



Photo: Boštjan Martinjak

Vladimir Braco Mušič: Professor, mentor and comrade, on his eightieth birthday

I first met Vladimir Braco Mušič when I was a student at the Faculty of Architecture. I sat in the back, he spoke relatively softly, and I was only able to catch bits and pieces of what he was saying – but apparently essential bits because he was very satisfied with my exam. For self-study, I made use of his book *Urbanizem – bajke in resničnost* (Urban Planning: Myth and Reality, 1980), which remains the most frequently cited source for any kind of serious or professionally accountable work about urban planning or spatial planning in Slovenia. The assistant instructor for the lab classes was quite a bit less satisfied. One had to go to Tomšič Street to have the grades entered into the student record book because that was where Mušič directed municipal urban planning or coordinated the work of the five municipal urban-planning bodies at the Municipal Committee for Urban Planning and Environmental Protection. We met again several years later at a talk about the methodology of urban planning at an interdisciplinary graduate program in spatial planning and management. I did not know that he had helped found it at the end of the 1970s, following an American-Yugoslav project studying regional and urban planning. His voice was loud, playful and entertaining – after all, urban planning can be fun business. Perhaps this manner of passing on his urban-planning knowledge was fostered by his return to research and design at the Urban Planning Institute of the (at that time, Socialist) Republic of Slovenia, where he also served as director during that institution's heyday.

After this, I had the opportunity to participate in several projects that he led, although unfortunately less ambitious than those that he had helped lead earlier (e.g., the Split III, Ruski Car and Maribor Jug projects) and for which he won acclaim, awards and international recognition. There were no longer such commissions, the social environment had changed, but the projects were nonetheless interesting and challenging. It began with the Conditions, Covenants and Restrictions for Bizovik, where it was necessary to solve a political problem involving improper urban-planning decisions and prepare a plan more acceptable for the residents. I saw the workings of the urban-planning document for the (renewal of) the historical centre of Novo Mesto on the adjacent table, and followed the writing of studies and research projects on the spatial planning policy in Slovenia, regulatory elements in urban-planning documents, and other spatial planning studies at the national and municipal level in the rooms downstairs, as well as the first mention of sustainable development as a new paradigm.

We continued with changes and additions to the municipal plan for Novo Mesto (where, incidentally, we first sketched in part of the route of the third development axis in the spatial-planning document) and a number of study projects; for example, for the Drgančevje university campus, feasibility studies for the velodrome, minor projects in Bršljin and so on. Unfortunately, there was always too little time for the design work, and responsibilities for various committees and important forums for research and spatial-planning policy often demanded a great deal of his energy.

Nonetheless, he had plenty of energy to spend the afternoons working on preparing the journal *Urbani izziv*, for which he served as chief editor from 1993 to 1996. However, cooperating with *Urbani izziv* was only an extension of his wide-ranging work in publishing because he was a regular contributor to all Slovenian and Yugoslav architectural and urban-planning journals, including *Arhitektura*, *Sinteza*, *Arhitektov bilten*, *Teorija in praksa*, *Naši razgledi* and *Razgledi*.

In his retirement he has also remained very active and his presence has continued to be felt in the spatial-planning and urban-planning scene. It is hardly possible for a major event in Slovenia to take place without him speaking or at least attending.

My dear professor, mentor and senior comrade, I wish you a wealth of satisfaction, joy and health as you celebrate this milestone, and I look forward to reading both of your forthcoming books, especially the one on the origins of post-war urban planning in Slovenia.

Ivan Stanič