Editorial

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An early morning wake-up call. A cup of coffee, a glance at the news, and a quick scroll through the phone: "Politicians call Israel's blockade of aid into Gaza a 'disgrace.'" A morning jog with earphones in. A notification from a Facebook group for cat lovers and a request to temporarily foster an abandoned kitten. Likes from like-minded users in small, interest-based communities. A drive to the daycare centre, birthday invitations for the following week. An escape from the stress of daily life, or the quiet acceptance of another obligation? Daydreaming of vacations, deliberately ignoring bad news, getting through the workday (with or without procrastination), hoping for more time with friends and family, increasing detachment from a stressful environment, envy-filled escapes on Facebook, liking photos of faraway places …

… Isolation, escapism, digitalisation, fragmentation, insularisation?

Our everyday lives and sometimes overwhelming experiences of the world, despite the seemingly autonomous decisions that shape our individual paths, inevitably unfold in numerous, diverse, and overlapping processes. New forms of subjectivity and diasporic citizenship are emerging in worlds shaped by digital communication, forms that anthropologist Massimo Canevacci (2012) explores through the concept of digital ubiquity. Ubiquity implies an all-pervasive, sensory presence that transcends the traditional binary divisions of the world we usually perpetuate. The world once split into nature and culture, virtual and real, connection and isolation, objectivity and subjectivity is gradually dissolving, leaving us washed ashore in worlds that are entangled. According to Canevacci, the digital is not merely a form of technology, but rather a "logical-expressive potentiality that enables the flow of fragmented subjectivities which emerge, disperse, and reassemble in the currents of pixelated air" (2012: 265). Consequently, in the multiplicity of their experiences, subjects become "multividuals", a term Canevacci uses to describe individuals who, in their multiplicity and fluidity, in their omnipresence and pervasive plurality, exist in the plural through various "selves", just like the worlds in which they live. Consequently, one can easily ask the question: what does "place" actually mean today? What kinds of manifestations does it appear in, and how do utopias, dystopias, bubbles, and placelessness relate to what we consider "place"? Where does insularisation come into our understanding of these phenomena?

The world we live in today is characterised by a high degree of interconnectivity, interdependence, and an overwhelming amount of information. As we navigate this increasingly complex world, it is important to recognise that isolation still exerts an attraction that captures our imagination, invades our daydreams and shapes our desires. For many people, romantic notions of secluded and remote places are still tantalising utopias that evoke ideas of isolation, remoteness, and detachment from everyday worries. This is why islands, with their promise of being cut off from the rest of the world and immersed in a rhythm characterised by simplicity and a slower pace of life, hold a special place in people's imaginations. As Godfrey Baldacchino (2012) noted, however, this island appeal arises from insularism or the contemporary branding of islands, where the deliberately stereotypical self-presentation of islanders is mixed with the exotic expectations of non-islanders. Despite the prevailing critique of reductionism and generalisation in anthropology, romanticised images of island life owe their seductive power to the long durée of Western imagination and history (Gillis 2004). Although they bear little resemblance to a conceptually shrinking, interdependent world, and the heterogeneity of lived experience, these images continue to enchant us and stimulate our imagination. Island metaphors and island-related experiences have a huge impact on how we perceive ourselves and others, even in environments that are not islands, leading to a kind of insularisation that has little to do with actual islands. Whether it's spatially isolated areas that make us think in island metaphors, cultural phenomena that emphasize island imagery, or oases with different temporal rhythms that emerge amidst the hustle and bustle of cities, it's hard to deny that island concepts are ubiquitous in today's world.

In this thematic issue of *Svetovi/Worlds: Journal for Ethnology, Anthropology and Folkloristics*, we explore the complex cultural and social worlds that characterise our daily lives and that are often presented as isolated. By re-mapping these complex processes that set archipelagos of thoughts, ideas and practises in motion, we hope to gain new insights that go beyond the usual assumptions of spatially distant and self-contained domains. Our research of insularisation highlights the importance of re-evaluating our assumptions about isolation and islands, tracing their fragments in everyday life, and considering the ways in which spatial, temporal, metaphorical, cultural, and experiential notions of insularity blur and intersect to insularise our world.

The thematic issue of the journal begins with a contribution by Andrew Halliday, who notes that the Covid-19 pandemic has revived the anthropologically already deconstructed concept of insularity in the social imagination, planning and lifestyles. Based on the study of the "Atlantic Bubble", a travel-restricted area established in Eastern Canada during Covid, the author introduces and explains the concepts of "Covid islands" and "Covid archipelagos". These are metaphorical or imaginary island constructs that enable the investigation of changing island identities, insularisation, and insularity. Covid islands and archipelagos offered an enforced sense of safety and a real sense of isolation and remoteness from the global pandemic.

Building on the theme of isolation, though in a different cultural setting, Ana Perinić Lewis and Tomislav Oroz analyse lifestyle migrants on the island of Hvar (Croatia). Based

on ethnographic material from two time periods, authors explore the diversity of migration experiences through the concept of insularisation, which encompasses both distance and isolation from previous ways of life on the one hand, and the migrants' need to connect with island communities on the other. The search for "the good life" reflects their desire to settle down and re-connect with themselves. The authors note that due to their lifestyle and outsider position, migrants are often more connected to each other than to the local community, especially because of language barriers, and this can lead to the creation of social "micro-islands" within the island community.

Complementing the exploration of migration and community, Nežka Struc examines how metaphorical islands are inspired by processes of solidarity and sustainability. She discusses the importance of self-organised local food supply networks in Maribor (Slovenia) as a key factor in preventing food deserts and ensuring a sustainable food supply in an urban environment. The practices within the self-organised food supply networks represent "archipelagos" of solidarity economy that open up space for the distribution of locally produced food. These networks, which at first glance appear to be closed and far removed from the general distribution of food, maintain links between urban and rural areas and strengthen resilience to corporate food systems.

