

## Article

# Urban Regeneration through Cultural–Tourism Entrepreneurship Based on *Albergo Diffuso* Development: The Venac Historic Core in Sombor, Serbia

Branislav Antonić <sup>1,\*</sup>, Aleksandra Stupar <sup>1</sup>, Vladimir Kovač <sup>2</sup>, Danira Sovilj <sup>2</sup> and Aleksandar Grujičić <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Urbanism, Faculty of Architecture, University of Belgrade, Bulevar kralja Aleksandra 73/2, 11000 Belgrade, Serbia; stupar@arh.bg.ac.rs (A.S.); aleksandar.grujicic@arh.bg.ac.rs (A.G.)

<sup>2</sup> Department of Architecture, Faculty of Architecture, University of Belgrade, Bulevar kralja Aleksandra 73/2, 11000 Belgrade, Serbia; kovac@arh.bg.ac.rs (V.K.); danirasovilj@gmail.com (D.S.)

\* Correspondence: antonic83@gmail.com

**Abstract:** The inner core of Sombor, known as “Venac”, is probably the best-preserved one among medium-sized cities in Serbia. The stagnation of Sombor during the 20th century and its urban shrinkage in the 21st century have prevented significant transformations of the core, enabling its preservation under state protection as an urban heritage site. However, the recent rise of cultural tourism has triggered urban regeneration. As the city is still unprepared for this change, this regeneration has mostly omitted the inner core. Realising this, local representatives and experts have started rethinking innovative approaches to its regeneration, including the concept of *Albergo Diffuso*. This sustainable concept is created to revive the historic cores of small, shrinking cities and towns. Basically, it represents a hotel situated in several old buildings dispersed throughout a historic urban fabric, fitting perfectly into the regeneration of Venac. However, the current lack of precise spatial indicators and thresholds makes their incorporation into the planning process challenging. Considering this, this study focuses on the current spatial development of tourism in Venac, analysing the elements that would support and facilitate the application of this concept in the future. This article also proposes a set of new planning measures to support a strategically organised approach—from the emphasis on urban reuse and physical renewal to multileveled linking of basic concept conditions to the prioritization of pedestrian-friendly places and the application of innovative urban design in open public spaces. By connecting the selected *Albergo Diffuso* approach with spatial development and its analysis, this study also contributes to the spatial imprint of the concept’s implementation.

**Keywords:** *Albergo Diffuso*; historic core; shrinking cities; urban renewal; cultural tourism; post-industrial development; small cities



**Citation:** Antonić, B.; Stupar, A.; Kovač, V.; Sovilj, D.; Grujičić, A. Urban Regeneration through Cultural–Tourism Entrepreneurship Based on *Albergo Diffuso* Development: The Venac Historic Core in Sombor, Serbia. *Land* **2024**, *13*, 1379. <https://doi.org/10.3390/land13091379>

Academic Editor: Maria Rosa Trovato

Received: 2 August 2024

Revised: 22 August 2024

Accepted: 23 August 2024

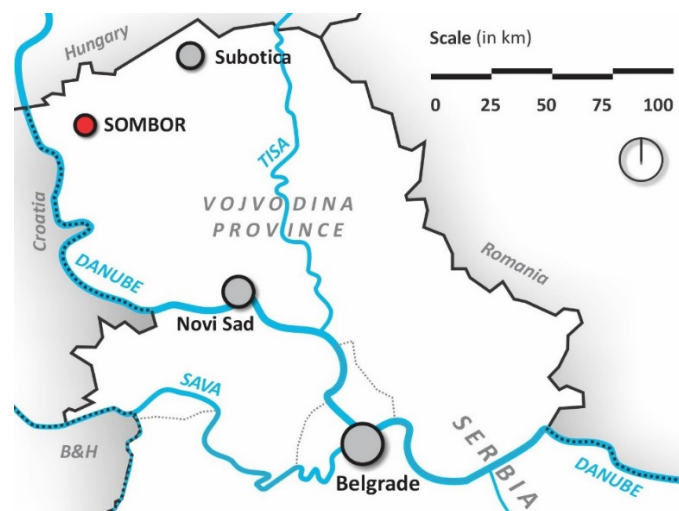
Published: 28 August 2024



**Copyright:** © 2024 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

## 1. Introduction—Cultural Tourism for Small Shrinking Historic Cities

The City of Sombor (41,814 inhabitants, 2022 [1]) is located in the northwestern part of Serbia (Figure 1). Its peripheral position (close to a “hard border” for more than 100 years), as well as its poor transport connections, has epitomised Sombor as one of the most remote medium-sized cities in the state [2]. The latest demographic data indicate that the city lost more than 10% of its population during the last inter-census period (2011–2022) [1], placing Sombor among the most vulnerable group of continuously shrinking medium-sized cities in Serbia [3]. Negative demographic trends are just one of the consequences of the underperformance of the local economy in shrinking cities, aside from weak local finances and investment atmosphere, underutilised building stock, construction land, communal and public infrastructure or empty historic urban cores [4]. Thus, considering the negative pace of urban shrinkage, Sombor is defined as a city with limited future prospects within the Serbian context [5].



**Figure 1.** Position of Sombor in Serbia and region (Authors).

This unfavourable socio-economic situation has become a long-lasting challenge to the city's regeneration, imposing significant pressure on the city authorities and experts. In these considerations, local urban planning is among the sectors of great importance in addressing the main issues related to urban shrinkage, exploring and proposing new and innovative approaches to deal with the detected problems. Consequently, urban planners in Sombor have to deal with two main challenges—whether (urban) shrinkage can and/or should be planned [6,7] and whether the local planning system has already incorporated the set of established guidelines or—at least—the necessary inputs. However, Jansen (2006) argues that widespread urban shrinkage at the end of the 20th century brought innovations and new approaches into traditional urban planning, shaping new university and student cities, R&D hub cities, retiree-friendly cities or cities as filming stages [8].

Nowadays, tourism-led development represents one of the possible solutions for urban regeneration because tourism, as an important economic driver, initiates and boosts the renewal and revitalisation of shrinking cities easily [9–11]. Furthermore, tourism has grown faster than the general economy for decades [12]. It makes up more than 30% of the entire service sector worldwide, and therefore, it is important for international trade [13]. Interestingly, the rapid global rise of tourism over the last few decades [14] has concurred with the widespread occurrence of urban shrinkage as a worldwide phenomenon [6]. However, the links between these two fields have not been properly examined scientifically [15], creating a research gap that is addressed in this study.

