanstvenom i društvenom polju zato što je danas lakše zamisliti kraj svijeta nego (istinsku) društvenu promjenu.

## Pripovijedanje o potresu i teleogenetički zaplet

Početnu pretpostavku o važnosti pripovjedne razmjene iskustva u kaotičnim, izvanrednim i nesigurnim vremenima preuzela sam od Michaela Wilsona (2014), koji tvrdi da je pripovijedanje u najvećoj mjeri suobrazno doživljaju zbrke, nereda i kontingencije trenutka. Pripovjedne razmjene opažaja, dojmova i stavova ostvaruju se kao “fina zbrka” i “izvedba trenutka” koja je u stanju obuhvatiti i transcendirati kontradiktornosti i paradokse životnih situacija te pomiješane osjećaje kako govornika tako i sugovornika. Iz istog se razloga naracije (o sebi i drugima) tako dobro i brzo prilagođavaju uvjetima mrežnog komuniciranja i novim hipertekstualnim i piktografskim alatima za oblikovanje doživljaja, osjećaja i komentara na vanjske događaje (Wilson 2014). Unatoč dvojakom epistemološkom vrednovanju narativnosti kao katalizatora racionalnih

<sup>4</sup> Oba pojma u ovom radu koristim paralelno i potpuno ravnopravno jer ih i stanovnici brojnih mjesta, sela i zaselaka ove regije tako koriste i kontinuirano pune povijesnim, sociološkim, etnonacionalnim i kontekstualnim značenjima. Usp. Alemko Gluhak, “Analiza jezikoslovca: Riječ Banovina ravnopravna je Baniji, drugačije tumačenje je neznanje”, 13. siječnja 2021., *Večernji list*, <https://www.vecernji.hr/vijesti/rijec-banovina-ravnopravna-je-baniji-drugacije-tumacenje-je-neznanje-1460763> (pristup 10. 10. 2021.).

<sup>5</sup> I pojedini filozofi u živoj riječi vide temelj etičkog odnosa: “To je glas koji nadmudruje svaku diskurzivnu argumentaciju i nudi čvrste temelje za moralno prosuđivanje onkraj diskurzivnosti, onkraj zamršenih dedukcija, opravdanja i razmišljanja” (Dolar 2009: 84).

spoznaja, ali i iracionalnih sudova, predrasuda i teorija zavjere (Livingston 2009), pripovijedanje organizira znanje i objašnjava iskustvo, a posebice je važan dio socijalnog oblikovanja zajednice jer “nam pomaže razumjeti inače nedokučivo iskustvo drugih ljudi” (Shuman 2005: 146). Žanrovski obrasci i narativne tehnike posredovanja iskustva u temelju su interpersonalne komunikacije. I psihoanalitičari i folkloristi znaju da je potrebno dvoje da se posvjedoči “drama” nečijeg intimnog svijeta i da verbalno kodiranje snažnih emocija poput straha traži razumijevanje društvenog okvira, folklorne tradicije te etičkih normi pojedinca i kolektiva (usp. Rudan 2020; Polgar 2020).

Društvene mreže su danas najzaslužnije za oblikovanje dominantnih hibridnih strategija (samo)reprezentacije i značenjsko punjenje (kao i zamućivanje) binarnih pojmova privatno i javno, emocionalno i racionalno, verbalno i slikovno, humorno i ozbiljno, bitno i nebitno. Rezultat ovog procesa jest postupna globalizacija digitalnog folkloru i činjenica da “online izvedbe postaju sve više nalik tradicijskim oblicima interakcija licem-u-lice premda prikrivaju svoju fundamentalnu različitost” (Peck 2020: 6). Jedan od dokaza za tezu da je folklor najveći arhiv kulturnih odgovora na katastrofu” (Webb et al. 2000)<sup>6</sup> jest i priča o medvjedićima, Velikom Đuri i Malom Đuri, koja se s jedne strane (nesvjesno) oslonila na tradicijsku predaju o zmaju, a s druge na društvene mreže kojima se širila i dobila status nove “petrinjske predaje”. Priču o potresu kao posljedici trešnje i trzanja medvjeda koji se prerano bude iz zimskog sna za potrebe su psihoterapijskog rada s djecom kreirale i lutkarski osmislile suradnice psihijatara Dragana Puljića u Petrinji.<sup>7</sup> Namjera je bila uplašenoj djeci slikovito približiti (nedokučive) uzroke potresa te ovom konceptualnom metaforom pomoći razumjeti nepredvidljivost i intenzitet svakodnevnog iskustva naknadnih potresa. Priča o Velikom i Malom Đuri postala je dijelom popularne kulture i potresnog folkloru zahvaljujući medijskim natpisima i društvenim mrežama. Mogli bismo reći da je ona neosvijestena inačica tradicijske predaje o zmaju ili pozaju koji svojim trzajima u podzemlju izaziva zemljotres, dočim se lutkarska izvedba priče nadovezuje na folklornu dramu s lutkama Šante i Pante čije inačice je Nikola Bonifačić Rožin zabilježio tijekom svojih terenskih istraživanja po banijskim selima od 1954. do 1960. godine te opisao u knjizi o narodnoj glumi (usp. Bonifačić Rožin 1963). Ova pretapanja i nadovezivanja suvremene i tradicijske kulture samo potvrđuju da verbalni folklor postoji sve dok postoji društvena svrha kojoj udovoljava i duhovna potreba na koju odgovara.

Naratologija nas uči da što je osobni doživljaj intenzivniji to je snažnija i naša emocionalna reakcija na nj, a raste i potreba za (alternativnim) narativnim oblikovanjem i dijeljenjem proživljenog. Potreba da se opiše, značenjem ispuni, emocionalno preradi i pamti nesvakidašnji, snolik i “magijski” doživljaj zemljotresa kao zajednič-

<sup>6</sup> Tijekom istraživanja čula sam tek jednu predaju, u dvije varijante, o uzrocima potresa u selu Slana pored Gline. Mnogo češće bile su priče o “čudotvornom spašavanju” života, to jest izbjegavanju pogibelji u posljednji tren, kao i nove predaje o “čudotvornom kipu”, koji je ostao neoštećen u teško razrušenim crkvama i kapelicama, a koje sam čula od mještanki Hađara, Strašnika i Majura.

<sup>7</sup> Terapijsku igru s medvjedićima osmislile su psihologinja Irena Zulić, psihijatrica Marija Čopo i magistrica sestinstva Martina Omerhodžić. Usp. “Jutarnji s timom psihijatara koji pomažu djeci”, *Jutarnji list*, 9. siječnja 2021., <https://www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/jutarnji-s-timom-psihijatara-koji-pomazu-na-baniji-dijete-3-kako-se-zovem-potres-15022687> (pristup 1. 10. 2021.).

kog iskustva (svih stanovnika središnje Hrvatske, ali i šire)<sup>8</sup> pokrenula je “tsunami” banijskih životnih i potresnih priča. Razorni zemljotresi u Zagrebu i Banovini, usred *društvoštaja* u “korona nevremenu”, pripovjednim su posredovanjem pretvoreni u teleogenetički zaplet (Davis 1992)<sup>9</sup> i povijesni zasjek, prekid i pukotinu u homogenom vremenu svakodnevnog života. Ne samo da je potres u Petrinji i okolici bio nenadan i tragičan po svojim posljedicama (odnio je sedam života, ranio mnoge i oštetio gotovo četrdeset tisuća stambenih objekata), on se zbio u vrijeme božićnih svetkovina, usred najstrože karantene i možemo reći da predstavlja klimaks, pa i katarzu tranzicijske *socijalne drame* (Turner 1974) koja rastače i preoblikuje društveno tkivo u većini postsocijalističkih društava posljednja tri desetljeća.

Ovom bih raspravom voljela pokrenuti diskusiju o tome u kojoj mjeri afirmativno intonirane banijske naracije, kao poziv na društvenu mobilizaciju i političku participaciju odozdo, možemo interpretirati kao teleogenetički zaplet dugogodišnje socijalne drame. Je li riječ o stvarnom zaokretu koji nacionalnu (i nacionalističku) “veliku naraciju” pretvara u priču o građanskom jedinstvu, solidarnosti i uzajamnom razumijevanju nasuprot (nekompetentnih) poteza političkih elita? Premda su ratne asocijacije i bolne uspomene na razaranje i devastaciju, na progonstvo i raseljavanje bile redovite, čini se da se posljednja katastrofa izdvojila iz zavičajne povijesti kao najveća tragedija, ali i kao *protupriča* o samoorganiziranju i humanom herojstvu malih ljudi koji priskaču jedni drugima u pomoć bez obzira na etničke, socijalne i druge različitosti (usp. Jambrešić Kirin 2020). Barem u kratkom razdoblju nakon prirodne nepogode, činilo se da je moguće razviti “drukčiju mentalnu zarazu”, “zarazu hrabrosti, dobrog raspoloženja i solidarnosti” (Okri 2020), zarazu koja je demokratizirala i “komunizirala” sve građane ujedinjene osjećajem ranjivosti i (straho)poštovanja pred nepredvidljivom prirodnom silom.

## Urušena Banovina/Banija kao nesvjesno hrvatskog društva

Od 173 tisuća stanovnika potresom pogođene Sisačko-moslavačke županije, 118 tisuća ih treba neku vrstu humanitarne pomoći, među kojima 60 posto čine ranjive skupine. (...) Ljudi o kojima smo danas govorili su u trostrukoj ugrozi. S jedne strane ugrožava ih pandemija, dramatično ih je ugrozio potres, a ono što je potres dodatno razotkrio su problemi s kojima su oni živjeli godinama i desetljećima prije toga. (Šimonović Einwalter 2021)<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Prema podacima Seizmološke službe Prirodoslovno-matematičkog fakulteta, od 28. prosinca 2020. do sredine kolovoza 2021. godine na Banovini je zabilježeno više od 1200 potresa što bi, da su ravnomjerno raspoređeni, značilo oko šest potresa dnevno.

<sup>9</sup> Za Lennarda Davisa teleogenetičko razumijevanje povijesti podrazumijeva “preinaku prošlih događaja narednim zbivanjima” (1992: 361), to jest sposobnost da se na temelju učinaka i posljedica otkriju društvene, ideološke i antropološke silnice u pozadini povijesnih događaja i pojava.

<sup>10</sup> Tena Šimonović Einwalter, “Procjena humanitarnih potreba”, 1. prosinca 2021., Net.hr, <https://net.hr/danas/hrvatska/gotovo-118-000-potresom-pogodenih-stanovnika-banije-treba-neku-vrstu-humanitarne-pomoci-1ede1a80-52a5-11ec-9da5-4a41d2da1da2> (pristup 1. 12. 2021.).

Ako se složimo da u suvremenoj Hrvatskoj, najmlađoj članici EU, postoji više paralelnih realiteta, kao i temporaliteta, dva su ipak dominantna. S jedne strane, zagrebačka metropola s okolicom i jadranska obala 2021. godine privukli su više od milijun turista koji su ostvarili 55,3 milijuna noćenja<sup>11</sup>, a s druge strane mrak se širi perifernim dijelovima Hrvatske i u njima sve manje ljudi noći, živi i radi. Stanovnici rubnih, pograničnih područja kontinuirano se iseljuju u velike gradove i razvijenije zemlje EU i stječe se dojam da u rubnim ruralnim krajevima ostaju samo oni koji nemaju drugog izbora.

Na svakom koraku čujem, vidim i osjećam da je zemljotres vrhunac “sistemskog projekta da se zanemari i uništi zdravlje, sredstva za život i psihička izdržljivost određene populacije” (Stoler 2016: 378). U njegovoj pozadini je ekonomska, sociokulturna i demografska devastacija područja obilježenog ratom i međuetničkim sukobima u 1990-ima, a potom migracijama i etničkom homogenizacijom stanovništva, ali i deindustrijalizacijom (usp. Potkonjak i Škokić 2016). Ili kao što zaključuju Sanja Lončar i Dario Pavić u svojoj studiji o napuštenim, praznim i neželjenim nekretninama u Hrvatskoj:

Rezultati geografske raspodjele napuštenih nekretnina [abandonment rate] govore da su najnapuštenija područja ona koja su bila najteže pogođena ratnim događajima iz 1990-ih. To su također područja iz kojih se iselilo srpsko stanovništvo tijekom završnih operacija hrvatske vojske 1995. godine. (...) ta područja karakteriziraju negativne demografske, ekonomske, društvene i kulturne okolnosti. (Lončar i Pavić 2020: 222)

Odmičući se od patetičnih i egzotiziranih medijskih reportaža o tome kako se bijedni, ali gordi seljaci Banovine, “elita” bivše *Militärgrenze*,<sup>12</sup> bore s nedaćama preživljavanja u surovom okolišu, mogli bismo parafrazirati Slavoja Žižeka<sup>13</sup> (2008) i reći da je urušena Banovina/Banija danas strukturirana “kao nesvjesno Hrvatske”. Riječ je ne samo o drastičnim promjenama u krajoliku, aglomeraciji ruševina nakon ratova, potresa i egzila nego o “udaru realnog” i otkriću “prljave tajne” da velik dio Hrvatske, kao vanjski rub EU, postaje odlagalište radno neaktivnog “ljudskog otpada”, zajedno s odlagalištima opasnog i radioaktivnog otpada. Znali smo da kapitalističke vizije o gradnji novih tunela, mostova i suvremenih autocesta prema Jadranu ne dodiruju brojna hrvatska sela i naselja, ali tek nas je potres suočio sa svakodnevicom ljudi koji žive život bez jasnih pravila na marginama civilizacije (Tsing 2015), bez pristupnih cesta, tekuće vode i telekomunikacija, a ponekad i bez struje. Svojim prisustvom oni markiraju prostor jedne nove *Militärgrenze* – Frontex mehanizama zaštite vanjskih

11 “Odlični turistički rezultati: Premašen broj noćenja iz cijele 2020. godine”, 18. kolovoza 2021., <https://privredni.hr/premasen-broj-nocenja-iz-cijele-2020-godine> (pristup 1. 9. 2021.)

12 “Ljudi s te granice, ljudi iz Vojne Krajine, službeno s *Militärgrenze*, pripadali su, čak i kad su bili sirotinja, eliti jedne epohe, koja će potrajati stoljećima” (Miljenko Jergović, “Majske Poljane, kratka povijest jednoga sela”, Portal 24 sata, 31. prosinca 2020., <https://www.24sata.hr/news/jergovic-majske-poljane-kratka-povijest-jednoga-sela-737169> (pristup 1. 10. 2021.)).

13 Slavoj Žižek, “Talks films and Balkans with Slavoj Žižek”, 9. prosinca 2008., <http://www.euronews.net/2008/09/12/euronews-talks-films-and-balkans-with-slavoj> (pristup 1. 10. 2021.).



granica EU koji njima osobno ne osigurava ni mobilnost ni zaštitu “slobode, sigurnosti i pravde”,<sup>14</sup> a egzistencijalna ih nužda usmjeruje na devastaciju šuma ili pak na prekogranično krijumčarenje duhana, droga i ljudi.

Međutim, namjera ovog rada nije puniti građom antropološke teorije o ruinizaciji, o nekropolitikama (Mbembe 2019) i “Ljudskom otpadu” u udaljenim, depriviranim i iseljenim područjima.<sup>15</sup> One se odnose i na druge periferije jugoistočne Europe i globalnog juga. Nastojat ću pokazati da je pripovijedanje o osobnom iskustvu način kanaliziranja negativnih emocija i iskustava, ali i način osnaživanja lokalnih subjekata “koji nisu prevareni, slomljeni, homogenizirani; koji zapravo kreativno prisvajaju ili reinterpreteraju što im se dobaci sa strane” (Graeber 2004: 99). Smatram da su upravo poslijepotresne osobne naracije kao “most za razumijevanje drugih ljudi” (Shuman 2005: 150) zauzele središnje mjesto kako u javnom prostoru tako i u društvenom i humanističkom diskursu o posljedicama ove prirodne katastrofe.

Hraneći glad masovnih medija za senzacionalističkim prikazima i snažnim porukama,<sup>16</sup> ali i društvenu mrežu kao najdemokračičniji i najemocionalniji način ljudske komunikacije (usp. Peck 2020), svakodnevno nastaju novi hibridni oblici vernakularnih narativa koji svi zajedno oblikuju kulturni trenutak u kojem živimo. Kao i drugdje u svijetu nakon prirodnih katastrofa, i u Hrvatskoj je val društvene solidarnosti donio iznenadnu pozitivnu promjenu kolektivne svijesti u obliku “ujedinjujućeg procesa simboličkih akcija koje osnažuju i pojedince i zajednicu” i koje opstaju neko vrijeme kao “kolektivni odgovor asistencije” stradlima (Letukas et al 2009: 3). Kao i u drugim depriviranim postjugoslavenskim područjima i stanovnici Banije su koristili “depolitizirajuće diskurse o ljudskosti kako bi izrazili svoje (političko) pravo na preživljavanje i blagostanje u kontekstu obilježene dominantnošću etno-nacionalističke retorike” (Brković 2016: 115). Premda se protjecanjem vremena slika na terenu komplicira (usp. Pavlič 2021), posebice kad je stradalcima postalo jasno da su privatne donacije kao i donacije međunarodnih i domaćih humanitarnih organizacija, civilnih i vjerskih udruga jedine učinkovite u obnovi porušeni domova, ipak i nadalje dominiraju naracije o humanom odgovoru sugrađana i neučinkovitosti državnih institucija.

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14 Kao posebno važan cilj djelovanja Frontex ističe: “We recognise people, institutions and their roles and demonstrate respect by treating these as valuable and important” (<https://frontex.europa.eu/about-frontex/our-mission/>).

15 Prema službenim vladinim podacima (portal potresinfo.gov.hr) broj stanovnika koji je od siječnja do kraja kolovoza 2021. napustio Petrinju iznosi 1388, Sisak 1136, Glinu 177 i ostala mjesta 160 građana. Prema popisu stanovništva iz 2021. godine, najveći pad broja kućanstava od 14,70 posto, u odnosu na popis iz 2011. godine, zabilježen je u Sisačko-moslavačkoj županiji (portal popis2021.hr).

16 Diskurzivna analiza hrvatskih mrežnih portala od siječnja 2020. do travnja 2021. godine pokazala je da su konceptualne metafore rata i “borbe” s nevidljivim neprijateljem dominirale izvješćima o koronaepidemiji, a metafore apokalipse izvješćima o petrinjskom potresu (Lacković et al. 2021: 38).

## Pobjednici događaja, junaci života

Još od ratnih devedesetih ova je regija, metaforički govoreći, “ušla u bizarni univerzum, izvrnuti svijet s druge strane ogledala. On je sve ono što svakodnevni život nije – turbulentan, nesiguran i nepredvidljiv” (Tripathy 2021). Svakodnevica koja je desetljećima tegobna, neizvjesna i stagnirajuća, stapa izvanrednost ratnog stanja i provizorij poraća te je nusprodukt “mačehinskog” državnog protektorata na *potpomognutim* područjima kakvih je sve više u Hrvatskoj (usp. Obad 2020). Usred borbe za preživljavanje, apatije i oskudnog života u osami i na margini, prirodna katastrofa proizvela je emocionalni i egzistencijalni šok, “veličanstveno buđenje (...) iz košmarnog sna” (Kljaić 2021: 128). Prekinuvši imobilnost pojačanu epidemiološkim mjerama iz prosinca 2020. godine, “veće zlo” koje se sručilo na stanovnike Banije odjednom je ubrzalo vremenski tijek povijesti te usmjerilo pozornost svih državnih i privatnih medija na možda najmanje vidljiv kutak Hrvatske. Medijski interes za stradanja stanovnika malenih naselja i izoliranih brdskih zaselaka, kao i za besprizornu neimaštinu u kojoj žive mnogi od njih, povratio im je stas i glas, a narativna moć elokventne samo/reprezentacije preko noći ih je učinila našim sugrađanima i suvremenicima. Već više od godinu dana emocionalne životne priče, moralni integritet i dostojanstvo žilavih, s prirodom sraslih banijskih staraca i staričica dio su naše (medijalizirane) stvarnosti obilježene dvjema prirodnim nepogodama, ali i kritikama na račun nesposobnosti državne uprave da se nosi s njihovim posljedicama.

Građani koji su dotad percipirani kao većinski ili manjinski, kao kotačići biračke mašinerije koja nekolicini stranački “podobnih” manjinskih predstavnika omogućuje participaciju u lokalnoj vlasti, odjednom su pozvani da govore o svojoj prekarnoj svakodnevici, o teškoćama i izazovima “eliptičnog života”, pa čak i o biblijskom osjećaju “izabranog puka” – “odabrani smo kao oni koji se mogu nositi sa nesrećama” (Kljaić 2021: 114).<sup>17</sup> I kad je novinarski posredovan i redigiran, pripovjedni diskurs ruralnih stanovnika Banije obiluje formulnim izričajima, krilaticama, mudrim zapažanjima te bogatom metaforikom s osloncem na usmenoknjiževnoj tradiciji. To se potvrdilo i u mojim usputnim razgovorima sa stradalnicima, a potom i u polustrukturiranim intervjuima. Čini se da je potres od preživjelih banijskih seljaka učinio “junake života” koji opstaju na svojim ruševinama i bore se kao “svojeglava, nedokazana i nezaglavljena starčad” (Kljaić 2021: 131). Za razliku od njih, život bezimernih i obezličanih staraca na kovidodjelima sa ili “bez bolesti Covid-19 smatran je izgubljenim, neprimjetnim, načelno gotovim, bez budućnosti” (Marković 2021).

Feministička antropologinja Sara Ahmed smatra da su svojeglavi i svojevoljni subjekti (engl. *willful subjects*) oni koji i najveće teškoće mogu pretvoriti u kreativno sredstvo djelovanja, otpora i aspiracije prema novoj društvenoj stvarnosti i konstelaciji moći. Svojeglavi, istrajni i principijelni subjekti u velikoj mjeri dolaze iz eksploa-

<sup>17</sup> Stef Jansen je pronicljivo opisao “ekskluzivističku logiku” stanovnika postjugoslavenskih prostora koji smatraju da njihove egzistencijalne nevolje i njihove ljudske kvalitete nisu usporedive s onima drugih ljudi. S druge strane, njihova najdublja čežnja jest “da se ponovo stekne neko dostojanstveno mesto na karti sveta” (2020b: 33).



tiranih i marginaliziranih društvenih skupina, a nevolje, prepreke i poremećaji svake vrste njihove akcije čine smjelijima i dalekovidnijima:

Poremećaj (engl. *disturbance*) može biti kreativan: ne kao ono čemu težimo, ne kao temelj našeg djelovanja, već kao učinak djelovanja: poremećaj kao ono što je stvoreno samim naporom dohvaćanja, posezanja, obraćanja, dohvaćanja nečega što nije prisutno, nečega što se pojavljuje samo kao obzor mogućnosti. (Ahmed 2014: 204)

O osjećaju historijske “obilježnosti” Banijaca, ali ne i ukopanosti u traumau (Jansen 2020a: 65), uvjerljivo piše glinska književnica i novinarka Jagoda Kljaić. Ona smatra da, premda na geografskoj margini, seljaci žive “u središtu društvenih i državnih previranja (...) kako 1941., tako i 1991. i 1995. godine” svjesni kolektivnih stradanja i povijesnih izazova, ali poput pravih *bricoleura* ne brinu o koherentnosti sustava vjerovanja ni stabilnosti istine. Zemlja koja ih hrani nepresušni je izvor primjera istrajnosti i fleksibilnosti, ali i nježnosti i plemenitog darivanja:

Pobjednici događaja, junaci života koji nastavljaju između i iznad ruševina, obilaze ovce i košnice, oru, brnaju i tanjuraju, frezaju bašče, orezuju loze i voćke, hrane i muzu krave, prave sir i vrhnje, udaraju čekićima po starim i novim daskama i gredama, gaze po krovovima, ispijaju kavu po dvorištima, na stol u kontejneru prostiru ručno vezeni stolnjak ... (Kljaić 2021: 89)

Gledano iz etnološkog očista, ne čudi da banijskog “čovjeka duboko ukorijenjena u agrarni svijet i omeđena njime; blisko povezana s prirodom, ali i sudbinski ovisna o njoj” (Muraj 1992: 215), nije toliko dirnula i potaknula na kazivanje prirodna katastrofa – jedna u nizu tragedija, rušilačkih epizoda i nedaća – koliko solidarnost i izravna pomoć hrvatskih građana.<sup>18</sup> Ono što je, s druge strane, empatijski pokrenulo sve one koji su došli pomoći ili tek izvijestiti o razmjerima stradanja jesu životne priče stanovnika ruralne Banije. Daniel Pavlič, jedan od najaktivnijih volontera u regiji, fotograf i organizator Smaragdnoeg eko film festivala (SEFF) u Hrvatskoj Kostajnici, poentirao je temeljni folkloristički stav i *ethos* u susretu s ovim naracijama:

Svi ovi zaselci imaju svoje rijetke žitelje koji imaju svoje priče. A što je priča ako se ne ispriča? Ništa. Zapravo ni priča ne postaje priča ako je netko ne odsluša, tj. pročita. (Pavlič 2021: 123)

Premda često razvlašteni u svom društvenom položaju, ovi ljudi još uvijek imaju autoritet nad svojom životnom pričom i kompetenciju da je ispričaju, ovisno o sugovorniku, kontekstu i prigodi, u tragičnom, “romanesknom” ili humornom modusu. Jedna od brojnih osobnih naracija koje nas suočavaju s paradoksalnom izokrenutošću životnih činjenica i afektivnih stanja u svojoj zoni svakodnevne borbe za preživljavanje donosi zgodu seljana iz Zrinskih Brđana na Šamarici. On se istinski obradovao

<sup>18</sup> Prigodom obiteljskih susreta i prisjećanja na “veliki događaj” moji bi sugovornici redovito zaplakali pripovijedajući o velikodušnosti volontera, posebice navijača, koji su im još isti dan pritekli u pomoć.

pozitivnom rezultatu drugog (PCR) testa na koronu u bolnici u Sisku jer je strepio da će, bez ozbiljne dijagnoze, morati platiti taxi za povratak u svoje zabačeno selo:

– Znaš da sam prije mjesec dana bolovao od corone. – kaže nam M. – Mene baš sve hoće. Imao sam visoku temperaturu, pa su me prebacili u Sisak. Tamo me testirali pa pokazalo da nemam coronu. Onda je došao neki visoki doktor pa me pitao jesam li išao na normalan ili brzinski test. Rekoh da je bilo na brzini. Ma nikako ne na brzini, nego ponovno na normalni test reče mi doktor bez ikakve maske. Objasnio mi da je on imun na coronu. A ja stalno razmišljam kako ću se vratiti kući jer vozilo koje me dovezlo u Sisak, već odavno otišlo. Bože, kako sad da se vratim kući ako me ne zadrže jer već se i mračii?! I nakon toga dolazi doktor da mi priopći da imam coronu, a ja mu reče “Hajd hvala Bogu da je imam! Ne moram više razmišljati kako ću se vratiti kući!” (Pavlić 2021: 67)

Ova je razgovorna sekvenca oblikovana kao kratka priča s nenadanim obratom i sretnim krajem, a odlikuje ju naglašena ekonomičnost i performativnost pripovijedanja; dijaloške dionice su vjerno prenesene i “uprizorene”, napetost postignuta brzim ritmom pripovijedanja, dočim su dramatični momenti (strah od negativnog testa i povratka kući taksijem) prikazani kao živ unutarnji monolog kazivača. No crni humor je onaj “tajni sastojak” koji potvrđuje estetsku i kognitivnu vrijednost ove priče shodno zahtjevima ljepote, smisla i dobrog ustroja te ističe pripovjedačev “dovrtljiv duh na granici između šale i ozbiljnosti” (Ranke 2018: 124). Ekspresivnost i karakterna osebjnost naratora iskazuje i duhovni stav koji smjelost i rezilijentnost nadređuje strepnji i oprezu. Ironijska ekspresija nije “mlađa” od bajkovne ili predajne, upozorava Hermann Bausinger, ona “kao da pokazuje da stvarni svijet nije nov, nego jedan od mogućih još otprije poznatih viđenja svijeta” (2018: 439)<sup>19</sup>. Svaki lucidan i ekspresivan pripovjedač, poput ovdje citiranog, tjera nas na refleksiju o tome kako “duh kreativnog čovjeka” ne preoblikuje samo narativne moduse nego i uvjete i ishode vlastite egzistencije (usp. Ranke 2018: 128).

