

GER DUIJZINGS

Urban Ethnography. An Introduction

This is the first in a series of 'urban ethnography' issues of this journal, exploring everyday life in cities and towns across Southeastern Europe. The aim is to provide a platform for anthropologists and practitioners of other Urban Studies disciplines (such as historians, sociologists, political scientists, geographers, architects and urban planners) who may be using qualitative (including fieldwork) methods to approach cities from a phenomenological perspective, from the point of view of the people inhabiting urban (infra)structures and spaces. Since several years, there has been an increase in the production of ethnographic writing about Southeast European cities, not only by 'western' anthropologists but, more importantly, by a growing number of authors originating from the region.¹ Many of them received doctoral training in a West European or American university (or the Central European University in Budapest), carrying out fieldwork in the region, often in their country or city of origin. While many have continued to pursue careers abroad, others have returned to their country after the

GUEST EDITOR

Ger Duijzings

is Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Regensburg and the Graduate School for East and Southeast European Studies in Regensburg. He is currently studying urban transformations and social inequality in Bucharest, Romania.

¹ The following is a selection of monographs published since the 1990s in English: Michael Herzfeld, *A Place in History. Social and Monumental Time in a Cretan Town*, Princeton/NJ 1991; Neni Panourgíá, *Fragments of Death, Fables of Identity. An Athenian Anthropography*, Madison/WI 1996; Mattijs Van de Port, *Gypsies, Wars and Other Instances of the Wild. Civilization and its Discontents in a Serbian Town*, Amsterdam 1998; László Kürti, *Youth and the State in Hungary. Capitalism, Communism and Class*, London 2002; Keith Brown, *The Past in Question. Modern Macedonia and the Uncertainties of Nation*, Princeton/NJ 2003; Kristen Ghodsee, *Muslim Lives in Eastern Europe. Gender, Ethnicity and the Transformation of Islam in Postsocialist Bulgaria*, Princeton/NJ 2009; Ivana Maček, *Sarajevo Under Siege. Anthropology in Wartime*, Philadelphia 2009; Marko Živković, *Serbian Dreambook. National Imaginary in the Time of Milošević*, Bloomington/IN 2011; Rozita Dimova, *Ethno-Baroque. Materiality, Aesthetics and Conflict in Modern-Day Macedonia*, New York, Oxford 2013; Stef Jansen, *Yearnings in the Meantime. 'Normal Lives' and the State in a Sarajevo Apartment Complex*, New York, Oxford 2015; Dimitris Dalakoglou, *The Road. An Ethnography of (Im)Mobility, Space, and Cross-Border Infrastructures in the Balkans*, Manchester 2017.

completion of their thesis, and continue doing ‘anthropology at home’.² There is also a growing number of young scholars who have received a western-style anthropological education in the region itself, and are now doing research at establishments such as the Institute for Ethnology and Folklore Research in Zagreb, where the urban everyday has become a key focus of research.³ In this journal, the editors, I among them, want to offer a platform for this growing body of urban ethnography providing fresh insights into the everyday realities in Southeast European cities and towns, with an emphasis indeed on locally produced ‘ethnography’.

Anthropologists have rarely contributed to this journal, an omission in its multidisciplinary profile which we would like to rectify. In trying to make anthropological research in the area more visible in this journal, the most promising avenue seems to be to focus on urban ethnography, which is a sprawling field and likely to be of most interest to a wider multidisciplinary audience.⁴ Readers will be familiar with life in these cities rather than rural sites, in which anthropologists continue to do typical village-based research into topics such as postsocialist agrarian reform and land restitution.⁵ An additional argument for an urban focus is that more and more people in the region live in urban or ‘urbanising’ spaces, which can be even said for rural contexts: Southeast European

² Anthony Jackson, ed, *Anthropology at Home*, London 1987 (ASA Monographs, 25).

