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*Public squares in Southern Pannonian cities  
as a legacy of Habsburg regulations:  
The case of Holy Trinity Square in Sombor, Serbia*

*Abstract*

Settlements in Southern Pannonia are known for their well-regulated urban matrix, which was developed after the Habsburg reconquest of this peripheral region of Central Europe from the Ottomans in the 17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The previous destructive wars left this land as a “tabula rasa” – barren and severely underpopulated. Hence, this was a “perfect polygon” for Habsburg military engineers to enforce the complete regulation of land and settlements, focusing on then-modern, colonial-style strict orthogonal organisation. However, some albeit rare settlements and their basic elements, such as public squares, urban blocks or streets, had preserved their organic matrix from medieval and Ottoman times. In these cases, a gradual process of strict regulation was implemented as a compromise, resulting in the present-day historical urban ambience with overlapping urban-planning legacy – their organic layer is usually “beneath” a relatively simplified and regulated form. The spotlight of this research is on public squares in the historic cores of Southern Pannonian cities in Serbia. The research first defines a historical context and general typology regarding their urban morphology. Then, a case study on Holy Trinity Square in the City of Sombor is presented. This square is appropriate for a historical-morphological analysis, as it has not physically changed for the last 150 years, so the square represents an insight into the past after the aforementioned Habsburg urban regulation. This means that this research embraces the specific remnants of colonial urbanism in the middle of Europe.

**Key words:** public square, urban morphology, colonial urbanism, early modern city, Habsburg Empire

*Introduction*

Pannonian Plain in the southern corner of Central Europe (Fig. 1) has been a borderland region since the beginning of civilisation. In antiquity, the Danube, the major river in the plain, served as a “Limes”, a border between the Roman Empire to the southwest and barbarian tribes to the northeast (Frontiers... 2011; Remenyik, Szabo and Guth 2016). In the deeply religious Middle Ages, the plain

divided the realms of Western and Eastern Christianity, contributing to persistent local instability (Lemajić 2008). Later, the Pannonian Plain was a major battleground between the Habsburg and Ottoman empires for almost three centuries (1520s–1800s). Several Austro-Turkish wars completely devastated much of the communities, settlements and economy in the plain (Aksan 2007). In the aftermath, the Pannonian Plain was left barren and severely underpopulated.

Habsburgs made the main territorial gains in the third Habsburg-Ottoman War (1683–1699), conquering the central and southern thirds of the Pannonian Plain<sup>1</sup>. The previous

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<sup>1</sup> This area is currently divided between four states: the central part of the Pannonian Plain makes southern Hungary, whereas its southern part is northern Serbia. The smaller southwestern part is eastern Croatia, while the southeastern one belongs to westernmost Romania.



Fig. 1. Pannonian Plain (light green area) with the current international borders, major rivers and cities. The case-study city – Sombor – is marked with a red dot (elaborated by A. Grujić)

Il. 1. Nizina Panońska (obszar jasnozielony) z obecnymi granicami państw, głównymi rzekami i miastami. Miasto będące przedmiotem studium przypadku – Sombor – jest oznaczone czerwoną kropką (oprac. A. Grujić)

destructive wars left this land as a “tabula rasa” for new development (Simonović, Ribar 1993). The well-organised Austrian military, over-present in this newly-acquired borderland region, also took a major task in its territorial arrangement and redevelopment (Good 1984). During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Austrian military engineers remodelled the southern half of Pannonia in a multi-layer manner. First, numerous ponds and swamps were drained with newly-built canals, river courses were regulated and shortened by cutting numerous meanders, and protective causeways were built (Dragović et al. 2005). Military engineers used the then modern tenets of colonial urbanism as a role-model, where an orthogonal territorial organisation was seen as efficient, orderly, and hierarchical (Home, King 2016). They implemented these tenets swiftly; the whole territory – settlements and agricultural land – was organised in a rational orthogonal manner, which was customised only in the case of natural limitations (rivers, hills, etc.).

The focal point of these planned settlements with an orthogonal matrix in southern Pannonia has been a central square, which also tended to be shaped in a strictly regulated form – as a square or rectangle (Simonović, Ribar 1993). However, some public squares, especially in major settlements with rich albeit hidden previous morphological strata, were more developed gradually, from an organic to a more regulated form (Pušić 1987). Today, many such public squares look like completely regulated and formed in the Habsburg times. Although this is a common oversimplification, precise research on this topic is extremely rare and internationally unknown, especially in the context of this time – the utilisation of a colonial urbanism in the middle of Europe.