Considering all the above mentioned, this article is based on a concept that combines elements of (cultural) tourism and urban regeneration—the concept of a dispersed hotel, better known by its Italian name—*Albergo Diffuso*. Originating in Italy, it represents an authentic Italian phenomenon [16,17], although examples of this approach have begun to spread from Italy to other countries. However, the concept is still not fully recognised worldwide, which opens possibilities for its further application. The main features were determined by the concept's founder—Italian Giancarlo Dall'Ara. Basically, it is not a traditional hotel situated in one building or a compact urban complex with usual services in one place, but a model in which all hotel facilities are scattered across different, preferentially old buildings within a historic neighbourhood, urban quarter or even a whole settlement, e.g., small historic town [18]. Thus, the implementation of *Albergo Diffuso* firmly resonates with urban planning and design, as it becomes an integral part of the local community, supporting the local urban economy and lifestyle. Finally, it has proven to be an effective means to revive small cities and towns with historic buildings and valuable urban heritage [19]. Although the concept of *Albergo Diffuso* has gained popularity in Italy and nearby European countries [20], its implementation, based on eight conditions, is still

regionally adaptive, i.e., without precise indicators and thresholds, often representing challenges for application.

The aim of this study is to provide insight into the possibilities of incorporating the concept into a planning process. Relying on the selected case study of Sombor and its inner historic core Venac, the eight basic conditions proposed by the concept will be elaborated, spatially determined and quantified in accordance with local specificities. The selected case represents one of the best-preserved areas among medium-sized cities in Serbia. The name Venac (i.e., Wreath in English or *Ring* in German) is related to its location within Sombor, where it is detached from the newer urban fabric by four green boulevards outlining its circular shape. The historic core is under state protection as an urban heritage, which has prevented its transformations for decades. However, due to strict protective regulations, many buildings have become abandoned, and outdoor places have remained relatively underused. Venac, therefore, functions as a “city within a city”, both on a physical and functional level. Nevertheless, the recent rise of cultural tourism, driven by the nearby Danube as a major European river, has instigated new city prospects for local urban regeneration. Knowing that the local level is still unprepared for the large-scale, comprehensive regeneration of Venac, Sombor’s representatives and experts in urban planning, tourism and culture have expressed interest in upgrading planning practices, which could use the concept of *Albergo Diffuso* as a starting point for sustainable cultural tourism.

In line with the previous elements, this study is tailored as a case study of the Venac Core in Sombor, comprising two inner analyses. They target the implementation of the eight conditions embedded in the concept of *Albergo Diffuso* related to (1) the current state of local tourism entities in the core and (2) the current planning process of the selected historic ambience. Hence, the expected contributions of this study are twofold. At the international level, it is important to propose an urban planning framework adjusted for the proper implementation of *Albergo Diffuso* in small and medium-sized shrinking cities as a sustainable concept in cultural tourism. At the local level, it is important to understand which elements of the concept are suitable and/or necessary to be included in the prospective urban plan for Venac, initiating and managing cultural tourism-led urban regeneration. Finally, although many studies have explored the *Albergo Diffuso* approach, they have rarely included the spatial level of analysis. Consequently, the spatially based method applied in this article represents an additional contribution.

## 2. Literature Review—About *Albergo Diffuso*

The purpose of this section is to enlighten the concept of *Albergo Diffuso* (pl. *Alberghi Diffusi*), relating it to the challenges of urban shrinkage and regeneration.

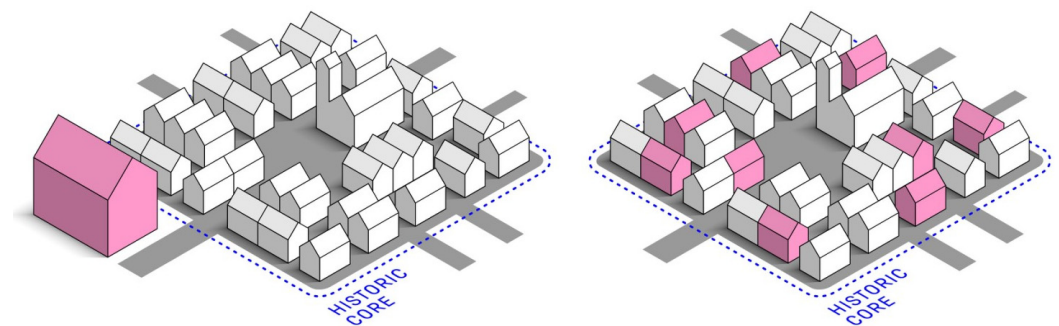
The establishment of the concept is linked to the great 1976 earthquake in the north-eastern Italian province of Friuli, around the city of Udine. Since it damaged a large number of historic buildings and old settlements in this region, an appropriate comprehensive approach to overall urban regeneration was necessary [21]. During the 1980s, the first precursor to hotels appeared, while the first hotel of the *Albergo Diffuso* type was opened in 1994. This laid the foundations for the concept and its application in other parts of Italy, especially in the south [22]. Nowadays, the north of Italy leads the way in the overall number of *Alberghi Diffusi*, reflecting another renowned Italian concept in urban tourism—the urban ‘slowness’ or ‘slow city/*Cittaslow*’ model [23].

The founder of the *Albergo Diffuso* concept, as well as its most prolific promoter, is the Italian marketing expert and entrepreneur Giancarlo Dall’Ara [24]. He also gave the definition of the term based on eight conditions. According to Villani and Dall’Ara, the *Albergo Diffuso* entity must meet the following criteria [18]:

1. Joint enterprise-like management, with a single member or a society managing hospitality services and related activities;
2. Hotel services, including accommodation, meals, room cleaning and local shuttle transfers;

3. Residential units distributed across separate, pre-existing buildings located within inhabited historic urban cores;
4. Limited distance between residential units and common areas (max. 200 m);
5. The presence of a hosting community ensuring the relationship between users and residents;
6. The presence of an authentic environment, characterised by the interaction with the local social milieu and culture;
7. Recognisability due to a well-defined and homogenous [urban] identity;
8. A management process integrated with the territory and its culture.

Compared to traditional hotels, an *Albergo Diffuso* does not represent a single building or a compact urban complex (Figure 2) [18], but its spatial elements are defined loosely since they should be adjusted to the local and/or regional context. For example, each Italian region can enact its own regulations governing *Albergo Diffuso* entities, respecting local peculiarities [24]. However, this is also a sensitive issue that can be manipulated, as many diverse tourist entities can be potentially branded as *Alberghi Diffusi*.



**Figure 2.** Schemes of the traditional model of a hotel (pink) and its urban surroundings (left) and *Albergo Diffuso* (pink), as an integral part of the surrounding (right) (Authors according to Y. Watanabe [18]).

The current experience presents this concept as a comprehensive and sustainable spatial model of tourism for small, shrinking urban communities [16,25]. It is noteworthy to underpin that this observation is not strictly limited to the aspect of spatial/physical space. *Albergo Diffuso* entities support local entrepreneurs [26] while increasing the value of urban land and the property market [27]. This type of tourist accommodation seems to be more lucrative and entrepreneur-oriented than other types used in small cities and towns [28]. The usual entrepreneur model of *Albergo Diffuso* is single ownership and management, but cooperatives may also join, e.g., creating a consortium of small local property owners with privately owned cooperative management of the entity [29].