³ Jasna Čapo / Valentina Gulin Zrnić, *Croatian Ethnology as Cultural Anthropology at Home*, *Ethnologia Balkanica. Journal for Southeast European Anthropology* 17 (2014), 85-104, <http://www.volkskunde.uni-muenchen.de/publikationen/ethnobalk/volume-17/index.html>. All internet sources were accessed on 6 February 2018. In Croatia, a seminal study and source of inspiration was Dunja Rihtman-Auguštin, *Etnologija naše svakodnevice*, Zagreb 1988. For Romania, see Vintilă Mihăilescu, ed, *Etnografii urbane. Cotidianul văzut de aproape*, Iași 2009; Ger Duijzings, *The Bucharest Urban Anthropology and Ethnography Workshop*, *Colloquia. Journal for Central European History* 18 (2011), 131-149, <http://hiphi.ubbcluj.ro/isce/numere/2011.html>.

⁴ This growing interest in cities amongst anthropologists was marked by an international conference organised in May 2005, ‘Urban Life and Culture in Southeastern Europe. Third Conference of the International Association for Southeast European Anthropology (InASEA)’, Belgrade, 26-29 May 2005. The journal *Ethnologia Balkanica. Journal for Southeast European Anthropology* published numerous papers presented at this conference in two subsequent volumes, in 2005 (vol. 9) and 2006 (vol. 10), and has since published regularly on a variety of urban themes for a (historical-)anthropological audience.

⁵ Gerald W. Creed, *Domesticating Revolution. From Socialist Reform to Ambivalent Transition in a Bulgarian Village*, University Park/PA 1998; Katherine Verdery, *The Vanishing Hectare. Property and Value in Postsocialist Transylvania*, Ithaca/NY 2003; Deema Kaneff, *Who Owns the Past? The Politics of Time in a ‘Model’ Bulgarian Village*, New York, Oxford 2004; Katy Fox, *Peasants into European Farmers? EU Integration in the Carpathian Mountains of Romania*, Berlin, Zürich 2011; Stefan Dorondel, *Disrupted Landscapes. State, Peasants and the Politics of Land in Postsocialist Romania*, Ithaca/NY 2016.

villages are ‘globalising’, as I have argued in the volume *Global Villages* (2013),⁶ because of the direct links they develop with large urban centres in Western Europe due to labour mobility, and the feedback effect this has on those villages in terms of remittances, consumption and rural architecture.⁷ This makes rural sites potentially an integral part of the Urban Studies field, as Henri Lefebvre already argued in 1970.⁸

As anthropologists do their fieldwork in specific places, it makes sense to concentrate on ‘ethnography’ rather than ‘anthropology’, describing the particular localities anthropologists are familiar with and bringing into focus their in-depth knowledge of these individual sites. What they call an ‘ethnography’ or ‘ethnographic monograph’, ‘focuses on a particular population, place and time with the deliberate goal of describing it to others’.⁹ It conveys the local ambiance of the fieldwork site, while simultaneously stimulating general and comparative theoretical reflection, and providing ‘the building blocks and testing grounds of anthropological theory’.¹⁰ Even though (local) ethnography and (general) anthropology may be seen as deeply intertwined, many anthropologists (and non-anthropologists) argue that the discipline’s strengths lie primarily in ethnography, precisely. I agree with Daniel Miller who, in a recent debate on the role of ethnography in the open access ‘flagship’ journal *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, argued that ethnography is the ‘be-all and end-all’ of anthropology, without which the discipline would not be able to exist.¹¹ Ethnographic writing offers more than detailed and descriptive ‘case studies’ of things we already know. It provides, to the contrary, a means to effectively question established perspectives on the world through deep engagement with a particular site, or a small number of connected sites, as in multi-sited field-

⁶ Ger Duijzings, ed, *Global Villages. Rural and Urban Transformations in Contemporary Bulgaria*, London 2013.

⁷ See for example the fascinating visual ethnography produced by photographer Petruț Călinescu and anthropologist Ioana Hodoiu, Petruț Călinescu / Ioana Hodoiu, *Mândrie și beton / Pride and Concrete*, Bucharest 2013.

⁸ Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, Minneapolis 2003, 3-4 (originally published in French in 1970). See also Michael Woods, *Engaging the Global Countryside. Globalization, Hybridity and the Reconstitution of Rural Place*, *Progress in Human Geography* 31, no. 4 (2007), 485-507, DOI: 10.1177/0309132507079503; Michael Woods, *Rural*, London, New York 2011.

⁹ Roger Sanjek, *Ethnography*, in: Alan Barnard / Jonathan Spencer, eds, *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, London 2002, 193-198, 193.

¹⁰ Sanjek, *Ethnography*, 193.

