

Jasenka Kranjčević. *Neglected Heritage: Spatial Structures of Villages in Croatia*. Zagreb, Srednja Europa, 2018, p.202

Book Review

When I first heard this book was published, knowing fully well the author's field of interest (planning rural settlements in Croatia), I was instantaneously intrigued by the first word in the title - *neglected*, because I have also investigated heritage for the most part of my career. Rural heritage truly is neglected, underestimated, silenced, unrecognized by some, suppressed by others, in short - neglected!

The topic of planning rural settlements has had limited impact among professionals. It is randomly mentioned in professional literature, thus this book is the first synthesis that systematically and chronologically presents this topic. It is written in an understandable way, although it is based on the author's dissertation.

The book is divided into nine chapters. In this article I will focus on chapters related to regulation of villages in Croatia in the following periods (chapters 3-7): From the 18th to mid - 19th century; From mid - 19th century to the end of the First World War; Interwar period; During the Second World War; After the Second World War.

In the last chapter the author brings us biographies of experts who were engaged in the effort to preserve architectural rural heritage, who planned and designed houses or regulations of villages. There are 79 biographies in total, which I find invaluable.

The book covers a period of the last 250 years, although the tradition of planning in rural areas in the Adriatic has been present since antiquity (centuriations in Istria, Zadar hinterland, Stari Grad Plain, and elsewhere), and middle ages. These activities were interrupted when the Ottomans invaded, but continued after liberation, and this is also covered in the book.

In the first period, from the 18th to mid - 19th century, the most significant planning activity was taking place in Slavonija, which was just liberated from the Ottomans. During this period approximately ten planned settlements were built, but documentation on this is scarce. The author addresses planned settlements in Gorski kotar (Mrkopalj, Josipdol, etc.) which were built along new roads called Louisiana Road and Josephina Road. In the second period, from mid - 19th century to the end of the First World War, planned construction continued in Slavonia under slightly different (more modern) conditions. Further construction and regulation was encouraged by forest exploitation, melioration, agricultural trade, and creation of food industry. Government departments for construction and spatial planning are set up in this period for the first time in history, as well as laws and regulations. Belišće, Krndija and Ferdinandovac are good examples of this. A new kind of settlements arose in this period and which were associated with agriculture and forestry - industrial and residential blocks, the so-called *pustara*. The most important blocks are the ones in Belje, with Kneževo as the administrative centre. Fifteen of these blocks are well preserved.

During this period, and after it, during the interwar period, natural disasters such as floods, landslides and fires led to the creation of new settlements. The example is Novo Selo Okičko. Namely, as a consequence of a heavy rain a landslide opened in June 1911 whereby the village Popov Do which had 180 inhabitants disappeared, and a new village was planned and built in a different location.

In the third period, the interwar period, planning activities in rural area developed in the environment of changing regulations due to agrarian reform, colonization, and the changing state, etc. This is the first time that professional architects become more significantly involved in planning processes through institutions and associations such as the School of Public Health, Institute of Hygiene, organization "Earth" which promotes social topics, and Croatian Peasant Party which also got involved.

During this period several fire-damaged villages were reconstructed, for example Donji Kraljevec in Međimurje, Brezovac Žumberački, and Kolarec in the vicinity of Križevci. A 1936 initiative by the Littoral Banovina is worth mentioning - the idea was to build a new village Mandre instead of Kolan on the island of Pag due to bad economic and hygienic circumstances and transport system. The plan was designed just before the Second World War so it was not realized until the 1920s in compliance with the then regulations. I would also like to mention an important sanitation project in the village Mraclin in Turopolje conducted by the School of Public Health and Institute of Hygiene.

Several settlements planned by Italian architects were built in areas under Italian occupation, for example fishing village Ubli in Lastovo and mining settlement Raša in Istria.

Interest of the professional community for planning in rural areas arose in this period, as evidenced by Marko Vidaković's dissertation on the regulation of Đurđevac (which was only a village then).

In the fourth period, during the Second World War, the Independent State of Croatia government showed interest in the restoration of villages destroyed in the war. The Ministry of Welfare for War-Affected Areas of the Independent State of Croatia announced a tender for a conceptual design of rural estates and settlements. The tender called for two types of rural estates and seven regional types of houses. Tender documentation has not been preserved, but the designs which were awarded were published in a daily newspaper. The only project realized in this period was Turopolje.

Architects in the National Liberation Struggle (NOB) worked alongside government initiatives. The Department of Engineering and Restoration Committee were set up with the State Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Croatia (ZAVNOH). The Department of Engineering organised a seminar in Urban Planning which focused on the restoration of settlements destroyed in the war. Architects Seissel, Pervan and Ostrogović participated in this seminar.

In the fifth period, after the Second World War, there was a lot of plans and desires, but only a few were actually realized. Some people were saying 290 destroyed villages needed to be repaired, and 70.000 houses needed to be renovated, which was a big financial burden on the shoulders of a country ravaged by war. The Ministry of

Construction, or more precisely, its Department of Architecture, was in charge of the restoration of villages, however decentralization took place and the activities were delegated onto lower levels of authority. I would like to mention the State Construction Project Institute in Zagreb as an example of this. The Institute brought together leading Croatian architects of that time (M. Kauzlarić, S.Gomboš, Z. Strižić, J. Seissel, V. Potočnjak, F. Floršec, Z. Neuman, V. Kauzlarić, H. Bauer, L. Horvat, B. Bonn, A. Ulrich, B. Petrović, S. Planić, V. Juranović, I. Richman), and was headed by B. Tučkorić. Not many theoretical discussions took place because all the experts focused on specific tasks at hand.

Bilice (near Šibenik) in Dalmatia and Gradac (near Makarska) were supposed to be models of renovated villages for 160 and 250 households respectively. Eventually 5-6 houses were built in Bilice, and in Gradac only 2-3. When it comes to Central Croatia regulation plans were designed for Divoselo (Lika), Vlahović (Banija), Vojnić and Tušilović, but few were actually realized. In Gorski kotar plans were in place for Crni Lug, Brod na Kupi, Mrzla Vodica, etc. Despite the passion towards the renovation not many plans were realized, mostly because of insufficient funds.

The village Gornji Vrhovci Papučki is an exception by a high percentage of realized plans. This village was burned to the ground during the Second World War. The Ministry of Construction hired Aleksandar Freudenreich to design plans. Out of 78 houses that were planned only 50 or so were built. Unfortunately, the village was burned down again during the Croatian Homeland War.

In this period education moved a step further ahead. The Faculty of Technical Studies in Zagreb introduced a course on village construction - Rurism (Rural Urbanism) in 1945.

All these steps forward, i.e. the introduction of Rurism into universities, construction of planned settlements in rural areas, and village restoration, only went on for a few years after the Second World War. Paradoxically, all of this goes away in the early 1950s when 75% of Croats live in rural areas (outside of cities). The Croatian government, the society in general, and architects have not been engaging in planned construction in rural areas for 65 years. Rural areas are derelict, haphazard, which is why people who live in these areas respond by leaving - in a planned manner.

Even if this kind of heritage remains neglected, at least this book brings it out of anonymity. And that's a start!

Zdravko Živković