This model of hospitality also indirectly promotes local heritage, culture, authenticity, tradition and history, raising local-based competitiveness in general [30]. De Montis et al. [31] also point out the utilisation of this approach in stimulating the preservation and revitalisation of old crafts, traditional materials and techniques for the refurbishment of historical stock. The latest studies also underline that this type of tourism represents an exceptionally adequate model regarding urban health, which was noticed during the recent COVID-19 pandemic [32,33]. Consequently, all the presented data suggest that the concept supports the sustainable preservation and promotion of local intangible heritage [34] while having a firm social significance due to its community-based approach [35].

However, certain disadvantages are also visible. For instance, a historic building stock usually has small and hard-to-adapt accommodation units (rooms and apartments). Additionally, there is a lack of nearby parking places, accessibility problems and difficulties in delivering luggage and goods through historic fabric [36]. Furthermore, *Albergo Diffuso* hotels are usually small entities, which limits the managerial abilities of local staff and can negatively impact the experience of visitors [37]. From an urban perspective, excessive



implementation of the concept, i.e., a high concentration of the *Albergo Diffuso* entities in a historic core, can lead to over-tourism [38] or even gentrification at the local level [39].

There are numerous affirmative characteristics relevant to urban planning and the regeneration of small, shrinking cities, too. For example, the concept enables the physical preservation and refurbishment of valuable small-scale historic built stock (Figure 3), while the addition of new and contemporary functions influences urban reuse processes. The *Albergo Diffuso* approach instigates the revitalisation of already existing urban ambiances (neighbourhoods, urban quarters and small settlements), dealing with locally inherited problems, such as demographic shrinkage and general disrepair. Finally, there is a positive impact on the wider community since new users (tourists) indirectly revive local services, retail, entrepreneurship and the job and property markets.



**Figure 3.** Main square in the historic core of Cormons, a town in the Friuli Region of northeastern Italy and a model place for the development of *Albergo Diffuso* (Photo by B. Antoni c, 2019).

Finally, it is important to briefly discuss cases with already established *Alberghi Diffusi*. Since Italy represents a country where the concept was invented and has been applied more extensively [16,18], it is chosen as a successful example. Insights from the official webpage of the Alberghi Diffusi Association [40] provide a list of all members, consisting of 74 *Albergo Diffuso* entities. Most of them (48 or 64%) are located in small historic towns with less than 5000 residents; however, several examples exist in medium-sized cities with 50–70 thousand inhabitants. The only constant element in all these cases is their micro-location within a historic urban ambience.

### 3. Methods and Material

This article is based on a single-case study, which is suitable for supplementing high-quality theory but also requires more in-depth research on the phenomenon [41,42]. Since the present study aims to define a set of precise spatial indicators and thresholds that would contribute to the eight conditions of the *Albergo Diffuso* concept, several internal analyses were needed to provide elaborated insight into their specificities. Consequently, the first step represented the synthesis of the theoretical fundamentals of the key research phenomenon—*Albergo Diffuso*—through which the relationship between urban shrinkage (as a problem) and urban regeneration (as a possible solution) was established. This approach also enables cross-case analysis, which is important in a single-case study [42]. The findings presented in the discussion were derived by cross-casing the results obtained from the analyses that were conducted. The comparison between the main theoretical elements

and the findings generated the final study contributions at both the international and the local levels, formulating them as a set of recommendations.

The focus of this case study represents the Venac historic core of the city of Sombor as the protected urban ambience [43], outlined by four boulevards with lush urban greenery distinguishing it from the rest of the city. This coverage of the whole historic inner core, with a “clear boundary” toward the rest of the city, distinguishes the selected case from all other Serbian cities of similar size and protection prerogatives (other cases usually include only particular public squares and streets with their surrounding). Comparing the demographic size of Sombor (42,000 inhabitants) with the Italian cities and towns that applied *Alberghi Diffusi*, it is clear that it does not represent an average urban settlement. However, it is not atypical since approximately 10% of the enlisted Italian examples have more local residents. This means that the findings and conclusions from this study will be particularly relevant for larger towns/cities with an existing or planned *Albergo Diffuso* model.

The contextual analysis uses a temporal frame that spans the period from early modernity (i.e., the early 18th century) when the current urban fabric of Sombor and Venac was set, to contemporary times. This area is included in the currently operative Plan of detailed regulation; thus, an overview of the local urban planning process overlaps with the desired urban regeneration, enlightening the critical elements of the *Albergo Diffuso* concept.

Two inner analytical lines are set within this study, addressing the most important premises of the *Albergo Diffuso* concept—tourism development and urban fabric. Therefore, the first four analyses are based on a site analysis of local tourist entities, while the last one is a review of the aforementioned plan of the core area—The Plan of Detailed Regulation for the Venac Central Zone in Sombor (Serb. *План детаљне регулације централне зоне „Венац” у Сомбору*). The site analysis of tourist entities is corroborated by internet research based on the selected travel-relevant search engines (Booking.com, Google Maps and Tripadvisor). All analyses are based on the criteria derived from the *Albergo Diffuso* concept, i.e., its eight conditions.

#### 4. Context: Venac Historic Core in Sombor, Serbia

The city of Sombor is located in the extreme northwestern part of Serbia, close to the tripoint of Serbia, Hungary and Croatia (Figure 1), and the lack of modern road connections influences its peripheral position within Serbia. The same problem is identified in three other medium-sized cities—Bor, Kikinda and Sombor (30–100 thousand inhabitants)—which are also situated in close proximity to other national tripoints [5]. The territorial remoteness of Sombor has caused its slower economic recovery and demographic decline, especially after the collapse of the socialist economy in the 1990s (Table 1):

**Table 1.** Demographic decline of Sombor during the post-socialist transition (1991–) [1,44].

Population Census Year	1991	2002	2011	2022
Number of inhabitants	48,993	51,471	47,623	41,814
Intercensal change (per year)	/	+0.46%	−0.83%	−1.11%

This difficult socio-economic situation is in sharp contrast to the rich culture and tradition of the city [45]. The importance of Sombor originates from the so-called “golden period”, i.e., the development phase during the Habsburg rule in the 18th–19th century. In 1749, Sombor was the first city in the southern Pannonian Plain, which gained a royal free city status. It represented the seat of the spacious Bač-Bodrog Country [46]. These preconditions enabled the blossom of the city in multiple ways during this period: economic, demographic, social, cultural, etc. After World War I (1914–1918), Sombor lost both the administrative importance to a new regional seat, Novi Sad, and the zone of previous influence due to the newly established national border [47]. The city entered stagnation during the interwar period, but a slow revival happened during the rapid industrialisation of socialist Yugoslavia (1945–1991). This process partially substituted the loss of its previ-

ous administrative functions. However, with the collapse of the socialist socio-economic system in the early 1990s, Sombor lost its industrial base.