¹¹ Daniel Miller, *Anthropology Is the Discipline But the Goal Is Ethnography*, *HAU. Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 7, no. 1 (2017), 27-31, 27, <https://doi.org/10.14318/hau7.1.006>. Key opponent, who triggered the ensuing debate on this issue, was Tim Ingold, *That’s Enough about Ethnography!*, *HAU. Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 4, no. 1 (2014), 383-395, <https://doi.org/10.14318/hau4.1.021>; and, later, Tim Ingold, *Anthropology Contra Ethnography*, *HAU. Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 7, no. 1 (2017), 21-26, <https://doi.org/10.14318/hau7.1.005>.

work.¹² Hence, ethnography should not (anymore) be seen as a naively 'realist', faithful, and documentary portrayal of one particular site,¹³ but as an invitation to rethink the larger issues humanity is faced with based on the insights we have gained during fieldwork.¹⁴

Let me be clearer still about what I mean by ethnography. Put in the simplest manner, it is a written narrative or textual composition resulting from fieldwork which is guided by general concerns and theoretical anthropological interests. Fieldwork is more than what non-anthropologists commonly understand by it, that is, 'doing interviews'. It entails direct and prolonged engagement with and immersion into the everyday life of the people anthropologists study through participant observation. Anthropologists do indeed carry out interviews (for example life histories), but the bulk of what they do consists of 'small talk' while 'hanging around' and participating in the social life of the community over months or even years (in serial fashion). Hence anthropologists take part in various social activities, learn to behave in culturally appropriate ways, while observing, making notes and gathering other material, like objects, photos, drawings, and moving images. The continuous 'small talk' is hard work, as Henk Driessen and Willy Jansen demonstrated,¹⁵ and fieldwork is often a confusing and humbling experience, which only has a chance of success if one accepts that it is open-ended, that one has to go 'with the flow' and is willing to suspend earlier held assumptions. However, the serendipity of fieldwork offers unexpected rewards as it allows us 'to make discoveries, by accidents and wisdom of things which one was not in quest of'.¹⁶

Hence, ethnographic fieldwork requires time, endurance, improvisation, and important social skills, such as listening and putting oneself in the background. Through prolonged immersion and exposure, anthropologists eventually discover the contradictions between what people 'say' and what they 'do', getting thereby closer to what they really 'think'. Participant observation also makes us consider people's lives in their full holistic complexity, and forces us not to insist on pursuing topics that only we are interested in. Hence, anthropologists commonly change the focus of their research after discovering that they started off

¹² George E. Marcus, Ethnography in/of the World System. The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography, *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24 (1995), 95-117, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.an.24.100195.000523>.

¹³ John van Maanen, *Tales of the Field. On Writing Ethnography*, Chicago, London ²2011, 45-72.

¹⁴ Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Small Places, Large Issues. An Introduction to Social and Cultural Anthropology*, London ⁴2015.

¹⁵ Henk Driessen / Willy Jansen, The Hard Work of Small Talk in Ethnographic Fieldwork, *Journal of Anthropological Research* 69, no. 2 (2013), 249-263, <https://doi.org/10.3998/jar.0521004.0069.205>.

¹⁶ Signe Howell, Two or Three Things I Love about Ethnography, *HAU. Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 7, no. 1 (2017), 15-20, 17, <https://doi.org/10.14318/hau7.1.004>.

on the wrong footing and chose a topic or an approach that is of little relevance to informants. Fieldwork is therefore a democratic and potentially revolutionary praxis that ‘makes us question our fundamental assumptions and preexisting theories about the world’.¹⁷ It helps articulate silenced voices and marginalised views, challenging hegemonic conceptions. And in urban research,

‘Participant observation provides access to hidden aspects or segments of urban life, to intimate, informal, and illegal processes. It allows researchers to map tacit knowledge that cannot be verbalized, and can shed light on the many less obvious routines that structure social life in the city.’¹⁸