This research aims to bring this neglected scientific topic in regional urban morphology into the international spotlight. The research subject is Holy Trinity Square in

the City of Sombor, Serbia. This square is appropriate for a historical-morphological analysis, as it has not physically changed for the last 150 years, so the square represents an insight into the past after the aforementioned Habsburg urban regulation. Hence, the research is a case study with the contextual analysis of the urban morphology of public squares in the southern Pannonian Plain. This approach was somewhat driven by practical needs, as it stemmed from preparatory research conducted for an urban design competition for this public square in Sombor, with a purpose to set up the design idea based on the local urban legacy and inherited identity. However, the contribution of this research is reframed to be a scientific one – to shed light on this internationally hidden topic about the urban morphology of cities in southern Pannonia and its key elements. This means that the explanation of the genesis and morphology of the case-study public square is a key to embracing this specific remnant of colonial urbanism in the middle of Europe.

### *The state of research – public squares within urban morphology in Southern Pannonia*

This research first had to define the historical context and general typology regarding public squares as the important elements of regional urban morphology before a focus on the concrete case.

First, it should be emphasised that regional urban morphology has many other specific elements. The orthogonal matrix of urban blocks and streets in new settlements in southern Pannonia has had many advantages, such as a simple and fast implementation, unlimited form for physical expansion and reconstruction, and the efficient control of the whole space (Djukić, Stupar and Antić 2018a). This military-developed orthogonal order was reflected in all elements of such settlements: urban blocks, streets, squares, building plots, and ultimately, the buildings themselves (Fig. 2). The shape of urban blocks was mainly square or rectangular. Streets were straight and very wide, sometimes even 30–40 m, due to several reasons: to prevent the spread of fire between blocks, to leave place for urban trees in a naturally deforested plain with strong winds, and, in rural settlements, to enable the passage of the herds of cattle. Building plots also tended to be rectangular with one shorter side on the street. They were divided into several sections from the street, so economic buildings, especially with a “smelly content”, could not be built in the first/street section. This section was reserved for a house that had to be oriented in such a way so as to be exposed to insolation as much as possible to enhance public health measures (Simonović, Ribar 1993).

As it was explained, the focal point of these planned settlements with an orthogonal matrix in southern Pannonia has been a central square, also shaped as a square or rectangle (Simonović, Ribar 1993). There were two approaches to form it (Fig. 2); (1) the square that was the “left out block” surrounded by four streets, and (2) the square formed by chamfering four blocks that form the main crossroad in settlement. Public buildings were built around the square, while the most important ones, such

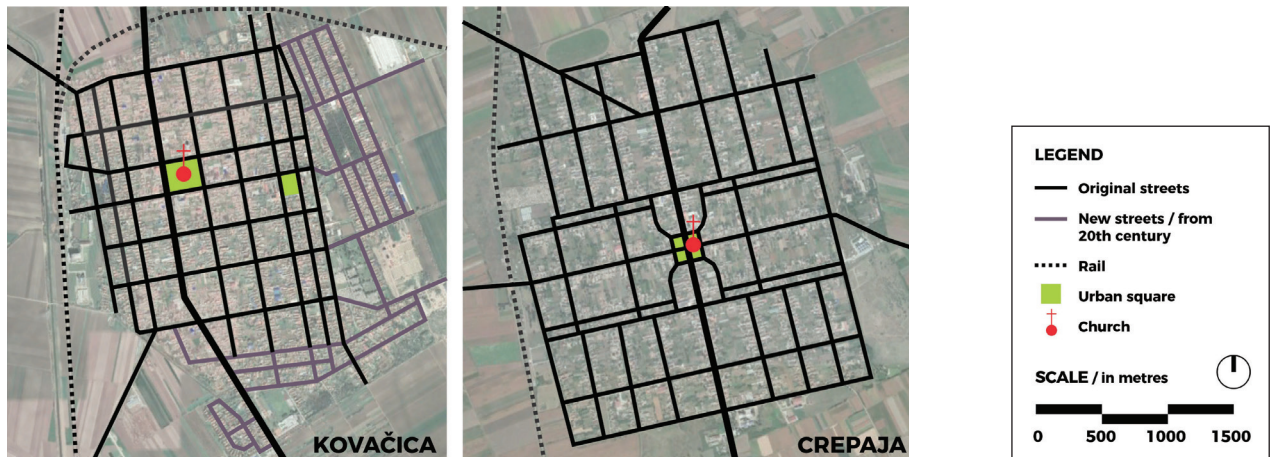


Fig. 2. The examples of planned settlements with an orthogonal matrix and the squares formed in two different ways:  
Type 1 – Kovačica, Type 2 – Crepaja (elaborated by B. Antonić)

