

FROM PARKING TO LANDMARKING

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Sokolovské square in Liberec
50.7704658N, 15.0551375E

HISTORY

Sokolovské náměstí was founded in the first half of the 17th century and is one of the main squares in Liberec. The square is 100x60 metres in size and is connected to several streets. The square is located on a hill and is a link between the main square of Liberec towards the north-west to the Malé náměstí.

Marian Column

It was erected on the square between 1719 and 1720 and in 1887 it was moved to the nearby garden of the church. One of the big topics of my work was the question of returning this column back to the Sokolovské náměstí.

Paving

Throughout much of the documentable history of the surface of Sokolovské náměstí, paving is evident along the buildings, through the centre of the square and also in two transverse strips. The intermediate areas were filled with hoggin. This design can be seen on many historical photographs and postcards.



DER NEUSTÄDTER PLATZ in REICHENBERG im JAHRE 1861

4824



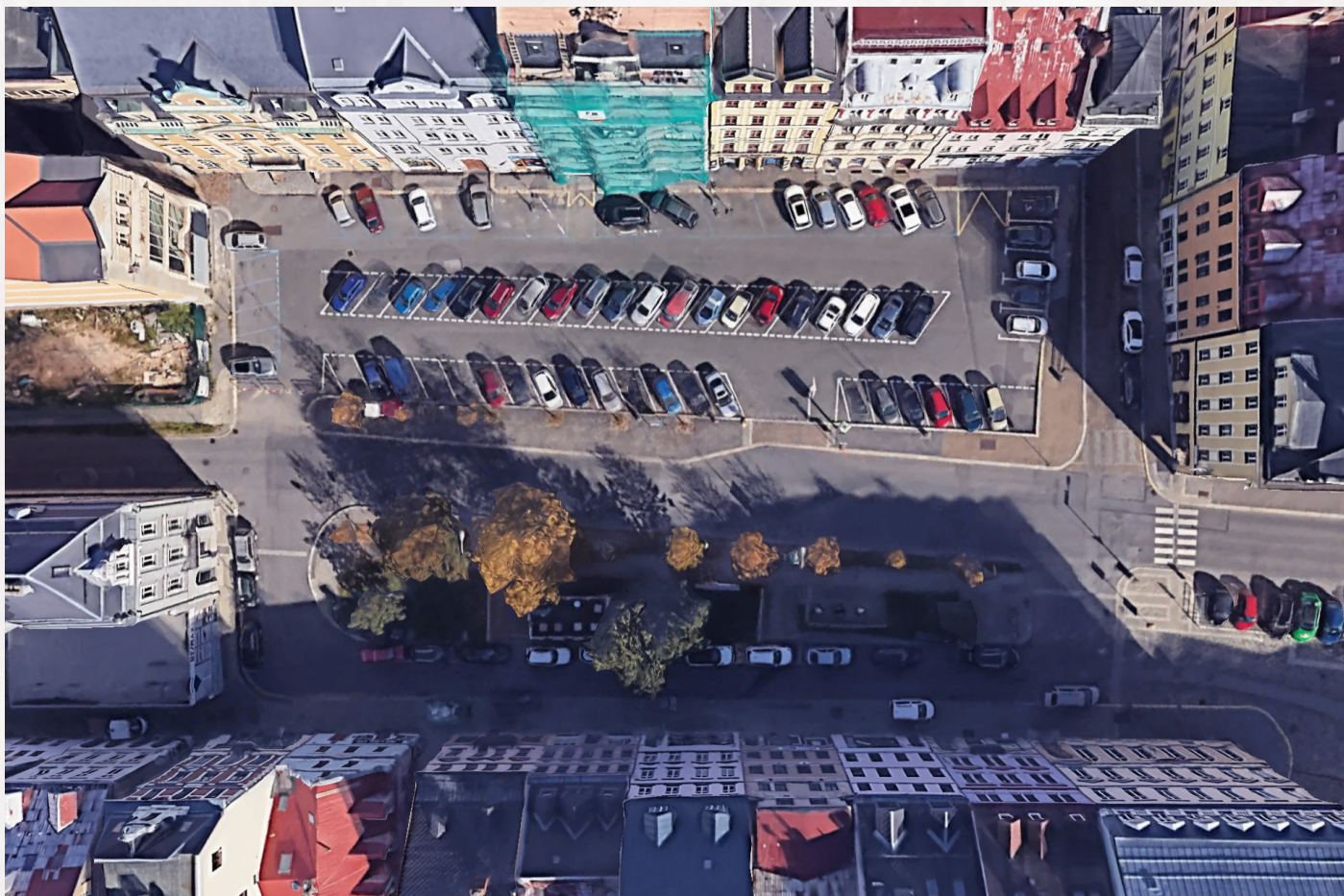


PRESENT

Nowadays the square is more of a parking lot. The main road that runs through it is a disproportionately dominant feature that is supported by inappropriate tree planting. Important compositional links are lost and much of the area is used purely for car storage.

The square is only gently sloping in most of its area. It only drops off significantly in the western part and also in the north-east corner a street emerges from the square which drops off sharply and is separated from the rest of the square by a wall. There is a varied mix of shops and restaurants in the parterre of houses around the perimeter of the square. A secondary school building also stands on the square.

None of the restaurants have a suitable area for an outdoor garden. A major barrier is the non-functioning grassy areas in the southwest portion of the square. There is no satisfactory furniture, surfaces or traffic solution. The topic of reconstruction has been discussed over the last decade, but no concrete proposal is intended for implementation at this time.





PROCESS

Behind this page are several sketches from the semester that illustrate the process of finding the ideal solution for the reconstruction of the square. A distinctive element that I have been working with since the beginning is the relatively conservative layout of the square, which is largely based on the original surface design. From the various variations, a very clean version eventually emerged.

However, the strong geometry soon became a nuisance and I tried to balance and soften it. This was eventually achieved with a continuous spatial planting layer.

An important issue was the return of the Marian column. It was removed from the square a long time ago, but the need for its return still resonates with the local population. The column originally stood in the middle of the square and it was not practically possible to restore it to its original location. The question of the appropriateness of treating the Marian column as a mere historical relic and not respecting its original location seemed kitsch at times. In the end, however, I did decide to relocate the column and used it as the focal point of the newly created space in the middle of the square. The column is thus no longer the dominant feature of the whole space, but only of its central part. Some axial views are also linked to it.

The big question was also how to deal with the terrain in the south-western part of the square. The stairs, although they seemed like a simple solution, ended up taking a lot of time and requiring many attempts. Their final location respects the current terrain and creates a structured, calm space.

Passage through the square remains, but with regard to other planned investments of the city, the traffic intensity should decrease in the future. I had originally planned only to reduce parking on the square, but in the end I eliminated it altogether, in response to sufficient parking capacity in the area.