U skladu sa “svojom koncepcijom dobrog života” (Nussbaum 2019: 63) banijski seljaci svoje skromne resurse ravnopravno dijele sa životinjama na svom imanju te s onima još ranjivijima i nemoćnijima od sebe. Njihov vitalistički stav srećemo u pričama u kojima oni mole staričare da im ne dodijele “crvenu”, nego “žutu naljepnicu” (barkod) kako ne bi morali ostaviti svoje imanje. Za ove je čvrste i ponosne ljude briga o zdravlju stoke i domaćih životinja,<sup>20</sup> ali i samoodrživost te sloboda odlučivanja o vlastitom životu, važnija od vlastite sigurnosti i udobnosti organiziranog smještaja:

Razgovaram s ljudima. Po danu borave u kontejneru plašeći se da će doći neka “komisija za obnovu”, pa ako ih zatekne u kućama žutih i crvenih naljepnica,

<sup>19</sup> I novije teorije o smijehu naglašavaju da je on povezan s “temeljnim evolucijskim parametrom preživljavanja ljudske vrste: našom sposobnošću da uočimo pogreške, nelogičnosti i ispadanja iz jednom uspostavljene logike zaključivanja” (Govedić 2012: 5).

<sup>20</sup> Martha Nussbaum podsjeća na to kako djetinju privrženost i brigu za životinje u odrasloj dobi često zasjeni učenje o tome “da su ljudska bića jedini izvori inherentne vrijednosti” (2019: 451).

neće im biti obnovljeno. Po noći spavaju u tim kućama, jer je teško zagrijati kamp kućice i kontejnere. (Pavlić 2021: 111)

Mnogo je ovakvih emotivnih priča o “okrutnom optimizmu” (Berlant 2011) iluzija lišenih, osebnih i rezistentnih ljudi koji se opiru kako životnim nedaćama tako i nastojanjima da se patetizira, etnički ili politički manipulira njihovom društvenom patnjom (usp. Kleinman 1989; Renault 2010). Mnogo je i neformalnih praksi, improvizacija, nelegalnih gradnji i poslova, nepoštivanja propisa i nepovjerenja u državu, koje antropolog Christan Giordano naziva “socijalnom logikom neformalnosti” (2015: 123–133). U gotovo svakom banijskom selu naišla sam na problem neregistriranih boravišta prije 29. prosinca 2021. – što je preduvjet prijave štete od potresa. Nesređeni imovinski odnosi i neažurirano stanje u gruntovnicama rezultat su dugog povijesnog procesa zadružnog i mobilnog stanovanja na Vojnoj granici, a potom i socijalističkog procvata nelegalne gradnje, a danas strukturno usporavaju proces obnove.<sup>21</sup>

Neprikladni habitati, nedovršenost građevina i nove ruševine, kao i neuspjeh životnog projekta da u istoj kući živi nekoliko generacija iste obitelji, zasigurno utječu na osjećaj rezignacije i “spore smrti” (Berlant 2011: 95–119) koja kao biopolitičko “novo normalno” pritišće izolirana staračka domaćinstva u opustjelim selima. Najdirljiviji dio mog razgovora sa ženom u šezdesetima u selu Borojevići posljedica je zamjene mog supruga za kuma koji nije dugo navratio i činjenice da osamljeni par rijetko posjećuju kćer i unuci koji žive u Slavoniji. Njezin monolog koji povezuje “nadu u bolji život” s mogućnošću povratka mladih u selo, zapravo je nostalgичno evociranje bolje prošlosti i “povijesti sentimentalnosti koju izazivaju djeca” (Berlant 2011: 171):

Samo da ima omladine, mi bi se stari pomladili pored vas! Imali bi neku veću nadu. Ako nje nemaš, to je gadno. Će nema lopte, Će nema krika djeteta, Će nema omladine da vozi bicikle, da se smiju i puste muziku i to, to je za mene pustoš! (...) To je gospodo vama na prolazu divno i krasno, a kada bi vi noću i danju, u tu divnoću-samoću ustajali, imali bi drugo mišljenje. (Borojevići, *Desanka*, 12. kolovoza 2021.)

Ova razgovorna sekvenca također je oblikovana kao kratka priča s kodom, signalom zaokružene naracije, i poetskom figurom divnoća-samoća (gdje izraz divota zamjenjuje neologizam *divnoća* radi poetsko-ritmičkog učinka). Literarnoj vrijednosti ovog hipotetičkog narativa doprinose performativna obilježja poput stanki, uzdisanja i usklika. Koda je oblikovana i kao punktum konstruiranog dijaloga sa mnom kao empatičnom sugovornicom koja “prikriva” svoju poziciju moći čime pripovjedačica zauzima i poziciju socijalne kritičarke. Etički odnos neravnopravnih sugovornika te etnografsko prizivanje snažnih emocija neizbježan je dio promišljanja “terapijskog

<sup>21</sup> Prema podacima Zaklade Solidarna oko 89 posto gospodarskih objekata i 20 posto kuća u Sisačko-moslavačkoj županiji nije legalizirano (usp. <https://dnevnik.hr/vijesti/potres/solidarna-i-rotary-planiraju-do-zime-na-banovni-sagraditi-11-protupotresnih-kuca---655824.html> (pristup 1. 2. 2021.)).

učinka” pričanja o osobnom životu. Koliko god da su osobne priče “oblikovane da osiguraju koherentno, autentično sebstvo u kaosu svakodnevice”, one su jednako tako i opterećene “fragmentacijom iskustva, zamučivanjem granica onog osobnog i ne toliko osobnog” (Shuman 2005: 151). Svaka njihova izvedba predstavlja “preoblikovanje iskustva uz pomoć umješne uporabe narativnih obrazaca i domišljenog dijaloga u spontano izrečenom tekstu” (Borland 2021: 40).

### *Treba čuti, vidjeti i dotaknuti: završna zapažanja*

Geslo blisko etnografskom načelu (*Treba čuti, vidjeti i dotaknuti*) preuzela sam od zagrebačkog psihijatra Dragana Puljića, koji je prvi pritekao u pomoć stanovnicima Petrinje (usp. Bendix 2000). Na temelju svog iskustva rada s psihički najteže stradalim stanovnicima, u prvim danima nakon potresa, on je zaključio:

Da, ja sam psihijatar, ali čak ni ja nisam ekspert za ljudsku patnju. (...) Treba biti iskren i pogledati ljude u oči. (...) Treba čuti, vidjeti i dotaknuti. To je sva mudrost. (...) Niti lijekovi ne igraju ulogu. Prepisujemo ih možda u 10 posto slučajeva. (...) Ne trebaju oni nikakvu psihologizaciju, trebaju samo da budu viđeni, da ih se čuje i dotakne. Trebaju samo prisutnost drugog čovjeka. (...) Izgledaju kao zamrznuti izvana, a unutra je toliko intenzivan doživljaj. Paradoksalno. To je toliko visok stupanj patnje, da nemamo pravo glumiti nikakvog eksperta. Čovjek treba osjetiti da nije sam. (Puljić 2021)

I moje je iskustvo potvrdilo da “svaki čovjek na Baniji ima svoju priču, i to ne jednu, nego tko zna koliko njih” (Kljaić 2021: 20) i samo čeka tektonski poremećaj, bilo geološki ili sociološki, koji će te priče poput likvefakcija finog pijeska izbaciti na površinu iz dubine ranjenog bića. Uvidjela sam da je ljudima na geografskoj i društvenoj margini bilo važnije da ih netko (novinari, volonteri, istraživači) uključi u svoje socijalne mreže i učini relevantnim sugovornicima o vlastitoj budućnosti nego da im ponudi materijalnu pomoć.<sup>22</sup> Ili je to samo moj površni dojam, umišljaj naivne zagovornice “etnografije nenametljivosti” (usp. Jambrešić Kirin 2021) koja, uz malu materijalnu pomoć, svima pristupa istim svakodnevnim pitanjima *Kako ste? Kako ste izdržali sve to? Kako živite ovih dana?*

Ovim radom pokušala sam skicirati tek nekoliko odgovora na brojna pitanja koja su mi se nametnula i još uvijek mi se nameću na banijskom *terenu*. Recimo: Jesu li neprojane reportaže o “običnim ljudima” s Banije u prijepornom medijskom “polju reprezentacije gdje se humanizacija i dehumanizacija neprestance odigravaju” (Butler 2017: 197) doista osnažile njihov glas nasuprot hegemonijskim diskursima političkih aktera koji slijepo slijede EU smjernice i zahtjeve (usp. Asad 2015)? Hoće

<sup>22</sup> I u razvijenim zemljama poput Japana fenomen *kodokushi* predstavlja ozbiljan socijalni problem: “proces u kojem velik broj ljudi umire u vlastitim domovima u apsolutnoj osamljenosti, sve dok njihovu smrt netko ne otkrije danima ili mjesecima kasnije zahvaljujući smrdu raspadanja” (usp. <https://en.yestherapyhelps.com/kodokushi-the-wave-of-solitary-deaths-ravaging-japan-15215> (pristup 1. 2. 2021.)).

li medijska glad za recentnim spektaklom ljudske nesreće potisnuti interes za razorenju “banijsku kuću” u neposrednom susjedstvu? Je li zajedničko iskustvo tisuća naknadnih potresa od građana središnje Hrvatske doista oblikovalo afektivnu zajednicu koja uz pomoć “osjetilne demokracije”<sup>23</sup> artikulira “umijeće pobune” i političke zahtjeve za promjenom zakona o obnovi i brzom obnovom? U kojem smislu je izravna i *online* razmjena mišljenja o (egalitarnim) životnim vrednotama i moralnim načelima zajednice oblik društvene prakse,<sup>24</sup> a ne dio “naracija o korijenima, o rodnoj grudi ili o kulturnoj privrženosti krajoliku” (Jansen 2020a: 9)? Je li etnografska posveta pripovjedačkom autoritetu banijskog čovjeka uistinu doprinos društvenim naporima da se na ruševinama antagonističke kulture porača izgradi bolja lokalna zajednica i demokracičnije društvo? Što teoretičarima kulture govori činjenica da je u središtu “kondenziranog romana o običnom Jugoslavenu” Danila Kiša, naslovnoj priči iz *Enciklopedije mrtvih*, jedan Banijac iz emblemske Komogovine (usp. Thompson 2021: 120–22)?<sup>25</sup> Koja je važnost folklorne i književne baštine (usp. Kirin i Vrga 2021), estetske komunikacije i kulture za prepoznatljivost regije, za identitet njezinih živih i mrtvih građana?<sup>26</sup> Mogu li naracije “uglačane prepričavanjem kroz generacije i generacije” (Thompson 2021: 127), u kojima se prepliću folklorna vjerovanja, metafizičke težnje i potraga za mirnim suživotom različitih vjerskih i etničkih zajednica, povratno oblikovati društveni ideal kojem težimo? Jesu li sposobnost “ugodenog” slušanja (Bendix 2000) i umijeće pripovijedanja “naš posljednji preostali demokratski prostor” koji nam pomaže “sačuvati mentalno zdravlje u doba podjela” (Shafak 2020)?

Ono što možemo zaključiti jest da su osobna kazivanja o doživljaju prirodne katastrofe osnažila stanovnike stradalih područja u njihovu regionalnom nadetničkom, civilnom identitetu. Dogodila se civilna revitalizacija Banijaca kao građana i državljana, a ne pripadnika određene etničke ili socijalne skupine. Njihova kritika partitokratskog modela obnove pretvara ih u *buntovnike*, a ne društvene *otpadnike*. Spremnost šire zajednice da ih čuje, pruži im konkretnu pomoć, ali i uključi ih u mreže solidarne i društvene ekonomije,<sup>27</sup> potvrdila ih je kao pojedince s ljudskim dostojanstvom. Sposobnost prepoznavanja vlastite muke u mucu drugoga pokrenula je “processe koji od naizgled privatnih i izoliranih iskustava mogu oblikovati šire kolektive koji su po prirodi i javni i politički” (Hutchison 2016: 12–13). Personalizirana, konkretna pomoć građana odgovorila je na konkretne potrebe “ljudi iz kontejnera”,

23 Politolozi ističu da je potrebno odmaknuti se od “senseless democracy” koja nije u stanju proizvesti smislen politički angažman prema “sensory democracy” (...) that emphasise the role of ‘watching’ and ‘listening’ within sociopolitical relationships” (Ryan i Flinders 2018: 133).

24 O komunikacijskim i drugim strategijama rješavanja društvenih problema u zajednicama izgrađenim oko antagonističkih kultura vidi više u Douglas i Ney 2003: 105–132. O važnosti ratnih naracija za razumijevanje nevidljivih granica i neartikuliranih točki prijepora u “nemirnim mjestima” u regiji usp. Jansen 2020a: 67–95.

25 Mark Thompson pokazuje da je kao model za ovu priču poslužila biografija Đure Miočinovića, oca Mirjane Miočinović, Kišove prve supruge (Thompson 2021: 114–124).

26 Usp. sjajnu pjesmu *Pokojnici u gradu čija zemlja pomiče njihov vječni san* Monike Herceg iz recitala *Grad po mjeri čovjeka koji može voljeti* (Petrinja, 6. 11. 2021.) dostupnog na mobilnoj aplikaciji za slušanje knjiga book&zvook.

27 Inicijativa građana Ljudi za ljude, Zaklada Solidarna, Udruga Dobro Dobrim DoDo i neke druge grade solidarne mreže i poveznice između kupaca i poljoprivrednih proizvođača s Banije po modelu “od polja do stola”.

a pedesetak zamjenskih i trajnih smještajnih objekata izgrađeno je privatnim donacijama. Tomu su pomogle objave emotivnih životnih priča, uspostavljanje izravnih kontakata stradalih obitelji i donatora, ali i moć imaginacije, prepoznavanja drugih u njihovoj ranjivosti kao njihovoj univerzalnoj ljudskosti. Nedavna smrt bake Ljube Obradović<sup>28</sup> iz sela Donji Klasnić u požaru njezine trošne drvene kuće učinila je ovu tragičnu sudbinu parabolom nestanka ne samo banijskog nego i "crvenog čovjeka" jednog "rabljenog doba" s njegovim "predodžbama o dobru i zlu, o junacima i mučenicima" (Aleksievič 2013: 9). Vijest je izazvala mnoštvo empatičnih komentara i postala činjenicom zavičajne povijesti.

Čitanje banijskih naracija kao teleogenetičkog zapleta nacionalne priče omogućilo mi je interpretaciju kako je prirodna katastrofa proizvela (pozitivan) društveni pre-tres i najavila obrat u pristupu problemu razvojnih socioekonomskih nejednakosti na relaciji selo-grad, metropola i druge regije (usp. Obad 2020). Barem privremeno, dominantnu nacionalnu naraciju o povijesnim i društvenim antagonizmima odmijenila je priča o građanskom jedinstvu, solidarnosti i uzajamnom razumijevanju nasuprot volji za moć političkih elita. Dubinsko povezivanje prostora obitavanja i prostora kazivanja, prostora "divlje misli" koja prkosi dominantnim narativima o dobrom životu i dostojanstvenoj smrti, izvor je tvrdoglave opstojnosti i adaptabilnost seljana Banije/Banovine. Njihova sposobnost adaptacije na teške egzistencijalne i okolišne uvjete sušta je suprotnost konformističkom urbanom osjećaju (ne)sigurnosti i anksioznosti. Istinska briga za ekološku održivost, bol zbog nemile eksploatacije šuma i odlaganja svih vrsta otpada u njihovu zavičajnu, ono je što ih povezuje s drugim *alterglobalistima*. Ono najvažnije što sam dobila ovim (nedovršenim) istraživanjem jest spoznaja da granična stanja i iskustva ne vode nužno u traumu nego mogu povećati naš kapacitet za empatiju, učenje, sazrijevanje, promjenu svjetonazora i ekološko osvještavanje.

Pripovjedne prakse kao moćno sredstvo (pre)oblikovanja stvarnosti i iskustva odraz su onog što filozofkinja Catherine Malabou naziva "plastičnost mozga". Riječ je o neurološko-kulturološkoj metafori koja sposobnost našeg kognitivnog aparata da se adaptira na teške egzistencijalne uvjete i surovi okoliš tumači kao sposobnost stvaranja i osnaživanja:

Kao da više znamo o onome što možemo podnijeti nego o onome što možemo stvoriti. Prema tome, zahtijevati istinsku plastičnost mozga svodi se na to da iziskujemo znati što mozak može učiniti, a ne samo što može *tolerirati*. (Malabou 2010 [2004])

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<sup>28</sup> O baki Ljubi Obradović u godinu dana snimljeno je i napisano bezbroj reportaža, postala je "zaštitno lice" one skrivene, napuštene i bijedne Banije koju njezini tvrdoglavi "urođenici" nikako ne žele napustiti. Stradala je u požaru 1. veljače 2022. godine, o čemu su izvijestili mnogi portali: "U utorak su isti ti ljudi, gazeći kroz blato jer normalnog puta do Ljube nema, pronašli ostatke njenog doma. Skromne starice koja je provela život u bijedi, odbijajući napustiti trošni kućerak i otići iz zavičaja, još uvijek nema. Nema ni njenog tvrdoglavog mačka. Nema nikoga" (usp. <https://365dana.info/2022/02/02/izgorjela-je-kuca-bake-ljube-o-njoj-jos-nema-vijesti-puhovi-joj-vise-nikad-nee-remetiti-san/> (pristup 15. 2. 2022.)).



Filozofkinja Denise Ferreira da Silva smatra da nas “mogućnost transformacije (...) čini ljudima u spiritualno-etičkom smislu” i da o tome najviše učimo “uz pomoć vode i njezine promjenjivosti”.<sup>29</sup> Ono što ona opisuje kao “duboku međupovezanost” (engl. *deep implicancy*) jest svijest o “primordijalnom trenutku objedinjenosti prije separacije čestica koje čine planet (...) pogled na svijet kao mješavinu ljudskih i ne-ljudskih elemenata” (da Silva i Neuman 2018). Upravo taj mitski osjećaj duboke sjedinjenosti s prirodom i svim njezinim česticama organizira priče o vlastitom životu na način koji “alegorijsko čini osobnim, a kozmičko lokalnim” (Shuman 2005).

Vozeći se prošlog ljeta banijskim krajolikom neprestano su mi se pretapale dvije perspektive – jedna koja je nudila pogled odozgo (zahvaljujući snimkama dronom) s prizorima nadrealne ljepote nepreglednih šuma i livada, zelenih vrtača, rasjeda i drugih tragova “novog geološkog protresanja planeta” – i druga, semantička i osjetilna perspektiva, u kojoj je dominirao zvučni film Dereka Jarmana *Plavo* kao katalizator ratnog i potresnog iskustva kako mog osobnog tako i iskustva starca koji se raduje mom posjetu i počinje svoju priču već na kapiji. Njemu posvećujem ove Jarmanove stihove:

*One can know the whole world  
Without stirring abroad  
Without looking out of the window  
One can see the way of heaven  
The further one goes  
The less one knows  
(Jarman, Blue 1993/94).<sup>30</sup>*

29 Ne čudi da je usporedba nepredvidljivosti, promjenjivosti i neuhvatljivosti života s protjecanjem rijeka ili plodivbom nemirnim morem jedna od najstarijih u povijesti pripovijedanja.

30 *Može se poznavati cijeli svijet // a da se nikud ne mičeš // a da ne gledaš kroz prozor // mogu se vidjeti čudesa // što se dalje ide // manje se zna* (Jarman, *Blue* 1993/94).

# KOMENTARI

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## Katastrofa, subjektnost i slušanje uz empatiju

Renata Jambrešić Kirin pružila je dovoljno materijala za razmišljanje o složenom skupu odnosa i paradoksa koji se pojavljuju u slučaju katastrofe. Njezin prikaz stanovnika Banije/Banovine koji se samooblikuju i načina na koji su iznova percipirani u očima hrvatske nacionalne publike uvjerljiv je i aktualan. Želim proširiti njezina zapažanja usporednim materijalima iz vlastite hemisfere. Amblemski slučaj za ulogu narativa u katastrofama u sjevernoameričkom folkloru jest uragan Katrina koji je 2005. godine razorio New Orleans i razotkrio i danas aktualne nepravde s kojima se crnački stanovnici suočavaju zbog zanemarivanja države i društvenih stereotipa. Metodologijom “kuhinjskog stola” Pata Jaspere i Carla Lindahla preživjeli koji su se preselili u Houston naučeni su da intervjuiraju jedni druge i tako bilježe svoje perspektive, a istovremeno su se stvarale i prilike za empatijsko povezivanje (2006). U radu o projektu *Preživjeli uragana Katrina u Houstonu (Survivors of Hurricane Katrina in Houston)* Lindahl (2012) tvrdi da je prethodna stigmatizacija pogođenih ljudi (jer su crnci i siromašni) za posljedicu imala nejednak pristup i kontrolu nad narativnim konstrukcijama događaja. Prevladale su medijske “istine”, što je dovelo do dodatnih smrtnih slučajeva i snažnije viktimizacije preživjelih. Lindahl spominje rad Rebecce Solnit (2009) o privremenim utopijama stvorenima neposredno nakon katastrofa kako bi naglasio načine na koje je reakcija zajednice na katastrofu izvukla najbolje iz ljudi tijekom Katrine, uzimajući u obzir to da raspršeni pristup na terenu, “od čovjeka do čovjeka”, hrani ljudsku potrebu za društvenom vezom i međusobnom brigom. Jambrešić Kirin ističe sličnu pojavu na Baniji/Banovini, ali primjećuje jednu razliku: nekadašnja stigmatizirana skupina postala je moćan nacionalni simbol opstanka, *jer su mediji preuzimali i prenosili njihove priče* umjesto da ponavljaju stare stereotipe. Postavlja pitanje mogu li narativi o nadi usred ruševina i solidarnosti koja iz njih proizlazi biti “teleogenetički zaplet dugogodišnje socijalne drame” koja će u državi potaknuti građansko jedinstvo koje nadilazi podjele ruralno/urbano. Dok je takvo jedinstvo unatoč razlikama možda teško dugoročno održati, slažem se s Jambrešić Kirin da, kao etnografi, trebamo dokumentirati takve snažne trenutke solidarnosti među ljudima ne samo da bismo napravili trajni zapis već i da bismo, kao što Jambre-

šić Kirin predlaže, sudjelovali u projektu drugačijeg razmišljanja, istovremenog ponovnog stvaranja predodžbe i približavanja dobrog života sa svojim sugovornicima.

U slučaju uragana Katrina golemi razmjeri neuspjeha vlade da dostojno odgovori na krizu ubrzali su provođenje brojnih misija solidarnosti. No unatoč tim ranim intervencijama, novi početak za New Orleans nakon poplava temeljio se na uklanjanju siromašnih crnačkih stanovnika kako bi se napravilo mjesta za bjeliji, bogatiji grad (Elie 2019). U hrvatskom je slučaju bitno zapamtiti, kao što Jambrešić Kirin rječito ističe, način na koji vanjski izvjestitelji i osobe koje su reagirale na katastrofu refiguriraju starije, ruralne subjekte etnički obilježenog pograničnog područja, tako da oni od traumatiziranih žrtava postaju subjekti koji se oslanjaju sami na sebe i čija je borba s napadima prirode postala simbolična za šire hrvatsko građanstvo, zamoreno neuspjehom postsocijalističkog neoliberalizma u ispunjavanju njihovih želja.

To kolektivno refiguriranje marginaliziranog seljaka podsjeća na jedan drugi božićni potres na sličnoj geografskoj periferiji. Dana 23. prosinca 1972. godine glavni grad Nikaragve srušen je sa zemljom, pri čemu su tisuće ljudi izgubile život i stotine tisuća ostale bez krova nad glavom. U to je vrijeme zemljom vladala nemilosrdna diktatura jedne obitelji koja je nastojala iskorijeniti male skupine naoružanih pobunjenika. Poznato je kako je Anastasio Somoza stariji jednom prilikom izjavio: "Ne želim obrazovanu populaciju; želim volove", čime je prikladno sazeo svoje zanemarivanje siromašne seljačke većine u Nikaragvi (Holloway 2011: 408). Ali je kleptokracija Anastasija mlađeg, koji je u svoje džepove preusmjerio sredstva za pomoć pristigla u zemlju nakon potresa, definitivno okrenula stanovništvo protiv njegova režima. Godine 1972. ljudi su bili prisiljeni oslanjati se jedni na druge kako bi sebe i svoje voljene izvukli iz ruševina (Walker 2003).

Samo šest godina kasnije zemlju su pokrenule spontane pobune u domorodačkim četvrtima Masaya na jugu i Leon na sjeveru. Figura Indijanca, koja se dotad smatrala atavističkim ostatkom koji stoički podnosi svoje podčinjenje, odjednom je predvodila pokret za promjenu. Somozinim odlaskom 17. srpnja 1979. godine zemlja je doživjela kratki procvat narodne vlasti. Kampanje za rješavanje brojnih društvenih problema (širenje pismenosti 1980., kasnije iskorjenjivanje ospica) uspjele su zahvaljujući masovnoj mobilizaciji građana. Zemlja je istodobno doživjela procvat umjetnosti: poezije, slikarstva, svečanih predstava. Sve su te aktivnosti izazvale međunarodno divljenje i nadahnule mnoge iz prvog svijeta da pohrle u zemlju te ponude svoju pomoć i tehnička znanja za potrebe tada mlade društvene revolucije. Ti solidarni aktivisti bili su šokirani kada su samo deset godina kasnije plemeniti, samoodređeni nikaragvanski seljaci okrenuli leđa revolucionarnom eksperimentu i glasali za neoliberalni režim koji je imao podršku SAD-a i koji je obećao okončati građanski rat.