Choosing ‘ethnography’ as the focus of this special issue also addresses questionable trends in the anthropological profession, such as its self-referential outlook and lack of interdisciplinary orientation, opening up the field to practitioners of other disciplines who may be doing equally valid forms of ‘participant observation’ in the cities in which they live. I am critical of anthropologists failing to communicate with scholars from other disciplines, or the wider public for that matter. This attitude leads for example to the discipline being marginal in the Urban Studies field, where it could very well adopt a more self-confident and critical position vis-à-vis the other urban disciplines, such as architecture and urban planning. The predisposition towards theoretical obscurantism which some anthropologists display does not help either: ‘the field’ seems to serve them in their theoretical endeavours and not the other way round. They address a limited audience of ‘the few’ anthropologists who share the same universe of abstract ideas.¹⁹ What may provide some consolation – and ideally convince other anthropologists to send in contributions for future urban ethnography issues of this journal – is that an accessible and well-written ‘ethnographic’ paper has a longer shelf-life and will be read by more people than a difficult to read theory paper that will be soon superseded by the next theoretical trend. To communicate effectively with a multidisciplinary audience takes some effort and requires the anthropologist to explain complicated realities and issues in an accessible language without too much jargon.²⁰ This will also help to secure anthropology’s relevance in the public sphere.

¹⁷ Alpa Shah, *Ethnography? Participant Observation, a Potentially Revolutionary Praxis*, *HAU. Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 7, no. 1 (2017), 45-59, 47, <https://doi.org/10.14318/hau7.1.008>.

¹⁸ Rivke Jaffe / Anouk de Koning, *Introducing Urban Anthropology*, London, New York 2016, 5.

¹⁹ An example is the recent strand of anthropology that finds inspiration in the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Cf. Ellen Hertz, *Pimp my Fluff, ‘A Thousand Plateaus’ and Other Theoretical Extravaganzas*, *Anthropological Theory* 16, no. 2-3 (2016), 146-159, DOI: 0.1177/1463499616654830.

²⁰ Kristen Ghodsee, *From Notes to Narrative. Writing Ethnographies that Everyone Can Read*, Chicago, London 2016.

Good ethnography provides us with a powerful means to speak up against authority and other forms of hegemonic knowledge, especially in the field of Urban Studies, where there is also no shortage of abstract theoretical approaches. They may be out of touch with realities in cities across the world, or only have particular Western (especially American) examples on their radar. Urban ethnographies from other world regions, such as from the postsocialist world, can function as a welcome corrective, as Ben Campkin and I argued in the volume *Engaged Urbanism*.²¹ A key inspiration is the geographer Jennifer Robinson, who has been an influential voice in Urban Studies in recent years with her plea for a postcolonial and empirically grounded comparative urbanism, which foregrounds case studies from other parts of the world, such as cities from postsocialist Eastern Europe, and helps to critique and destabilise the dominant sites of urban theorising. She emphasises the intrinsic locatedness of all our theoretical endeavours and the need to adapt our concepts and methods to the local contexts in which we work. She argues that we should start ‘thinking with elsewhere’, between and across different cases, rather than trying to ‘control for difference’.²² New ideas are most likely to be forthcoming if we look beyond the existing scholarship that focuses on a few renowned ‘global cities’, to places where urban transformations may be happening most dramatically, such as in some postsocialist cities.

This resonates with the ethnographic strategies I am proposing here, arguing that it may bring benefits to write *ethnographically* about individual cities and towns in Southeastern Europe, each of them having their own specific characteristics and history. Ethnographic work brings into focus the distinctive qualities of these cities and towns, especially the experiential dimensions of everyday life in the midst of their ‘structural’ spatial and material givens. Although focusing primarily on the here and now, the ethnographic mode of research does not preclude a detailed awareness of transformation processes in a recent or more distant past, which have shaped conditions and practices in the ‘ethnographic present’. Urbanist interventions that occurred in the socialist and postsocialist period may have led to large-scale physical ‘erasures’ and ‘absences’, or radi-

²¹ Ben Campkin / Ger Duijzings, *Engaged Urbanism. Situated and Experimental Methodologies for Fairer Cities*, in: Ben Campkin / Ger Duijzings, eds, *Engaged Urbanism. Cities and Methodologies*, London, New York 2016, 1-20, 9.