The transcendence of spatial fragmentation, usually associated with the process of insularisation, through neoliberal practices is discussed in Alina Bezlaj's paper. She examines the two moral orders that shape life in Ballymun, a working-class suburb of Dublin (Ireland): the "old Ballymun" before the renovation and the "new Ballymun" after. The regeneration, guided by neoliberal Third Way policies, aimed to transform the area materially and socially, putting in place a new moral vision. The main aim of the regeneration was to free the residents from welfare dependency, reintegrate the suburb into the market economy, and integrate Ballymun into the wider urban area. However, these goals were not unanimously accepted by the residents. The article shows how moral values are embedded in the everyday practices that characterise the neighbourhood.

David Christopher examines the ambiguous processes of connectivity and isolation in the context of digitalisation, critiquing Castells's *Information Age* trilogy. According to Christopher, neglecting the social phenomena that lead to isolation, both online and offline, is reflected in the emergence of "network cities", which today are no longer merely physical communities but also exist as virtual and digital entities, such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. These cities operate between the broader network society and smaller networked communities. They are fragmented by linguistic and national differences, facilitate capitalist transactions, and are marked by the phenomenon of virtual social homophily, including associations with "equals", social narcissism, and idealised virtual identities. In such virtual environments, community and intimacy are intertwined with alienation and anonymity.

In her article, Tatiana Bajuk Senčar examines the intertwining of seclusion and connectedness in Bohinj, an alpine tourist destination in Slovenia. She is interested in how Bohinj has been established and has changed over time as a "remote" destination and how this notion is reflected in everyday life, especially through the prism of tourism seasonality. An impor-

tant starting point is the understanding of remoteness not only as a geographical fact but as a socially constructed concept that encompasses perceptions, representations, and practices.

Filip Škiljan, Ivana Škiljan, and Nataša Kathleen Ružić examine the case of the island of Žirje (Croatia), whose geographical position is haunted by socio-political isolation but is marked by processes of solidarity in practice. The authors analyse data from interviews with thirteen inhabitants of the island, focusing on life during socialism (1945–1991). Oral histories are an important source of information, especially when no or very few archival documents exist. The study shows how its location and socio-political forces shaped the social fabric and economy of the island. Everyday life on Žirje during socialism was characterised by isolation and limited access to resources and services, poverty, male migration, matrifocality – and a strong sense of community and solidarity.

The text collected in this issue explore the dialectic between connectivity (integration, community) and isolation (seclusion, alienation, insularity, food desert). This ambivalence serves as a heuristic starting point in many of the papers as well as a key to understanding contemporary social and cultural processes. In most of the articles, ethnography in the broadest sense is presented as a focal point for exploring the complex and dynamic interactions between people, space, and culture, enabling a nuanced understanding of both the material conditions and the symbolic meanings that people ascribe to their environment.

The articles emphasize that material conditions and environments (geographical location, infrastructure, economic conditions) form the basis for the emergence of symbolic meanings, representations, and identities. At the same time, these symbolic interpretations and ideas actively shape material practices and experiences. It is a dynamic and dialectical relationship. Spatial concepts (island, destination, neighbourhood, city, rural-urban) are interwoven with social processes (migration, tourism, seasonality, moralisation, solidarity), identities (insularity, remoteness, alienation), and temporality (seasonality, the past, socialism, the pandemic). Geographical, social, and cultural spaces are interdependent and constantly changing.

The authors explicitly or implicitly problematise insularisation as a multi-layered phenomenon: not only geographical, but also social, cultural, symbolic, and even digital. Insularisation figures as ambivalent: on the one hand, it implies isolation and separation, but on the other, it opens up new forms of connection, solidarity, and identity. As such, insularisation is dynamic and related to the Other (archipelagos, world systems, humans), experiential, and culturally constructed, and can be studied as everyday practices as well as imaginations, morals, and memories. Insularisation may imply isolation, but it goes beyond that, serving as a conceptual re-examination of the island metaphor in a contemporary world marked by atomisation, fragmentation, and social (dis)connection.

Ethnology, Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Science, Ljubljana; Institute for Social Research, Zagreb; J6-4610, 2022–2025), funded by the ARIS and Croatian Science Foundation; and *Ethnographies of Islandness – Island Migrations, Mobilities and Identifications* project (ETNOTOK, 2024–2027; Institute of Migration Research, Zagreb), funded by the European Union.

The second part of this issue consists of a review, an interview, and two reports. Liling Yang reflects on the book *Sensory Environmental Relationships: Between Memories of the Past and Imaginings of the Future*, edited by Blaž Bajič and Ana Svetel (2023).

Tisa Kučan Lah spoke to Dr Tanja Ahlin, who researches the use of digital technologies in the health and care sector and how they are intertwined with other interpersonal relationships. Ahlin argues in favour of a "bottom-up" approach to the introduction of technology in healthcare, as solutions that arise from people's actual needs have been shown to be much more effective and accepted by users.

Sarah Lunaček reports on the symposium *Social Inequalities and Environmental Injustices*, which she organised at the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology in Ljubljana in April 2025. The symposium and workshops were attended by academics from African and Slovenian universities.

Neža Vadnjan and Astrid Vončina report on Nataša Rogelja Caf's guest appearance at the *33rd Šmitkov večer* (Šmitek evening). Among other things, the guest speaker presented her work on walking as a methodological tool and the importance of semi-literary writing for reaching a wider audience.

Many thanks to all the authors and the technical staff of the editorial team who have made this issue possible.

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