Il. 2. Przykłady planowanych osiedli z macierzą ortogonalną i kwadratami utworzonymi na dwa różne sposoby:  
typ 1 – Kovačica, typ 2 – Crepaja (oprac. B. Antonić)

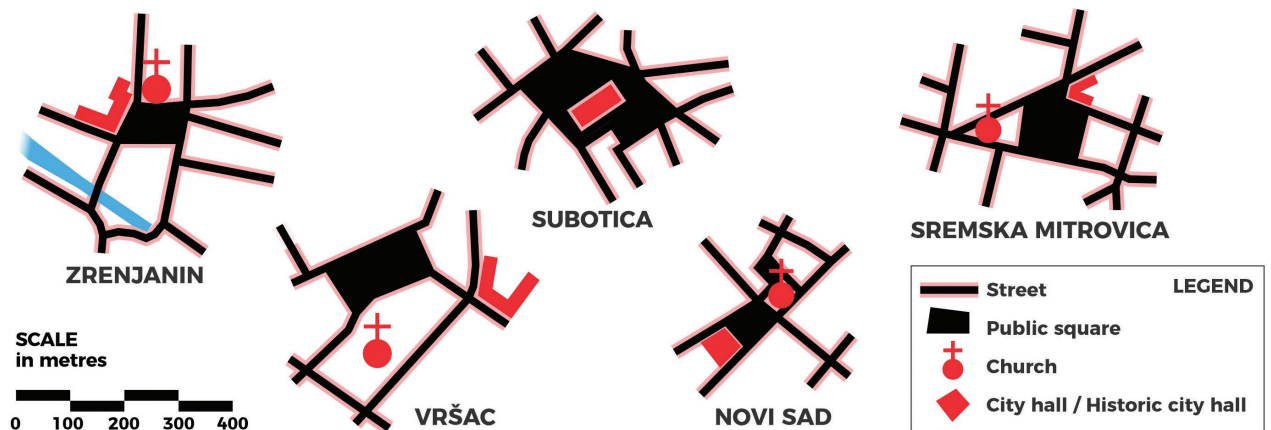


Fig. 3. Initially organic, then regulated central squares in Serbian cities of Southern Pannonia (elaborated by B. Antonić)

Il. 3. Początkowo organiczne, później uregulowane place centralne w serbskich miastach południowej Panonii (oprac. B. Antonić)

as a church(es), were often situated in the middle. These two approaches make the core of the typology of central squares in planned settlements with an orthogonal matrix.

However, some settlements in southern Pannonia had preserved the remnants of their previous organic matrix from medieval and Ottoman times. The same can be said for their basic elements, including public squares. In these cases, a gradual process of strict regulation was implemented as a compromise, resulting in the present-day historical urban ambience with overlapping albeit hidden urban-planning legacy – their organic layer is usually “beneath” a relatively simplified and regulated form (Pušić 1987). In some cases, the level of urban orthogonality and regulation in bigger settlements was reflected in a local ethnic picture. More regulated and centrally located urban parts were more settled by Germans, who traditionally were better educated and controlled local administration and government, while other ethnicities (Hungarians, Serbs, Jews, Romanians, Croats, Slovaks, etc.) were more into agriculture, crafts and trade.

Considering central squares, the attempts of their forced regularisation can be found mainly in cities, where this process targeted more regular forms – rectangular or triangular. Nowadays, they present a variety of morphological shapes with an interesting genesis in the background (Fig. 3) (Djukić, Stupar and Antonić 2018b). In addition, they also vary regarding other integral elements, such as focal elements, openings, size, etc. (Đokić 2009). This rational approach in balancing between forced and gradual urban regulation was later copied in the establishment and regulation of new settlements in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Principality of Serbia, as well as their central squares (Kojić 1970).

### Methods

The method used in this research is a single-case study. This method, in contrast to multiple-case study, does not employ a comparative approach. Therefore, it requires the contextualisation of the research to establish the inputs on how to examine the case study (Gustafsson 2017). Therefore,



this research has already defined the historical urban context of the Southern Pannonian Plain and the general typology of the central public squares in this region in line with their urban morphology. In the next section, the research is continued through the single case study on Holy Trinity Square in the historic core of Sombor. This analysis is tailored as historical-morphological to explain both the geneses of the historic core of the city and the square within it in parallel. The temporal limits of the analysis are approximately the last three centuries, as the radical urban regulation of Sombor began with the Habsburg conquest of this region in 1699. The last section of the research is discussion and conclusion, where the importance of this research is highlighted to address the possibilities of its exploitation and the future urban (re)development, especially regarding the aforementioned upsurge of cultural tourism as a prospect to regenerate and revitalise the historic core of Sombor as well as the city in general.