²² Jennifer Robinson, *Cities Methodologies Matter. Comparative Urbanism and Global Urban Theory*, in: Campkin / Duijzings, eds, *Engaged Urbanism*, 23-28; Jennifer Robinson, *Cities in a World of Cities. The Comparative Gesture*, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 35, no. 1 (2011), 1-23, DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-2427.2010.00982.x; Jennifer Robinson, *Comparative Urbanism. New Geographies and Cultures of Theorizing the Urban*, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 40, no. 1 (2016), 187-199, DOI: 10.1111/1468-2427.12273.

cal forms of top-down 'spatial cleansing',²³ which the ordinary inhabitants of cities painfully remember and refer to in order to critically engage with current realities and re-imagine urban futures.

The arguments presented in the four contributions of this issue resonate with the points made until now. Čarna Brković uses ethnography as a critical tool to engage with certain theoretical generalisations. She discusses a camp for displaced persons who fled the war in Kosovo. Living at the outskirts of Podgorica, Montenegro, in a segregated enclave, they struggle to participate in the life of the city. The text follows the everyday life of a young woman who spent her whole life in the camp, and on the surface of it, she may be regarded as a *homo sacer* or a 'representative of bare life' as Agamben famously postulated with reference to who is exempted from the legal order of the state and its policies. Following her in and out of the camp the ethnography shows how she lives in the camp, navigates the urban space of the city, and forms social relationships. The analysis contributes to the current debates about the political nature of refugee camps and shows how a range of governmental and non-governmental organisations enter into exchanges with the inhabitants, making the camp into a zone of 'aleatory sovereignty'²⁴ in which multiple forms of sovereign power complement and compete with one another. One of the most surprising aspects of her analysis is the beneficial effect EU policies seem to have had in the local context.

Deana Jovanović's paper provides an insight into the predicaments of the mono-industrial and neglected mining town of Bor in Serbia and the 'improvised' repairs carried out by the town's authorities and business elites in order to provide for some semblance of progress and hope for the population. Being the proverbial example of doom and gloom, of deepening postsocialist stagnation and abandonment, the town now experiences a certain 'revival'. As only ethnography can do, the study describes the ambiguous responses of the inhabitants to what they see as a 'politics of simulation', of 'cosmetic' changes imposed from the top. They are seen as superficial, but also as 'at least something', which is 'good enough' to spurn hopes for a better future. Previously socialised in a context of complete dependence on the state, people continue to long for a sense of normality and invest their hopes for a better future into the state, even though the latter does not have the same capacity and leverage as it used to have during socialism. Jovanović's study flags up the relevance of exploring the numerous rundown mono-industrial towns in Southeastern Europe, which can be seen as the 'losers' of transition and are ignored in the

²³ Michael Herzfeld, *Spatial Cleansing. Monumental Vacuity and the Idea of the West*, *Journal of Material Culture* 11, no. 1-2 (2006), 127-149, DOI: 10.1177/1359183506063016.

²⁴ Elizabeth Cullen Dunn / Jason Cons, *Aleatory Sovereignty and the Rule of Sensitive Spaces*, *Antipode* 46, no. 1 (2014), 92-109, DOI: 10.1111/anti.12028.

literature on Southeast European urbanism.²⁵ Her study demonstrates that we need more ethnographic studies of smaller cities and towns, almost all belonging to the category of ‘shrinking cities’, having lost a substantial part of their population due to economic stagnation and outmigration.²⁶ Smaller urban settlements are ethnographically interesting for many other reasons, as they are less heterogenous and anonymous; tend towards populist politics; display less spatial (ethnic or social) differentiation; offer quicker and easier forms of communication, while people travel smaller distances using a mix of modes (from walking to cycling to using cars and public transport). They often have a positive self-image in combination with displaying a strong resentment of life in the large metropolitan centres.²⁷

Șerban Văetiși describes a number of grassroots initiatives in the Romanian cities Bucharest, Cluj, Galați and Pitești, aimed at improving the urban environment. The postsocialist state being absent when it comes to offering solutions to urgent urban problems, people take things in their own hands, finding ‘informal’ solutions, through squatting, do-it-yourself urbanism, creative re-appropriation of public space, guerrilla gardening and artistic occupy-type interventions. The author critically engages with the concept of informal urbanism, which has been widely used in Southeastern Europe, arguing that such grassroots initiatives are often espoused by elites. They may be appropriated in a neoliberal fashion by authorities, private firms, and entrepreneurs as well as artists and activists, in the name of urban regeneration. Looking at several examples, Văetiși exposes the thin boundary that exists between informal and authorised urbanism—between ‘creativity’ and ‘power’. Revolving around the key issue of who has access to the city, he offers ethnographic vignettes of the many faces of informal urbanism in the contexts of neoliberal transformation and the privatisation of public spaces and assets, which in the postsocialist period has occurred in both ‘small’ and ‘big’ ways: from the inhabitants of former socialist blocks taking plots of public green space, to communist officials appropriating large industrial assets.²⁸ He

²⁵ Alan Dingsdale, *Mapping Modernities. Geographies of Central and Eastern Europe, 1920-2000*, London, New York 2001, 176-200.