Ovaj kratki sažetak zaboravljenog mjesta predstavljam kao možda bližu usporedbu od Katrine za načine na koji marginalizirani subjekti 1) počnu provoditi samoaktualizaciju kao odgovor na katastrofu, 2) prolaze proces ponovnog vrednovanja koji provode utjecajni autsajderi, što dovodi do 3) poboljšane slike o sebi koja ih dodatno osnažuje da djeluju 4) i nakon toga se moraju boriti protiv "fiksni" očekivanja

autsajdera kao uvjeta za njihovu trajnu solidarnost. Ubrzo nakon promjene režima u Nikaragvi 1990. godine fotografinja Susan Meiselas, koja je 1979. dokumentirala revoluciju, vratila se u zemlju kako bi pronašla svoje bivše fotografske subjekte. U tom drugačijem društveno-povijesnom trenutku neki su otišli toliko daleko da su poricali da su oni osoba prikazana u njezinu albumu. Njezin film, *Slike iz revolucije* (*Pictures from a Revolution*), proširena je lamentacija s naglaskom na njezin vlastiti osjećaj gubitka, zbunjenosti i izdaje, dok su obični Nikaragvanci iz stanja bezgranične nade prešli u stanje gorke bezvoljnosti. Desetljeće kasnije još je jedan par vanjskih snimatelja, novinari Peter Raymond i Bill Gentile, ponovno prošao istim putevima kao i 1988. godine kroz ratom pogođenu Nikaragvu kako bi saznali kako su se Nikaragvanci koje su upoznali tijekom rata Contra snalazili u poslijeratnoj zbilji. Njih su dvojica bili šokirani primjerima bivših pripadnika grupa Contra i Sandinista koji su ujedinili snage protiv novog režima ravnodušnosti prema ruralnim seljacima. U oba slučaja solidarni aktivisti, želeći potvrditi vlastite predodžbe o seljačkim revolucionarima, u početku nisu prepoznali fleksibilno pozicioniranje seljaka-podanika i kontinuiranost života na selu. Perspektive se mijenjaju za one koji žive stvarnost. Kao posljedica tog previda, bilješke autsajdera iz postrevolucionarnog trenutka nisu toliko usklađene s potrebom seljaka za samoodređenjem kao one iz ranijeg razdoblja. Slučaj Nikaragve upućuje na to da je kataklizmičku promjenu potrebno podržati trajnim, sporim aktivizmom koji se uklapa u svakodnevicu i podržava je, a ne narušava. Danas je Daniel Ortega, bivši revolucionarni vođa, ponovno na čelu države, ali njegov je stav prema nikaragvanskom narodu sada više u skladu s pogledom Somoze starijeg. Još se jednom pokreti mladih za samoodređenje susreću s nasilnom represijom koju provode njihovi navodni vođe.

Stanovnici Banije/Banovine, čini se, doživljavaju svoj trenutak priznanja. Kao marginalne figure izolirane starošću, etničkom pripadnošću i geografijom od nacije koja se sve više orijentira prema Europi, i oni su bliski zemlji, nekonformisti, rade samo za vlastito preživljavanje i/ili u podzemnim ekonomijama odvojenima od nacionalne norme. U tom smislu oni lako ispunjavaju ulogu hrvatskog lokalnog karaktera, suvremenog ekvivalenta ideji nacionalnog naroda (Borland 2022). Jambrešić Kirin stavlja naglasak na njihovo samooblikovanje u medijskim portretima, što podsjeća na Freirov (1970[1967]) i Boalov (1993[1974]) koncept osobnog oslobođenja povezanog s kolektivnom borbom za pravdu. U kojoj mjeri, pitam se, novinari i folkloristi koji solidarno rade sa stanovnicima Banije/Banovine djeluju kao pomagači u ovom oslobodilačkom projektu? Uostalom, kada se njihove priče ne bi prihvaćale s poštovanjem, njihova izdržljivost, crni humor i namjerni nekonformizam ne bi bili prihvaćeni i pojačani kao simbol alternativnog narativa o tome što znači biti Hrvat.

Jambrešić Kirin s pravom tvrdi da su materijalne potrebe podređene traženju smisla, svrhe i mogućnosti da osoba sama odluči što je dobar život. To me podsjeća na ekonomista Amartyu Sena koji je definirao razvoj kao slobodu odabira vlastitog života prema vlastitim prioritetima, slobodu koja se temelji na većem pristupu obrazovanju, zaštiti ljudskih prava i demokratskim sustavima upravljanja. S druge strane,

politički teoretičari, koji su svjesni da sposobnost govora i slušanja nije (a vjerojatno nikada nije ni bila) dostupna većini građana suvremenih demokracija, okreću se prema poimanju demokracije kao oblika dubokog slušanja, senzorne demokracije koja prepoznaje djelovanje političke publike kao i političkih aktera (Ryan i Flinders 2018). Ova pažnja prema publici i načini na koje dobro slušanje osnažuje subjekta da govori jest u skladu s pozivom Regine Bendix na proširenje etnografskog rada, tako da on uključuje participativno osjećanje, ne samo kao sredstvo potpunijeg dokumentiranja izvedbe već i kako bismo prepoznali vlastitu ulogu kao etnografi u zbivanjima koja dokumentiramo (Bendix 2000). Naša responzivnost prema stanovnicima Banije/Banovine ili bilo kojoj drugoj marginaliziranoj skupini koja je ignorirana, ponižena ili zanemarena politički je čin koji rezonira i podupire stvaranje predodžbe koje ovi subjekti inače iskazuju. Važnost tih trenutaka empatijske povezanosti je neprocjenjiva.

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Kako detektirati emancipacijske naknadne udare potresa?

Renata Jambrešić Kirin u ovom se dirljivom radu vraća Baniji/Banovini i svojem temeljnom interesu za pripovijedanje te u njemu pokazuje erudiciju i analitičku svestranost kakvu od nje i očekujemo. Kao i drugdje, njezino je pisanje bogato i sugestivno, a samim time otvara i širok dijapazon pitanja. Za potrebe ove diskusije obradit ću, korak po korak, samo nekoliko komponenti onoga za što vjerujem da je njezin (kumulativni) argument u nadi da će moja selektivnost biti nadopunjena komentarima drugih autora.

Prvi se korak temelji na potencijalu osnaživanja koji nosi sami čin pripovijedanja o vlastitoj patnji. Naravno da pripovijedanje može potaknuti i frustraciju, samosažaljenje i paralizu zbog samoviktimizacije. Međutim, kao što nam Jambrešić Kirin pokazuje, u određenim uvjetima pripovijedanje o vlastitoj nevolji može pomoći ljudima da organiziraju znanje, razviju okvire objašnjenja i afirmiraju svoju subjektivnost u komunikacijskom procesu međusobnog prepoznavanja. Susret sa suosjećajnim etnografom može predstavljati takve povoljne uvjete. Općenitije, autorica sugerira da se ključni čimbenik tiče vidljivosti i čujnosti, što je navodi da prouči ulogu masovnih i "društvenih" medija. Ističe da su nakon potresa 2020. godine uglavnom stariji stanovnici ruralnih dijelova Banije "odjednom pozvani da govore" o svojim borbama i nedaćama. Do tada većina drugih stanovnika Hrvatske gotovo da i nije bila svjesna njihova postojanja, iako su živjeli samo sat ili dva vožnje od centra Zagreba. Sada im je intenzivan medijski interes "povratio stas i glas"; drugim riječima, učinio ih je

vidljivima i čujnima njihovim sugrađanima i dao im osjećaj da *jesu* vidljivi i čujni za one druge. Tako ih je, riječima Jambrešić Kirin, njihova “narativna moć elokventne samo/reprezentacije preko noći učinila našim sugrađanima i suvremenicima”. Dapače, navodi da im je taj stečeni status “relevantnih sugovornika o vlastitoj budućnosti” bio važniji od materijalne pomoći.

Jambrešić Kirin naglašava specifičnost elokvencije tih sugovornika. Tako saznajemo da je njihov govor prožet “formulnim izričajima, krilaticama, mudrim zapažanjima te bogatom metaforikom s osloncem na usmenoknjiževnoj tradiciji”. Naveden je primjer priče o Velikom Đuri i Malom Đuri, kao i usputne reference na tvrdnje drugih autora, ali ovaj obećavajući argument ostaje nedorečen. Umjesto da *tvrdi* da su njezini sugovornici s Banovine iskazivali “temeljni folkloristički stav”, kao čitatelj mogao sam više naučiti *pokazivanjem* kako se to manifestiralo u etnografskim susretima. Ovakvo, upečatljiviji primjeri nisu previše folkloristički, premda su neki doista duhoviti, poput onog u kojem se opisuje izraz olakšanja čovjeka jer njegov pozitivan test na COVID-19 u sisačkoj bolnici znači da ne mora brinuti o prijevozu do svojeg doma. Kao što Jambrešić Kirin tvrdi, ovdje postoji i narativni autoritet i narativna kompetencija, u oštrom ironičnom stilu.

Drugi korak u autoričnoj argumentaciji odnosi se na zanimljiv društveni učinak uzajamnog priznanja koji je omogućen tim postpotresnim pozivom Banijcima da sami govore u svoje ime. Na području današnje Sisačko-moslavačke županije dugo je živjelo etnonacionalno raznoliko stanovništvo gdje su se ljudi u manje-više podjednakom omjeru izjašnjavali kao Hrvati/katolici i kao Srbi/pravoslavci, s time da su potonji prevladavali u ruralnim južnim brdima. Raseljavanja tijekom rata 1990-ih i poraća dovela su do konačnog omjera od otprilike 80/20. Stoga se tijekom posljednjih desetljeća, u rijetkim prilikama kada su Banovina i posebno njezini ruralniji dijelovi dobivali pažnju medija, isticala etnonacionalnost. Međutim, potres je, kako navodi Jambrešić Kirin, potaknuo kolektivno djelovanje koje je podrazumijevalo “stvaranje novih afektivnih zajednica”. Time se omogućila pojava alternativnog “regionalnog nadetničkog identiteta”, pa čak i “građanska regeneracija”. S jedne je strane zajednička nevolja, izazvana katastrofom za koju se smatra da nije ljudskog porijekla, omogućila nepolitičko samopozicioniranje ljudi s Banije kao napaćenih, ali dostojanstvenih pojedinaca, nasumično pogođenih moćnom, prevrtljivom prirodom. No, s druge strane saznajemo da je takvu depolitizaciju pratio i određeni stupanj repolitizacije, što Jambrešić Kirin prepoznaje u registru solidarnosti te kritici institucija i političkih dužnosnika. Od “društvenih otpadnika” svedenih na etnonacionalni identitet, kako tvrdi, ti su ljudi postali “pobunjenici” protiv etnonacionalno podijeljene partokracije koja je još jednom pokazala svoju nesposobnost u institucionalnom odgovoru na potres.

Priroda i razmjer te promjene u središtu su onoga što prepoznajem kao treći korak u ovom tekstu. Taj se korak odnosi na političke (neki bi mogli reći “kozmpolitičke”) implikacije pojave seljaka s Banovine kao javnih glasnika legitimne naracije izvan okvira etnonacionalnosti. Ovdje je Jambrešić Kirin, možda i neizbježno, manje egzaktna u svojem pisanju, kao što se vidi u čestoj upotrebi ograda “moguće” i



“može” te činjenici da su mnogi odlomci koji se bave tom temom formulirani kao pitanja. No, sveukupno gledajući, jasno želi istaknuti emancipacijsku (“afirmativnu”) dimenziju pripovijedanja s kojima se susrela na Baniji. To se odražava i u naslovu, kao i u njezinu slaganju s određenim pravcima teorije afekta. Zanimljivo je što Jambrešić Kirin sugerira da je pripovijedanje omogućilo njezinim sugovornicima da razviju “teleogenetički zaplet”, tj. retrospektivnu reinterpretaciju potresa kao katastrofe koja je “proizvela (pozitivan) društveni pre-tres i najavila obrat u pristupu problemu razvojnih socioekonomskih nejednakosti”. Jambrešić Kirin primjećuje oštre kontraste s ratnim narativima, kojima se bavila u nekim od svojih poznatih ranijih radova, te u konačnici formulira prilično ambicioznu tvrdnju kada piše o “katarzi tranzicijske socijalne drame”. Mislim da se ovdje radi o sugestiji da su postpotresni narativi s Banovine dokumentirani u ovom tekstu najava nekakva raskida ili da barem sadrže mogućnost takva raskida.

Čemu se ovdje točno bliži kraj, po mišljenju autorice? Po mojem bi tumačenju to bilo razdoblje koje možemo nazvati pretežno poslijeratnim i postsocijalističkim. I koji to novi početak Jambrešić Kirin predviđa? Čini se da je ovdje ključni pojam “održivost”. Autorica u više navrata naglašava “mitski osjećaj duboke sjedinjenosti s prirodom” među seljacima s Banije. Ona to ponovno povezuje s folklorom i religijskim okvirima značenja, morala i dostojanstva. Nažalost, ne dobivamo uvid u svakodnevne prakse i strategije preživljavanja njezinih sugovornika, niti smo uistinu upoznati s moralnim repertoarima na koje se pozivaju. Kao čitatelju dobro bi mi došla neka induktivna argumentacija u kojoj bi Jambrešić Kirin radila na temelju etnografskog materijala, na primjer o njihovom poljoprivrednom radu i o načinima na koje folklor nadahnjuje narative tih osoba o njihovim aktivnostima, o životu i smrti, o ljudima i ostatku prirode. Kako stvari stoje, možemo joj samo vjerovati na riječ. To je lako u slučaju kada govori o otpornosti i prilagodljivosti zbog kojih su njezini sugovornici “sušta suprotnost konformističkom urbanom osjećaju (ne)sigurnosti i anksioznosti”. Cijenim što Jambrešić Kirin pokazuje želju da se odmakne od više “patetičnih i egzotiziranih” slavljenja otpornosti. Ali kao unuk seljaka i nećak trojice seljaka (istina, daleko od Banovine) smatram da je s moje strane potrebno nešto više dobre volje da bih mogao kimati glavom dok čitam tvrdnju da “istinska briga za ekološku održivost” čini te ljude kritičarima “potrošačkog kapitalizma” poput drugih “alterglobalista”. Da budem jasan: jako bih želio da to bude istina. I volio bih da mi u ovom tekstu autorica empirijski pokaže na koji način je to doista tako.

Ipak, usprkos takvoj neutaženoj etnografskoj gladi s moje strane, smatram da su teme Jambrešić Kirin vrlo sugestivne i poticajne za daljnja propitivanja. U završetku ovog komentara osvrnut ću se na dvije linije takvog daljnjeg propitivanja.

Prva se odnosi na vremensku dimenziju “afirmativnog” argumenta, što me navedi na promišljanje o značaju melankolije u mnogim antropološkim otkrivanjima emancipacijskog potencijala. U nekim dijelovima Jambrešić Kirin postavlja ograde oko svojeg optimizma, pa tako govori o mogućnostima kritike i održivosti koje su se ukazale “barem u kratkom razdoblju”, “barem privremeno”. Što je onda s dužim rokom? Možemo li iz svoje sadašnje perspektive uopće uočiti neki duži rok za Bani-

ju koja je oprimjerena u njezinim sugovornicima? Stanovništvo današnje Sisačko-moslavačke županije najbrojnije je bilo 1931. godine. Zbog gubitka znatnog dijela stanovništva u nasilju Drugoga svjetskog rata, većinom iz ruralnog dijela u kojem je istraživanje provedeno, taj se prostor nedvojbeno smatrao "pasivnim krajem" u vremenima jugoslavenskog socijalizma, gdje su mnogi ljudi odustajali od male poljoprivrede i selili se u urbanizirana središta. Nakon što je ponovno razorena u ratu tijekom 1990-ih, Banovina je postala primjer opadanja stanovništva "subvencionirane regije". U posljednja tri desetljeća, najprije zbog niza ratnih protjerivanja, potom ograničenog povratka (osobito Srba, ali ne samo njih), a potom i u okvirima nedavnog snažnijeg egzodusa iz Hrvatske, županija je izgubila oko 44 % svojeg stanovništva. To otvara pitanja društvene reprodukcije. Sugovornici Jambrešić Kirin uglavnom su starije osobe i mala je vjerojatnost da će itko od njihove djece živjeti na njihovim imanjima. *Za koga ili što su ti seljaci otporni? Tko će i kako nastaviti njihov "održivi" način života? Tko bi to mogao nastaviti, čak i kada bi htio?* Sugovornica poput Desanke iz Borojevića očito je svjesna te nevolje jer izričito povezuje djecu i nadu kada govori o svojem "pustom selu": "Samo da ima omladine, mi bi se stari pomladili pored vas! Imali bi neku veću nadu." Možda bismo tekst Jambrešić Kirin trebali čitati kao eulogiju za *prošli* način života. Takav retrospektivni pogled koji afirmativno rekonstruira punoću i smislenost načina života koji nestaju, dakako, čest je u etnologiji i antropologiji, i to ne znači da se u njemu ne može pronaći nadahnuće za emancipaciju. A to je zapravo afirmacija u melankoličnom ključu, što postavlja pitanje moguće primjenjivosti u posve drugačijim prostorno-vremenskim konfiguracijama.

Druga je linija propitivanja, za mene, potaknuta pronicljivim komentarima Jambrešić Kirin o razvijanju međusobnog prepoznavanja kroz zajedničku ljudsku ranjivost. Ovdje se pitam koliku ulogu ima specifičnost konkretne katastrofe koja je pogodila Baniju. Je li veća vjerojatnost da će baš potres potaknuti međusobno prepoznavanje među ljudima koje gigantski seizmički događaj podsjeti na njihovu generičku sićušnost? Možda se potrese doživljava kao jednu od *prirodnijih* prirodnih katastrofa jer je, barem koliko ja znam, teško utvrditi njihove ljudske uzroke. Strahopoštovanje prema nasumičnoj moći prirode vjerojatno je čest osjećaj koji potres izaziva. Jambrešić Kirin sugestivno konstruira svoj tekst oko načina na koje se to ipak može pretočiti u kritiku politike. Možda bismo mogli proširiti njezina istraživanja u odnosu na ideju "antropocena", gdje se smatra da je "priroda" nepovratno suuvjetovana ljudskim djelovanjem. Za usporedbu bismo se mogli zapitati koji bi se različiti emancipacijski potencijal mogao izvući iz posljedica, primjerice, poplava. Prije nekoliko godina u Bosni i Hercegovini katastrofalne poplave dočekane su sličnim smanjenjem etnonacionalnog fokusa, barem "nakratko", kroz "prepoznavanje drugih u njihovoj ranjivosti", što se smatra univerzalnom ljudskom osobinom. No te su poplave također zakomplicirale naše razmišljanje o "prirodnim katastrofama". Poplave i njihove uzročne veze s, na primjer, krčenjem šuma, sve većom pokrivenošću asfaltom, upravljanjem vodenim putovima, pa sve do emisija ugljika, tjeraju nas da se bavimo pitanjem kako ljudi mogu biti i žrtve i (često nesvjesni) uzročnici uništavanja i propadanja. Time se vraćamo na ljudsko djelovanje i njegove (ne)na-

mjerne posljedice, uvijek na vrlo stratificirane načine: ako je paradigma ekstrakcije iz prirode u osnovi potrošačkog kapitalizma, ili zapravo cijelog modernizma, važno je osvijestiti činjenicu, kao što Jambrešić Kirin sugerira, da ljudska bića ne sudjeluju, ne pridonose i ne profitiraju *ravnopravno* od te paradigme. Tako možemo dodatno produbiti kritične lekcije koje treba naučiti iz više ili manje “prirodnih” katastrofa, a ne zadržati se samo na viktimizaciji i otpornosti.

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U strahu su velike oči, u boli mala usta, a empatija ima velike uši? Ili: Kako je potencijal teleogenetičkog zapleta (p)ostao incident konsekvativne realnosti

Banija je za mene bila samo medijski posredovan krajolik do rujna 2021. godine kada sam na nju istraživački zakoračila, o nju se afektivno “okrnula”. Prostor je to brojnih devastirajućih trauma uzrokovanih ratovima, političkom ruinizacijom i prirodnom katastrofom. To su poznate činjenice koje, iako naoko samorazumljive, istraživanje uzroka, slijeda i posljedica spomenutih devastacija čini složenim i to ne samo zbog toga što je u istraživanju svih “teških” tema izazovno stvaranje komunikacijskog konteksta u kojemu kao istraživači možemo biti empatično uho, nenametljivi svjedok za tuđu priču koju nipošto nije lako (do neke mjere nije ni moguće) pripovijedati. Problematika je mnogo kompleksnija i nužno ju je pogledati iz perspektive emocionalnih registara koji potiču istraživanje i upravljaju njime.

Iz (auto)refleksivne humanističke istraživačke pozicije, fizička, a slijedom toga i emotivna te kognitivna prisutnost u kraju “nezamislive” depriviranosti i devastacije, “samo šezdesetak kilometara od metropole” čini se složenom iz više razloga. Složena je zbog primordijalnog straha od susreta i suočavanja s ljudskom patnjom. Složena je jer ju prati velika nelagoda uslijed neizbježne kolonizacije tuđe boli, patnje i traume nakon koje se valja “posramljen” vratiti u svoj “topli dom” ili svoj “lagodni akademski kutak”. Složena je i zato što je prisutna svijest o vrlo skromnom utjecaju vlastite epistemologije na “stvaran” svijet i budući tijek tuđe boli, patnje i traume. Složena je i zbog toga što zahtjeva nošenje s tektonikom lokalnih vjerskih, nacionalnih, političkih, interesnih i drugih odnosa koji su prouzročili bol ili otežali zacjeljenje te se usložnjava kada se ispreplete s istraživačevim “preferencama” koje je poželjno ili suprimirati u korist svih ili prešutjeti neke. Istraživačka prisutnost na Baniji u susretu s tuđom boli je teška i zbog muka s pozvanošću da se o susretu s ljudskom patnjom išta kaže, ako se smogne hrabrosti, mudrosti i obraza. Teška je i zato što treba otprijeti nelagodu spoznaje o neizbježnosti promatračeve romantizacije ljudske otpornosti

koja, iako neosporna, samo je odraz okrutne nužnosti koju narodna mudrost definira kao “gore visoko, a dolje tvrdo”. Posebno je teško imaginirati budućnost za drugoga koji pati ili ga potaknuti da je sam imaginira ili narativno oblikuje svoju imaginaciju.

S metodološkog, epistemološkog i ako hoćemo, prvenstveno s ljudskog gledišta nužno je uzeti u obzir da, kako je upozorio Emmanuel Levinas (1988: 156), čak i kada smo spremni na iskustvo uvida u tuđu patnju, uvijek smo u opasnosti od neuspjeha pridavanja dovoljno značenja patnji kojoj svjedočimo ili mislimo da svjedočimo. Vrlo lako možemo previdjeti nečiju bol i patnju, previdjeti njezinu žestinu, prevesti je u najrazličitije emocionalne registre uslijed konteksta i žanra u kojima se patnja komunicira, čak i ako nastojimo razumjeti (i imaginirati) njezinu prošlost i imaginirati njezine učinke u budućnosti. Unatoč tome, kao ljudi, pa i s istraživačkom agendom, ili čak kao ljudi koji imaju radikalno zamagljenu istraživačku i privatnu perspektivu, na alarm boli i ljudske patnje drugog bića nudimo razne etičke, emocionalne i narativne te na koncu i epistemološke odgovore.

U polaznom tekstu Renate Jambrešić Kirin precizno su naznačene granične ili ekstremne pozicije koje su nam na raspolaganju u susretu s tuđom patnjom: primjerice, pozicija profesionalnog “samozadovoljavanja” ili pozicija žala za većom društvenom ulogom profesije u kojoj djelujemo. “Etnografija nenametljivosti” (Jambrešić Kirin 2021 i u polaznom tekstu) ili, njoj vrlo bliska, “etnografija brižnosti” (Vukušić 2021) koje se, premda ih je teško usustaviti kao “institucionalizirane” metode, smještaju između ideje o neprevladivom antagonizmu boli i ljudske patnje te jezika i ideje o boli i patnji kao iskustvima koja, iako u pitanje dovode jezik i komunikaciju, zapravo su vrlo snažno povezana s jezikom i izražavanjem. Pitati sugovornika “Kako ste?” (ili neko slično pitanje), iako banalno, osnova je istraživačke, etički odgovorne etnografije Banije i sličnih depriviranih i ruiniziranih područja. Nije ovdje riječ o vještom upravljanju pripovjednim kontekstom kako je o njemu pisao William Labov, koji je razgovore započinjao pitanjima koja otvaraju mogućnosti pričama koje su vrijedne pričanja, odnosno onima koje su snažnije poantirane (usp. Labov 1984: 56). Nije ni riječ o tome da time samo nastojimo izbjeći “diskurse upućene izvan neposredne sredine govornika” (Labov 1984: 46) ili da se nastojimo samo riješiti balasta istraživačke situacije (ibid.) čemu neka folkloristička istraživanja mogu legitimno težiti. Riječ je o tome da ta pozicija omogućuje da se bol i patnja naših sugovornika ovjere kao suštinsko iskustvo jezika. Bol i patnja jesu suštinsko iskustvo jezika i to zbog svojevrsnog kolapsa artikuliranog jezika koji stoji na raspolaganju latentnoj priči o patnji i boli i zbog toga što s jedne strane imamo poriv sugovornika koji pate da se bol i patnja izraze, a s druge je nemogućnost da se o boli i patnji bilo što kaže, da je se opiše ili prenese (usp. Freber 2019: 145). Unatoč teškoćama “guranja” boli i patnje u jezik, polazni tekst Renate Jambrešić Kirin pokazuje da bol i patnja Banijaca zahtijevaju ekspresiju, pa i stoga što je, po prirodi stvari, onemogućena njihova artikulacija, ali ne nužno na antagonistički način kroz konfrontaciju koja je i sveobuhvatna i destruktivna. Naime, Ilit Ferber primjećuje da žestoki antagonizam između boli i jezika pokazuje da je bol najtočnije definirana u odnosu na jezik, a jezik se manifestira u odnosu na iskustvo boli (ibid.: 145–146). Dakle, u susretu sa stanov-

nicima Banije koji su po tko zna koji put doživjeli “neopisivo” stradanje nije nužno riječ samo o naracijama koje nastaju na ruševinama jezika, na njegovim fragmentima i krhotinama, već upravo nesklad i antagonizam između jezika i boli jamče snagu jezika i mogućnost izražavanja. Pretpostavljam da su ti iskazi ono što, unatoč svim spomenutim slabostima i same ideje takvoga istraživanja, zahtijeva našu pažnju (ne samo pozornost nego i brigu).

Isto tako, razmišljanja u polaznom tekstu navode nas na razmišljanja o tome da izolacija od Drugih koju bol uzrokuje nije jedini učinak boli. Bol i patnja nas, neovisno o narušenoj kvaliteti komunikacije, istodobno “guraju” prema Drugome, čak i kada ne izazivaju jasnu empatiju i smisleni etički odgovor. Bol produbljuje našu vezu s drugima i otvara širok i raznolik raspon izražavanja, ali i “čitanja” boli koje nikada nije neko nevino “slijedenje pripovijesti” (Braid 1996). Unatoč poteškoćama etnografije “teških” tema koje nas duboko ljudski diraju i kojima se istodobno opiremo i koje nas privlače baš unatoč i/ili usprkos tome, one nas etički “kastiraju”, onemogućuju “lakoću” uvijek kompleksnog etnografskog susreta.

S “velikim očima” i “velikim ušima”, kao istraživači, moramo pronaći načina da slušamo one s “malim ustima” i da se “bavimo” Banijom i svim drugi teškim i bolnim mjestima naših sugovornika i to tako da, unatoč opravdanoj kritici da tako vrlo predano “konzimiramo tuđu traumu” (usp. Yaeger 2002) i koloniziramo tuđu šutnju (usp. Freund 2013: 235), uvijek iznova, kako se predlaže polaznim tekstom, pitamo “Kako ste?”

Na koncu, odgovor na to pitanje, narativi koje ono potiče, govore u prilog tezi da je ono što se u trenutku velike medijske i građanske pozornosti činilo kao teleogenetički zaplet, zapravo, čini se, ipak bio samo još jedan u nizu konsekutivnih zapleta. Medijski, građanski i aktivistički interes za stanovnike Banije koji je neke nagnao da zakluče da je potres najbolje što im se dogodilo<sup>1</sup> načelno je gotov i prije je moguće da je bilo riječi eventualno o priči u priči koja je oblikovana složenom suigrom boli i patnje s jedne i suosjećanja s druge strane. Mediji su proizveli sliku o prototipu Banijaca kao “svojejav[e], nedokazan[e] i nezaglavlj[e] starčad[i]” (Kljaić 2021: 131 prema Jambrešić Kirin u polaznom tekstu) koja je osuđena na život. Jedino je takva slika mogla pobuditi podnošljivo suosjećanje zajednice. Bol i patnja o koju se kao etnografi možemo “okrznuti”, a koja u međuljudskoj interakciji suklja iz naših sugovornika potaknuta pitanjem “Kako ste?”, nešto je posve drugo. Tada možemo uvidjeti da se u pozadini narativa o “herojima života”, rezilijentnim ljudima, punima humora i životne radosti, ljubavi prema kraju u kojemu žive i sl. paralelno odvija i arhetipska priča o Filoktetu. Ta se priča u brojnim svojim varijantama i tumačenjima (v. Ferber 2019: 17–20) koristi kao predložak za promišljanje odnosa boli i jezika, boli i empatije, osobe u boli i svjedoka patnje. Stanovnici Banije trpe posljedice društvenih i prirodnih nedaća u “neopisivoj” boli i patnji, dok u svjedocima bespoštedno raste suosjećanje i to ne nužno kao nešto o nekome ili prema nekome, nego i kao, doslovno, osjećaj tuđe boli.