### *Case study* – *Holy Trinity Square in Sombor, Serbia*

Holy Trinity Square is one of two main public squares in Sombor. The city is one of 28 official cities in Serbia and the administrative seat of Western Bačka District. Sombor is located in the southern-central Pannonian Plain and close to the Danube River (Fig. 1). In Serbia, it is in the north-westernmost corner of the country, close to Hungary and Croatia. The borderland peripheral position of the city for more than a century has slowed the economic development of Sombor, so it has been one of the most shrinking Serbian cities in the last 20 years (Antić, Djukić and

Marić 2020). Currently, the city has 42,000 inhabitants. In contrast to the dire economic and demographic situation, the city possesses the most preserved historic core among medium-sized cities in Serbia, which has influenced the rise of cultural and slow-city tourism in recent years (Antić, Djukić and Marić 2023).

By its genesis patterns, Holy Trinity Square fits into the regional type of the aforementioned Southern Pannonian city, developed in the 18<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> centuries. One of the peculiarities of this city type is the so-called dual or bipolar centre (Pušić 1987). The regional cities of this type have two important traditional public squares in their core. The reason for the existence of the dual centre is historical and religious. While the cities in the other parts of the Pannonian Plain were predominantly Roman Catholic, most of the cities in its south had a significant share or a majority of the Orthodox (mostly Serbian) population from the very beginning of the Habsburg rule. As the Orthodox inhabitants were mainly employed in trade, crafts, and services, they settled around the main market square and the main street. The Roman Catholics, mainly Germans and, later, Hungarians, held administration and government in the city, as well as across the Austro-Hungary (Taylor 1948). Hence, they were settled in the administrative part of the historic core, centred in the other square dedicated for events and manifestations.

There are regional cities where these two squares are spatially significantly apart from each other, up to 500 m. In other cases, they are closer, like “antipodes” at the ends of the main street. The second pattern is evident in the historic core of Sombor, as Holy Trinity Square is next to the city hall (Fig. 4), which makes its eastern side and separates



Fig. 4. The current state of Holy Trinity Square with the city hall of Sombor (photo by D. Mitrović)

Il. 4. Obecný stan placu Świętej Trójcy z ratuszem w Somborze (fot. D. Mitrović)

this square from also important St. George Square (Fig. 5). These two squares with the city hall in between make the aforementioned dual centre in Sombor. This duality had a deep historical meaning. According to Milan Stepanović (2019), *(A)s the Square of St. George was a place for spiritual, political and social gatherings of Somborian [Orthodox] Serbs, on the Square of Holy Trinity... the citizens of Sombor of the Roman Catholic faith (Bunjevacs<sup>2</sup>, Hungarians and Germans) gathered.*

Hence, Holy Trinity Square is not important just for its excellent location in the historic core of the city; it also occupies an extremely important place in Sombor history and present-day life. The importance of the square arose during the most vibrant period of Sombor after obtaining the status of a free royal city<sup>3</sup> in 1749 (Ćirković et al. 2017). The formation of the present-day square began that year with the construction of the town hall (Fig. 4) on the site of the former yard of the “castle” of Jovan Branković, a local border military officer. This space transformed into an open space for larger events and outdoor gatherings – a manifestation square. The square got its name from the centrally situated Monument of the Holy Trinity, erected in 1774 (Stepanović 2018).

The current shape of the square dates back to 1840s, when the extension of the town hall with a new tower was added on its eastern side (National Center for Digitization [Gradska Kuca]). The design of the square that is basically visible today was carried out in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by filling it with cobblestones and partial greening. Somewhat more significant modifications were made during the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the Monument of the Holy Trinity was removed from the square, and the area was transformed into an urban park. The last changes from a few decades ago were aimed at returning the state of the square to its previous state from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Stepanović 2019).

The previous historical data clearly underline that the genesis of Holy Trinity Square in many respects followed the fate of Sombor. Its socio-economical boom as a free royal city in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century was followed by the initial development of the square as a key gathering place for the people of Sombor. The local aspirations towards beautification and urbanisation, typical for this period of Austro-Hungary during the first industrialisation in the last third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Good 1984), were also reflected in this square through its modernisation and re-design. On the other side, industrialisation contributed to social stratification and even worse living conditions in the cities of the then-Austro-Hungarian Empire. Thus, paving and planting trees in the square should be understood as the first attempts at the then-modern sanitary and hygienic upgrading of the city (Pušić 1987). This sanitary-hygienic-driven urban design reached its peak through mod-

ernist urbanism in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which was (fortunately) only indirectly applied to Holy Trinity Square through its transformation into an urban park, without more radical moves. The change in the political system after World War II was clearly reflected in the replacement of the Monument of the Holy Trinity as an important religious landmark in its central place with an “atheistic” fountain (Stepanović 2019).