²⁶ Philipp Oswalt, ed, *Shrinking Cities*. International Research, vol. 1, Ostfildern 2005; Harry W. Richardson / Chang Woon Nam, eds, *Shrinking Cities. A Global Perspective*, London 2014; Manuel Wolff / Thorsten Wiechmann, *Urban Growth and Decline. Europe’s Shrinking Cities in a Comparative Perspective 1990-2010*, *European Urban and Regional Studies*, March 2017, DOI: 10.1177/0969776417694680.

²⁷ Brigitta Schmidt-Lauber, *Urbanes Leben in der Mittelstadt*. Kulturwissenschaftliche Annäherung an ein interdisziplinäres Forschungsfeld, in: Brigitta Schmidt-Lauber, ed, *Mittelstadt. Urbanes Leben jenseits der Metropole*, Frankfurt/M 2010, 11-36.

²⁸ Ger Duijzings, *From Bongo Bongo to Boston via the Balkans*. Anthropological Contributions to the Study of Urban Transformations in Southeastern Europe, in: Thomas M. Bohn / Marie-Janine Calic, eds, *Urbanisierung und Stadtentwicklung in Südosteuropa vom 19. bis zum 21. Jahrhundert*, München, Berlin 2010 (*Südosteuropa-Jahrbuch*, 37), 93-132, 114-117.

also argues for comparing postsocialist informal urbanism with non-Western and postcolonial informal urbanism.

Last but not least, Zora Kostadinova offers an excellent example of what ethnography can reveal in terms of insights into the spiritual life and religious quest of Sufis in postwar Sarajevo. It describes the Sufi inspired 'repair of the person' after violence and war, aimed at restoring social values such as proper conduct in private and public spheres. The author shows how the practical ethics of Sufism are internalised—the lodge (*tekke*) being the 'moral laboratory' for developing this new Islamic habitus in a city that is still scarred. Through a number of spiritual exercises and practices, such as *hizmet* (service) and *adab* (beautiful behaviour) as well as collective Sufi rituals, a novice tries to become a good Muslim or person. Kostadinova shows how dervishes visibly embody these behavioural norms, radiating these outwards into the life of the city. She provides a comprehensive insight into the renewed significance of Sufi Muslim traditions in postwar Sarajevo, in terms of mending the souls of traumatised, exhausted and spiritually disoriented Muslim subjects, under the religious guidance of a charismatic sheikh and former army general.

In presenting these four studies, the aim of this issue is to demonstrate the methodological and empirical strengths as well as theoretical spin-offs urban ethnography can offer, showing how open-ended anthropological research strategies can provide access to the corners of society that are inaccessible to other disciplines, especially when talking about the personal, subjective and phenomenological aspects of life in the city. Urban Studies will benefit from such fine-grained ethnographic research in postsocialist cities, and we invite practitioners also of other disciplines to contribute their own qualitative and ethnographic research strategies to this effort. For any future issues, the contributions we would like to publish are embedded in concrete urban sites, providing ethnographic portrayals of specific urban contexts. Written in an engaging and accessible style, they address the multidisciplinary readership of this journal, and offer reflections on 'the urban condition' and on 'urban ethnography', as well as on methods used in this context. The idea is to provide a broad range of urban topics, ethnography being the binding element, without being too prescriptive about themes. As the ethos of this journal is comparative, we welcome urban analyses that venture out into other parts of the region and beyond. I would indeed like to take seriously Robinson's advice to start 'thinking with elsewhere', between and across different cases.

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR

Ger Duijzings University of Regensburg, Graduate School for East and Southeast European Studies, Landshuter Str. 4, 93047 Regensburg, Germany. E-mail: Ger.Duijzings@geschichte.uni-regensburg.de