<sup>1</sup> Tijekom terenskog istraživanja više sam puta čula tu konstataciju.

Osobne pripovijesti Banijaca ne izazivaju samo neku singularnu, subjektivnu senzaciju nego one imaju potencijal izazivanja javne, zajedničke boli. Čak i slika banijskog domaćinstva koja se ne oslanja na propozicijski i komunikativni jezik zajedno s intimnim vezama koje se stvaraju među sugovornicima čine temelj za zajednicu utemeljenu na empatiji. Čak štoviše, u fazi u kojoj se jezik “porađa” mi još snažnije i izravnije osjećamo ili suosjećamo s tuđom patnjom (Ferber 2079: 47). Ta je faza boli često nepodnošljiva za svjedoka. Nagna ga na bijeg. Naime, suosjećanje se konstituira učinkovitom dinamikom između intenziteta boli i sposobnosti ljudi pogođenih katastrofom da je obuzdaju. Obuzdavanje “suza” i oblikovanje autonarativa o rezilijentnosti i tvrdoglavosti u svom naumu da se izdrži postaju izvor rastućeg, snažnog osjećaja suosjećanja. To, naime, ne znači da je rezilijentnost stvar izbora i u konačnici stalno i stvarno stanje stvari. Međutim, autonarativ o rezilijentnosti, kroz humor i prihvaćanje jedini može biti viđen i dostupan za empatični odgovor. Metaforički govoreći, ona gnojna, užasna, devastirajuća Filoktetova rana Banijaca nije za gledanje. Ta je bol, kao i brojne takve boli osuđena na krik bez odjeka, na bol u šutnji i to na pozadini, iako teškog, i dalje “običnog” života na periferiji naše pažnje (ne samo pozornosti nego i brige). Mogu li humanističke discipline kao što su, primjerice, folkloristika ili kulturna antropologija, čiji se znanstveni diskursi često miješaju s onim literarnim ili aktivističkim, išta učiniti s takvom boli, a da nije riječ samo o njezinu analitičkom odjeku? Možemo se samo nadati.

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Tekst Renate Jambrešić Kirin “Trebalo čuti, vidjeti, dotaknuti: može li etnografija razgraditi naracije straha?”, napisan kao rezultat bilježenja, promišljanja i interpretiranja događanja na području pogođenom potresom u prosincu 2020. godine, istaknuo je nekoliko aktualnih i relevantnih tema. Premda su autoričina zapažanja potaknuta konkretnim situacijama na Baniji/Banovini, ona upućuju na procese i trendove rasprostranjene i izvan te regije, kao i izvan hrvatskih granica. U ovom ću se osvrću usmjeriti na odabrana pitanja u kojima prepoznajem poveznicu s mojim stručnim i znanstvenim interesima, koji su posljednjih desetak godina usmjereni na promjene kroz koje prolaze hrvatske regije, prvenstveno promjene vidljive u prostoru, u stanju i korištenju gradskih i seoskih naselja, odnosu prema regionalnoj i lokalnoj baštini te u kvaliteti života. Prvo se pitanje odnosi na osvještavanje blizine i razmjera područja koje se, zbog niza okolnosti, smješta na “margine civilizacije”. Drugo se pitanje odnosi na moć i učinke pripovijedanja te moguću jednodimenzionalnost naracija. Treće se odnosi na (ne)mogućnost pretvorbe naracija u sredstvo postizanja društvenih promjena.



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Potres koji je u prosincu 2020. godine pogodio područje Banije/Banovine drastično je i trajno izmijenio životno okruženje i svakodnevicu stanovnika, a do nepojmljive je mjere privukao pažnju medija i javnosti za taj desetljećima zanemarivan kraj Hrvatske udaljen svega sat vremena vožnje od glavnog grada Zagreba. U mjesecima nakon potresa masovna je reakcija građana i stručnjaka volontera iz različitih dijelova zemlje i inozemstva pomagala ublažiti posljedice potresa, posebno štete na imovini i infrastrukturi, te pružiti psihološku i ljudsku pomoć. Inicijative entuzijasta su na terenu pokazale i ponudile modele za relativno brzo i učinkovito osiguravanje sigurnog stanovanja, kvalitetne prehrane, zdravstvenih i psiholoških usluga i drugog potrebnog za prevladavanje krizne situacije. Međutim, nepobitna je činjenica, posebno uzimajući u obzir da je od potresa prošlo dvadeset mjeseci, da taj val dobre volje, humanosti, empatije i konkretnih rješenja, nije uspio inspirirati, prodrmati i izmijeniti postojeće prakse i sustave državne i javne uprave te jedinica lokalne i regionalne samouprave (županija, gradova i općina) kojima se već desetljećima razara veliki dio Hrvatske.

Osim potresnih priča o iskustvima katastrofe, potres je neočekivano pod povećalo stavio sustavne probleme nagomilavane posljednjih desetljeća, reflektirane u brojnim osobnim i obiteljskim pričama o neimaštini, siromaštvu, usamljenosti. Prepuštenost samima sebi, desetljećima duga borba za ono što je građanima u nekim drugim dijelovima države osigurano, nepovjerenje u vlast i vanjske faktore (koje je dijelom moguće tumačiti i povijesnim okolnostima života na granici) (usp. Štefanec 2021), doveli su do specifičnih načina postojanja i življenja – koji su u pričama nakon potresa prenošeni slikom “žilavih”, “osebujnih i rezistentnih” (str. 10), dakle snalazljivih žitelja Banije/Banovine prepuštenih svakodnevnoj borbi za pristojan život. Te su priče u najmanju ruku šokirale hrvatsku javnost, ali je teško reći koliko su osvijestile da je ta studija slučaja Banije/Banovine, koju se ima prilike gledati zbog nedavne katastrofe, samo isječak realnosti s kojom se nosi gotovo trećina Hrvatske. “Margine civilizacije” puno su bliže i raširenije nego što se na prvi pogled čini, a zahvaćaju ne samo Baniju/Banovinu već i Kordun, Liku, Dalmatinsku zagoru, Slavoniju, kao i druge dijelove Hrvatske (Lončar i Pavić 2020).

Više desetljeća dugo “institucionalizirano zanemarivanje” (usp. Kanafani 2016) građana i njihovih potreba dovelo je do situacije u kojoj stanovnici u velikom dijelu Hrvatske nemaju zadovoljavajući pristup zdravstvenim, socijalnim, kulturnim i obrazovnim uslugama, i u kojoj je generacijama djece, mladih i odraslih uskraćena prilika da žive i napreduju ravnomjerno svojim vršnjacima u drugim dijelovima Hrvatske. Nejednakost u kvaliteti života između hrvatskih regija neupitno potvrđuje niz kvantitativnih i kvalitativnih ekonomskih i sociokulturnih pokazatelja, među koji su stopa rizika od siromaštva, udio korisnika minimalno zajamčenog dohotka u populaciji, udio bruto prosječne plaće, udio prodajne vrijednosti industrijskih proizvoda i izvoza, vitalni indeks, broj liječnika na 1000 stanovnika, broj vrtića po broju djece u dobi od 0 do 4 godine, omjer učitelja i učenika, potrošnja na kulturne aktivnosti,

i dr. (usp. Lončar i Pavić 2020). Nadalje, niz je pokazatelja o kojima se rjeđe govori poput (negativnih) promjena gradskih i seoskih naselja (fizičko stanje i korištenje građevina, dostupnost usluga uobičajenih za gradske sredine i dr.), odnosa prema regionalnoj i lokalnoj baštini, percepcije regije i mjesta poželjnih za život, osjećaja stanovnika i dr. Premda se svaka, i najmanja pomoć, pokazala dobrodošlom, sudar s činjenicama koje su pretočene u brojke otvara pitanja o tome koji krajnji učinak na živote ljudi mogu imati pojedinačne akcije pomoći odozdo (materijalne i ljudske) te jesu li za vraćanje dostojnog života nužni puno opsežniji i kompleksniji setovi aktivnosti koji moraju zahvatiti sustave i prakse odozgo.

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Usljed velikog interesa medija i javnosti za poslijepotresnu situaciju, stanovnici Banije/Banovine sa svojim životnim pričama postali su protagonisti televizijskih i novinskih reportaža objavljivanih na dnevnoj i tjednoj razini te masovno prosljeđivanih putem društvenih mreža. Jambrešić Kirin u svom tekstu navodi višestruke pozitivne učinke tog “tsunamija banijskih životnih i potresnih priča” (str. 7), između ostalog, doprinos “civilnoj revitalizaciji Banijaca kao građana i državljana”, tj. osvjetavanje činjenice o postojanju te regije, njezinih stanovnika i njihovih potreba. Dodala bih kako je jedan od doprinosa i revitalizacija naziva Banija, koji je posljednjih tridesetak godina, sve do potresa, u javnosti bio napušten i nepoželjan (usp. Lončar 2014). Međutim, potrebno je razmisliti je li taj proces stvaranja naracija o regiji i ljudima te njihova kanaliziranja prema javnosti imao i svoje manje pozitivne učinke. Može li dobra namjera prenošenja naracija o unesrećenima i potrebitima imati suprotan učinak te poslužiti kao argument nečinjenja, nedjelovanja koje je na snazi?

Brojne priče i emisije posvećene potresom pogođenom području bile su usmjerene na negativne pojave. U medijskim se reportažama gotovo senzacionalistički predstavljalo “deprivirane i eliptične životne priče” (str. 5) – priče o siromaštvu i bijedi, napuštenim starcima, zaselcima bez infrastrukture itd. – koje su zasigurno doprinijele stvaranju dominantne naracije o suvremenoj Baniji/Banovini. Nažalost, druge priče nisu imale moć i nisu se uspješno probile te su uglavnom ostale nepoznate javnosti. Od mnogobrojnih emisija nacionalne televizije koje su u kasnovečernjim satima okupljale aktere postpotresne obnove, uključujući djelatnike općina, gradova, županije, ministarstava, fakulteta, ustanova i drugih, usudujem se reći da ni jedna nije bila posvećena vrijednostima i resursima kojih se u procesu obnove i oporavka ne smijemo odreći i koji bi trebali biti temelj planiranja regeneracije cijele regije. Postavlja se stoga pitanje kako je u kriznim situacijama uopće moguće “progurati”, učiniti vidljivijima i druge, “afirmativno intonirane (...) naracije”.

Podsjetila bih da potresom pogođeno područje karakteriziraju iznimne prirodne i kulturno-povijesne vrijednosti te baština međunarodnog i nacionalnog te regionalnog i lokalnog značenja. Teško ih je ovdje pobrojati, ali indikativan može biti već podatak da cca 40 % površine Sisačko-moslavačke županije pokrivaju zaštićeni dijelovi prirode i područja u ekološkoj mreži Natura 2000 s brojnim strogo zaštiće-

nim vrstama, uključujući posebne rezervate, park prirode, regionalni park, značajne krajobrazne, spomenik parkovne arhitekture, park-šumu i dr. Vrijednosti i značaj kulturno-povijesnih urbanih i ruralnih cjelina, pojedinačnih povijesnih građevina i lokaliteta te brojnih izraza i praksi nematerijalne kulture govore o skladu i suživotu s prirodom koji ondje omogućuju kvalitetan razvoj, posebno razvoj ekološke poljoprivredne proizvodnje i proizvodnje hrane te ruralnog i kulturnog turizma. Prostor je od iznimnog značaja za nacionalnu povijest, o čemu svjedoči niz lokaliteta među kojima je fortifikacijska baština vezana za hrvatsku velikašku obitelj Zrinski, vojnokrajiški gradovi koji su bili središta okupljanja intelektualne i vojne elite te preporodnih aktivnosti tijekom kojih je u kući Peleš u Glini skladana hrvatska himna (Lončar 2022). Premda se niz ovakvih podataka i priča može nastaviti unedogled, oni nisu bili pogodni i nisu se mogli uklopiti u gotovo jednodimenzionalne predodžbe o tome kako na području Banije/Banovine nema ničega vrijednog za čuvanje ili ulaganje. Time je potpomognuto već uhodano zanemarivanje ovog prostora i ljudi te su stvoreni argumenti koji govore o besmislu i neisplativosti popravljavanja povijesnih građevina, gradnje novih puteva, širenja komunalne mreže, poboljšavanja kvalitete zdravstvenih i drugih usluga i tako dalje.

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U uvodnom tekstu Jambrešić Kirin preispituje ulogu i važnost “pripovjedne razmjene iskustva” (str. 5), odnosno aktivnosti pripovijedanja i naracija kao ishoda pripovijedanja i stručne (folklorističke, antropološke) obrade. Konkretno, autorica potiče raspravu o tome može li pričanje o osobnom životu imati “terapijski učinak” za pripovjedača (str. 13) i mogu li naracije biti “most za razumijevanje drugih” (str. 9). Ako se nastavi u smjeru traganja za mogućim ulogama pripovijedanja i naracija, može li se zamisliti njihovo transformiranje u formu koja će pospješiti širu “društvenu ulogu” (str. 5) i pripomoći ostvarenju “društvenih promjena” (str. 5), koje se u tekstu zagovaraju, ali i ocjenjuju kao praktično teško ostvarive? Mogu li se iskustva i znanja posredovana antropologu, posredovati dalje u praksu s ciljem izazivanja društvenih promjena? Mogu li i trebaju li se antropolozi asertivnije uključiti u kreiranje javnih politika i time uistinu raditi na osnaživanju zajednica i pojedinaca?

Demografski, ekonomski, sociokulturni i okolišni izazovi suvremenog doba legitimna su i zastupljena tema u znanstvenim istraživanjima i obrazovnim sadržajima te u europskim i nacionalnim politikama. Globalni izazovi – posebno klimatske promjene i održivi razvoj, siromaštvo i nejednakosti, pristup čistoj vodi i hrani, pristup obrazovanju i zdravstvenim uslugama i dr. – traže iznalaženje perspektiva, odgovora i rješenja uz nužno uključivanje (akademskih) stručnjaka različitih disciplina. Humanističke znanosti imaju neizostavnu ulogu u tim aktivnostima, koja nije samo rezultat zahtjeva razvojnih politika (uključujući i javno financiranje znanosti) već i društvene odgovornosti, koju neka europska sveučilišta i ustanove ponosno ističu kao svoj uzor i vodilju. Potrebno se stoga pokazuje govoriti o tome što je potrebno prevladati kako bi humanističke znanosti postale relevantni dionici tih procesa, tj.

učinkovito djelovale na javne politike. U već otvorenim raspravama navodi se potreba nadilaženja individualizma, djelovanje kroz institucije, usmjeravanje na sustavni dijalog s kreatorima politika i drugim znanostima te razvoj stručnosti koja je potrebna za vođenje takvih razgovora (Brom 2019, 2020). Ono što se traži od znanosti koja želi utjecati na javnu politiku je razumijevanje konteksta, percepcije dionika, norma i vrijednosti, nada i strahova (Brom 2019). Upravo u ovome prepoznajem ono o čemu govori Jambrešić Kirin kada tvrdi da pripovijedanje i naracije imaju svojevrstu moć i mogu slušačima povećati “kapacitet za empatiju, učenje, sazrijevanje, promjenu svjetonazora i ekološko osvještavanje”.

Privilegij je antropologa u tome što može spoznavati i učiti od običnog čovjeka, kroz direktan kontakt i razgovor, dugotrajni boravak ili višekratno posjećivanje nekog mjesta i zajednice. Lokalna znanja do kojih dolaze u svojim istraživanjima, i njihovo tumačenje, posebno kao “mreže znanja, razumijevanje i informacije o lokalnoj zajednici i njezinim praksama”, smatraju se važnima za kvalitetno oblikovanje javnih politika, ali i njegovu učinkovitost i legitimnost (Petković 2014: 108). Ako se prihvati rečeno, pripovijedanje i naracije mogu biti podloga za oblikovanje smjernica i izradu programa i strategija kojima se planira dugoročni razvoj, a posebno u područjima povezanim s ranjivim i marginaliziranim zajednicama, korištenjem i očuvanjem javnih dobara i vrijednosti, kao i drugih aspekata svakodnevnog života pojedinca i zajednice, uključujući oporavak nakon katastrofa. Mogu li, dakle, prikupljene priče s potresom pogođenog područja – o starcima koji žive sami u kućama bez struje i vode, o djeci koja pješače kilometrima do autobusa za školu, o poljoprivrednicima koji ne mogu plasirati svoje proizvode na tržište i dr. – biti posredovane dalje od antropoloških tekstova, na koji način i s kojom svrhom? Trebaju li antropolozi preuzeti odgovornost za transformiranje i preusmjeravanje priča prema široj javnosti i politikama kako bi uistinu doprinijeli “osnaživanju lokalnih subjekata” (str. 9)? U konačnici, imaju li stručnjaci iz humanističkih znanosti pravo birati ili se ovdje radi o pitanju društvene i osobne odgovornosti znanstvenika i pojedinaca radi dobrobiti čovječanstva?



## SVRT NA KOMENTARE

**Renata Jambrešić Kirin**

Prije svega želim naglasiti da sam komentirani rad pisala u prvih sedam mjeseci nakon razornog potresa od 28. i 29. prosinca 2020. godine, s epicentrom u Petrinji i okolnim mjestima, i da sam njegovu prvu verziju izložila na 18. međunarodnom kongresu društva International Society for Folk Narrative Research 5. rujna 2021. godine (online congress in virtual Zagreb, 5–8. 9. 2021.). Cilj mi je bio opisati trenutak, impulzivan i novim značenjima bremenit odgovor zajednice na kataklizmu koja je stvorila novu epsku cezuru u kolektivnom pamćenju regije i kojom kao da je napokon okončano dugo razdoblje obilježeno ratovima, razaranjima i progonima iz dvadesetog stoljeća. Željela sam predočiti verbalizirane, ali i druge psihosocijalne i senzorne reakcije stanovnika izazvane nagomilanim stresom i zazorom od nestabilnog društvenog i nemirnog fizičkog krajolika obilježenog pucanjem, pomicanjem i likvefakcijom tla te izrazitom seizmičkom aktivnošću. U međuvremenu sam napisala još dva (neobjavljena) teksta u kojima se pojedine postavke ovog članka elaboriraju, dopunjuju i razmatraju u drugom svjetlu i u bitno različitom afektivnom miljeu u kojem dominira frustracija, razočarenje, ogorčenost i rezignacija, a uslijed beznađno sporog tempa vladinog projekta obnove i nejasnih, konfuznih principa na kojima ona počiva. Studiozni i pronicljivi komentari, kao i vrijedne sugestije i kritičke primjedbe vrsnih znanstvenika, komentatora ovog rada, bit će mi od velike pomoći pri završnom oblikovanju neobjavljenih tekstova te im se ovom prigodom na njima iskreno zahvaljujem.

I sama sam bila pod snažnim dojmom nepogode koja je zahvatila i moju obitelj te poremetila dnevni ritam rastrzan između rada i brige o ranjivim članovima obitelji koji su ili ostali “u epicentru” ili došli u moj zagrebački stan. U radu sam pokušala povezati nekoliko disciplinarnih očista iz kojih je moguće interpretirati izvan-redne, kompleksne i paradoksalne posljedice prirodne nepogode – autoetnografiju, antropologiju katastrofe, afektivnu antropologiju i folklorističke teorije pripovijedanja i intersubjektivne komunikacije – ali i iznaći formu pisanja koja prenosi dramatičnu samoaktualizaciju, emotivni intenzitet svježih traume, patnju i bol, strah i neizvjesnost u stalno-iznova-potresanim habitatima te, prije svega, obnovljenu vjeru u širu zajednicu koja presijeca (ne)vidljive etničke, klasne i kulturne granice. Slažem se da članak mjestimice pati od egzaltiranog tona i mnoštva tematskih rukavaca što je posljedica želje da zabilježim afektivnu silinu i senzornu kvalitetu rašomonskog događaja koji se, ne zbog rušilačkog spektakla, nego “masovnofrontovskog” odgovora građana Hrvatske može okarakterizirati prvorazrednim Događajem. A takav

Događaj, prema filozofu Alainu Badiou, predstavlja rupturu koja rađa nove političke subjekte i “razbija pojavnost normalnosti i otvara prostor da se promisli stvarnost” i ono “što leži ispod određenog društvenog poretka”. Naime, “[s]amo u Događaju može isključeni član postati vidljiv. Događaj uspijeva reprezentirati dio [zajednice] koji je dotad bio nereprezentiran” (McLavery-Robinson 2014). Premda je tijekom vremena pokazao da masovna mobilizacija građana nije proizvela revolucionarne subjekte niti ugrozila postojeće odnose moći i centraliziranu državnu upravu, samoorganiziranje građana iznjedrilo je nove slike kolektiviteta, potaklo neke projekte solidarne ekonomije i niz međuregionalnih inicijativa te osvijestilo moć udruženih i motiviranih građana. Stanovnici depriviranih ruralnih zajednica Banije našli su se u središtu opće pozornosti te napokon bili reprezentirani kao punokrvni sugrađani čiji samosvjesni nastupi, srčanost i vitalnost, kao kontrast njihovu stradanju i depriviranosti, ne pobuđuju tek empatiju, nego osjećaj građanske odgovornosti za postojeći nepravedni društveni poredak s drastičnim regionalnim razlikama u razvijenosti, kvaliteti života i stopi iseljavanja (usp. Lončar i Čavrak 2022: 25–31).

U tom smislu ovaj rad tematizira “privremenu utopiju” i “načine na koje je reakcija zajednice na katastrofu izvukla ono najbolje iz ljudi” (Borland) u prvim mjesecima nakon potresa. Komentar **Katherine Borland**, u kojem iznosi primjer razornog potresa u Nikaragvi 23. prosinca 1972. godine i višegodišnju političku metamorfozu obespravljenih seljaka i nadničara, izuzetno je važan jer mi je osvijestio dinamiku “misije solidarnosti” kao složenog odnosa lokalne (deprivirane) zajednice i izvanjskih “utjecajnih outsajdera”. Borland pokazuje kako su ruralni starosjedioci u Nikaragvi od pasivnih podanika koji stoički podnose svoje podčinjavanje, rasijalizaciju i prirodnu kataklizmu postali revolucionarni subjekti i pokretači masovnih pobuna da bi nakon deset godina okrenuli leđa “revolucionarnom eksperimentu” i podržali proameričku neoliberalnu opciju. Tri od četiri mehanizma političke subjektivacije koje je Borland opisala – (a) samoaktualizacija marginaliziranih subjekata kao odgovor na katastrofu, (b) njihovo ponovno vrednovanje koje provode utjecajni outsajderi, (c) poboljšana slika o sebi koja lokalno stanovništvo dodatno osnažuje da djeluju – mogu se lijepo iščitati i na banijskom primjeru. No onaj četvrti opisani korak o raskoraku između aktivista, outsajdera uglavnom ljevičarskog svjetonazora, te seoskog konzervativnog, ideološki nedosljednog i ambivaletnog zamišljanja “idealne političke zajednice”, zaslužuje dužu raspravu. On se izravno nadovezuje na završnu primjedbu **Stefa Jansena**. Naime, Jansen smatra da svojim afirmativnim diskursom o vitalnosti, otpornosti i samoodrživosti banijskih seljaka starije dobi nisam opisala recentne strategije njihova kriznog preživljavanja, nego da sam “u melankoličnom ključu” ispisala “eulogiju za prošli način života” seljana.

Slažem se s Jansenom da sam pod prvim dojmom organiziranja novih oblika društvenosti u vakuumu paralizirane državne uprave pomalo romantizirala spremnost unesrećenih da okrenu novu stranicu i artikuliraju svoje nezadovoljstvo nacionalističkim, klerikalnim i konzervativnim politikama koje ih čvrstim (simboličkim i ideološkim) poveznicama vežu za ratnu prošlost i regresivne narative bliže devetnaestom no dvadesetprvom stoljeću. Već su lokalni izbori u svibnju 2021. godine



pokazali da je moje viđenje prirodne katastrofe kao teleogenetičke prijelomnice dominantnih narativa koja je uzdrmala postojeći politički *mindset* i umanjila važnost etnonacionalnih tenzija bilo preoptimistično i plod afektivnog dojma.<sup>1</sup>

Međutim, ne slažem se da koncept samoodrživosti nije svojstven lokalnom znanju i iskustvu i da je pozitivan saldo društvene reprodukcije njegov preduvjet. Ono što nazivam “samoodrživom agendom” ruralne egzistencije osoba treće dobi srodnije je filozofskom konceptu *ispunjenog* i *osmišljenog* no sociološkoj definiciji *dobrog* života agenda podrazumijeva odraz jednog širokog iskustva svijeta, osjećaj autentičnosti, rad kao organsku razmjenu s prirodom, snalaženje u vlastitom životnom kontekstu, zaštitu koju priskrbuje religiozno iskustvo, suživot s domaćim i drugim životinjama i funkcionalno starenje u vlastitom domu. Bogata folklorna tradicija ovog područja, kao i njezina djelomična aktualizacija u mojim intervjuima, a koju nisam mogla detaljnije prezentirati u ovom kratkom radu, potvrđuje ovaj skup životnih vrednota zajedno s intrinzičnom potrebom za mitskim mišljenjem, imaginativnim i numinoznim refiguriranjem svijeta (usp. Bošković-Stulli 1983; Jambrešić 1992; Muraj 1992; Kljaić 2021).

S druge strane, slažem se s filozofom Paolom Virnom da su svi suvremeni modusi egzistiranja ambivalentni, “odnosno u sebi sadrže i propast i spas, prilagodljivost i sukob, sluganstvo i slobodu” (Virno 2004: 14–15), i da starci u izoliranim selima najčešće ne mogu birati način ni mjesto egzistencije. Međutim, oni koji to mogu i kojima vlastita djeca ili socijalni radnici nude premještaj u grad ili dom za starije osobe u najvećem broju biraju ostanak na svome imanju – čak i kad je riječ o kontejnerima i improviziranim nastambama. Za mnoge od njih široko iskustvo svijeta podrazumijeva i transnacionalne spoznaje o modusima starenja i preživljavanja u različitim dijelovima svijeta, njihovim prednostima i manama, zahvaljujući kontaktu s djecom i rodbinom raseljenom nakon rata u devedesetima.<sup>2</sup> Za ove je ljude “svijet bez jastva” nadređen “jastvu bez svijeta”, a njihovi se srčanost, dostojanstvo, svijest o identitetu i lokalnoj pripadnosti, prelijevaju i u narativni autoritet i spremnost na priču o vlastitom tegobnom i eliptičnom životu. To je uvelike rezultat povijesnog iskustva života natopljenog ratnim traumama, ali i osjećajem kontinuiteta obitavanja na “tvrdoj granici”, a opet “u središtu društvenih i državnih previranja (...) kako 1941., tako i 1991. i 1995. godine” (Kljaić 2021: 89). Želim vjerovati u emancipatorsku snagu transgeneracijskog i lokalnog pamćenja u kojem je zabilježena i ustanička antifašistička epizoda i manja (oružana) pobuna na području Gline (kraj 1949. i početak

1 Svjesna sam da senzorna i afektivna etnografija plaćaju danak kapitalističkom “afektivnom režimu” koji pretpostavlja da emocije i emocionalni događaji nude jednostavniju, jasniju i dublju istinu o društvenim subjektima i društvenim odnosima. Međutim: “Emotion doesn’t produce clarity but destabilizes you, messes you up, and makes you epistemologically incoherent” (Berlant 2008). Premda je istodobna pandemija koronavirusa na Baniji odnijela puno više žrtava nego potres, moji su sugovornici nevoljko, šturo i s osjećajem nelagode pripovijedali o članovima obitelji koji su netom umrli od bolesti COVID-19. Oni su izbjegavali ove emocionalno teške i tragične “motive” povezati s temom posjeta volontera i iznenadne živosti u pustim selima pa su radije pripovijedali pozitivne “herojske naracije” o zajednici ujedinjenoj humanim i solidarnim odgovorom na katastrofu.