At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the awareness of urban heritage revived the general willingness to preserve a traditional city. This had an impact in well-preserved cities in northern Serbia (Djukić, Stupar and Antonić 2018b). In the case of Holy Trinity Square in Sombor, the park was remodelled into a pedestrianised square (Fig. 5). This modern time-frame in question is the year 1972, when Holy Trinity Square was once again, and finally, reconstructed. Large elements from the central part of the square were removed, such as the already mentioned fountain and trees, and the paving with cobblestone was restored. This new, “bare” square has received a recognisable local nickname – “Bald Square” (Stepanović 2019). Close to that year is the year 1969, when the entire historic core in Sombor (known as “Venac/Coronet”), including Holy Trinity Square, was first registered in the register of cultural monuments (i.e., protected cultural heritage) (National Center for Digitization [Venac]). The mentioned measures applied in Sombor fitted properly within this new protection status. Around the same time, the functional conversion of surrounding buildings happened – the former administrative buildings and “urban palaces” (Gale House, Grašalković Palace) were transformed into cultural institutions.



Fig. 5. The location of Holy Trinity Square in the city historic core (elaborated by B. Antonić)

Il. 5. Położenie Placu Świętej Trójcy w historycznym centrum miasta (oprac. B. Antonić)

<sup>2</sup> Bunjevacs are a small Roman Catholic South Slavic ethnicity in the border region between Hungary and Serbia.

<sup>3</sup> Free royal city was an official term for the most important cities in the Kingdom of Hungary from the late 12<sup>th</sup> century until its dissolution after World War I. This status granted certain privileges for a settlement, which eventually led to its faster economic development (Bácskai, Nagy 1984).



The Square has not experienced significant spatial changes after the 1970s. However, it completely regained the functional attributes of a square for public events and manifestations. Surrounding urban fabric did not change significantly for a long time, until the third millennium. In the mid-2000s, the main street in Sombor was completely renovated and pedestrianised, which significantly revitalised it in a functional sense. Previously, the short Zmaj Jova Street, located west of the square, was turned into a pedestrian street in 1996. The pedestrianisation process was completed a few years ago, through the comprehensive urban regeneration of the area of the Square of Kosta Trifković and Republican Square in the western part of the core. With these interventions, a relatively large and diffused pedestrian zone was created in the historic core of

Sombor (Antić, Djukić and Marić 2023), which is interestingly cut into two halves by the carriageway along the western perimeter of Holy Trinity Square (Fig. 6a).

In the last years, more and more old buildings around Holy Trinity Square are being refurbished. In addition, it is also noticeable that historic quarters around the square have been gradually “profiled” according to their prevailing contents. This spatial thematisation is typical for regenerated old urban parts in the post-industrial era (Vaništa Lazarević, Koružnjak and Devetaković 2016): (1) south – administrative and high-level service zone (banks, agencies, insurance, etc.); (2) east – retail zone around the main street; (3) north – education and school zone; and (4) west – cultural-bohemian zone (Fig. 6c). Finally, there is also a local innovative plan to turn the part of the spacious



Fig. 6. The axonometric schemes of Holy Trinity Square within the western part of the “Venac” historic core of Sombor:

a) a pedestrian zone,  
b) urban fabric,  
c) the recent functional thematisation of the surroundings of the square  
(elaborated by B. Antić)

Il. 6. Schematy aksonometryczne placu Świętej Trójcy w zachodniej części historycznego centrum Somboru „Venac”:

a) strefa dla pieszych,  
b) tkanka miejska,  
c) niedawna funkcjonalna tematyka otoczenia placu  
(oprac. B. Antić)

Grašković Palace on the western side of the square into a hub for creative industries and startups<sup>4</sup>. This will open up completely new prospects for the future use and design of the square. Moreover, such plans and the extraordinary location highlight Holy Trinity Square as an important place in the future development of the historic core of Sombor and impose its further sustainable renovation and modernisation as an imperative.

