

NIKŠA BOŽIĆ

TWENTY-FIVE CENTURIES OF URBAN CULTURE IN CROATIA

DVADESET PET STOLJEĆA URBANE KULTURE NA TLU HRVATSKE

BRUNO MILIĆ



Publishers: UPI-2M PLUS and the Faculty of Architecture, University of Zagreb, Zagreb, 2020

440 pages, Croatian, preface, afterword, literature, index of localities, about the author
[26x21 cm, b/w, paperback]

Reviewers: Sonja Jurković, Snješka Knežević,
Mladen Obad Scitaroci

Editor: Ariana Stulhofer

Preface: Zlatko Karac

Text editing and afterword: Lada Milic Demarin

Design: Sasa Stubićar

ISBN 978-953-7703-50-9

CIP 001068443 [NSK Zagreb]

Professor emeritus Bruno Milić (1917-2009) was one of the most prominent figures in Croatian architecture and urbanism in the second half of the 20th century. His long academic work at the Faculty of Architecture in Zagreb has left an unavoidable mark on generations of architects, urban planners and spatial planners, even for those who have not had the chance to personally attend his lectures. His three major books “Urban Development Through the Centuries I-III”, created in the 1990s after the professor’s retirement, marked the crown of his academic work. Originally conceived as university textbooks, these books have outgrown their scientific and educational function and become an indispensable read for a cultural analysis of urban development throughout history. With these books professor Milić not only filled the gap that existed until then in the Croatian professional and academic literature, but also set high standards for a systematic and comprehensive scientific analysis of urban planning. The books were written in an appealing and simple language, arranged as an intriguing collage of graphic contributions and accompanying cultural links, bringing the topic of urban development closer to a wider interested audience.

Even at the time of the creation of the books “Urban Development through the Centuries”, it was known that professor Milić was preparing the fourth book dedicated exclusively to the urban development of the territory of Croatia. The manuscript that the author was working on until his death at the age of 92 remained largely defined, but unfinished, and in some parts only in notes and with missing references and graphic sources. Eleven years after the author’s death, this major work is published in an unusual publishing venture in which the professor’s daughter worked with his former associates from the Department of Urban Planning of the Faculty of Architecture in Zagreb. Therefore, it is worth mentioning the names of the people most deserving of this endeavour. First of all, it is the professor’s long-term assistant at the faculty Zlatko Karac and the author’s daughter Lada Milic Demarin who reconstructed, systematized and supple-

mented the rich textual and graphic material that remained unfinished after the author’s death. The leader of the scientific project within which the manuscript was created, academician Mladen Obad Scitaroci, is responsible for the fact that immediately after the author’s death the decision was made to complete and publish the book. This enabled the participation of a number of technical associates who worked on the technical preparation of the materials. Among them, the author’s long-time collaborator, typist Ljiljana Loina Hohnjec, deserves a mention. She had preserved all versions of the manuscript files and enabled them to be reconstructed. Finally, the roles of the book editor Ariana Stulhofer and the reviewers Sonja Jurković, Snješka Knežević and Mladen Obad Scitaroci went beyond the usual framework of the publishing process in such an unusual publishing venture.

It is important to emphasize that despite this posthumous preparation, the book *Twenty-Five Centuries of Urban Culture in Croatia* remains a visible piece of work by professor Milić. The parts of the material that make up the book were created successively, since the early 1980s, during systematic research into the history of world and Croatian urbanism. Professor Milić left a conceptually completely defined book, even with the main graphic determinants. The book bears the undoubted author’s signature in a style of writing that is at the same time comprehensive, factually accurate, and with lucid links to broader cultural themes. The text is written in an essay-like style, which is why the book successfully moves away from classical university textbooks and brings the topic closer to a wider readership interested in the culture of space as an important segment of national culture.

The book also bears the recognizable author’s signature in the graphic layout, which was masterfully done by designer Saša Stubićar. It was professor Milić who as an architect and primarily a visual person created his manuscripts as richly illustrated collages. The graphic material in his books does not remain an accompanying material to the text, but instead the book becomes a complex sys-

tem of text and graphic elements, descriptions and accompanying framed text that provides links to broader cultural topics. The author used to create all his manuscripts from their earliest stages as collages of numerous photocopied materials, which he meticulously arranged, paying attention to their interrelationships and position on the pages. The finished book, richly illustrated with more than 800 illustrations, exclusively in black and white, bears that recognizable author’s signature. It certainly took a lot of skill and self-imposed modesty of the editor and author of graphic design to achieve this.

The book has 15 chapters and linearly follows the development of urban culture in today’s Croatia from prehistory to the 21st century. The author points out the diversity, number and quality of urban areas of Croatian cities and emphasizes the inherited high level of urban culture that characterizes the area of today’s Croatia. It is especially interesting that the author, who mainly dealt with the historical development of cities, deals in great detail with the dynamic development of Croatian cities in the 20th century, from explosive growth and development of our cities to the phenomenon of tourist urbanization in the Adriatic.

The book “*Twenty-Five Centuries of Urban Culture in Croatia*” looks like a fascinating masterfully restored mosaic. The very history of the cultural and historic development of our cities is fragmented, which is a consequence of turbulent historical facts. The author managed to combine such fragments into a comprehensive ensemble that for the first time brings a systematic overview of the urban development of our cities and indicates the longevity and continuity of urban culture in Croatia. The team that completed the book performed a masterful job of restoring the existing mosaic of unfinished materials, while their work remains a concealed dedication to the work of professor Milić.

The book is an indispensable read not only for students but for all who in their work need an understanding of the broader cultural context of development of our historic urban areas.