2 Na primjer, moja prva susjeda u Slani (rod. 1947) ima nećake u Kaliforniji, Australiji, Austriji i Njemačkoj te je dobro upućena u kretanje cijena nekretnina, troškove života i stupanj socijalne i zdravstvene zaštite u svim tim zemljama.

1950.), a kojoj je uzrok bila nasilna kolektivizacija i “spor oporavak od ratnih gubitaka i razaranja” (Čavrak 2022: 17). Recimo, razmjeri potresnog oštećenja obiteljskih kuća obnovljenih vladinim mjerama razvoja takozvanih “područja od posebne državne skrbi” (1996.–2018.) prvi su put izazvali sustavne kritike odozdo i odozgo ovog neuspješnog programa obnove bez revitalizacije. Iz perspektive lokalnog znanja riječ je o nepoštivanju temeljnog revitalizacijskog načela po kojem “štala kuću gradi, a ne obratno”.

Komentar **Jelene Marković** donosi izuzetno važnu raspravu o pretpostavkama “folklorističkog segmenta” mog (nedovršenog) istraživanja u kojem se antropologija emocija i senzorna etnografija susreću sa studijima pripovijedanja i studijima traume, etnografijom nenametljivosti i etnografijom brižnosti. Riječ o stalnoj analitičkoj i diskurzivnoj potrazi za etički primjerenim, epistemološki utemeljenim i “poštenim” pristupom ranjivim i depriviranim subjektima i njihovim često eliptičnim, aluzivnim, fragmentarnim i zapretenim naracijama u kojima se nazire njihov stalni napor da “organiziraju znanje, razviju okvire objašnjenja i afirmiraju svoju subjektivnost u komunikacijskom procesu međusobnog prepoznavanja” (Jansen). Kao istraživačica koja neumorno traga za “fundamentalnim načinima egzistiranja koji bi u osnovi mogli dati prostora i bitno drukčijim razvojem stvari od onih koji danas prevladavaju” (Virno 2004: 95), sklona sam bilježiti i interpretirati afirmativne primjere ljudske čestitosti, samozacjeljivanja, “okrutnog optimizma” i otpornosti u neoliberalnom pejzažu opće ambivalentnosti, cinizma, oportunitizma i rezignacije.<sup>3</sup> Od brojnih postavki filozofije jezika, počevši od Wittgensteinove tvrdnje da je bolje šutjeti o boli nego je banalizirati konvencionalnim frazama do Dolarova upozorenja da se etički odnos temelji na slušanju glasova (Dolar 2009: 81), slijedim postulat koji je teorijski pregnantno sažela Jelena Marković. Naime, ona s pravom tvrdi da kod naracija natopljenih iskustvom tuđe boli i patnje “nije nužno riječ samo o naracijama koje nastaju na ruševinama jezika, na njegovim fragmentima i krhotinama, već upravo nesklad i antagonizam između jezika i boli, jamči snagu jezika i mogućnost izražavanja” (Marković). To znači da se trudim svoju, osjetilima izoštrenu ili pak otupljenu, pozornost usmjeriti na kritičko fabuliranje (Hartman 2008), kreativne odmake, stilske nijanse i estetske kvalitete tekstualnog zapisa zabilježenih usmenih naracija u kojima je sačuvan trag kako individualnih tako i komunitarnih iskustava subjektivacije. Kao folkloristkinja vjerujem da taj “čudesni ljudski izum – priča i pripovijedanje” (Bichsel 2002: 12) najviše pridonosi razumijevanju suvremenog kaotičnog i ambivalentnog vremena “i našeg doživljaja života kao vremena” (ibid.). Uloga društvenih mreža u

3 Kao mali prilog folklorističkoj argumentaciji o važnosti interakcijske situacije, kvaliteti odnosa sugovornika i tipu atmosfere – u onome što nazivamo “empatičnim slušanjem” i “participativnim (su)osjećanjem” – navest ću pripovjednu situaciju grupnog razgovora ovog ljeta u vikendaškom naselju na ušću Gline u Kupu. Nakon podužeg vremena šest stanara ovog naselja okupilo se uz ohladenu lubenicu da bi porazgovarali o tipičnim temama (slabim potresima koji se obično osjete noću, lošoj telekomunikacijskoj mreži, štetama koje životinje iz šume čine vrtovima i voćnjacima, presušivanju bunara). U toj opuštenoj atmosferi jedna od sugovornica, rođena u ovom selu, ali s trenutnom adresom u Linzu, započela je svoju osobnu priču s posebnom toplinom, ali i nemirom u glasu: “Svaki put kad jedem lubenice sjetim se ljeta 1995. i lubenica s kojima su nas prognanike dočekali ljudi u Sremskoj Kamenici. Da bi olakšali patnju nama i našoj djeci hranili su nas brdom lubenica.” Uslijedila je kraća, no jezgrovita i živo oblikovana, priča o iskustvu prognaništva u Vojvodini, razvodu braka i odlasku u Austriju s malodobnim sinom.

ovom procesu jest da uspostavi dijalog o iskustvima “paralelnih suvremenosti” onih građana koji nastavljaju živjeti u zavičaju i onih koji su ga napustili, ali mu se (povremeno ili virtualno) vraćaju da bi amortizirali “metropolitanske šokove” i njegove učinke: “nesigurnost u očekivanjima, kontingencija položaja, fragilni identiteti, vrijednosti u neprestanoj mijeni” (Virno 2004: 98). Vjerujem da je moć pripovijedanja i empatičnog slušanja, “naš posljednji preostali demokratski prostor” (Shafak 2020) koji, unatoč instrumentalizaciji osobnih priča od strane klasičnih i digitalnih medija, više čini za međuljudsko razumijevanje u informacijski premreženom društvu od svih projekata dirigitiranog razvoja “civilnog društva”. Svjedoci smo kako je pripovjedno posredovanje osobnih sudbina prosvjednika, nerijetko žrtava autokratskih režima bilo okidačem masovnih društvenih prosvjeda i zahtjeva za društvenom promjenom (od Arapskog proljeća do posljednjih demonstracija u Iranu).

S ovom postavkom, koja naglašava središnje mjesto pripovijedanja i javnog poliloga u demokratskoj kulturi, a teorijski obzor folklorista približava onom književnih teoretičara i teoretičara kulture, osvrnut ću se na prilog **Sanje Lončar**. Njezini su mi radovi (Lončar 2014; Lončar i Pavić 2020; Lončar 2022) pružili vrijedan i obuhvatan uvid u složenost sociopovijesnih procesa koji su doveli do višegodišnje marginalizacije i ruinizacije potresom pogođene regije te kod njezinih osiromašenih, zanemarenih i depriviranih stanovnika razvili određen rezilijentan psihosocijalni sklop obilježen “svakodnevnom borbom za pristojan život”. Posebice je vrijedan programski tekst Sanje Lončar (2022) u kojem predlaže konkretne projekte očuvanja prirodne i kulturno-povijesne baštine Banije/Banovine, a istu predstavlja kao “odskočnu dasku” sveobuhvatne regeneracije i dugoročnog razvoja područja Sisačko-moslavačke županije. Iskreno se nadam da će lokalne uprave uključiti neke od tih prijedloga u svoje projekte razvoja, a posebice razvoja kulturnog turizma, a da prilikom kreiranja novih centara “interpretacije baštine” neće zaobići one koji taj epistemološki, a ne samo kreativno-zagovarački, rad obavljaju kao svoju primarnu djelatnost. Međutim, skeptična sam prema tvrdnji da se humanisti, uključujući sve naše (sub)discipline, trebaju izravno uključiti u oblikovanje javnih politika i strategija kao poligon poticanja i ostvarenja društvenih promjena. O konceptima primjenjivosti, performativnosti, instrumentalnosti i korisnosti humanističkih znanja i kompetencija, koji se u zadnje vrijeme i taksativno opisuju i propisuju kao *ishodi* humanističkog obrazovanja, vodila se ne tako davno plodna epistemološka rasprava (usp. Bagarić, Biti i Škokić 2017; Prica 2017). Ines Prica je pokazala kako dominantne znanstvene politike slijede neoliberalnu ideologiju i dovode do socijalne diferencijacije znanstvenika te umanjuju materijalni položaj, autonomiju i značaj humanističkih disciplina koje, u načelu, nisu korisne za reprodukciju kapitalističkog sistema. Rezultat tog nezahvalnog položaja “marginalne discipline” su latentni antagonizmi između “kritičke orijentacije” hrvatske etnologije koja se ne libi propitkivati odnose moći, političku matricu dominantnih narativa i politički cinizam vladajućih elita te pragmatične struje koja se priklanja, svako malo teorijski revidiranim, identitarnim politikama. Upravo nas slučaj odbacivanja lokalnih eksperata kao (pre)nositelja lokalnog znanja, autora razvojnog *Programa društvene i gospodarske revitalizacije područja Sisačko-moslavačke*

*županije pogođenih potresom* (usp. Čavrak 2022) osvještava da znanje, stručnost, izvrsnost, inovativnost i dobra volja nisu dovoljni da bi neki znanstvenik ili znanstvenica postali “utjecajni autsajder”, a kamoli ravnopravan dionik javne (razvojne) politike. Zagovaračka pozicija koja zastupa “važnost i vjerodostojnost onoga što se znade, uvjete u kojima je znanje podređenih, siromašnih, i pogotovo žena, nezamijećeno i ignorirano” (Prica 2022) nosi duboko humanistički predznak, ali i političku poruku, i ne možemo očekivati da će je prigrliti nositelji partitokratskih elita. Nažalost, u još uvijek polariziranom, socijalno i regionalno nejednako razvijenom društvu, u kojem temeljne koncepte “konzervativne” hrvatske etnologije – baština, sjećanje i (nacionalni) identitet – redovito zlorabe “konzervativni” politički akteri da bi čvrsto držali poluge moći i vlasti, smatram da etnolozi i folkloristi trebaju poticati kulturu otpora nasuprot kurentnim politikama njegovanja rasnih, etnonacionalnih, rodnih i drugih netrpeljivosti. A kulturu otpora najefikasnije potičemo tako što kod svojih studenata, ali i drugih društvenih subjekata s kojima komuniciramo, razvijamo humanističku ekspertizu i kapacitet za učenje, sazrijevanje i empatiju.<sup>4</sup> Da bi taj zadatak – koji podrazumijeva duhovni napor imaginiranja obzora novih mogućnosti – časno odradili, folkloristi i etnolozi trebaju više učiti od umjetnika nego društvenih arbitara. Neizvjestan susret s lokalnim i podjarmljenim znanjem je nezaobilazan da bismo osmislili i aktualnim značenjem ispunili pojmove “generacijska revitalizacija”, “održivi način života”, “zelena tranzicija”, “solidarna ekonomija”, jer vremena je sve manje. Kako kaže stih pjesnikinje Monike Herceg: “svijet pomalo / postaje ono što je oduvijek: / ubrzana ruševina.”

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<sup>4</sup> Naravno, ne smijemo odustati ni od etnografskog rada, novih projekata, kreiranja susreta i dijaloga s kulturnim i drugim društvenim subjektima na potresom pogođenom području, kao što to pokušavaju suradnici IEF-a u okviru svog projekta “Banija kao metafora i metonimija” koji je započeo prvim, istoimenim, znanstvenim skupom u Glini i Zagrebu 5. i 6. listopada 2022. Materijalna i gospodarska obnova obitavališta i okoliša koja je zapela u administrativnim i političkim mrtvouzicama “odlaganja budućnosti” može se pokrenuti upravo iz mogućnosti kreiranja novih mentalnih mapa i imaginiranja budućnosti.

# T O TOUCH, TO HEAR, TO FEEL

## Can Ethnography Dissolve Narrations of Fear?

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This paper deals with the social, cognitive, and affective consequences caused by the devastating earthquake that hit the Banija region on December 29, 2020. The natural disaster is understood not only as a catastrophe but as a kind of catharsis that has exposed layers of political negligence, difficult pasts, and deep connections to the environment. The author interprets (mediatized and face-to-face) personal narratives of natural disaster, ruination and regeneration, solidarity, and mutual understanding as the basis of making new affective communities and triggering processes that resolve national (and nationalistic) narratives and contribute to community empowerment. The paper's methodological framework embraces participatory ethnography, the theory of folk narratives (Bausinger 2018 [1958]; Borland 2021; Bošković-Stulli 1984; Ranke 2018 [1967]; Rudan 2020, Shuman 2005), the ethnography of the senses (Bendix 2000, 2005), and the "deep implicancy" knowledge of reflecting what makes the "human inseparable from all matter" (da Silva and Neuman 2018). The author concludes that villagers co-habiting with nature (but also depending on it) make sense of their unique experiences of disaster, comparing it with other humans' suffering and organizing a narrative frame that "makes the allegorical personal, the cosmological local" (Shuman 2005).

**Keywords:** the Banija earthquake, ethnography of disaster, natural vs. social catastrophes, narratives of ruination and revitalization, ethnography of senses, narrative democracy

*The concept of progress must be grounded in the idea of catastrophe. That things are "status quo" is the catastrophe.*  
(Benjamin 2003: 184)

*Nowhere is it more possible to encounter this much sorrow constantly being transformed into love than in Banija. I write down this love from the hands that touch trees as if they were a child, that touch animals like children, the earth.*  
(Herceg 2022)<sup>1</sup>

This debate opens with Walter Benjamin's provocative idea that catastrophe is not an act of nature but one of human inaction – incompetence, inability, or a lack of willpower and knowledge to transform a stroke of nature into a renewal of life or an evolutionary cycle. Metaphors of seismic activity, ruptures, turns, and twists are commonplace in social and intellectual history as the markings of groundbreaking

<sup>1</sup> Monika Herceg. "Reportažni esej: Hrabrost preživljavanja na Baniji", 3 March 2022. Available at: <https://express.24sata.hr/top-news/reportazni-esej-hrabrost-prezivljavanja-na-baniji-25665-express.24sata.hr> (accessed 5. 3. 2022.).

shifts and jumps. In order for new material and spiritual foundations to arise from the ruins, it takes a great deal of effort, vitality, and imagination. It takes the “very effort of reaching, of reaching up, of reaching out, of reaching for something that is not present, something that appears only as a shimmer, a horizon of possibility” (Ahmed 2014: 204). Poet Monika Herceg would say that it also takes a lot of love – love towards the earth and its fruits, love towards the animals and plants that function as a unique microcosm comprising the habitat of people in rural areas. Love is a broad term for affective and moral attachment, care, and concern for human and nonhuman animals, things, and objects that encompass the peasant’s existence in space and time<sup>2</sup> and “achieve actualisation with every instance of retelling” (Marks 2015: 195). This paper interprets the earthquake that hit Petrinja and numerous other locales in Banija on December 28 and 29, 2020, as a natural disaster but also as a metaphor for the existential shockwave and the experience of a community faced with fear, mortality, bodily vulnerability, and mutual dependability, by “recognizing one’s misfortune in the misfortune of others” (Nussbaum 2019: 445), which lends a new facet to the “imagined community.”

When I started researching narrative forms and communicative practices employed to mediate the experience of the earthquake, the Covid-19 pandemic, and the social crisis, my interest was directed toward a shared atmosphere of fear and anxiety in our time.<sup>3</sup> I tried to learn how natural disasters and the pandemic (cf. Jambrešić Kirin 2022), the global crisis of the economy, society and democracy, the crumbling of health and social institutions, a mistrust of science and rational thinking, and a rhetoric of new divisions were shaping the condition that Martha Nussbaum (2018) termed an introduction into the “monarchy of fear.” However, the more I talked to the inhabitants of Banija about their misfortune, loss, grieving, anger, everyday worries and fears, and life values, and the more I learned about, read, and observed their life stories, the more I realized that “the affective turn” in the humanities also needs a shift towards the question of “how we can theorize positive affect and the politics of good feeling,” that is, “how feelings participate in making things good” (Ahmed 2010: 30). Like numerous journalists, volunteers, social activists, and researchers visiting the ruinous and dilapidated landscapes of Banija, I have also wondered how it is that the mixed feelings with which we return home both “sting and keep us warm,” just like homemade schnapps from Banija, as Monika Herceg remarks. As I will argue later, I believe that the narrative performances and oral tradition of the Banija *homo narrans* are key for this affirmative emotion that corresponds to what Husserl terms the “core sphere,” a balance between affective and moral economy

2 The ecological and animalist paradigm, as well as theories of the Anthropocene, force anthropologists to once again re-examine the definitions of what is human, what is socio-historical, and what is cultural-geographical “in a given space and time” rather than pursuing biopolitical and related paradigms interested in the way *bare life* is regulated “within relations of power” (Prca 2001: 225).

3 The “Narrating Fear: From Old Records to New Orality” (2017–2021) project was financed by the Croatian Science Foundation. In addition to about fifty original scientific papers, the project involved the publication of two thematic collections: *Naracije straha*, 2019, and *Encountering Fear*, 2020. This paper is edited from the opening presentation at the 18<sup>th</sup> conference of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research (*Encountering Emotions in Folk Narrative and Folklife*, Sept. 5–8, 2021, virtual Zagreb).



that produces a sphere of practical action (cf. Ahmed 2002: 32). In short, most of my interlocutors from Banija used their self-representations as a means of describing and shaping sustainable cognitive, moral, emotional and ecological practices, firmly based in folklore and religious notions about the meaningful world, good life, and dignified death, which differ considerably from ones promoted by consumer capitalism. A researcher's sense of meaningful action within an "anthropology of shared concerns" (Jansen 2020b) may, of course, also be critically interpreted as professional "self-gratification," a contribution to "humanitarian ideology," or a desire for a greater role in society. Bearing in mind the complex problem-matter of textual representation and systemization of (ethnographic) experience (White 1980), I still believe that the rhetorically particular ways in which the inhabitants of Banija/Banovina<sup>4</sup> present their deprived and elliptic lives to a wider public is a certain shift "that is affirmative, that gives us an alternative set of imaginings of what might count as a good or better life" (Ahmed 2002: 50). This approach aligns with Marc Augé's assumption that the living word<sup>5</sup> and storytelling ability are what connects ethnologists (and folklore researchers) and their interlocutors concerned with universal questions of fate, oblivion, and death (Ože [Augé] 2003: 68–69). Although the modes of critical fabulation (cf. Hartman 2008) of these topics differ between quotidian and scientific discourse, there is an ever-greater sense of interconnectedness and mutual dependency since threats (such as nuclear war) have become universal and evenly distributed as well. Until recently, the severe consequences of climate change and wars were regarded as features of the "third world," however, today, "[w]e have entered the age of catastrophes. They will be universal in effect because the problems of the world are now universal" (Okri 2020). In addition, pent-up frustrations in the scientific and social fields are also universal, given that nowadays, it is easier to imagine the end of the world than (genuine) social change.

## Narratives about the Petrinja earthquake and the teleogenetic plot

I have borrowed an initial supposition about the importance of a narrative exchange of experiences amidst chaotic, extreme, and uncertain times from Michael Wilson (2014), who claims that storytelling is largely akin to the experience of the confusion, disorder, and contingency of a moment. The narrative articulation of impres-

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<sup>4</sup> In this paper, I use both names interchangeably and completely equitably because the inhabitants of numerous small towns, villages and rural communities of this region use them in this way, continually filling them with historical, sociological, ethno-national and contextual meanings. Cf. Alemko Gluhak. "Analiza jezikoslovca Riječ Banovina ravnopravna je Baniji, drugačije tumačenje je neznanje", 13 Jan, 2021, *Večernji list*. Available at: <https://www.vecernji.hr/vijesti/rijec-banovina-ravnopravna-je-baniji-drugacije-tumacenje-je-neznanje-1460763> (accessed 10. 10. 2021.).

<sup>5</sup> Some philosophers also regard the living word and other people's voice as the foundation of ethical relations: "It is a voice which circumvents all discursive argument and offers firm ground for moral judgment beyond discursivity, beyond the intricacies of deductions, justifications, and deliberations" (Dolar 2006: 85).

sions, sensations, and attitudes is realized as a “fine mess” and the “performance of the moment” capable of encompassing and transcending the contradictions and paradoxes of life’s situations, as well as the mixed feelings of both the narrator and their interlocutor. For that same reason, narratives (about one’s self and others) are able to adapt so well and so quickly to the conditions of internet communication and the new hypertextual and pictographic tools for lending shape to sensations, emotions, and commentaries about external events (Wilson 2014). Despite an ambiguous epistemological evaluation of narrativity, as a catalyst of both rational insights and irrational opinions, prejudices, and conspiracy theories (Livingston 2009), narration serves to organize knowledge and provide explanations of experiences “both by allowing us to see our own, seemingly unexplainable, experiences in other people’s stories and by helping us to understand the otherwise unfathomable experiences of others” (Shuman 2005: 146). Genre patterns and narrative techniques of mediating experience are at the core of interpersonal communication. Both psychoanalysts and folklore researchers know that it ‘takes two’ to witness the “drama” of someone’s intimate world and that verbal coding of intense emotions such as fear requires an understanding of the face-to-face interaction, social framework, oral tradition, as well as ethical norms of an individual and the collective (cf. Rudan 2020; Polgar 2020).

Instead of artistic communication in small groups, social networks today play the most prominent role in shaping the dominant hybrid strategies of (self)representation and the semantic construction (as well as blurring) of binary notions of private and public, emotional and rational, verbal and visual, humorous and serious, important and irrelevant. The result of this process is a gradual globalization of digital folklore and the notion “that expression online becomes increasingly reminiscent of traditional forms of face-to-face interaction while also hiding its fundamental differences” (Peck 2020: 6). One such example illustrating that “disaster-specific cultural products emerge in the wake of disaster, are spontaneously produced, and are publicly consumed” (Webb et al. 2000: 9)<sup>6</sup> is the story of the Big Đuro and Baby Đuro bears. On the one hand (unconsciously), the story relies on the folk legend about the dragon and the earthquake and, on the other, on social networks across which it spread, acquiring the status of a new “disaster oral legend” from Petrinja. The story that the earthquake was caused by the trembling and twitching of the bears waking early from their hibernation was created and conceived as a puppet play for psychotherapeutic work with children by associates of psychiatrist Dragan Puljić in Petrinja.<sup>7</sup> Their intention was to help explain the (unfathomable) causes

6 In the course of my research, I only heard one belief legend, told in two versions, about the causes of the earthquake in the village of Slana near Glina. Stories about the “miraculous salvation” of life, that is, avoiding death at the last second were much more frequent, along with new legends about a “miraculous statue” that was left unscathed in the heavily damaged churches and chapels, which I heard from female residents of Hađar, Strašnik, and Majur.

7 The therapeutic game involving bears was conceived by psychologist Irena Zulić, psychiatrist Marija Čopo and Martina Omerhodžić with an MA in nursing. Cf. “Jutarnji s timom psihijatra koji pomažu djeci.” *Jutarnji list*, 9 Jan, 2021. Available at: <https://www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/jutarnji-s-timom-psihijataraj-koji-pomazu-na-baniji-dijete-3-kako-se-zovem-potres-15022687> (accessed 1. 10. 2021.).

of the earthquake to frightened children, employing this conceptual metaphor to help them come to terms with the unpredictability and intensity of the experience of subsequent daily earthquakes. Big Đuro and Baby Đuro became part of popular culture and earthquake folklore thanks to media articles and social networks. The story could be seen as an inadvertent version of the folk legend about the dragon or mythical fire-drake (*pozoj*) whose underground jolts cause earthquakes, whereas the puppet performance takes cues from the folklore puppet play, *Šante i Pante*, versions of which Nikola Bonifačić Rožin documented during his field research around Banija villages between 1945 and 1960 (cf. Bonifačić Rožin 1963). These instances of contemporary and traditional culture overlapping and drawing on each other only confirm that verbal folklore exists as long as there exists a social purpose that it satisfies and a spiritual need to which it responds.

Narratology teaches us that the more intense a personal experience, the more potent our emotional reaction to it will be, accompanied by a growing need to lend it (alternative) narrative form and share it. The need to describe, understand, and remember the unique, dream-like, and “magical” experience of the earthquake as a shared experience (of all residents of Central Croatia and beyond)<sup>8</sup> triggered a “tsunami” of authentic and harrowing stories from Banija. By means of narrative mediation, the devastating earthquakes in Zagreb and Banovina that occurred amidst the social standstill during Covid-suspended time were transformed into a teleogenetic plot (Davis 1992)<sup>9</sup> and a historic notch, disruption and fissure in the homogenous time of daily life. Not only was the earthquake in Petrinja and the surrounding area unexpected and tragic in its consequences (taking seven lives, wounding many, and damaging almost 40,000 housing structures), but it also occurred in the period of Christmas festivities and in the midst of the strictest quarantine. Therefore, we might say that it represents a climax of the pandemic stance (cf. Jambrešić Kirin 2022), as well as a catharsis of the transitional *social drama* (Turner 1974) that has been dissolving and reshaping the social fabric in the majority of post-socialist societies over the past three decades.

This debate is aimed at encouraging a discussion on the extent to which it is possible to interpret the affirmatively framed Banija disaster narratives, functioning as an invitation to social mobilization and grassroots political participation, as the teleogenetic plot of a long-term social drama. Is it a genuine shift that transmutes the national (and nationalist) “grand narrative” into a story of civic unity, solidarity, and mutual understanding, in contrast to the (ineffectual) actions of political elites? Unlike war as a narrative turning point, full of painful memories of destruction and devastation, of exile and displacement, the latest catastrophe stands out as a counter-narrative of self-organization and heroic acts of ordinary people who come to each

8 According to the data of the Seismological Survey of the Faculty of Science in Zagreb, in the period from Dec 28, 2020, to mid-August 2021, over 1200 earthquakes were recorded in the Banija area, which would amount to six earthquakes per day if they were evenly distributed.

9 For Lennard Davis, the teleogenetic understanding of history entails a “reworking of past events by means of subsequent occurrences” (1992: 361), that is, the ability to discover social, ideological, and anthropological forces behind historic events and occurrences based on the effects and consequences they produce.

other's aid regardless of their ethnic, social, and other differences (cf. Jambrešić Kirin 2020). In the aftermath of the natural disaster, at least for a short while, it seemed possible that "another mental contagion..., a contagion of courage, good health, and solidarity" (Okri 2020) would develop, a contagion that democratized and "communalized" all the citizens, united by a sense of vulnerability and awe before the unpredictable force of nature.

## Crumbling Banovina/Banija as the unconscious of Croatian society

Of the 173 thousand inhabitants of the earthquake-stricken Sisak-Moslavina County, 118 thousand are in need of some form of humanitarian aid, 60 percent of which belong to vulnerable groups. (...) The people we have mentioned today are triply affected. On the one hand, they are affected by the pandemic, they have been dramatically impacted by the earthquake, which has, in turn, revealed the problems with which they had been coping for years and decades prior. (Šimonović Einwalter 2021)<sup>10</sup>

If we agree that there are several parallel realities, as well as temporalities, in modern-day Croatia, the youngest EU member state, there are two dominant ones. On the one hand, in 2021, the capital of Zagreb and the Adriatic coast attracted more than one million tourists, recording 55.3 million overnight stays.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, darkness engulfs the peripheral zones of Croatia, where increasingly fewer people live and work. The inhabitants of fringe border areas continually relocate to bigger cities and to more developed EU countries, creating the impression that those who stay in the peripheral rural areas are the ones who have no other option.