### *Morphological analysis of the square*

Public urban squares and their genesis are among the most prominent research topics in urban morphology (Moughtin 2003). Since the spatial changes of Holy Trinity Square in Sombor have been relatively small in the last 150 years, the morphological analysis of the square focuses on its current state. It was carried out according to the principles of the urban typology of urban squares in Serbia done by Vladan Đokić. According to this typology, the key parameters of the morphological analysis of squares in the national context are (Đokić 2009):

- 1) formal regularity and shape of a square,
- 2) the existence of the privileged elements of the square,
- 3) closings and openings of a square,
- 4) the existence of landmarks in a square,
- 5) character of a square surface: pedestrian area, greenery or roadway,
- 6) number and location of accesses to/from a square,
- 7) the possibility of division into smaller zones within a square, and
- 8) location and size of the open paved area of a square ("plateau").

Based on the given parameters, Holy Trinity Square in Sombor belongs to the type of a square of an orthogonal constitutionality with privileged elements, because, as it was afore explained, it was modelled ("constituted") during the process of radical regulation of the matrix of already existing organic cities in southern Pannonian Plain during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This can be considered a counterpart to the orthogonal matrix of completely new planned cities in the same region. Its privileged element is the tower of the city hall (Fig. 5).

The analysis, according to the adopted morphological parameters, is as follows (Fig. 7).

The analysed square has the shape of a slightly prominent rectangle, placed in a lightly offset north-south direction (Fig. 7-I). Its approximate size is 100 × 70 m, so the total area of the square is about 0.71 ha. The square is formed morphologically according to the principle "left out urban block" surrounded by four streets, so that almost all access streets tangentially enter it (except Zmaj Jova Street).

Furthermore, the only privileged element on the square is the tower of the city hall on its eastern edge, additionally emphasised by the monumental facade of the building below it (scheme IV). The belfry of the large Roman Catholic church is somewhat prominent, although it is not situated on the square itself, but north of it.

The square is fairly closed because buildings completely surround it on three sides – south, east and west (Fig. 7-II). Only its northern side is partially open towards the previously mentioned Roman Catholic church (Fig. 7-III). However, the prominence of the church tower contributes to an impression of visual closure from the north.

The square currently has no landmarks, although it had them previously – first the monument of the same name dedicated to the Holy Trinity, and then, much shorter, the fountain. Actually, it owes its nickname to the absence of landmarks – "Bald Square".

Holy Trinity Square can be accessed from as many as 9 directions (Fig. 7-V) – three from the east, two from the south, three from the west and only one from the north, although the widest access of these four approaches is with carriageway (red), two are pedestrian only (grey), and three represent a shared space (blue). Interestingly, two integrated approaches are covered at the same time, i.e., these are public passages through buildings – the passage through the city hall (east) and the passage through Grašković Palace (west). While the first has been in constant use for decades, the second is promising, and its greater use is related to the further refurbishment and reuse of this urban palace and its spacious courtyard.

The square is quite compact – there are no visible subdivisions within it. This perception is particularly created because the large and central part of the square is in the form of a spacious open pedestrian plateau without any landmarks, even without urban furniture (Fig. 7-VI). The present furniture elements and urban greenery are on the square edges, so they do not create a feeling of independent subdivisions.

Finally, according to the character of its surface, the square is mostly a pedestrian zone – 71% (Fig. 7-VII). This zone occupies the central and eastern parts of the square. A carriageway with associated car parking runs along the southern, western and northern perimeters of the square, making up approximately one quarter of its surface (Fig. 7-VIII). The smallest part of the square consists of urban greenery – only 5% of the surface. It is mostly located on the perimeter of the square (Fig. 7-IX). Although it contains both low and medium vegetation (flowers, grass, and bushes), locally specific hackberry trees visually stand out on the square.

### *Instead of an ordinary conclusion – a vision of Holy Trinity Square for tomorrow*

All the activities about the regeneration of the historic core of Sombor and the refurbishment of old buildings and open public space around Holy Trinity Square have recently prompted a new local interest to genuinely revive and redesign the square while preserving its historical values and acquired identity. There is no doubt that the renewal and revitalisation of the square is necessary. Nevertheless, there are discussions on how these future urban interventions should be chosen and carried out. Inter alia, there are a few big questions to be addressed, namely:

1. The square is currently a typical one for events and manifestations, i.e., without internal landmarks and urban equipment and greenery in its central segment. Although

<sup>4</sup> From a conversation with local experts.