In the last 10–15 years, the economic recovery of Sombor has been visible, with new industries in the southern industrial zone, a new shopping centre and the revitalisation of the retail and hospitality sectors along the main streets. However, this process has been slower than in many other cities of similar size in Serbia. The economic sector with the most noticeable rise in the last few years is tourism. If the latest available statistical data (2017–2022) are taken into account, a positive change is noticeable (Table 2):

**Table 2.** Recent trends in tourism in Sombor—the period 2017–2022 [48,49].

Year	2017	2022	Change
Number of tourists	12,335	22,296	+80.8%
Number of domestic tourists	8325	11,066	+32.9%
Number of foreign tourists	4010	11,230	+180.0%
Number of tourist nights	23,760	52,342	+120.3%
Number of nights—local tourists	16,036	25,600	+59.4%
Number of nights—foreign tourists	7724	26,742	+246.2%
Average nights per tourist	1.93	2.35	+22.4%

Notice: The statistical data in the table are more relevant for illustrating trends. The exact numbers are not reliable, as many tourists are not officially recorded, which is especially noticeable for one-day tourists and domestic tourists.

In an interview, representatives from the Tourist Board of Sombor underlined that the main drivers of city tourism originate at the national and international levels (Danube). Interest is mostly focused on culture and heritage, as both foreign and local visitors enjoy the “historic ambience” and “visibility of tradition”. The main problem is that these visits are usually one-day trips during weekend breaks due to, inter alia, a fragmented tourism offering across all segments: accommodation, meals, attractions and entrainment. For example, they underline the issue of the increased number of tourist accommodations (doubled in the last five years), which mostly belongs to the AIRBNB type (rented singular flats and houses). The interviewees also stressed that the empowerment of tourist entities through their consolidation is among the critical conditions for increasing the speed of tourism-led urban (re)development in the future.

The former glory of Sombor is especially visible in its valuable and preserved historic core—Venac—where more than 90% of all the buildings are older than 100 years. Other cities in northern Serbia also have well-presented historic cores due to more progressive urban and heritage policies applied in the former Yugoslavia, already during the 1970s [47]. Venac is encircled by four green boulevards following the former line of protective canals around the historic area, which occupies 54 hectares (Figure 4). The whole area is labelled by national legislation as a “spatial cultural-historical unit” (Serb. *Просторна културно-историјска целина*), which is the largest type of immovable, tangible cultural heritage in Serbia, applied to valuable historic ambiances in urban and rural settings [50]. Similar to the entire core, many buildings (approximately 1/3 of the total number) are also protected due to their architectural values, with different levels of importance and perseveration status. Some of them are legally defined as “cultural monuments” or architectural heritage. Furthermore, approximately 1/6 of the total number of buildings have (only) strict urban protection, which means that their street appearance (façade and street roof, doors and windows) had to be completely preserved. Finally, the remaining half of the core buildings are under urban protection, which indicates that old buildings could be replaced with new ones but with controlled street appearance and volume.



**Figure 4.** Status of state-protected buildings in Venac, Sombor (Authors, 2024).

After a long period of decline, the slow revitalisation of the historic core of Sombor started in the early 2010s, with the rise of cultural tourism along the nearby Danube and the first sights of reindustrialisation. This is noticeable in the Venac area as a very complex mixture of spatial effects [51]. The positive effects include an overall, albeit slow functional revitalisation and physical refurbishment of old buildings and open public space, and the rise of general interest for new activities and facilities suitable for the historic core and the protection of its cultural heritage (e.g., retail, hospitality, tourism, culture, high-skilled services and manifestations) (Figures 5 and 6).



**Figure 5.** Elements of urban regeneration in Venac, Sombor: refurbished buildings along the main pedestrian street (Photo by A. Grujičić, 2021).





**Figure 6.** Refurbished public square in the front of the Evangelical or “German” Church (Photo by A. Grujičić, 2021).

These new tendencies have prompted the private sector for a large-scale investment in the city. As the inner core (Venac) is strictly protected, this investment impulse is mainly focused on the outer part of the Sombor core, where many new, mostly multi-family residential buildings have been built over the last few years (Figure 7). However, many buildings in Venac remained in their previous dilapidated condition, and on-site research confirms that their age and protection status simply make them unattractive for many everyday activities (Figure 8).



**Figure 7.** Typical example of a new multi-family residential project in the inner core of Sombor in a sharp contrast with the nearby urban fabric (Photo by B. Antonić, 2018).



**Figure 8.** Two historical buildings with empty upper floors, situated on the main street of Sombor (Photo by B. Antonić, 2021).

The recent rise in cultural tourism in Sombor and its surroundings represents a new force in local urban (re)development, including an impact on Venac. This is evident in the already renewed segments, such as the main street (Figure 5) or the western part, with a high concentration of cultural institutions (Figure 6) and the emerging museum quarter [51]. In addition, the local cultural scene has been more active, including alternative and more specialised programmes. Along with the intensified retail sector, these activities have attracted the local population to the open public spaces in Venac, consequently increasing its liveability and social inclusion. This is a “win-win” situation since, nowadays, especially younger tourists strive to experience the specificities and vibrancy of “localhood” during their visits [52].

However, medium-sized cities, such as Sombor, usually have limited local capacities to properly plan and organise tourist development, even with a significant number of local tourist-cultural attractions [53]. For example, even long-established cultural events in the city have struggled to attract more visitors [54]. Furthermore, valuable examples of intangible heritage, such as the traditional loom-based manufacture of Bezdán damask silk (Figure 9), are still invisible to international tourists due to weak cooperation between public and private entities in tourism. Discussions with representatives of a very active local association of traditional crafts also revealed their prioritisation of external consumers. For instance, artisans and handcraft masters from Sombor and its vicinity market their high-quality goods in larger cities of Serbia (Belgrade, Novi Sad), where their handicrafts fetch better prices despite transportation costs. Additionally, the organisation of special outdoor cultural-tourist events and manifestations, e.g., local ethno-fairs (Figure 10), represents a good starting point for improving local presentation for both locals and cultural tourists.



**Figure 9.** Traditional, loom-based manufacture of Bezdán damask silk, although protected as a high-value intangible heritage of Serbia, remains mainly inaccessible to ordinary cultural tourists (Photo by D. Siljanović Kozoderović, 2021).



**Figure 10.** Ethno-fair in the main street in Sombor in Autumn 2022 (Photo by D. Siljanović Kozoderović, 2022).

## 5. Analysis and Results

The analysis is organised in two parts. In the first part, the current situation regarding tourist entities within the Venac core is analysed, while the second part pertains to the operational plan of the detailed regulation of Venac. Four space-related criteria are extracted from the afore-enlisted eight conditions for *Albergo Diffuso* entities (Table 3), as one of them is not applicable (the current absence of *Alberghi Diffusi* in Sombor), while three conditions are already fulfilled.