At every turn, I hear, see, and feel that the earthquake is the height of a "systematic project to disregard and destroy the health, livelihood, and psychic endurance of a very particular population" (Stoler 2016: 378). It rests on the economic, socio-cultural, and demographic devastation of the area marked by war and ethnic conflict of the 1990s, followed by migrations and ethnic homogenization of the population, as well as deindustrialization (cf. Potkonjak i Škokić 2016). Or, as Sonja Lončar and Dario Pavić conclude in their study of abandoned, empty, and undesirable real estate in Croatia:

The results of the geographical distribution of the abandonment rate indicate that the most abandoned areas are those that have been affected most severely by the war activities during the 1990s. These are also the areas from which the

<sup>10</sup> Tena Šimonović Einwalter, "Procjena humanitarnih potreba", Dec. 1, 2021. Net.hr, Available at: <https://net.hr/danas/hrvatska/gotovo-118-000-potresom-pogodenih-stanovnika-banije-treba-neku-vrstu-humanitarne-pomoci-1ede1a80-52a5-11ec-9dba-4a41d2da1da2> (accessed 1. 12. 2021.).

<sup>11</sup> "Odlični turistički rezultati: Premašen broj noćenja iz cijele 2020. godine" 18 August 2021. Available at: <http://privredni.hr/premasen-broj-nocenja-iz-cijele-2020-godine> (accessed 1. 9. 2021.).

Serbian population was displaced during the final operations by the Croatian armed forces in 1995. (...) this area is characterized by negative demographic, economic, social and cultural circumstances. (Lončar and Pavić 2020: 222)

Moving away from sentimental and parochial media reports on how the miserable but stately rural people of Banovina, the “elite” of the former *Militärgrenze*,<sup>12</sup> struggle with the hardships of survival, we could paraphrase Slavoj Žižek<sup>13</sup> and state that today’s crumbling Banija/Banovina is structured as “the unconscious of Croatia.” Drastic changes in the social fabric and the landscape are consequences of the ruin left behind by wars, earthquakes, and exile, but also of “the strike of the Real” and the discovery of “a dirty secret” that a large part of Croatia, as the outer region of the EU, is becoming a repository of “human waste,” along with actual depositories of dangerous and radioactive waste. We knew that capitalist visions of constructing new tunnels, bridges, and modern motorways towards the Adriatic did not touch upon many rural areas in Croatia. Still, it was the earthquake that confronted us with the circumstances of people who live life on the margins of civilization, without any definite or stable rules (Tsing 2015), without access to roads, running water, telecommunication services, and sometimes even without electricity. Their presence marks the space of a new *Militärgrenze e* – the Frontex mechanisms of protection of the outside borders of the EU, which, to them personally, offer neither mobility nor protection of “freedom, security and justice,”<sup>14</sup> while the necessities of life prompt them to devastate forests or to engage in the cross-border smuggling of tobacco, drugs, and people. However, my intention is not to illustrate anthropological theories about postimperial ruination, necropolitics (Mbembe 2019), and “human waste” in remote areas that could just as easily be applied to other peripheries of Southeast Europe and the Global South.<sup>15</sup> I shall demonstrate that narrating one’s personal experience is a way to channel negative emotions and experiences, but it is also a way for local subjects who “are not fooled, not crushed, not homogenized; indeed, they are creatively appropriating or reinterpreting what is being thrown at them” (Graeber 2004: 99) to gain social empowerment. I believe that, thanks to their role as a “bridge to understanding others” (Shuman 2005: 150), it is precisely such post-earthquake personal narratives that have assumed a central place, both in the public sphere and the social and humanistic discourse on the aftermath of this natural disaster.

12 “The people living near that border, from Vojna Krajina, officially the *Militärgrenze*, even if they were poor, belonged to an elite of the era that would go on for centuries.” Miljenko Jergović. “Majske Poljane, kratka povijest jednoga sela”. Portal 24 sata, 31 December 2020. Available at: <https://www.24sata.hr/news/jergovic-majske-poljane-kratka-povijest-jednoga-sela-737169> (accessed 1. 10. 2021).

13 Slavoj Žižek. “Talks films and Balkans with Slavoj Zizek.” 9 December 2008. Available at: <http://www.euronews.net/2008/09/12/euronews-talks-films-and-balkans-with-slavoj> (accessed 1. 10. 2021).

14 Frontex highlights the following as one of its particularly important goals: “We recognise people, institutions and their roles and demonstrate respect by treating these as valuable and important” (<https://frontex.europa.eu/about-frontex/our-mission/>).

15 According to official government data (portal potresinfo.gov.hr), from January to August 2021, 1388 residents from Petrinja, 1136 from Sisak, 177 from Glina, and 160 from surrounding municipalities relocated from the area. According to the 2021 national population census, the sharpest decrease in the number of households was recorded in Sisak-Moslavina County, with 14.7% fewer households compared to the 2011 census (portal popis2021.hr).

Feeding the hunger of mass media for sensationalist portrayals and powerful messages,<sup>16</sup> as well as the social network as the most democratic and most emotional form of human communication (cf. Peck 2020), new hybrid forms of vernacular narratives have begun to appear daily, jointly shaping the cultural moment in which we live. Like elsewhere in the world in the aftermath of a natural disaster, in Croatia too, a wave of solidarity prompted “a unifying process of symbolic action that strengthens both the individual and the community,” which persisted for a while “through a collective response of assistance” (Letukas et al. 2009: 3). Like in other deprived post-Yugoslav regions, the inhabitants of Banija used the “depoliticizing discourses of humaneness to assert their (political) claims to survival and wellbeing in the context marked by the dominance of ethno-nationalist rhetoric” (Brković 2016: 97). As time went by, the situation in the field became more complex, creating competing and antagonistic voices (cf. Pavlić 2021), especially once the affected population realized that private donations, as well as the donations of international and domestic humanitarian organizations, civil and religious associations, were the only effective recourse in rebuilding their damaged homes. However, narratives about the humanitarian response of fellow citizens and the inefficiency of state institutions still dominate the public discourse.

### *Coming out as winners, as heroes of life*

Since the war-torn 1990s, metaphorically speaking, this region has entered “a bizarre universe, a flipped world on the other side of the mirror. It is all that the everyday is not – it is turbulent, unstable and unpredictable” (Tripathy 2021). The daily life that for decades has been harrowing, uncertain, and stagnant, fuses the exceptionality of wartime and the provisionality of the post-war. The living conditions are more or less the by-product of the pitiless state protectorate of the *subsidized* regions, which are becoming increasingly widespread across Croatia (cf. Obad 2020). Amid the struggle for survival, apathy, and frugal life in isolation and on the margins, the natural disaster produced an emotional and existential shock, “a magnificent awakening (...) from a nightmarish dream” (Kljaić 2021: 128). Disrupting the immobility heightened by epidemiological measures in force in December of 2020, the “greater evil” that befell the inhabitants of Banija suddenly accelerated the passage of history, directing the attention of every state- and privately-owned media towards probably the least visible corner of Croatia. The media interest in the affliction of the dwellers of small rural communities and isolated hillside villages, as well as the utter poverty in which many of them live, restored their stature and their voice. At the same time, the narrative power of eloquent self/representation overnight turned them into our

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<sup>16</sup> A discursive analysis of Croatian web portals from January 2020 to April 2021 has revealed that conceptual metaphors of war and “fighting” the invisible enemy predominated in reports on the Covid pandemic, while metaphors of the apocalypse were prevalent in reports on the Petrinja earthquake (Lacković et al. 2021: 38).



compatriots and contemporaries. For over a year, the emotional life stories and the moral integrity and dignity of the resilient elderly men and women of Banija, at one with nature, have been a part of our (mediatized) reality marked by two natural calamities, as well as by the joint criticism directed at the incapability of government institutions to tackle their fallout.

The residents, until then perceived as either a majority or minority population, as cogs in the electoral machinery that allowed a handful of politically “suitable” minority representatives to participate in the local government, were suddenly invited to speak out about their precarious daily struggle, the hardships and challenges of this “elliptical life” and even about being the “chosen people” in a biblical sense – “we have been chosen as the ones capable of dealing with misfortune” (Kljaić 2021: 114).<sup>17</sup> Even when it is mediatized and redacted by the media, the narrative discourse of the rural inhabitants of Banija is rich in formulaic expressions, catchphrases, wise observations, and rich metaphors based in oral literary traditions. This has been confirmed in my spontaneous conversations with the afflicted and in semi-structured interviews. It seems that the earthquake turned the remaining Banija peasants into “heroes of life,” who survive on their own ruins, persisting like “wilful, obstinate and recalcitrant old folks” (Kljaić 2021: 131). Unlike them, the lives of the nameless and faceless elderly in Covid units were, with or “without Covid-19, considered lost, unnoticeable, basically finished, without future” (Marković 2021).

Feminist anthropologist Sara Ahmed believes that obstinate and wilful subjects can turn even the greatest hardship into a creative means of action, resistance, and aspiration toward a new social reality and constellation of power. Wilful, persistent, and principled subjects, to a great extent, come from exploited and marginalized social groups, while hardships, obstacles, and disruptions of any kind make their actions bolder and more far-reaching:

Disturbance can be creative: not as what we aim for, not as what grounds our action, but as the effect of action: disturbance as what is created by the very effort of reaching, of reaching up, of reaching out, of reaching something that is not present, something that appears only as shimmer, a horizon of possibility. (Ahmed 2014: 204)

Jagoda Kljaić, a writer and journalist from Glina, convincingly writes about Banija residents’ sense of historical “markedness,” which is, nevertheless, not entrenched in trauma (Jansen 2020a: 65). She believes that, despite existing on the geographical margins, the peasants live “at the centre of social and state turmoil... as much in 1941, as in 1991 and 1995,” aware of collective casualties and historical challenges, but, in the manner of true *bricoleurs*, not concerning themselves with the coherence of belief systems or the stability of truth. The soil that nourishes them is an inex-

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<sup>17</sup> Stef Jansen insightfully described the “exclusivist logic” of the inhabitants of post-Yugoslav regions, who believe that their existential troubles and their human qualities are incomparable to those of other people. On the other hand, their deepest desire is the “desire to regain a dignified place on the world map, threatened and deformed by experiences of the last two decades” (Jansen 2020b: 33).

haustible source of instances of perseverance and flexibility but also of tenderness and noble charity:

Coming out as winners from these events, as heroes of life who go on among and atop the ruins, make their rounds of the sheep and the beehives, plough, harrow and disc, use garden diggers, prune their vines and fruit trees, feed and milk their cows, make cheese and cream, hammer on old and new wooden boards and beams, walk on rooftops, drink coffee in the yard, deck the tables in their containers with hand-embroidered tablecloths... (Kljaić 2021: 89)

From an ethnological point of view, it is not surprising that the people of Banija “deeply rooted in the agrarian milieu and bounded by it; in tune with nature, yet fatefully dependent on it” (Muraj 1992: 215), were not as touched and prompted to share their narratives by the natural disaster – simply one in a string of tragedies, destructive episodes, and hardships – as by the solidarity and direct aid of Croatian citizens.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, the life stories of the inhabitants of rural Banija spurred the empathetic action of all those who came to help or simply report on the extent of the devastation. Photographer and organizer of the Smaragdni Eco Film Fest (SEFF) in Hrvatska Kostajnica Daniel Pavlić, who was one of the most active volunteers in the region, highlighted a fundamental folkloristic attitude in the encounter with these narratives:

All of these villages have their scarce inhabitants with their stories. But what is a story if it is not told? Actually, a story does not become a story unless someone listens to it or reads it. (Pavlić 2021: 123)

Though often disfranchised in their social position, these people still possess authority over their life story and the competence to tell it in a tragic, humorous, or mixed mode, depending on the context, occasion, or their interlocutor. One of the numerous personal narratives that illustrate the paradoxical twistedness of life’s facts and affective states in the gray area of the daily struggle for survival recounts the episode of a peasant from Zrinski Brđani at Šamarica (Zrin Mountain). He was genuinely relieved to receive a positive result of the second (PCR) test for Covid at the hospital in Sisak, because he feared that without a serious diagnosis, he would have to pay for a taxi to take him back to his isolated village:

“You know, I had Covid about a month ago,” M. tells us. “Trouble really never comes alone. I was running a high fever, so they transferred me to Sisak. They did a test, and it was negative. Then a tall doctor came to see me and asked if I had had a regular or a quick test. I said it was one of those quick ones. Well, that’s not right, the quick test won’t do, you should do a regular one, the doctor told me, not wearing any kind of mask. He explained he was immune to Covid (...) And I just kept thinking how I would get home, because the vehicle that

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<sup>18</sup> During family gatherings, as they remembered the “great event,” my interlocutors would often start to cry while relating the generosity of the volunteers, especially the football fans, who came to their aid on the very same day.

brought me to Sisak was long gone. God, it's getting dark already, so how will I get home if they don't keep me overnight?! (...) After that, the doctor came back and told me I did have Covid. So, I say to him "Well, thank God I do, so I don't have to think about how I'm going to get back home!" (Pavlič 2021: 67)

This conversational sequence is told in the form of a short story with a sudden twist and happy ending, marked by economy of language and performativity of telling; the dialogical units have been faithfully transmitted and "performed," and suspense is achieved by means of quick-paced storytelling, whereas the dramatic moments (the fear of testing negative and taking a taxi home) are rendered as a lively inner monologue of the teller. However, the "secret ingredient" that confirms the aesthetic and cognitive value of this story and highlights the teller's "clever wit balancing between jocularity and seriousness" (Ranke 2018: 124) is dark humor. The expressiveness and black humor of the narrator also reveal the spiritual attitude that superimposes daringness and resilience over fear and caution. The ironic mode is not "newer" than the fairy tale or belief legend, warns Hermann Bausinger, but rather, "as if it were demonstrating that the real world is not new, but simply one of many possible previously known perspectives of the world" (2018: 439)<sup>19</sup>. A witty and expressive narrator, like the one cited above, makes us reflect on how "the spirit of creative man" reshapes not only the narrative modes but also the conditions and outcomes of one's own existence (cf. Ranke 2018: 128).

In accordance with "their concept of the good life" (Nussbaum 2019: 63), Banija's peasants equitably share their modest resources with the animals on their farms, as well as with those even more vulnerable and helpless than themselves. Their vitalist attitude is discernible in the stories in which they plead with the structural engineers to assign them the "yellow" instead of the "red sticker" (barcode) so that they would not have to leave their life-threatening estates. To these hardy and proud people, caring for the health of their livestock and farm animals,<sup>20</sup> as well as the self-sufficiency and freedom to make decisions about their own lives, are more important than their own safety and the comfort of organized accommodations:

I talk to people. During the day, they stay in their containers afraid that some "rebuilding commission" will come and, if they find them inside the houses with yellow and red stickers, they will not receive funds for renovation. At night, they sleep in these houses, because the campervans and containers are hard to keep warm. (Pavlič 2021: 111)

There are many such emotional stories of "cruel optimism" (Berlant 2011) of the people devoid of illusion, eccentric and resilient people who resist both life's hardships and the attempts to sentimentalize or ethnically or politically manipulate their

<sup>19</sup> More recent theories about laughter similarly stress that it is related to the "fundamental evolutionary parameter of survival of the human species: our ability to notice the errors, irregularities and deviations from the previously established logic of deduction" (Govedić 2012: 5).

<sup>20</sup> Martha Nussbaum reminds us that children's attachment to and care for animals is often in adult age supplanted by the teaching that "human beings are the only sources of intrinsic value" (2019: 451).

social suffering (cf. Kleinman 1989, Renault 2010). There are also many informal practices, instances of improvisation, illegal construction and dealings, noncompliance with regulations, and distrust of state institutions, which anthropologist Christan Giordano terms “the social logic of informality” (2015: 123–133). I will only mention a problem I came across in most of the villages concerning the people who were not registered residents in the area prior to December 29, 2020, which is a prerequisite for being able to submit a formal earthquake damage report. Transgenerational memory of the practices of living with extended family and mobile dwelling in the Military Frontier, along with the socialist boom of illegal construction, is at the root of unresolved ownership relations and the chaotic state of land registries. Among other reasons, lacking or missing ownership documentation is structurally slowing down the implementation of the action plan to remove and rebuild earthquake-stricken buildings.<sup>21</sup>

Unfit dwellings, unfinished structures, and recent ruins, as well as the failure of life projects, in addition to several generations of the same family residing under the same roof, all undoubtedly contribute to a sense of defeat, resignation, and “slow death” (Berlant 2011: 95–119) saddling the elderly families in these deserted villages. The emotionally charged part of my conversation with a woman in her sixties in the village of Borojevići took place because she mistook my husband for her cousin, who had not visited for some time, combined with the fact that the elderly couple rarely receives visits from their daughter and grandchildren who live in Slavonia. Her monologue, which combines “hope for a good life” with “the history of sentimentality around children” (Berlant 2011: 171), is, in fact, a nostalgic reminiscence about a brighter past:

If only there were young people around, it would take years off you! It would give us greater hope. If you don't have hope, it's rough. If there are no children playing ball and shouting, youth riding bicycles, laughing, and playing music and all that, to me that's a deserted village. (...) It is all lovely for you in passing, but if you had to get up day and night to this lovely loneliness, you would think differently. (*Desanka*, 12 August 2021)

This conversational sequence is also presented in the form of a short story with a coda signaling a rounded narrative and the poetic figure of loveliness-loneliness (employing a neologism “divnoća” in order to achieve a rhythmic, poetic effect). Performative traits such as pauses, sighs, and exclamations contribute to the literary value of this hypothetical narrative. The coda is also formulated as a punctum of a constructed dialogue, with me as an empathetic interlocutor who “conceals” her position of power, by which the narrator also assumes the position of a social critic. The ethical relationship of unequal parties in a conversation, as well as the ethno-

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<sup>21</sup> According to the data of the Solidarna Foundation, about 89 per cent of commercial objects and 20 per cent of houses in the Sisak-Moslavina County do not have the proper building permits. Cf. <https://dnevnik.hr/vijesti/potros/solidarna-i-rotary-planiraju-do-zime-na-banovini-sagraditi-11-protupotresnih-kuca--655824.html> (accessed 1. 2. 2021.).

graphic eliciting of powerful emotions, is a problematic point when considering the “therapeutic effect” of narrating about one’s life. However much the personal stories “are shaped to ensure a coherent, authentic personal identity amid the chaos of daily life,” they are equally burdened by “the fragmentation of experience, and the blurring of personal and more than personal” (Shuman 2005: 151). Often, performing the personal story in front of a stranger means “the reshaping of experience through the artful deployment of narrative patterns and invented dialogue in the spontaneous voiced text” (Borland 2021: 40).

### *To Touch, to Hear, to Feel: Concluding Remarks*

I borrowed the title of my paper (*To Touch, to Hear, to Feel*) from Zagreb psychiatrist Dragan Puljić, who was one of the first experts to help the residents of Petrinja. His words neatly correspond to Bendix’s concept of “the ethnography of listening” (Bendix 2000). Based on his experience of working with the most traumatized inhabitants in the early days after the earthquake, he concluded:

Yes, I am a psychiatrist, but even I am not an expert on human suffering. (...) One should be honest and look people in the eye. (...) One should hear, see, and touch. That is all the wisdom there is. (...) Medications are not the key. We prescribe them in maybe 10 percent of cases. (...) They do not need any psychologization, they just need to be seen, heard, and touched. They just need the presence of another person. (...) They seem frozen on the outside, but, inside, their experience is very intense. Paradoxically. It is such a high degree of suffering that we have no right to play experts. One should feel that one is not alone. (Puljić 2021)

My experience from the field is very similar to the description of “every person in Banija [having] her or his own story, not only one, but many” (Kljaić 2021: 20), just waiting for a tectonic disturbance, either geo- or sociological, that would, similar to the liquefaction of fine sand, “expel” these stories to the surface from the depths of their wounded being. When the world is in disarray and time out of joint, space opens up for creativity, empathy, and “sensory democracy.”

I realized that to the people living on the geographical and social margins material aid is not the most important thing. The fact that they became interlocutors, followers, and contacts of journalists, volunteers, or researchers who included them in their social networks, and rendered them relevant speakers about their own future, meant a lot more to them.<sup>22</sup> Or perhaps this is only my superficial impression, the

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<sup>22</sup> In developed countries such as Japan, a similar phenomenon known as *kodokushi* presents a serious societal problem, being described as: “the process by which a large number of people die in the most absolute loneliness in their homes, their death being unknown for a while and usually being found days or weeks later due to the odors of decomposition.” <https://en.yestherapyhelps.com/kodokushi-the-wave-of-solitary-deaths-ravaging-japan-15215> (accessed 1. 2. 2021.).

fancies of a naïve advocate of “self-effacing ethnography” (cf. Jambrešić Kirin 2021), who, with a small offering of material assistance, approaches everyone with the same everyday questions of *How are you? How did you endure all that? How do you live these days?*

This essay has attempted to outline the answers to only a handful of the numerous questions that have arisen and continue to arise for me in the field(s) of Banija/Banovina. For instance: Have the countless reports about “the ordinary people” from Banija, in the contentious media “domain of representation where humanization and dehumanization occur ceaselessly” (Butler 2004: 140), really empowered their voices against the hegemonic discourses of political players who blindly abide by the guidelines and demands of the EU (cf. Asad 2015)? Will the media’s hunger for the latest spectacle of human misfortune push out the interest in the devastated “Banija house” in the vicinity? Has the shared experience of thousands of subsequent tremors reshaped the residents of Central Croatia into an affective community that uses “sensory democracy”<sup>23</sup> to articulate “the art of revolt” and the political demands for a change of legislature on reconstruction and faster rebuilding? In what sense is direct and online exchange of opinions<sup>24</sup> about (egalitarian) life values and moral principles of a community a true alternative to “narratives about roots, native soil or the cultural attachment to a landscape” (Jansen 2020a: 9)? Is the ethnographic tribute to the narrative authority of a person from Banija truly a contribution to the social effort to build a better local community and a more democratic society on the ruins of an antagonistic culture of the post-war period? What do cultural theorists read from the fact that Danilo Kiš’s “condensed novel about an ordinary Yugoslav man” in the titular story from *The Encyclopedia of the Dead* centers on a Banija resident from the emblematic Komogovina (cf. Thompson 2021: 120–22)?<sup>25</sup> How important are Banija’s folklore and literary heritage (cf. Kirin and Vrga 2021), aesthetic communication, and culture for the recognisability of a region and for the identity of its living, as well as deceased inhabitants?<sup>26</sup> Can narratives “polished as though by generations of telling” (Thompson 2021: 127), in which folk beliefs, metaphysical aspirations, and the quest for a quiet coexistence of different religious and ethnic communities, in turn, shape the social ideal to which we aspire? Are the ability of “attuned” listening (Bendix 2000) and the art of storytelling “our last remaining democratic spaces,” helping us “to stay sane in an age of division” (Shafak 2020)?

23 Political scientists underline the necessity of taking a step back from “senseless democracy” not capable of producing meaningful political involvement towards “sensory democracy” that emphasizes “the role of ‘watching’ and ‘listening’ within sociopolitical relationships (Ryan and Flinders 2018: 133).

24 On communication and other strategies of resolving social problems in communities built around antagonistic cultures, compare Douglas and Ney 2003: 105–132. On the importance of war narratives for the understanding of invisible borders and unarticulated points of contention in “troubled locations” in the region, cf. Jansen 2020a: 67–95.

25 Mark Thompson reveals that Kiš modeled the story on the biography of Đuro Miočinović, the father of Mirjana Miočinović, Kiš’s first wife (Thompson 2021: 114–124).

26 Cf. the excellent poem by Monika Herceg titled *Pokojnici u gradu čija zemlja pomiče njihov vječni san* [*The dead in a city whose land moves their eternal dream*] from the recital *Grad po mjeri čovjeka koji može voljeti* [*A city tailored to a person capable of love*] (Petrijnja, 6 November 2021), available on the *book&zvook* audiobook mobile application.



What we are able to conclude is that personal narratives about the experience of the natural disaster have empowered the inhabitants of devastated areas in their regional supraethnic identity. A civil regeneration of Banija residents occurred, with them assuming the roles of citizens, not as members of a particular ethnic or social group. Their criticism of the partitocratic model of the reconstruction is turning them into *rebels* rather than social *outcasts*. The readiness of a wider community to hear them, offer them concrete aid, but also, to include them in the networks of solidarity and social economy;<sup>27</sup> has endorsed them as individuals possessed of personal dignity. The ability to recognize one's own misery in the misfortune of others prompted "processes through which something seemingly private and isolating can also help to shape a wider collective – which by nature is both public and political" (Hutchison 2016: 12–13). The personalized, concrete aid from the citizens was a response to the specific needs of "the people from containers." At the same time, private donations helped to build approximately fifty substitute and permanent residential structures. This was aided by the publication of emotional life stories establishing direct contact between the afflicted families and the donors, but also by the power of imagination, to recognize the vulnerability of others as a trait of their universal humanity. The recent death of the elderly woman Ljuba Obradović<sup>28</sup> from the village of Donji Klasnić when her rundown house caught fire turned her tragic fate into a parable of the (dis)appearance of the local "red man" of the "second-hand time" with their "notions about good and evil, about heroes and martyrs" (Alexievich 2013: 9). The news prompted a flood of empathetic comments, becoming a fact of local history.

Reading Banija narratives as a teleogenetic plot of the national story allowed them to be interpreted in the sense that the natural disaster has produced a (positive) social reshuffling, heralding a shift in the treatment of developmental socioeconomic inequalities between rural and urban areas, the capital and other regions (cf. Obad 2020). At least temporarily, the dominant national narrative about historical and social animosities was supplanted by the story of civil unity, solidarity, and mutual understanding in opposition to the political elite's need for power. A profound connection between the space of dwelling and the space of telling, the space of wild thought that defies the dominant narratives about the good life and dignified death, is a source of obstinate perseverance and adaptability of the rural population of Banija and Banovina. Their ability to adapt to difficult existential and environmental

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27 Citizens initiatives Ljudi za ljude, Solidarna Foundation, Dobro Dobrim DoDo Associations and several others build networks of solidarity and connect buyers with agricultural producers from Banija based on the sustainable model "from field to table."

28 In the past year, countless video reports and news articles have been produced about grandma Ljuba Obradović, turning her into the 'poster boy' of the hidden, abandoned, and miserable Banija, which her stubborn "natives" refuse to leave. She was killed in a fire on 1 February 2022, which was covered by various news portals: "On Tuesday, trenching through mud, because there is no road to Ljuba's house, these same people found the remains of her home. The modest elderly woman who spent her life in poverty, refusing to leave her rundown shack and abandon her native land, is still missing. Her stubborn cat is missing too. There is nobody around." Cf. <https://365dana.info/2022/02/02/izgorijela-je-kuca-bake-ljube-o-njoj-jos-nema-vijesti-puhovi-joj-vise-nikad-nece-remetiti-san/> (accessed 15. 2. 2022.).

conditions is in stark contrast to the conformist urban feeling of (in)security and anxiety. Genuine care for ecological sustainability and the rage caused by vile forest exploitation and deposits of all types of waste in their native land tie them to other *alterglobalists*. The crucial point that I have acquired from this (unfinished) study is the realization that the experiences of disaster and borderline states do not necessarily lead to trauma but rather may increase our capacity to learn, mature, and change our mindsets. Narrative practices as a powerful means of (re)shaping reality and experience are a reflection of what philosopher Catherine Malabou termed “brain plasticity.” This neuro-cultural metaphor interprets the ability of our cognitive apparatus to adapt to difficult existential circumstances and harsh environments as the ability to create and empower:

As if we know more about what we can *endure* than about what we can *create*. Accordingly, true brain plasticity comes down to finding out what the brain can *do*, not just what it can tolerate. (Malabou 2010 [2004])

Philosopher Denise Ferreira da Silva believes that “the possibility of transformation ... makes us universally human in its spiritual-ethical sense” and that we mostly “learn through water and its phasing.”<sup>29</sup> What she describes as “deep implicancy” is “the primordial moment of entanglement prior to the separation of matter evolving into the planet we know.” A myth-like view of the world as a “single mass of human and [...] non-human elements” (da Silva and Neuman 2018). It is precisely this myth-like sense of profound unity with nature and all its particles that is the organizing principle in the stories about one’s own life, in a way that makes “the allegorical personal, the cosmological local” (Shuman 2005).