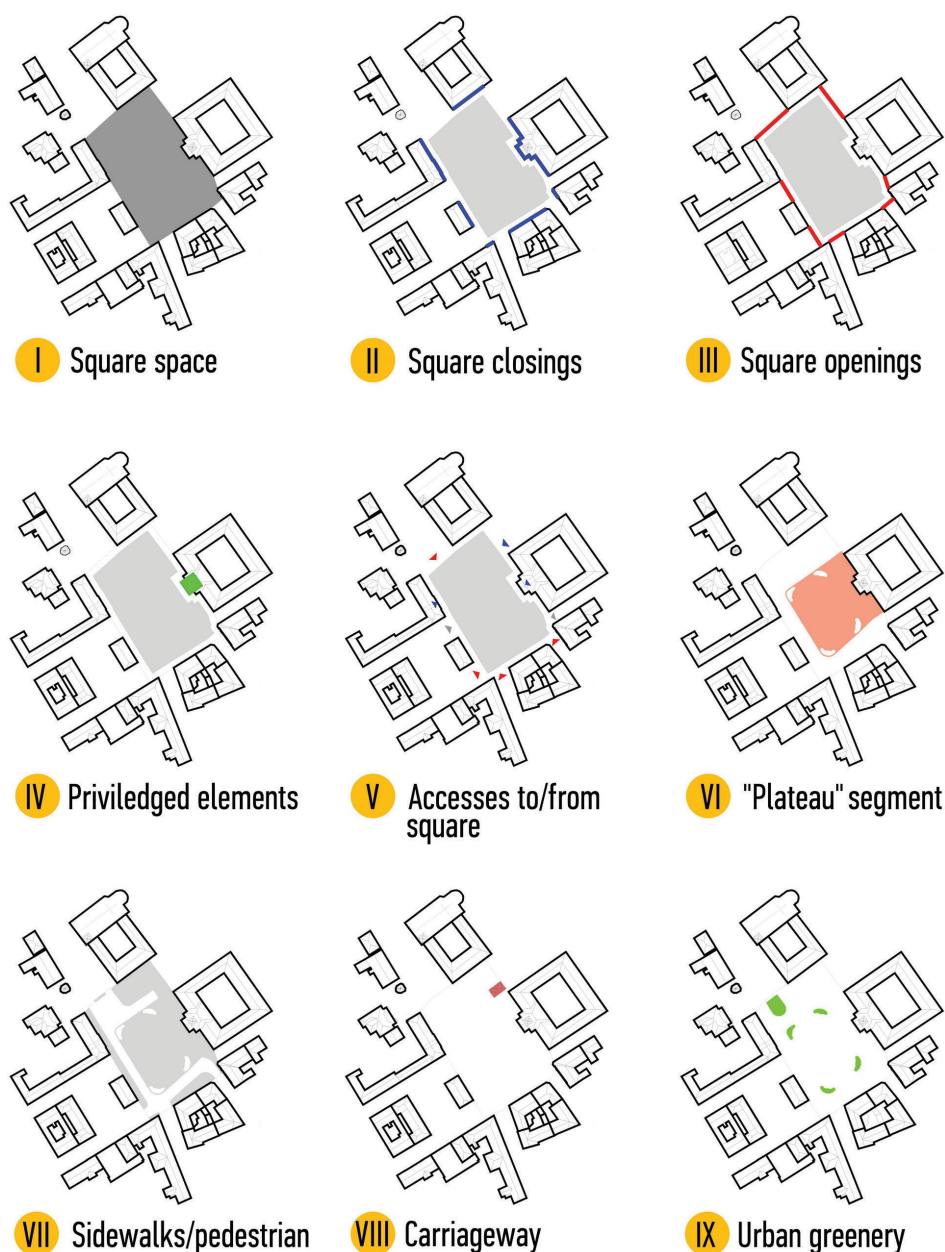


Fig. 7. Characterisation of Holy Trinity Square in Sombor, Serbia, according to key morphological parameters for typology of public squares in Serbia, by Đokić (elaborated by B. Antić)

Il. 7. Karakteristika placu Šv. Trojice u Somboru u Srbiji na osnovu ključnih parametara morfoloških za tipologiju javnih placova u Srbiji, autorstva Đokica (oprac. B. Antić)

this situation enables its flexibility for different happenings (concerts, flower market, old-timer day, ice rink during winters, etc.), it also makes the square rather inert during in-between periods, as well as sensitive during more and more present extreme weather conditions (heat, winds, drought or excessive insolation).

2. The square is surrounded by the busy zone of the historic core, close to the main retail street and traditionally very vibrant farmers' market and with many cultural and education institutions in its vicinity. Although the widening and interconnection of the city pedestrian zone is planned as desirable, there is a challenge to deal with vehicles and their parking, which is a precondition of preserving local economic vibrancy.