**Table 3.** Criteria for the analysis of *Albergo Diffuso* entities.

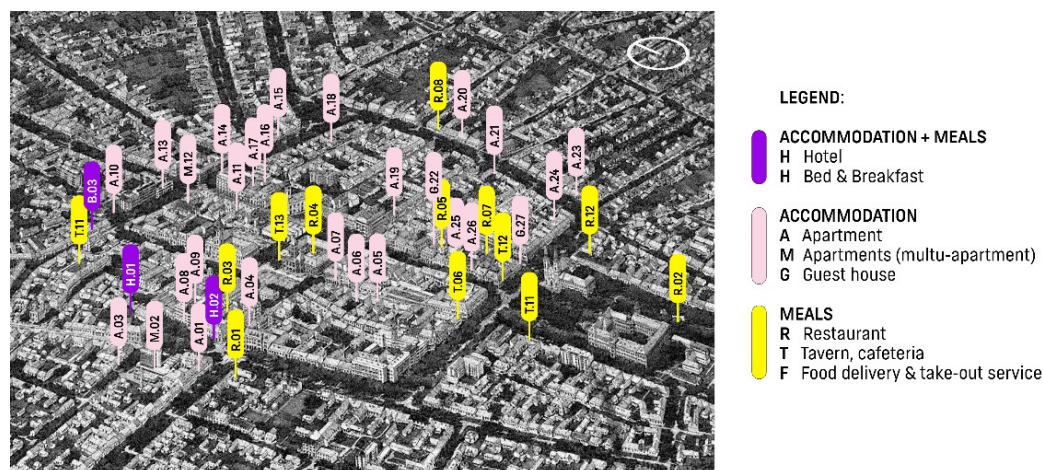
No	Condition [55]	Criterion
1	Joint enterprise-like management—a single member or a society managing hospitality services and related activities.	/ (Not applicable, as it relates to already existing local <i>Albergo Diffuso</i> )
2	Hotel services offer accommodation, meals, room cleaning, local shuttle transfers, etc.	K1: Entities engaged in basic tourist services: accommodation (small hotels, B&Bs, apartments for rent, and guesthouses) and meals (restaurants, taverns, cafeterias, take-out and food delivery services).
3	Residential units distributed in separate pre-existing buildings located within inhabited historic urban cores.	K2: Location of the entity in a historic building.
4	Limited distance between residential units and common areas, max. 200 m.	K3: The concentration of tourist entities within a diameter of 200 m, including both critical types of tourist services (accommodation and meals)
5	The presence of a hosting community ensuring the relationship between users and residents.	/ (Fulfilled due to the presence of a permanent population in Venac. It should be noted that many places and buildings are semi-occupied, underused and neglected.)
6	The presence of an authentic environment, characterised by the interaction with local social milieu and culture.	K4: The quantification of this criterion is not well-defined. Since an authentic and socially active environment can be represented by a historic urban square, park or pedestrian street, a critical diameter of influence (200 m) is used as indicator.
7	Recognisability due to well-defined and homogenous [urban] identity.	/ (Fulfilled—Venac has a strong urban identity).
8	Management process integrated in the local territory and its culture.	/ (Fulfilled by the presence of joint and centralised management: (1) heritage protection by the regional institute, (2) cultural institutions and events by the city authority, and (3) tourism management and development by the city tourist organisation).

### 5.1. Analysis 1: Active Tourist Entities

The analysis of tourist entities was conducted through site analysis/fieldwork and additionally supported by discussions with local representatives and desktop research using travel-relevant search engines (Booking.com, Google Maps and Tripadvisor).

The first criterion refers to the locations of tourist entities, i.e., the entities covering basic services in tourism: (1) tourist accommodation (e.g., (small) hotels, bed & breakfast, guesthouses and apartments for rent) and (2) dining/places to eat (restaurants, taverns, cafeterias, take-out and food delivery services). In total, 43 tourism-based enterprises were found (Figure 11), three of which combine accommodation and meals, 27 are specialised solely in accommodation, and 13 belong to different types of dining/places to eat.





**Figure 11.** Locations of active tourist entities in Venac, Sombor (Authors, 2024; Background image: B. Jovin).

The second criterion classifies the historical status/period of buildings. There are three options in the focus area: (1) historical, (2) modernist and (3) post-modernist buildings (Figure 12). Since approximately 90% of all the buildings within the protected area of Venac are historical, i.e., older than 100 years and with a ‘neoclassical’ appearance. Half of the remaining buildings (around 5%) are modernist from the socialist period (1945–1991)—several multi-family buildings (3–5 floors) situated mainly at the periphery of the Venac area. Finally, the last 5% of buildings belong to the post-socialist period (since 1991). They have been built under strict protection measures, reflected in their post-modernist or pseudo-historic appearance.



**Figure 12.** Three types of buildings in Venac, Sombor: (left) historical, (middle) modernist/socialist and (right) post-modernist/post-socialist buildings with a pseudo-historical appearance. The buildings with tourist entities (hotels, restaurants and AIRBNB flats) are intentionally chosen. (Author: B. Antonić).

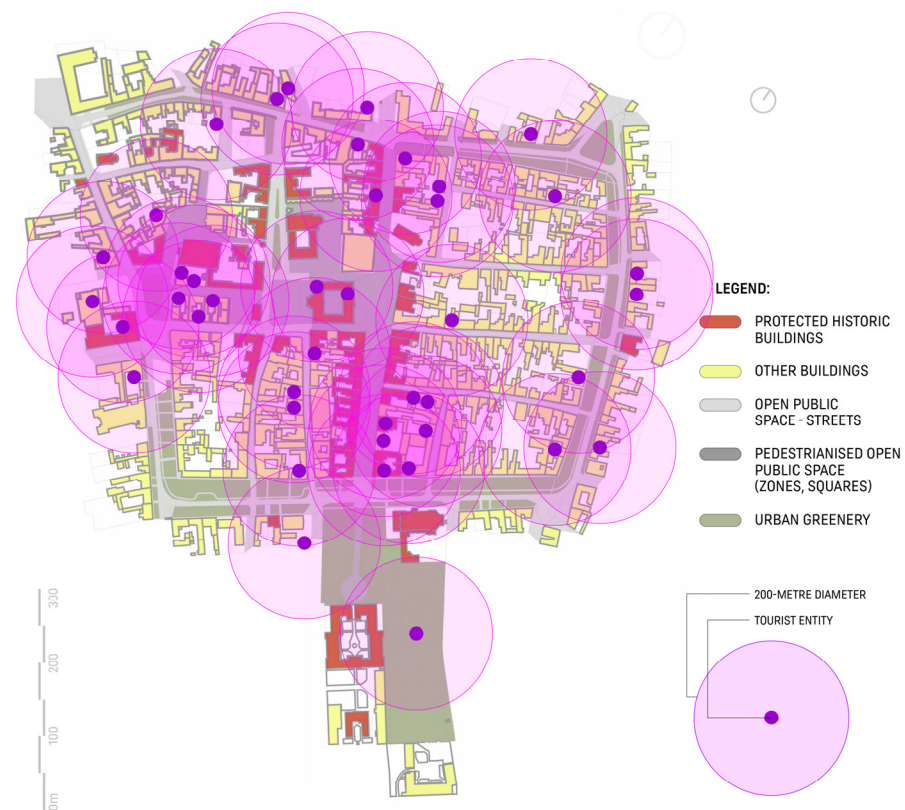
The analysis reveals that this ratio is completely different if just buildings with tourist entities are considered (Figure 13). Just twenty-eight (65%) of tourist entities are housed in historical buildings, whereas eight (19%) and seven (16%) are in modernist and post-modernist buildings, respectively. It is obvious that newer buildings are more popular, even within the historic zone that targets cultural tourists.