While traveling through Banija/Banovina landscapes last summer, two perspectives blended – one that offered a visual and bird’s-eye poetics of the soil in which sinkholes, faults, and other traces of “the new geological rumblings of the planet” surfaced, followed by drone shots that are already part of the collective memory of the Croatian earthquake – and the other, a semantic and sensory perspective, marked by a face-to-face encounter and the excitement of an old man looking forward to my return to his village, so that he could start telling a story right at the gates of his house. I dedicate these verses from Derek Jarman’s film *Blue* to him:

*One can know the whole world  
Without stirring abroad  
Without looking out of the window  
One can see the way of heaven  
The further one goes  
The less one knows  
(Jarman, Blue 1993/94).*

Translated by Andrea Rožić

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<sup>29</sup> The comparison of life’s unpredictability, variability, and elusiveness with the flux and flowing of rivers or sailing through rough seas, is one of the oldest in the history of storytelling.



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## Disaster, Subjecthood, and Empathic Listening

Renata Jambrešić Kirin has provided ample food for thought about a complex set of relations and paradoxes that emerge when disaster strikes. Her portrait of the self-fashioning Banija/Banovina residents and the ways they have been reimagined by a Croatian national audience is compelling and timely. I want to extend her observations by offering comparative materials from my hemisphere. In North American folklore, the emblematic case for the role of narrative in disasters is Hurricane Katrina, which devastated New Orleans in 2005 and laid bare the ongoing injustices Black residents face due to state neglect and social stereotyping. Pat Jasper and Carl Lindahl's "kitchen table" methodology trained survivors who had relocated to Houston to interview each other, capturing their perspectives while at the same time offering opportunities for empathic connection (2006). In his published work on the Survivors of Hurricane Katrina in Houston project, Lindahl (2012) argues that the prior stigmatization of the people affected (because they are Black and poor) resulted in unequal access to and control over narrative constructions of events. Media "truths" prevailed, resulting in additional deaths and greater victimization of survivors. Lindahl references Rebecca Solnit's (2009) work on the temporary utopias created in the immediate aftermath of disasters to underscore the ways that community-led disaster response during Katrina brought out the best in people because the dispersed, on-the-ground, human-to-human approach feeds a human need for social connection and mutual care. Jambrešić Kirin points to a similar phenomenon in Banija/Banovina with this difference: a formerly stigmatized group became a potent national symbol of survival *because the media picked up and transmitted their stories* instead of rehashing old stereotypes. She asks whether narratives of hope amidst the ruins and the solidarity they engender might be the "teleogenetic plot of the long-term social drama" that will move the polity toward civic unity across rural/urban divides. Whereas such unity across differences may be difficult to sustain over the longer term, I agree with Jambrešić Kirin that, as ethnographers, we should document these powerful moments of grassroots solidarity not only to create a lasting

record but also, as Jambrešić Kirin suggests, to participate in the project of thinking differently, of simultaneously reimagining and enacting the good life with our interlocutors.

In the case of Hurricane Katrina, the enormity of the government failure to adequately respond to the crisis precipitated an outpouring of solidarity missions. Yet despite these early interventions, the new beginning for New Orleans after the floods was predicated on removing its poor Black residents to make way for a whiter, wealthier city (Elie 2019). What is notable in the Croatian case, as Jambrešić Kirin eloquently demonstrates, is the way that outsider reporters/ responders refigure elderly, rural subjects of an ethnically-marked border zone from traumatized victims to self-reliant subjects, whose struggle to overcome the assaults of nature have become emblematic for a broader constellation of Croatian citizens, wearied by the failure of post-socialist neoliberalism to fulfill their desires.

This collective refiguring of the marginalized peasant brings to mind another Christmas earthquake in a similar geographic periphery. On December 23, 1972, the capital city of Nicaragua was flattened, killing thousands and leaving hundreds of thousands without shelter. At the time, the country was ruled by a ruthless family dictatorship, which was working to stamp out small groups of armed rebels. Anastasio Somoza, the elder, was known to have crowed, "I don't want an educated population; I want oxen," an apt encapsulation of his disregard for the impoverished peasant majority of Nicaragua (Holloway 2011, 408). But it was the kleptocracy of Anastasio, the younger, who siphoned off the aid flooding the country after the earthquake, that turned the populace definitively against his regime. In 1972, people were forced to rely on each other to dig themselves and their loved ones out of the ruins (Walker 2003).

A mere six years later, the country was galvanized by spontaneous insurrections in the indigenous-identified neighborhoods of Masaya in the south and Leon in the north. The Indian, who until then had been viewed as an atavistic holdover, stoic in his subjection, was suddenly leading the movement for change. With Somoza's departure on July 17, 1979, the country witnessed a brief flowering of people's power. Campaigns to tackle myriad social problems--extending literacy in 1980, eradicating measles, subsequently--succeeded through mass mobilizations of the citizenry. Simultaneously, the country experienced a flowering of the arts: poetry, painting, and festive enactments. All this activity drew international admiration, inspiring countless first-world pilgrims to flock to the country, offering their assistance and technical expertise in service to a nascent social revolution. These solidarity activists were shocked when a mere ten years later, the noble, self-determining Nicaraguan peasants turned their backs on the revolutionary experiment and voted for a U.S.-backed, neoliberal regime that promised to end the ongoing civil war.

I offer this brief summary of a forgotten place as perhaps a closer comparison than Katrina of the ways that marginalized subjects 1) become self-actualizing in response to catastrophe, 2) are revalued by influential outsiders, leading to 3) improved self-image that further empowers them to act 4) and subsequently must

struggle against outsiders' "fixed" expectations of them as a condition for their ongoing solidarity. Shortly after the 1990 regime change in Nicaragua, photographer Susan Meiselas, who had documented the 1979 revolution, returned to the country to track down her former photographic subjects. In that different socio-historical moment, some went so far as to deny that they were the person depicted in her album. Her film, *Pictures from a Revolution* is an extended lament focusing on her own sense of loss, confusion, and betrayal as ordinary Nicaraguans moved from a position of boundless hope to bitter resignation. A decade later, another pair of outsider videographers, journalists Peter Raymond and Bill Gentile, retraced their 1988 journey through war-torn Nicaragua to find out how Nicaraguans they had met during the Contra War were navigating their postwar reality. The pair were shocked to find instances of former Contras and former Sandinistas making common cause against a new regime of indifference toward the rural peasant. In both cases, the solidarity activists, invested in confirming their own ideas about peasant revolutionaries, initially failed to recognize the flexible positioning of peasant-subjects and the ongoingness of life in the countryside. Perspectives shift for those who are living the reality. As a consequence of this oversight, the record that outsiders produced in the post-revolutionary moment is not as aligned to the peasant's need for self-determination as the one they had produced in an earlier moment. The Nicaraguan case suggests that cataclysmic change must be supported by ongoing, slow activism that fits into and supports the quotidian rather than upending it. Today, Daniel Ortega, the former revolutionary leader, is once again in charge, but his stance regarding the Nicaraguan people now aligns with Somoza, the elder. Once again, youthful movements for self-determination are met with violent repression by their putative leaders.

The inhabitants of Banija/Banovina, it appears, are experiencing their moment of recognition. Marginal figures isolated by age, ethnicity, and geography from a nation increasingly oriented toward Europe, they are also close to the land, nonconformist, working in subsistence and/or underground economies detached from the national norm. In this sense, they easily fill the slot of a Croatian local character, a contemporary equivalent to the idea of a national folk (Borland 2022). Jambrešić Kirin's emphasis on self-fashioning in their media portraits brings to mind the Freirian (1970[1967]) and Boalian (1993[1974]) concepts of personal liberation tied to a collective struggle for justice. To what degree, I wonder, are the journalists and folklorists who are working in solidarity with the residents of Banija/Banovina functioning as facilitators of this liberatory project? After all, without the respectful reception of their stories, their endurance, black humor, and willful nonconformity would not have been embraced and amplified as emblematic of an alternative narrative of what it means to be Croatian.

Jambrešić Kirin rightly argues that material needs are subordinate to the search for meaning, purpose, and the opportunity to decide for oneself what the good life is. I am reminded of economist Amartya Sen's definition of development as the freedom to choose one's life according to one's own priorities, a freedom that is predicated on greater access to education, human rights protections, and more democratic

systems of governance. Meanwhile, political theorists, recognizing that the ability to speak and be heard is not (and probably never was) available to most citizens of contemporary democracies, are moving toward a notion of democracy as a form of deep listening, a sensory democracy that recognizes the agency of political audiences as well as political actors (Ryan and Flinders 2018). This attention to the audience and the ways that listening well to one's subject empowers them to speak coordinates with Regina Bendix's call for a broadening of the ethnographic project to include participatory sensing, not only as a means of documenting the occasions of performance more fully but also to recognize our own role as ethnographers in the ongoingness we document (Bendix 2000). Our responsiveness to the residents of Banija/Banovina or to any other marginalized group who have been ignored, maligned, or neglected is a political act that resonates with and supports the imagining otherwise these subjects are voicing. The importance of these moments of empathic connection cannot be overstated.

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## How to Detect an Earthquake's Emancipatory Aftershocks?

Returning to Banija/Banovina and to her core interest in narration, in this moving article Renata Jambrešić Kirin (hereafter RJK) displays the erudition and analytical versatility that we have come to expect from her. As elsewhere, her writing is rich and suggestive, opening up a broad set of issues. For the purpose of this conversation, I will address, step-by-step, only a few components of what I believe to be her (cumulative) argument in the hope that my selectivity will be complemented by that of other contributors.

A first step revolves around the empowering potential of the very act of narration of one's suffering. Of course, narration can also foster frustration, self-pity, and self-victimizing paralysis. But, as RJK shows, when occurring in certain conditions, narrating their predicament can help people to organize knowledge, develop explanatory frameworks, and affirm their subjectivity in a communicative process of mutual recognition. An encounter with a compassionate ethnographer may constitute such favorable conditions. More generally, the author suggests that a key factor concerns visibility and audibility, which leads her to account for the role of mass and "social" media. As she points out, after the 2020 earthquake the mostly elderly residents of the rural sections of Banija were "suddenly invited to speak out" about their struggles and hardships. Up to then, they had been pretty much absent from the map for



most other people in Croatia, despite living only a one to two hours' drive from the center of Zagreb. Now intense media interest "restored their stature and their voice" – in other words, it made them visible and audible to fellow citizens, and it gave them a sense that they *were* visible and audible to those others. In that way, in RJK's words, their "narrative power of eloquent self/representation overnight turned them into our compatriots and contemporaries." Indeed, she states that this acquired status of interlocutors, of "relevant speakers about their own future" was more important to them than material aid.

RJK draws attention to the specificity of the eloquence of these interlocutors. It is infused, we are told, with "formulaic expressions, catchphrases, wise observations and rich metaphors based in oral literary tradition." The example of the story of Big Đuro and Baby Đuro is provided, as are passing references to the claims of other authors, but this promising argument remains elliptical. Rather than *stating that* her Banovina interlocutors displayed a "fundamentally folkloristic attitude," my learning as a reader could have been enhanced by *showing how* this emerged in ethnographic encounters. The more striking examples we get now are hardly folkloristic, even if some are really witty, such as one featuring a man's expression of relief that his positive Covid test at Sisak hospital meant he did not need to worry about transport back to his house. As RJK argues, there is both narrative authority and narrative competence here in a sharp, ironic mode.

A second step in the author's argumentation concerns an interesting social effect of the mutual recognition made possible by that post-earthquake invitation for people from Banija to speak for themselves. The territory of today's Sisačka-moslavačka županija has long housed an ethnationally diverse population with roughly 50/50 proportions of people identifying as Croats/Catholics and as Serbs/Orthodox, with the latter predominant in the rural southern hills. The displacements of the 1990s war and its aftermath eventually shifted these proportions to about 80/20. During the last decades, then, on the rare occasions when Banovina, and especially its more rural parts, made a media appearance, ethnonationality featured prominently. Yet, the earthquake, RJK states, sparked collective action that entailed "the making of new affective communities." This allowed the emergence of an alternative "regional supraethnic identity," even a "civil regeneration." On the one hand, a shared predicament, caused by a disaster considered to be of non-human origin, enabled the non-political self-positioning of people in Banija as suffering, yet dignified individuals, indiscriminately struck by mighty, capricious Nature. Yet, on the other hand, we learn that such depoliticization was accompanied by a degree of repoliticization, which RJK traces in a register of solidarity and critique of institutions and political functionaries. From "social outcasts" reduced to their ethnonational identity, she writes, these people became "rebels" against the ethnationally compartmentalized partocracy that, yet again, showed its inadequacy in the institutional response to the earthquake.

The nature and the degree of this shift are at the heart of what I identify as a third step in this article, addressing the political (some might say "cosmopolitical") impli-

cations of the emergence of Banovina peasants as public enunciators of legitimate narration beyond the ethnonational. Here RJK's writing is, perhaps inevitably, more tentative, as shown in her frequent use of the term "possible" and in the fact that many of the passages addressing such issues are phrased as questions. Yet, overall, she clearly wishes to emphasize the emancipatory ("affirmative") dimension of the narrations she encountered in Banija. This is reflected in her title, as well as in her alignment with certain strands of affect theory. Interestingly, RJK suggests that narration allowed her interlocutors to develop a "teleogenetic plot," i.e., a retrospective reworking of the earthquake as an event that "produced a (positive) social reshuffling, heralding a shift in the treatment of developmental socioeconomic inequalities." Noting sharp contrasts with war narratives, which she addressed in some of her well-known earlier studies, ultimately, RJK formulates a rather strong claim here, speaking of a "catharsis of the transitional social drama." What this amounts to, I think, is a suggestion that the post-earthquake narratives from Banovina documented in this text herald some kind of rupture, or at least that they contain the possibility of such a rupture.

So, what exactly is coming to an end here, according to the author? In my reading, this would be a conjuncture that we may refer to as predominantly postwar and postsocialist. And which new start does RJK detect? A key term here seems to be "sustainability." The author repeatedly emphasizes the "myth-like sense of profound unity with nature" among Banija peasants. This she reconnects to folklore and to religious frameworks of meaning, morality, and dignity. Unfortunately, we are not given insight into the everyday practices and subsistence strategies of her interlocutors, nor are we really introduced to the moral repertoires they invoke. As a reader, I would have benefited from some inductive argumentation in which RJK would work closely through ethnographic material, for example on their agricultural labor and on the ways in which folklore inspires those individuals' narratives about their activities, about life and death, about people and (the rest of) nature. As it is, we have to take her word for it. This is easily done where she refers to the resilience and adaptability that marks her interlocutors "in stark contrast to the conformist urban feeling of (in)security and anxiety." Indeed, I appreciate that RJK shows a desire to move away from more "sentimental and parochial" celebrations of resilience. Yet as the grandson of a farmer and the nephew of three farmers (true, far from Banovina) I find it requires somewhat more goodwill on this reader's part to nod along with the statement that "genuine care for ecological sustainability" renders these people critics of "consumer capitalism" akin to other "alterglobalists." Let me be clear: I would very much like this to be the case. And, in this text, I would have liked the author to show me empirically how it was indeed the case.

Nevertheless, despite such remaining ethnographic hunger on my part, I found RJK's offerings highly suggestive and stimulating of further lines of inquiry. To close this comment, I will turn to two of those.

The first concerns the temporal dimension of the "affirmative" argument, which leads me to reflect on the significance of melancholy in many anthropological de-

tections of emancipatory potential. In some passages RJK qualifies her optimism, speaking of possibilities of critique and sustainability that appeared “at least for a (short) while,” “at least temporarily.” So, what about the longer term? From our current vantage point, can we detect any longer term at all for the Banija exemplified by her interlocutors? The population of today’s Sisačko-Moslavačka županija reached its numerical peak in 1931. Losing a considerable part of its population in WWII violence, its predominantly rural part, where the research was conducted, was no doubt considered a “pasivni kraj” in Yugoslav socialist times, with many people leaving subsistence farming and moving to urbanized centers. Devastated again in the 1990s war, Banovina came to exemplify the population decline of the “subsidized region.” In the last three decades, first due to successive war-time expulsions, then to limited return (especially, but not only, of Serbs), and then as part of the recently intensified exodus from Croatia, the županija has lost about 44% of its population. This raises questions of social reproduction. RJK’s interlocutors are overwhelmingly elderly people, and the chances that any of their children will inhabit their homesteads seem minimal. Who or what are these peasants being resilient *for*? Who will continue their “sustainable” way of life, and how? Who could continue it even if they wanted to? An interlocutor like Desanka from Borojevići is clearly aware of this predicament, as she explicitly makes the link between children and hope when she speaks of her “deserted village”: “If only there were young people around, it would take years off you! It would give us greater hope.” Perhaps then we should read RJK’s text as a eulogy for a *past* way of life. Such a retrospective gaze, affirmatively reconstructing the fullness and meaningfulness of ways of life that are expiring is, of course, common in ethnology and anthropology, and this does not mean no emancipatory inspiration can be drawn from it. Yet this is affirmation in the melancholic key, which poses the question of possible applicability in totally different spatiotemporal configurations.

For me, a second line of inquiry was sparked by RJK’s insightful comments on the forging of mutual recognition through shared human vulnerability. Here I wonder about the specificity of the particular disaster that struck Banija. Is an earthquake particularly likely to ignite mutual recognition between human beings who are reminded of their generic smallness by a gigantic seismic event? Perhaps earthquakes are experienced as among the more *natural* of natural disasters, as, to my knowledge at least, it is difficult to identify human actions in their causality. Awe at the arbitrary might of Nature is probably the more common affect it evokes. RJK suggestively weaves her text around ways in which this can nevertheless feed into political critique. Perhaps we could extend her explorations in relation to the idea of the “anthropocene,” where “nature” is considered to be irrevocably co-conditioned by human action. Comparatively, we could ask which different emancipatory potential could be drawn from the aftermaths of, for example, floods. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, catastrophic floods have been met with a similar reduction of the ethnonational focus, at least “for a while,” through “recognition of the vulnerability of others,” acknowledged as a universal human trait. Yet these floods have also com-

plicated our thinking about “natural disasters.” Floods, and their causal links to, for example, deforestation, the spread of asphalt cover, waterway management, all the way to carbon emissions, force us to address how humans can be both victims of and (often unwitting) agents of destruction and deterioration. This brings back in human action and its (un)intended consequences, always in highly stratified ways: if an extractive paradigm of nature underlies consumer capitalism, or indeed all of modernism, it remains important to acknowledge, as RJK suggests, that human beings do not *equally* participate in it, contribute to it, and profit from it. In that way, we can further deepen the critical lessons to be learned from more or less “natural” disasters beyond victimization and resilience.

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### Fear Comes with Large Eyes, Pain with a Small Mouth, and Empathy with Big Ears? Or: The Potential of a Teleogenetic Plot as an Incident of Consecutive Reality

For me, Banija was a landscape I experienced only through the media until September 2021, when I visited the region as a researcher and “brushed up” against it affectively. This is a place of numerous devastating traumas caused by wars, political mismanagement, and natural disasters. These are well-known facts that, although apparently self-evident, complicate researching the causes, sequence, and consequences of the aforementioned devastations. This is due not only to the challenge of creating a communication context, as is the case with researching all “difficult” topics, in which we as researchers can serve as empathetic listeners, unobtrusive witnesses of someone else’s story, which they have a hard time narrating (and which is even impossible to narrate to some extent). The problem is much more complex, and it is necessary to examine it from the perspective of the emotional registers that encourage and manage research.

From a (self-)reflexive humanities research position, the physical, and consequently the emotional and cognitive presence in a region of “unimaginable” deprivation and devastation, “only sixty kilometers from the capital metropolis” seems complex for several reasons. It is complex because of the primordial fear of encountering and confronting human suffering. It is complex because it comes with a great discomfort caused by the inevitable colonization of other people’s pain, suffering, and trauma, after which the visitor has to return “ashamed” to their “warm home” or their “comfortable academic cubbyhole.” It is also complex because one is aware of the very modest impact of one’s own epistemology on the “real” world and the future

course of other people's pain, suffering, and trauma. It is complex also because it requires dealing with the local religious, national, political, interest, and other relationships that caused pain or hindered healing, and becomes more complicated when it meets the researcher's "preferences," which would ideally either be suppressed for the benefit of everyone or kept quiet on some of them. Conducting research in Banija while encountering other people's pain is also difficult because of the problems of how appropriate it is to say something about the encounter with human suffering if one can even find the courage and wisdom and overcome discomfort. It is also difficult because one has to endure the uneasiness of knowing that the observer will inevitably romanticize human resilience, which, though undeniable, is only a reflection of the cruel necessity that popular wisdom defines as "between a rock and a hard place." It is especially difficult to imagine a future for a suffering person, to encourage that person to imagine it themselves or to narratively shape their imagination.

From a methodological, epistemological, and primarily from a human point of view, it is necessary to take into account that, as warned by Emmanuel Levinas (1988: 156), even when we are ready to experience insight into other people's suffering, we are always in danger of failing to attach sufficient meaning to the suffering we are witnessing or think we are witnessing. We can very easily overlook someone's suffering and translate it into diverse emotional registers due to the context and genre in which the suffering is communicated, even if we try to understand (and imagine) its past and imagine its effects in the future. Despite this, as people, even ones with a research agenda, or even as people who have a radically blurred research and private perspective, we offer various ethical, emotional, narrative, and, ultimately, epistemological responses to the alarm of human pain and suffering.

In the lead text by Renata Jambrešić Kirin, the borderline or extreme positions at our disposal in the encounter with other people's suffering are precisely stated: for example, the position of "professional self-gratification" or the position of regret arising from the fact that our profession does not have a greater social role. "Self-effacing ethnography" (Jambrešić Kirin 2021 and in the lead text) or the similar "ethnography of care" (Vukušić 2021) which, although difficult to systematize as "institutionalized" methods, are found between, on the one hand, the idea of the insurmountable antagonism of pain and human suffering and, on the other, language and the idea of pain and suffering as experiences that, although they call into question language and communication, are very strongly related to language and expression. Asking an interlocutor, "How are you doing?" (or a similar question), although banal, is the basis of the ethically responsible research ethnography of Banija and similar deprived and ruined areas. This is not the skillful management of the narrative context, as discussed by William Labov, who started conversations with questions that open up possibilities for stories that are worth telling, i.e., stories that are more pointed (cf. Labov 1984: 56). It is also of not a case in which we are simply trying to avoid "discourse directed to someone outside of the immediate peer group of the speaker" (Labov 1984: 46) or simply trying to get rid of the ballast of the research situation (ibid.), which some folklore research can legitimately aim for. It

is about the fact that this position enables the pain and suffering felt by our interlocutors to be seen as an essential experience of language. Pain and suffering are the essential experience of language, and this is due to a failure of articulated language available to the latent story of suffering and pain and because, on the one hand, interlocutors who are suffering have the urge to express their pain and suffering, and on the other hand, there is an inability to say anything about pain and suffering, to describe it or convey it (cf. Freber 2019: 145). Despite the difficulties of “forcing” pain and suffering into language, the lead text of Renata Jambrešić Kirin shows that the pain and suffering of the Banija people require expression because, by the nature of things, their articulation is impossible, but not necessarily in an antagonistic manner through a comprehensive and destructive confrontation. Ilit Ferber notes that the fierce antagonism between pain and language shows that pain is most accurately defined in relation to language, and language is manifested in relation to the experience of pain (ibid.: 145–146). Therefore, when meeting the people of Banija who have experienced “indescribable” suffering for the umpteenth time, we are not necessarily talking only about the narratives that are created on the ruins of language, on its fragments and debris. Still, the disharmony and antagonism between language and pain guarantee the power of language and the possibility of expression. I assume that these statements, despite all the mentioned weaknesses and the very idea of such research, deserve our attention (not only attention but care as well).

Likewise, the reflections in the lead text lead us to think that isolation from others caused by pain is not the only consequence of pain. Pain and suffering, regardless of the impaired quality of communication, simultaneously “push” us toward the other, even when they do not evoke clear empathy and a meaningful ethical response. Pain deepens our connection to others and opens up a wide and diverse range of expression, but also a “reading” of pain that is never an innocent act of “following a narrative” (Braid 1996). Despite the difficulties of ethnography of “heavy” topics that touch us deeply as human beings, which we resist at the same time, though they still attract us in spite of and/or because of this, they ethically “castrate” us, they prevent the “ease” of an ethnographic encounter which is complex in any circumstances.

With “large eyes” and “large ears,” as researchers, we have to find a way to listen to those with “small mouths” and to “engage” with Banija and all other difficult and painful places of our interlocutors. We also have to do this by constantly asking “How are you?” as suggested in the lead text, despite the justified criticism that by doing so we diligently “consume other people’s trauma” (cf. Yaeger 2002) and colonize other people’s silence (cf. Freund 2013: 235).

In the end, the answer to that question, the narratives which come from it, are in favor of the idea that what appeared to be a teleogenetic development at the moment of great media and public attention, in actuality, was just another in a series of consecutive events. The media, civic and activist interest in the residents of Banija, which led some to conclude that the earthquake was the best thing that could happen to them<sup>1</sup>, is basically over, and it is quite possible that this was a story within a

1 During my field research, I heard this statement several times.



story that was shaped by a complex interplay of pain and suffering on the one hand and compassion on the other. The media fashioned an image of the prototype Banijan as “willful, obstinate, and recalcitrant old folks” (Kljaić 2021: 131 according to Jambrešić Kirin in the lead text) who were condemned to live. Only such a picture could induce tolerable sympathy from the community. The pain and suffering that we, as ethnographers, can “brush up against” and which springs forth from our interlocutors in interpersonal interaction when asked the question “How are you?” is something else entirely. This is the moment when we can see that the background of the narrative involving the “heroes of life,” resilient people, full of humor, the joy of life, and love for their region, etc., also reveals the archetypal story of Philoctetes. This story, in its plentiful variants and interpretations (see Ferber 2019: 17–20), is used as a template for reflecting on the relationship between pain and language, pain and empathy, a person in pain, and a witness to the suffering. The people of Banija suffer the consequences of social and natural adversities in “indescribable” pain and suffering. At the same time, witnesses feel more and more compassion, not necessarily as *something about someone* or *toward someone*, but also as, literally, feeling someone else’s pain.