3. The Monument of the Holy Trinity was the key element of the square identity for almost two centuries. With the fall of religiously oppressive socialism in the 1990s, there have been calls to return and reinstall the monument

in its location in the centre of this same-name square. However, others believe that this is not viable, as the monument is more an urban memory today.

4. Most of the buildings around the square are cultural institutions with a significant potential for rising cultural tourism. Therefore, the element of cultural and tourist promotion is becoming a must in any future intervention relating to the square. However, there are visible limitations to implementing it due to the status of the square as protected heritage, as well as due to the previously explained reasons.

Local representatives and experts have initiated several activities to address these questions. Firstly, they began with the creation of a new general urban plan for the "Venac" historic core, including the square. The plan is currently in a draft version. Secondly, local experts have been recently involved in several international and cross-border projects where the topics of cultural heritage, urban



morphology, tourism and sustainable transport have been explored, with aspirations to form thematic city networks and partnerships and to learn the best practice from other countries. Finally, the city authority organised an open public design competition for a conceptual arrangement of Holy Trinity Square in 2023, to “screen” professional opinion about the future (re)development of the square. All these activities are thought to be a prerequisite for the main ones – a new urban design project for the square and its implementation.

Although the underlined challenges are still unresolved, some inputs and ideas for the future of Holy Trinity Square in Sombor are under discussion. They are in line with the main inputs from this morphological analysis, which present a very clear picture of a well-defined historic square, which can be sensitive to any significant physical disturbance. Therefore, future interventions should be subtle and mostly related to its non-physical modifications and upgrades.

For instance, the marking of the place of the former Monument of Holy Trinity in the pavement on the square

can be a compromise between two quite different opinions of its complete reconstruction and status quo. Secondly, an underground car garage beneath the square is suggested as a solution to mediate pedestrianisation plans and local economic viability. Thirdly, densification of the urban greenery on the peripheral parts of the square is recommended, so as to preserve a clear space in the middle for events and to protect the square from extreme weather at the same time. Fourthly, it is advisable to use the possibilities of fast-developing digitalisation and ICT-driven urban design (QR codes, hotspots for offline data, augmented reality, etc.) to promote the culture, heritage, and tourism of Sombor in a more innovative and sophisticated way, without the significant physical disturbance of the square design.

In the end, it seems that the local representatives, experts and citizens will need to speed up this decision process, as Sombor with its historic core and cultural heritage is becoming a “magnet” for booming cultural tourism along the nearby Danube River, as a major tourist route in this part of Europe.

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## Streszczenie

### *Place publiczne w miastach południowej Panonii jako spuścizna po regulacjach Habsburgów: przypadek placu Świętej Trójcy w Somborze w Serbii*

Osady w południowej Panonii znane są z dobrze uregulowanej macierzy miejskiej, która rozwinęła się po odzyskaniu przez Habsburgów tego peryferyjnego regionu Europy Środkowej od Turków w XVII–XVIII w. Wcześniejsze niszczycielskie wojny pozostawiły tę ziemię jako „tabula rasa” – jałową i poważnie niedoludnioną. Stąd też był to doskonały „poligon” dla habsburskich inżynierów wojskowych, aby wyegzekwować całkowitą regulację ziemi i osad, skupiając się na ówczesnej nowoczesnej, kolonialnej, ścisłej organizacji ortogonalnej. Jednak niektóre, choć rzadkie osady i ich podstawowe elementy, takie jak place publiczne, bloki miejskie lub ulice, zachowały swoją organiczną matrycę z czasów średniowiecznych i osmańskich. W tych przypadkach stopniowy proces ścisłej regulacji został wdrożony jako kompromis, skutkując obecną historyczną atmosferą miejską z nakładającym się dziedzictwem urbanistycznym – ich warstwa organiczna jest zwykle „pod” stosunkowo uproszczoną i uregulowaną formą. W centrum uwagi w tym badaniu znajdują się place publiczne w historycznych centrach miast południowej Panonii w Serbii. W badaniu najpierw zdefiniowano kontekst historyczny i ogólną typologię dotyczącą ich morfologii miejskiej. Następnie przedstawiono studium przypadku dotyczące placu Świętej Trójcy w mieście Sombor. Plac ten nadaje się do analizy historyczno-morfologicznej, ponieważ nie zmienił się fizycznie przez ostatnie 150 lat, więc stanowi wgląd w przeszłość po wspomnianej regulacji miejskiej Habsburgów. Oznacza to, że badanie to obejmuje specyficzne pozostałości kolonialnego urbanizmu w środku Europy.

**Słowa kluczowe:** plac publiczny, morfologia miejska, urbanistyka kolonialna, wczesne miasto nowożytne, imperium Habsburgów