**Figure 13.** Distribution of tourist entities by the age of the buildings that house them in Venac, Sombor (Authors, 2024; Background image: B. Jovin).

The third criterion indicates the concentration of tourist entities for potential grouping into larger entities. A critical distance/radius of 200 m for *Albergo Diffuso* is applied, confirming the results of the first analysis (Figure 14). Two main areas of concentrated tourist entities are the southern and western edges of Venac. For example, fourteen entities (33%) have at least four other entities in close proximity (up to 200 m radius). Conversely, six of them have just one entity within the diameter, all of them situated in the eastern and northeastern parts of Venac.



**Figure 14.** Concentration of tourist entities in Venac, Sombor (Authors, 2024).

The fourth and last criterion is the proximity to the nearest authentic and socially active environment—an urban square, park or pedestrian street. In the case of Venac, this is simplified into proximity to pedestrianised zones, including the main retail street and several small squares and parks in the nearby surrounding. Consequently, a belt zone (200 m) is applied around the pedestrianised spaces, and the obtained results (Figure 15) confirm that the overall majority of tourist entities in Venac are less than 100 m away from the nearest segment of the central pedestrian zone in Sombor. Ten entities (23%) are outside this zone, while nineteen (45%) have direct access to the pedestrian zone.



**Figure 15.** Proximity of tourist entities to the nearest authentic and socially active environment in Venac, Sombor (Authors, 2024).

### 5.2. Analysis 2: Urban Plan for Venac

The Plan for Detailed Regulation of the ‘Venac’ Central Zone in Sombor (Serb. *План детаљне регулације централне зоне „Венац” у Сомбору*; hereinafter—the plan) was officially adopted by the city authorities in 2009. The main aim of the plan is to address the “multiple potentials (tourist, cultural, public, administrative, etc.) of the central zone [of Sombor], which can be utilised only through a detailed examination of the area” [56] (p. 1). After 15 years of its implementation and the general change in development conditions, the plan has become insufficient and even obsolete in some segments. According to local planners, the document was prepared in a rather different context from the mid-2000s. Since then, a lot of open public spaces have been pedestrianised, creating an impact on local facilities and general use. Everyday retail in the city centre has shifted to a specialised one, while the immense rise in the service and hospitality sectors has been detected. Similarly to retail, private entities in the quaternary economic sector (business, agencies and offices) have mainly relocated from the centre to the peripheral boulevards of Venac, enabling easier access. The problem of parking has also become more evident in the last few years. Nevertheless, the current plan is operative until the adoption of a new one (in preparation since 2022).

The current plan envisions the development of (cultural) tourism among its main objectives—as one of the most important development opportunities for Venac—with a necessity to expand accommodation options. One of the conclusions states that the old housing stock in the area does not satisfy the current needs of residents (“citizens do not want to live in a city that is more like a museum” [56] (p. 8) and, consequently, the plan implies a solution that would combine the preservation of urban heritage and history with the modernisation of the old city core through innovative approaches [56]. Additionally, the operative objectives of the plan are, inter alia, the restoration and appropriate adaptation of buildings in accordance with their protection status and the flexible planning of urban functions and their rational use (including basements and attics) [56]. All these elements of the plan support the concept of *Albergo Diffuso*.

The list of the extracted criteria for the analysis of *Albergo Diffuso* development in Venac is given in Table 4. It is important to underline that the plan does not separate tourism as a specific activity—it is included in the wide definition of service activities (retail, crafts, etc.) in both the text and graphics (maps). This classification is also used in the building and regulation rules.

**Table 4.** Criteria for the analysis of *Albergo Diffuso* development in Sombor.

No	Criterion	Explanation from the Plan for Venac Area, Sombor
1	Entities engaged in basic tourist services: accommodation and meals.	Partially fulfilled. In general, the plan supports mixed-use development, where tourism is combined with housing and services. The regulations for mixed-use zones are applicable [56] (p. 24), even at the plot level—e.g., housing + tourism [56] (p. 37). Consequently, the plan supports tourism development, but it does not have specific rules.
2	Location of an entity in a historic building.	Partially fulfilled. The protection measures given in the plan focus on building appearance, roof typology (e.g., pitched roof), materialisation and façade aesthetics. The reuse of old buildings has to be in line with permitted activities, including tourism [56]. However, there are no indications on possible reuse.
3	The concentration of tourist entities (200 m radius), including both critical types of tourist service.	Unfulfilled. Corresponding elements do not exist in the plan. Tourism development is accepted throughout the whole area covered by the plan, excluding public buildings (e.g., government, schools and cultural institutions).
4	Proximity (up to 100 m) to the nearest authentic and socially active environment.	Partially fulfilled. The main contribution of the plan to the <i>Albergo Diffuso</i> development is the proposal for the preservation targeting the entire public space of Venac. Planning regulations and codes for open public spaces focus on streets, squares and pedestrian areas (“pavement zones”), as well as green areas (urban parks and alleys). The regulations consider infrastructural development, while just one paragraph is dedicated to physical interventions (mentioning “pavement, greenery, urban furniture, colours, lightening, artistic elements such as public sculptures, water elements” and the preservation of urban vistas [56] (p. 12). Green areas are considered in one general regulation related to the preservation of autochthonous plant varieties [56] (pp. 12–13).

## 6. Discussion

The analysis of the spatial imprint of tourist entities in Venac indicates a recent increase in their number and types (guesthouses, apartments for rent, restaurants, etc.), which

is in line with the recent rise in tourism in Serbia and along the Danube. It is noticeable that these entities are well-distributed throughout the analysed area, with a few exceptions. Accommodation-based facilities are almost absent in the southern part, where city administration and governmental institutions are mostly located. Conversely, a lot of dining places are situated in this part, dominantly serving local users. A similar situation is identified around the main street, which divides Venac as a north–south axis. Tourist entities in the western part of Venac are especially interesting, as two hotels and the only B&B entity are located there, as well as several restaurants.