The personal narratives of the people from Banija do not simply cause a singular, subjective sensation. They also have the potential to cause public, shared pain. Even the image of the Banija household, which does not rely on propositional and communicative language with the intimate bonds which form between interlocutors, constitutes the basis for a community based on empathy. Furthermore, in the stage in which language is “born,” we feel or sympathize with the suffering of others even more strongly and directly (Ferber 2019: 47). This stage of pain is often unbearable for the witness. It forces them to run. Compassion is constituted by an effective dynamic between the intensity of pain and the ability of people affected by the disaster to contain it. “Holding back the tears” and forming a self-narrative of resilience and stubbornness in order to endure hardships become a source of a growing, strong sense of compassion. This does not mean that resilience is a matter of choice and, ultimately, a permanent and actual state of affairs. However, the self-narrative of resilience, through humor and acceptance, can only be seen and made available for an empathic response. Metaphorically speaking, the festering, horrible, devastating Philoctetes wound of the people from Banija is not to be seen. That pain, like many such pains, is condemned to a cry without a response, to suffering in silence, against the background of a difficult, though still “ordinary” life on the periphery of our attention (not only our attention but also our concern). Can humanities such as, for example, folklore studies or cultural anthropology, whose academic discourses are often mixed with literature or activism discourses, do anything with such pain without merely echoing it analytically? We can only hope.

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The lead article by Renata Jambrešić Kirin, “To Touch, to Hear, to Feel. Can Ethnography Dissolve the Narrations of Fear?” results from the recording, reflecting, and interpreting events in the area affected by the earthquake in December 2020 and succeeds in highlighting several current and relevant topics. Although the author’s observations come from specific situations in Banija/Banovina, they point to processes and trends that are common not only outside this region but also beyond Croatian borders. In this review, I will refer to certain issues which correspond with my professional and academic interests, which for the last ten years have been focused on the changes affecting Croatian regions, primarily changes visible in space, in the condition and use of urban and rural settlements, the treatment of regional and local heritage, and quality of life. The first issue is raising awareness of the proximity and scale of the area which, due to various circumstances, is placed on the “margins of civilization.” The second issue deals with the power and effects of narrating and the possible one-dimensionality of narratives. The third issue relates to the (in)ability to transform narratives into a means of achieving social change.

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The earthquake that hit the Banija/Banovina area in December 2020 drastically and permanently changed the living environment and everyday life of the area’s inhabitants. The natural disaster attracted media and public attention to an unimaginable extent for this part of Croatia (only an hour’s drive from the capital of Zagreb), which had been neglected for decades. In the months following the earthquake, the mass reaction of citizens and volunteer experts from different parts of the country and abroad helped mitigate the consequences of the earthquake (especially damage to property and infrastructure) and provided psychological and human assistance. Initiatives from enthusiasts on the ground presented models for the relatively quick and efficient provision of safe housing, quality food, health and psychological services, and other means of help necessary to overcome the crisis. However, it is an undeniable fact, especially taking into account that twenty months have passed since the earthquake, that this wave of goodwill, humanity, empathy, and concrete solutions has failed to inspire, shake, and change the existing practices and systems of state and public administration, local and regional governments (counties, cities, and municipalities), which have been destroying a large part of Croatia for decades.

In addition to moving stories about the experiences of the disaster, the earthquake unexpectedly highlighted the systemic problems that had been accumulating for decades, reflected in numerous personal and family stories about deprivation, poverty, and loneliness. Being left to their own devices, the decades-long struggle to

secure what citizens in some other parts of the country are provided with, mistrust of the government and external factors (which can be partly explained by the historical circumstances of life on the border) (cf. Štefanec 2021), have led to specific ways of existence and living for the area's inhabitants who were portrayed, in the stories after the earthquake, as "eccentric and resilient" (p. 49) people, resourceful inhabitants of Banija/Banovina, left to their daily struggle for a decent life. These stories shocked the Croatian public, to say the least. Still, it is hard to say how much they raised awareness that the Banija/Banovina case study, which presented itself because of the recent disaster, is only a fragment of the reality that almost a third of Croatia has to deal with. "The margins of civilization" are much closer and more widespread than a cursory glance suggests. They affect not only Banija/Banovina but also Kordun, Lika, Dalmatinska Zagora, Slavonija, as well as other parts of Croatia (cf. Lončar and Pavić 2020).

The decades-long "institutionalised neglect" (cf. Kanafani 2016) of citizens and their needs has led to a situation in which citizens of a large part of Croatia do not have adequate access to health, social, cultural, and educational services. Generations of children, young people, and adults have been denied the opportunity to live and prosper on equal footing with their peers in other parts of the country. The disparity in the quality of life among Croatian regions is confirmed beyond any doubt by a number of quantitative and qualitative economic and sociocultural indicators, including the risk of poverty rate, the share of beneficiaries of the minimum guaranteed income in the population, the share of the gross average salary, the share of the sales value of industrial products and exports, the vital index, the number of doctors per 1,000 residents, the number of kindergartens per number of children aged 0–4, the ratio of teachers to pupils, cultural activities expenditure, etc. (cf. Lončar and Pavić 2020). Furthermore, there are a number of indicators that are less often discussed, such as (negative) changes in urban and rural settlements (the physical condition of buildings and their usage, availability of services common in urban areas, etc.), attitudes toward regional and local heritage, the perception of the region and place as one desirable for life, the feelings of the inhabitants, etc. Although every bit of help, no matter how small, was welcome, facing facts that have been converted into numbers opens up questions about the possible ultimate effect of individual actions from below on people's lives (material and human) and whether, in order to secure a dignified existence, much more extensive and complex sets of activities that involve systems and practices implemented from above are necessary.

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Due to the great media and public interest in the post-earthquake situation, the residents of Banija/Banovina and their life stories became the focal point of television and newspaper reports that were published on a daily and weekly basis and shared on social networks in great numbers. Jambrešić Kirin states multiple positive effects of this "tsunami" of authentic and harrowing stories from Banija" (p. 43),

among them being the contribution to the “civil regeneration of Banija residents as citizens,” i.e., raising awareness of this region’s existence, its inhabitants, and their needs. I would add that one of the contributions is the name Banija coming back into usage, as it was abandoned and undesirable in the public for thirty years prior to the earthquake (cf. Lončar 2014). However, it is necessary to consider whether this process of creating narratives about the region and its people and channeling them to the public had some less positive effects. Can the good intention of presenting narratives about the victims and the needy have the opposite effect and serve as an argument for ongoing inaction?

Numerous stories and TV broadcasts about the earthquake-affected area focused on the negative phenomena. Media reports presented the “deprived and elliptic lives” (p. 41) almost sensationally: stories about poverty and misery, abandoned old people, hamlets without infrastructure, etc. These stories certainly contributed to the creation of the dominant narrative about contemporary Banija/Banovina. Unfortunately, other stories carried less weight and did not successfully reach the public, so they remained mostly unknown. Of the many broadcasts on national television, with the actors of the post-earthquake reconstruction offering their opinions in the late evening hours, including employees of municipalities, cities, counties, ministries, universities, institutions, and others, I believe not one broadcast was dedicated to the values and resources that we should not abandon in the process of reconstruction and recovery, and which should serve as the basis for planning the regeneration of the entire region. We can ask ourselves how could other “affirmatively framed [...] narratives” even be “pushed through” or be made more visible, if at all?

One should note that the area affected by the earthquake is characterized by exceptional natural and cultural-historical values and heritage with international and national, as well as regional and local significance. The entirety of this heritage is impossible to list here. Still, much is said by the fact that ca. 40% of the area of Sisak-Moslavina County is covered by areas of protected nature and areas that fall under the Natura 2000 ecological network with numerous strictly protected species, including special reserves, a nature park, regional park, significant landscapes, a monument of park architecture, a park-forest, etc. The value and significance of cultural-historical urban and rural entities, individual historical buildings and sites, and numerous expressions and practices of intangible cultural heritage bear witness to the harmony and coexistence with nature, which make quality development possible, especially the development of organic, agricultural, and food production and rural and cultural tourism. The area holds an exceptional importance for national history, as evidenced by a number of historical sites, one of them being a fortification heritage connected to the Croatian noble family Zrinski, the Military Frontier towns where the intellectual and military elite gathered and served as hotbeds for Croatian National Revival activities which led to the Croatian national anthem being composed in the Peleš house in Glina (Lončar 2022). Although this list and stories could be continued indefinitely, they were not suitable and could not fit into the almost one-dimensional ideas about how the Banija/Banovina area has nothing of value to

preserve or invest in. This supported the already well-established neglect of this area and these people, and it gave rise to arguments about how repairing historical buildings, building new roads, expanding the utility network, and improving the quality of health and other services makes no sense and is unprofitable.

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In the lead text, Jambrešić Kirin analyzes the role and importance of the “narrative exchange of experiences” (p. 41), the activity of narrating and narration as the outcome of narrating and expert (folkloristic, anthropological) treatment. More specifically, the author encourages discussion about whether talking about one’s personal life can have a “therapeutic effect” for the narrator (p. 51) and whether narratives can be “a bridge to understanding others” (p. 45). If we continue in the direction of searching for the possible roles of narration, can we imagine their transformation into a form that will promote a “greater role in society” (p. 41) and help to achieve “social change” (p. 41), which are advocated the text, but also evaluate it as practically difficult to achieve? Can the experiences and knowledge mediated to the anthropologist be mediated further, into practice, with the aim of bringing about social changes? Can and should anthropologists be more assertively involved in the creation of public policies and thus truly work to empower communities and individuals?

Demographic, economic, sociocultural, and environmental challenges of the modern era are a legitimate and represented topic in academic research and educational content, as well as in European and national policies. Global challenges – especially climate change and sustainable growth, poverty and inequalities, access to clean water and food, education and health services, etc. – require finding perspectives, answers, and solutions with the necessary involvement of (academic) experts from different disciplines. Humanities play a key role in these activities, which is not only a result of the requirements of development policies (including public funding of research), but also of social responsibility, which some European universities and institutions proudly point out as their model and guideline. It is, therefore, necessary to discuss desired overcomes in order for the humanities to become relevant stakeholders in these processes and to effectively influence public policies. The already ongoing debates include arguments for the need to overcome individualism, act through institutions, focus on systematic dialogue with policymakers and other disciplines, and to develop the expertise necessary to have such conversations (Brom 2019, Brom 2020). Academic research that wishes to influence public policy has to understand the context, perceptions of stakeholders, norms and values, hopes and fears (Brom 2019). This issue comes to mind when Kirin Jambrešić claims that narration and narratives have a kind of power and can increase listeners’ “capacity to learn, mature, and change our mindsets.”

Anthropologists are privileged in the sense that they can get to know and learn from ordinary people through direct contact and conversation, long-term stays, or repeated visits to a place and community. The local knowledge they obtain in their

research and its interpretation, especially as a “network of knowledge, understanding, and information about the local community and its practices” is considered important for shaping public policies in a satisfactory manner, as well as its effectiveness and legitimacy (Petković 2014: 108). If the stated arguments are accepted, narration and narratives can be the basis for shaping guidelines and creating programs and strategies for long-term development, especially in areas related to vulnerable and marginalized communities, the use and preservation of public goods and values, as well as other aspects of everyday life of the individual and the community, including disaster recovery. Can the stories collected from the area affected by the earthquake – about old people who live alone in houses without electricity and water, about children who walk for miles to reach the school bus, about farmers who cannot market their products, etc. – be shared further than anthropological texts, in what way and for what purpose? Should anthropologists take responsibility for transforming and redirecting stories toward the wider public and policies in order to truly help “local subjects [...] to gain social empowerment” (p. 45)? Ultimately, do experts in the humanities have the right to choose, or is this a question of social and personal responsibility of academics and individuals for the benefit of humanity?



# R EPLY

## Renata Jambrešić Kirin

First of all, I would like to note that I wrote the commented article during the first seven months after the devastating earthquake of December 28 and 29, 2020, whose epicenter was located in Petrinja and the surrounding area. I presented the first version of the article at the 18<sup>th</sup> congress of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research on September 5, 2021 (online congress in virtual Zagreb, September 5–8, 2021). At that time, my goal was to describe the immediate and impulsive community response full of new meanings which came about due to the cataclysm that created a new epic caesura in the collective memory of the Banija region and which seems to have finally ended a *longue durée* timeframe defined by twentieth-century war, destruction and persecution. I wanted to present the verbalized and other psychosocial and sensory reactions of the inhabitants caused by the accumulated stress and recoil of an unstable social and restless physical landscape characterized by cracks, shifts, and liquefaction of the ground and extreme seismic activity. In the meantime, I have written two more (unpublished) texts elaborating and supplementing certain propositions from this article, examining them in a different light and in a significantly different affective context dominated by frustration, disappointment, indignation, and resignation because of the hopelessly slow pace of the government's reconstruction project and its vague and confusing principles. The elaborated and insightful comments, as well as the valuable suggestions and critical remarks from the outstanding academics and commentators of this article, will be of great help when finalizing forthcoming texts. I take this opportunity to sincerely thank them.

Personally, the disaster left a great impression on me as it affected my family and disrupted my everyday life, leaving me torn between work and caring for vulnerable family members who either remained “at the epicenter” or came to stay in my apartment in Zagreb. In the article, I tried to connect several disciplinary perspectives from which it is possible to interpret the extraordinary, complex, and paradoxical consequences of a natural disaster – autoethnography, disaster anthropology, affective anthropology, and folkloristic theories of narration and intersubjective communication – but also to find a form of writing that would convey dramatic self-actualization, the emotional intensity of fresh trauma, suffering and pain, fear and uncertainty in constantly and repeatedly shaken domiciles and, above all, the renewed faith in a wider community that cuts across (in)visible ethnic, class and cultural boundaries. I agree that the article is occasionally pervaded by an exalted tone and plenty of thematic sidelines, which is a consequence of my desire to record the

affective force and sensory quality of the Rashomon-like event, which, not because of the destructive spectacle but because of the mass response of the citizens of Croatia, can be classified as a first-class Event. And such an Event, according to the philosopher Alain Badiou, represents a rupture that brings about new political subjects and “ruptures the appearance of normality, and opens a space to rethink reality” and that “which always lies beneath a particular social order.” “Only in an Event can the excluded part be visible. An Event succeeds in representing a part [of the community – RJK] which is previously unrepresented” (McLaverty-Robinson 2014). Although the passage of time has shown that the mass mobilization of Croatian citizens did not produce revolutionary subjects nor threaten the existing power relations and centralized state administration, the self-organization of citizens elicited new images of collectivity, prompted certain solidarity economy projects, and a number of interregional initiatives, and raised awareness of the power of united and motivated citizens. Residents of the deprived rural communities of Banija found themselves in the center of public attention. They were finally represented as fully fleshed fellow citizens whose self-aware actions, courage, and vitality, in contrast to their suffering and deprivation, aroused not only empathy but also a sense of civic responsibility for the current unjust social order with drastic regional differences in development, quality of life and rate of emigration (cf. Lončar and Čavrak 2022: 25–31).

In this sense, the article discusses a “temporary utopia” and “the ways that community-led disaster response [...] brought out the best in people” (Borland) in the first months after the earthquake. **Katherine Borland’s** comment, with its example of the devastating earthquake which struck Nicaragua on December 23, 1972, and the years-long political metamorphosis of its most disenfranchised populations, is extremely important because it made me aware of the dynamics of the “solidarity mission” as a complex relationship between the local (deprived) community and external “influential outsiders.” Borland shows how the rural indigenous people in Nicaragua went from being passive subjects who stoically endure their subjugation, racialization, and natural cataclysm to becoming revolutionary subjects and initiators of mass uprisings, only to turn their backs on the “revolutionary experiment” ten years later and support the pro-American neoliberal regime. Three of the four mechanisms of political subjectivation described by Borland – (a) the self-actualization of marginalized subjects in response to a disaster, (b) their re-evaluation carried out by influential outsiders, (c) an enhanced self-image that further empowers local populations to act – can be clearly recognized in our example from Banija. However, the fourth aspect, related to the difference between the mostly leftist activist outsiders, and the rural conservative, ideologically inconsistent and ambivalent imagining of the “ideal” political community, deserves a more thorough discussion. It essentially dovetails with **Stef Jansen’s** final remark. Jansen believes that with my affirmative discourse on the vitality, resilience, and self-sustainability of elderly Banija farmers, I failed to describe their recent crisis survival strategies and that I wrote a “eulogy for a *past* way of life” of the peasants “in a melancholic key”.

I could agree with Jansen’s remark that under the first impression of organizing new forms of sociality in the vacuum created by a paralyzed state administration, I

slightly romanticized the willingness of those affected to turn a new page and articulate their dissatisfaction with nationalist, clerical and conservative policies that strongly bind them (symbolically and ideologically) to the wartime past and regressive narratives closer to the nineteenth than to the twenty-first century. The local elections in May 2021 already showed that my perspective on the natural disaster as a teleogenetic turning point for dominant narratives that shook the existing political mindset and attenuated the importance of ethno-national tensions was too optimistic and the result of an affective impression.<sup>1</sup>

However, I disagree that the concept of self-sustainability is not inherent to local knowledge and experience in the Banija region and that its prerequisite is a positive balance of social reproduction. What I refer to as the “self-sustaining agenda” of the rural existence of elderly people is more akin to the philosophical concept of a *fulfilled* and *meaningful life* than the sociological definition of a good life. This agenda implies a reflection of a broad experience of the world, a feeling of authenticity, human work as an organic exchange with nature, the capacity to manage in one’s own life context, protection provided by a religious experience, coexistence with domestic and other animals and functional aging in one’s own home. The rich folklore tradition of this area, as well as its partial actualization in my interviews, which I could not present in detail in this short article, confirms this set of life values together with the intrinsic need for mythical thinking, an imaginative and numinous refiguring of the world (cf. Bošković-Stulli 1983, Jambrešić 1992, Muraj 1992, Kljaić 2021).

On the other hand, I agree with philosopher Paolo Virno that all contemporary modes of existence are ambivalent, or, we might say, they contain within themselves “both loss and salvation, adaptation and conflict, servility and freedom” (Virno 2004: 14–15), and that old people in isolated villages most often cannot choose the way nor the place of their existence. However, even those who can do so and whose children or social workers offered to relocate them to the city or a nursing home most often choose to stay on their property – even when they had to live in tin containers and improvised dwellings. For many of them, the broad experience of the world also implies transnational knowledge about modes of aging and surviving in different parts of the world, their advantages and disadvantages, thanks to contact with their children and relatives who relocated after the 1990s war.<sup>2</sup> For these people, the “world without the self” is prioritized in relation to the “self without the world,” and their courage, dignity, awareness of identity, and local affiliation translate

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1 I am aware that sensory and affective ethnography are forced into compromise due to the capitalist “affective regime,” which assumes that emotions and emotional events offer a simpler, clearer, and deeper truth about social subjects and social relations. However: “Emotion doesn’t produce clarity but destabilizes you, messes you up, and makes you epistemologically incoherent” (Berlant 2008). Although the simultaneous coronavirus pandemic in Banija took the lives of more people than the earthquake, my interlocutors reluctantly, curtly, and with a sense of unease talked about family members who had just died of Covid-19. They avoided connecting these emotionally difficult and tragic “motifs” with the volunteer visits and sudden liveliness in deserted villages, so they preferred to talk about positive “heroic narratives” about a community united by a humane and solidary response to a disaster.

2 For example, my next-door neighbor in village of Slana (b. 1947) has nieces and nephews in California, Australia, Austria, and Germany and is quite familiar with real estate price trends, living costs, and the level of social and health care in these countries.

into narrative authority and their willingness to tell the story of their own difficult and elliptical life. This is largely a consequence of the historical experience of a life full of war traumas, but also the feeling of continuity of life on a “hard border,” and yet “at the center of social and state turmoil... in 1941, as well as in 1991 and 1995” (Kljaić 2021: 89). I want to believe in the emancipatory power of transgenerational and local memory of Banija inhabitants who remember, among other events, the anti-fascist uprising and the smaller (armed) rebellion in the Glina area (end of 1949 and beginning of 1950), which was the result of forced collectivization and the “slow recovery from war losses and destruction” (Čavrak 2022: 17). For instance, the extent of the earthquake damage to family houses renovated under the government’s development measures for so-called “areas of special state concern” (1996–2018) for the first time caused systematic criticism from both below and above as this low-quality, unsuccessful reconstruction program did not spur revitalization. In this instance, the local wisdom would opine that a basic revitalization principle was ignored: “the barn builds the house, not the other way around.”

**Jelena Marković’s** comment contains an extremely important discussion on the assumptions of the “folkloristic segment” in my (unfinished) research, in which the anthropology of emotion and sensory ethnography combine with narratology and trauma studies, self-effacing ethnography and ethnography of care. My procedure is, however, a constant analytical and discursive search for an ethically appropriate, epistemological, and “fair” approach to vulnerable and deprived subjects. Their often elliptical, allusive, fragmentary, and concealed narratives provide a glimpse of their constant effort to “organize knowledge, to develop explanatory frameworks and to affirm their subjectivity in a communicative process of mutual recognition” (Jansen). As a researcher who tirelessly searches for a “fundamental mode of being, which, in principle, could give rise even to developments very different from those prevailing today” (Virno 2004: 95), I tend to record and interpret affirmative examples of human virtue, self-healing, “cruel optimism” and resilience in the neoliberal landscape of general ambivalence, cynicism, opportunism, and resignation.<sup>3</sup> From the numerous assessments coming from the philosophy of language, starting from Wittgenstein’s claim that it is better to remain silent about pain than to trivialize it with conventional phrases to Dolar’s warning that the ethical relationship is based on listening to voices (Dolar 2009: 81), I follow the theoretical principle proposed by Jelena Marković. She is right to claim that in the case of narratives filled with

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<sup>3</sup> As a small contribution to the folkloristic argumentation on the importance of the interactional situation, the quality of the interlocutors’ relationship and the type of atmosphere – in what we call “empathetic listening” and “participatory compassion” – I mention the narrative situation involving a group conversation that happened this summer in a settlement, whose houses are mostly used for weekend stays, at the site where Glina flows into Kupa. After a long time, six residents of this settlement gathered to discuss typical topics while eating chilled watermelon (weak earthquakes usually felt at night, bad telecommunications network, damage caused to gardens and orchards by animals coming from the forest, wells drying up). In this relaxed atmosphere, one of the interlocutors, born in this village but currently living in Linz, began her personal story with a special warmth, but also unease, in her voice: “Every time I eat watermelon, I remember the summer of 1995 and the watermelons we were greeted with in Sremska Kamenica as displaced persons. To ease our suffering and the suffering our children, the people there fed us heaps of watermelons.” This was followed by a shorter, but pithy and vividly told story about the experience of exile in Vojvodina, divorce and leaving for Austria with an underage son.

other people's pain and suffering, "we are not necessarily talking only about the narratives that are created on the ruins of language, on its fragments and debris, but the disharmony and antagonism between language and pain" (Marković). This means that I try to focus my attention, sharpened or dulled by my senses, on critical fabulation (Hartman 2008), creative distancing, stylistic nuances, and aesthetic qualities of the textual record of recorded oral narratives in which traces of both individual and communal experiences of subjectivation have been preserved. As a folklorist, I believe that this "wonderful human invention – story and narration" (Bichsel 2002: 12) greatly contributes to understanding the contemporary chaotic and ambivalent times "and our experience of life as time" (ibid.). The role of social networks in this process is to establish a dialogue on the "parallel contemporary" experiences of those citizens who continue to live in their hometowns and neighboring areas and those who have moved but (occasionally or virtually) return to it in order to ameliorate the "metropolitan shock" and its effects: "uncertainty of expectations, the unpredictability of assignments, fragile identities, ever changing values" (Virno 2004: 98). I believe that the power of narration and empathetic listening is "one of our last remaining democratic spaces" (Shafak 2020) which, despite the distortion and instrumentalization of personal stories by classical and digital media, contributes more to interpersonal understanding in an informationally interconnected society than all projects of directed development of "civil society." We are witnessing how the narrative mediation of the personal destinies of protesters, often victims, against autocratic regimes triggered mass social protests and demands for social change (from the Arab Spring to the last demonstrations in Iran).

With this observation, emphasizing the central place of narration and public polylogue in democratic culture, and making the theoretical horizon of folklorists more akin to that of literary theorists and cultural theorists, I refer to **Sanja Lončar's** contribution. Her articles (Lončar 2014, Lončar and Pavić 2020, Lončar 2022) provided me with a valuable and comprehensive insight into the complexity of the socio-historical processes that led to the years-long marginalization and ruination of the earthquake-affected region and ingrained a resilient psychosocial mindset characterized by the "daily struggle for a decent life" among its impoverished, neglected and deprived residents. The programmatic text by Sanja Lončar (2022) is particularly valuable, wherein she proposes specific projects for the preservation of the natural and cultural-historical heritage of Banija/Banovina, and presents it as a "springboard" for the comprehensive regeneration and long-term development of the Sisak-Moslavina region. I sincerely hope that local governments will include some of these proposals in their development projects, especially when it comes to cultural tourism, and that when creating new centers of "heritage interpretation," they will not overlook those who epistemologically deal with the heritage, and not only participate in the protective work and advocacy. However, I am skeptical of the claim that humanities scholars should be directly involved in shaping public policies and strategies as groundwork for promoting and achieving social change. The concepts of applicability, performativity, instrumentality, and usefulness of knowledge

and skills coming from the humanities, which have recently been described in lists and prescribed as *outcomes* of an education in the humanities, were the subject of a prolific epistemological debate not so long ago (cf. Bagarić, Biti, Škokić 2017; Prica 2017). Ines Prica showed that dominant academic policies follow neoliberal ideology and lead to the social differentiation of academics while diminishing the material position, autonomy and importance of the humanities, which, in principle, are not useful for the reproduction of the capitalist system. The result of this ungrateful position of a “marginal discipline” are latent antagonisms between the “critical orientation” of Croatian ethnology on one hand, which does not shy away from questioning power relations, the political matrix of dominant narratives and the political cynicism of the ruling elites, and the pragmatic current on the other hand, which goes along with, identity politics that are frequently theoretically revised. The case in which the authors of the study *Social and Economic Revitalization Program for the Areas of Sisak-Moslavina County Affected by the Earthquake* (cf. Čavrak 2022) were rejected as local experts and carriers of local knowledge makes it obvious that knowledge, expertise, excellence, innovation and goodwill are not enough for an academic to become an “influential outsider,” let alone an equal stakeholder in public (development) policy. The position that advocates “the importance and credibility of what is known, the conditions in which the knowledge of the marginalized, the poor, and especially women, is unnoticed and ignored” (Prica 2022) is deeply connected to the humanities but also carries a political message. We cannot expect that it will be a message welcomed by partitocratic elites. Unfortunately, in a society that is still polarized and socially and regionally unequally developed, in which the fundamental concepts of “conservative” Croatian ethnology – heritage, memory, and (national) identity – are regularly abused by “conservative” political actors to secure their control over the levers of power and authority, I believe that ethnologists and folklorists should encourage a culture of resistance against the current policies of fostering racial, ethno-national, gender and other intolerances. And the culture of resistance is most effectively encouraged by fostering humanistic expertise and the capacity for learning, maturing, and empathy in our students, as well as in other social subjects we communicate with.<sup>4</sup> In order to perform this task – which implies the effort of imagining the horizon of new possibilities – honorably, folklorists and ethnologists should learn more from artists than from social arbiters. An uncertain encounter with local and marginalized knowledge is inevitable in order to shape and fill the terms like “generational revitalization,” “sustainable lifestyle,” “green transition,” “solidarity economy” with current meaning, as time is running out. As the poet Monika Herceg states in her poem: “the world is slowly / becoming what it has always been: / an accelerated ruin.”

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4 Of course, we must not give up on ethnographic work, new projects, organizing meetings and dialogues with cultural and other social subjects in the area affected by the earthquake, as the collaborators of the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research are trying to do in their project “Banija As Metaphor and Metonymy” which started with the first eponymous academic congress in Glina and Zagreb on October 5 and 6, 2022. The material and economic reconstruction of the houses and the environment, stuck in the administrative and political deadlocks of “postponing the future”, can be initiated from the possibility of creating new mental maps and imagining the future.



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