

EDITOR'S NOTES

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This issue explores how urban life is experienced, expressed, and imagined in times of profound transformation. Across different contexts, it examines what it means to belong to a city, how communities respond to crises through cultural expression, and why some people choose to leave urban environments in search of different lifestyles way of living. From singing and dancing as forms of solidarity and reflections on how cities might become more sustainable, connected, and accessible, the contributions in this issue trace the many ways people inhabit and shape urban spaces. Moving from Central Europe to the Global South, the authors offer grounded as well as imaginative perspectives on lived urbanity, resilience, and the evolving relationships between people and their cities.

The opening article by Světlana Stěpanova, “Characteristics of the Fourth Wave of Russian-Speaking Migration to the Czech Republic: Transnational Approaches, Belonging, and Identity Strategies,” explores how Russian-speaking migrants in the Czech Republic negotiate questions of identity and belonging in a time marked by political tension and war. Combining a questionnaire survey with an autoethnographic study of the vocal ensemble *Ruska Duša* (“Russian Soul”), which the author herself founded, Stěpanova illustrates how cultural performance becomes a space for navigating transnational identities. Through changes in repertoire, internal disagreements, and evolving public representations, the ensemble mirrors the broader struggles of a community redefining itself amid crisis.

The following contribution by Matvei Gotlib continues this reflection on cultural expression and belonging, shifting from song to dance as it explores how another Prague-based community responds to the war in Ukraine. In “The Effects of War: Prague’s Tango Community After the Start of the War in Ukraine,” the author offers an intimate ethnography of Prague’s tango scene and its transformation since February 2022. Using soundscape analysis, Gotlib examines how milongas, the city’s social dance gatherings, became spaces of both escape and emotional processing for dancers affected by the war. Through careful observation and participation, the article reveals how people from Ukraine, Russia, and other countries found solidarity through movement,

rhythm, and music. Rather than dividing, the war brought together a community united by shared opposition to violence and by the characteristic melancholy of tango, as a “sad thought that can be danced.” Like Stěpanova’s exploration of the Ruska Duša ensemble, this study shows how collective cultural practices can embody resilience and belonging in times of conflict.

The next article by Šárka Tesařová and Hynek Jeřábek shifts the focus from cultural expression to mobility itself, exploring what motivates people to leave the city and seek new ways of living. In “Exploring the Shifting Motivations for Counter-Urbanization Moves: A Comparative Analysis,” the authors examine why an increasing number of people in the Czech Republic are leaving large cities for smaller towns and rural areas. Drawing on interviews with recent movers, the authors revisit and update classic research on migration motivations, showing how traditional factors such as the desire for space, home ownership, and a quieter environment have evolved. For many, counter-urbanization today is less about social status and more about finding a lifestyle that aligns with personal values, work flexibility, and well-being. This article complements the previous two by approaching questions of movement and belonging from a different angle. While Stěpanova and Gotlib focus on how communities maintain cohesion in times of crisis, Tesařová and Jeřábek look at what prompts individuals to seek a new kind of balance beyond the city.

The following article by Nikola Staníčková and Vojtěch Malátek builds on this urban focus, turning to the challenges of creating more sustainable and connected forms of mobility within cities. In “The Opportunities and Limits of Private–Public Sector Cooperation in Sustainable Urban Mobility,” the authors analyze the challenges and possibilities of integrating shared micro-mobility services such as e-scooters and bicycles into the transportation systems of medium-sized cities. Drawing on research conducted in Olomouc, they show how conflicting interests between municipal authorities, private providers, and users often prevent these services from reaching their full potential. While many residents see shared mobility as a flexible and cost-effective alternative to car travel, policymakers tend to view it as competition for public transport rather than a complement to it. The authors argue that clearer legal frameworks, better infrastructure, and regular dialogue between the public and private sectors are needed to make urban mobility more inclusive and sustainable. With its focus on governance and planning, this contribution closes the section on Central and Eastern Europe and prepares the ground for the issue’s shift toward the Global South.

The next article takes us to São Paulo, where questions of belonging and exclusion unfold under very different urban conditions. In “The Urban Quilombo of Cracolândia,” Guglielmo Guatteri turns our attention to São Paulo and one of its most stigmatized neighborhoods. Through interviews and fieldwork, he offers a deeply empathetic portrayal of life in Cracolândia, an area marked by poverty, homelessness, drug use, and state neglect. The article reveals how residents endure daily police violence and social exclusion while developing their own forms of resistance and mutual support. Rather than viewing the neighbourhood as a case study of failure, Guatteri reinterprets it as an “urban quilombo,” a site of collective survival and defiance rooted in Black resistance to structural racism. By situating Cracolândia within the framework of necropolitics and the “politics of death,” the author shows how its inhabitants confront the life-threatening effects of a racist state through small, everyday acts of resilience. This essay broadens the scope of the issue, inviting readers to reflect on how visibility, dignity, and belonging are negotiated in contexts of deep inequality.

The issue concludes with “Ho Chi Minh City 2000 to 2050: An Annotated Illustration of Social Transformation” by Cheryl Prendergast and Catherine Earl. This visual essay traces five decades of urban change in Vietnam’s largest metropolis, combining artistic representation with anthropological reflection. Through detailed illustrations, the authors capture the city’s rapid modernization and the impact of globalization on daily life. The work moves from the rise of the first skyscrapers and international brands to the digitalization of urban life during the COVID-19 pandemic and a speculative vision of a greener, more sustainable future. By depicting Vietnam’s commitment to carbon neutrality and the shift toward electric forms of transport, the essay offers a hopeful image of the city’s future. It provides a fitting conclusion to the issue’s exploration of lived urbanity, returning to the question of how people and cities change together.

Taken together, the contributions in this issue highlight how people experience, interpret, and reshape urban life across very different social and geographic contexts. Whether through song and dance, everyday acts of endurance, or imaginative visions of the future, each piece offers a glimpse into the many ways in which communities create meaning and a sense of belonging in the city. I wish all readers an inspiring and enjoyable time exploring this issue.