Furthermore, mapping reveals the situations with several multi-apartment entities, as well as buildings with two or more unrelated apartments for rent, implying a tendency toward grouping. Local planning and tourism experts explain this finding using new local trends—(1) the transformation of inherited houses into new guesthouses with multiple small apartments for short-term rentals and (2) the introduction of new property payers willing to buy flats in multi-family buildings, neighbourhoods or streets in Venac and converting them into short-term rental apartments in close proximity. These trends might be interpreted as a pre-step in the conceptualisation of the *Albergo Diffuso* approach. There is a higher concentration of this type of tourist entity in the southern and western parts of the core. In the western part of Venac, a higher concentration of tourist entities overlaps with cultural and entertainment facilities and activities, which are mostly located in this zone [51]. In contrast to this, the northeastern section of Venac is defined by a lower concentration of tourist estates despite its relative tranquillity and prevailing residential characteristics.

The results related to the building age of tourist entities reveal that those rated as above average are located in newer buildings, mostly built in the last three decades of the post-socialism era, with a post-modernist/pseudo-historic appearance. This points out the dominant preferences of owners, directed toward a historic look for their tourist facilities and the overall ambience but without the usual challenges associated with older buildings (obsolete internal organisation and installations, old construction and more expensive refurbishment and restoration). Similarly, entities situated in modernist buildings from the socialist period (1945–1991) are also numerous. However, there is not any noticeable pattern in the spatial distribution of the three periodically/architecturally defined types of buildings—all of them could be found throughout Venac.

Another evident factor in the positioning of tourist entities in Venac is the proximity of the main pedestrian zone. The findings underpin its importance for the development of (cultural) tourism, as it is both a key place for everyday leisure and entertainment and the main linking element between different ‘high-end’ tourist urban contents in Sombor: culture, retail, services, administration, etc.

The analysis of the operative urban plan for Venac presents a set of results related to urban activities and their current status, but it could also be applicable in the planning process focused on future local development. This is especially important considering the fact that the (still) valid plan endorses the development of tourism and other complementing activities, such as culture or retail) but does not elaborate on all necessary regulations and guidelines. Furthermore, the plan entails rules on the protection and sustainable use of buildings and outdoor spaces in Venac, but it is not very explicit regarding urban regeneration and building reuse. However, these elements are crucial for the implementation of the *Albergo Diffuso* development concept. Having in mind both the functional and spatial features of the analysed plan, it could be concluded that it does not prohibit the *Albergo Diffuso* transformation, but its premises do not envision its application.

## 7. Conclusions

The collected data systematised through the conducted analyses clearly underline that the private sector in the local tourism of Sombor has been very active lately, with many new tourist entities. The spatial distribution and types of tourist entities in Venac, the historic core of the city, also demonstrate a trend of concentration and grouping in areas with more



tourist-oriented activities (culture, hospitality, entertainment and retail). However, this has not led to the establishment of an *Albergo Diffuso*, even though this model could represent a more lucrative type of tourist establishment compared to the currently dominant guesthouses or rental apartments. Moreover, other trends reveal a negative development—e.g., the tendency for new tourist entities to be housed in the rare new buildings within the historic fabric of Sombor. This is an unsustainable trend from the perspective of the preservation and/or use of cultural heritage, as stated in the theoretical fundamentals of the *Albergo Diffuso* approach. Consequently, the concept emphasises its multi-aspect advantages, which are critical for regenerating the surrounding historic urban environment. As many of these advantages are interconnected, it is important to embrace an integrative strategic approach to urban planning for *Albergo Diffuso*.

Considering the findings from the last analysis of the operative urban plan for Venac, it is obvious that this approach is not being met. This gap, as well as the implications from the theoretical section of this article, provides input for a new plan, which is currently in the first phase of preparation by the local urban planning institute:

1. Since (cultural) tourism has become an important driver of the economy for both Sombor and Venac, it requires a separate analysis and planning measures included in the new plan. The importance of sustainable forms of urban cultural tourism (e.g., *Albergo Diffuso*) also has to be underlined and elaborated. The aforementioned customised regional rules to establish an *Albergo Diffuso* in different Italian provinces can be used as a role-model.
2. The formally highlighted importance of urban preservation is not sufficient without the introduction of precise and elaborated measures for the revival of historic fabric, urban heritage and traditional ambiances. Special emphasis should be given to the measures addressing a functional level (i.e., appropriate reuse) since this aspect is often neglected in urban plans. The latest planning practices on the reuse of industrial heritage in the region can be utilised for these purposes, as they also rely on sustainable changes in building activity. For example, the transformation of old mills in Čačak and Vršac (Serbia) into new small-format hotels or the reuse of an old silk factory on the Danube waterfront in the centre of the nearby city of Mohacs in Hungary for cultural and hospitality purposes [57].
3. The current trend of replacing old buildings with new ones, without strict protection but with a pseudo-historical appearance, is completely unsustainable. Hence, special planning measures bridging cultural tourism, urban regeneration and restoration should be enforced in order to minimise this trend. Some of them could clarify/define suitable types of urban tourism for the existing building typology in Venac, providing further explanations and preferential status. In addition, the plan should include special guidelines for cases under ambiental/urban protection, where street façade and roofs have to be preserved and adjusted to new elements behind them.
4. The current plan treats the whole area of Venac rather uniformly. However, certain parts function differently. The new plan has to acknowledge these differences through the development of tourism and spatial thematisation. As *Albergo Diffuso* includes almost all segments of tourist services, it could be a good pilot project for the revival of the parts that have been economically passive (for ex., the northeastern part of Venac). In contrast, it could be developed into a more thematised form in the already vibrant Western part, with culture and entertainment activities. For instance, it could focus on younger tourists and digital nomads as prospective contributors to tourism along the Danube Route [58];
5. Venac is rich in open public space, but many segments are not designed to embrace local identity and authentic ambience. Therefore, the plan has to underline the importance of ambience-tailored urban design and placemaking efforts. This can be an effective tool for the revival of the eastern part, based on the aforementioned concept of “slow city” tourism.

The listed inputs target the development of an *Albergo Diffuso* in Venac in Sombor, but they have a wider significance, both functionally and spatially, for the concept implementation in similar conditions of medium-sized cities. The eight conditions for establishing an *Albergo Diffuso* represent a good starting point; nevertheless, they need to be regionally and locally customised in a strategic, integrative way. For example, the Sombor case shows that there is a need for the customisation of the 200-meter threshold regarding the specificities of the urban matrix and local ambience—it is not the same if all units of an *Albergo Diffuso* are situated along a street or around a public square. In these cases, an even more rigid threshold can be installed. Other conditions also need further explanation and precise definitions. For instance, the presence of an authentic environment with local culture and lifestyle also varies in its meaning, as this can be questionable in abandoned historical cities and urban cores.

Through the presented local customisation of the *Albergo Diffuso* concept, two initial research goals are achieved, highlighting the possible support that this model could provide for the cultural–tourism-led urban regeneration of Venac/Sombor. Additionally, the study conducted in this article highlights the significance of spatially based analysis for the future development and local application of *Albergo Diffuso* in similar urban contexts of medium-sized cities. The last conclusion also affirms future research directed toward the application of the concept to small cities and towns in Serbia and/or provides criteria for the evaluation of the results achieved after the implementation of a new plan targeting the area of Venac.

The Sombor case presents the possibility of connecting the notion of an authentic environment and identity with a distance to the nearest open public spaces, which are pedestrian-friendly (e.g., pedestrian zones and shared urban space). They usually attract a lot of local users, as well as external visitors, but the importance of pedestrian-friendly open spaces is not highlighted enough in theory. Furthermore, the condition related to a well-defined and homogenous urban identity is also challenging, as it should be professionally evaluated. However, officially declared urban-heritage zones and ambiances could be used as tools for formalising this condition. Finally, all the afore-explained proposals for the upgrading of the urban planning process and documents should be supplemented by appropriate fiscal and financial measures which could, in the long run, support the sustainable development of an *Albergo Diffuso*—its local applicability and overall contribution to the ongoing urban regeneration of historic urban areas.

**Author Contributions:** Conceptualization, B.A.; Methodology, B.A.; Validation, A.S.; Resources, V.K.; Data curation, V.K.; Writing—review & editing, A.G.; Visualization, D.S.; Supervision, A.S. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding. However, it is based on the cooperation established through the INTERREG Danube Project “DANube Urban Brand + Building Regional and Local Resilience through the Valorization of Danube’s Cultural Heritage—DANURB+” (2020–2022).

**Data Availability Statement:** The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors on request.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## References

1. Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia—SORS. 2022 *Census of Population, Households and Dwellings: Age and Sex: Data by Settlements*; SORS: Belgrade, Serbia, 2023. Available online: <https://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2023/Pdf/G20234003.pdf> (accessed on 15 July 2024).
2. Antonić, B.; Djukić, A.; Marić, J. Borderland Shrinking Cities: “Uncharted Territory” in International Research of Urban Shrinkage. In Proceedings of the VSU’2020 Conference Proceedings—Volume II. XX International Scientific Conference on Construction and Architecture—VSU’2020, Sofia, Bulgaria, 15–17 October 2020.
3. Djurkin, D.; Antić, M.; Djordjević, D. Demographic Aspects of Urban Shrinkage in Serbia: Trajectory, Variety, and Drivers of Shrinking Cities. *Sustainability* **2023**, *15*, 15961. [CrossRef]

4. Haase, A.; Rink, D.; Grossmann, K.; Bernt, M.; Mykhenko, V. Conceptualizing urban shrinkage. *Environ. Plan. A* **2014**, *46*, 1519–1534. [CrossRef]
5. Djukić, A.; Antonić, B.; Vujičić, T. Urban Shrinkage in a ‘Shrinking’ Serbia—The Approach to a Global Phenomenon in a Local Context. *Geod. Vestn.* **2017**, *61*, 614–629. [CrossRef]
6. Hollander, J.; Pallagst, K.; Schwarz, T.; Popper, F. Planning Shrinking Cities. *Prog. Plan.* **2009**, *72*, 223–232. Available online: [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=1616130](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1616130) (accessed on 15 July 2024).
7. Sousa, S.; Pinho, P. Policies and strategies for dealing with demographic change/shrinkage in Oporto (Portugal). In *Demographic Change and Local Development: Shrinkage, Regeneration and Social Dynamics*; Martinez-Fernandez, C., Kubo, N., Noya, A., Weyman, T., Eds.; OECD: Paris, France, 2012; pp. 103–112.
8. Antonić, B. Housing as an Activator of Urban Development in Shrinking Cities: The Case of Cities in Vojvodina. Ph.D. Thesis, University of Belgrade—Faculty of Architecture, Belgrade, Serbia, 2018. Available online: [http://nardus.mpn.gov.rs/handle/123456789/10342?locale-attribute=sr\\_RS](http://nardus.mpn.gov.rs/handle/123456789/10342?locale-attribute=sr_RS) (accessed on 15 July 2024).
9. Lak, A.; Gheitasi, M.; Timothy, D. Urban regeneration through heritage tourism: Cultural policies and strategic management. *J. Tour. Cult. Chang.* **2020**, *18*, 386–403. [CrossRef]
10. Wise, N.; Jimura, T. *Tourism, Cultural Heritage and Urban Regeneration: Changing Spaces in Historical Places*; Springer: Cham, UK, 2020.
11. Lei, H.; Zhou, Y. Conducting Heritage Tourism-Led Urban Renewal in Chinese Historical and Cultural Urban Spaces: A Case Study of Datong. *Land* **2022**, *11*, 2122. [CrossRef]
12. United Nations World Tourism Organization—UNWTO. *International Tourism Growth Continues to Outpace the Global Economy*; UNWTO: Madrid, Spain, 2020. Available online: <https://www.unwto.org/international-tourism-growth-continues-to-outpace-the-economy> (accessed on 15 July 2024).
13. United Nations World Tourism Organization—UNWTO. *UNWTO Tourism Highlights: 2017 Edition*; UNWTO: Madrid, Spain, 2017.
14. Richards, G. Cultural tourism: A review of recent research and trends. *J. Hosp. Tour. Manag.* **2018**, *36*, 12–21. [CrossRef]
15. Deng, T.; Liu, S.; Hu, Y. Can tourism help to revive shrinking cities? An examination of Chinese case. *Tour. Econ.* **2022**, *28*, 1683–1691. [CrossRef]
16. Confalonieri, M. A typical Italian phenomenon: The “albergo diffuso”. *Tour. Manag.* **2011**, *32*, 685–687. [CrossRef]
17. Pietrogrande, E.; Vaccher, F. The Albergo Diffuso: An innovative model for tourism development and territorial enhancement. In *Proceedings of the Next Architecture—The 3rd International Conference S.ARCH 2016*, Budva, Montenegro, 25–27 May 2016.
18. Dall’Ara, G. *Manuale dell’albergo diffuso [Manual for Albergo Diffuso/Dispersed Hotel]*; Franco Angeli: Milan, Italy, 2015.
19. Morena, M.; Truppi, T.; Del Gatto, M.L. Sustainable tourism and development: The model of the Albergo Diffuso. *J. Place Manag. Dev.* **2016**, *10*, 447–460. [CrossRef]
20. Foulkes, I. Can Modern Makeover Save Smallest Swiss Village? 2017. Available online: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-41114730> (accessed on 15 July 2024).
21. Toson, C. *Il Racconto dell’Albergo Diffuso 1978–2014 [The Tale of the Albergo Diffuso 1978–2014]*; AArchitects: Udine, Italy, 2015.
22. Murphy, M. The Towns Italy Forgot. *National Geographic Traveler*, September 2011. Available online: <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/italy-hotels-traveler/> (accessed on 15 July 2024).
23. Lancerini, E. Territori lenti: Contributi per una nuova geografia deipaesaggi abitati italiani [Slow Territories: Contributions for a New Geography of Italian Inhabited Landscapes]. *Territorio* **2005**, *34*, 9–15. Available online: [https://www.francoangeli.it/riviste/Scheda\\_rivista.aspx?IDArticolo=25628](https://www.francoangeli.it/riviste/Scheda_rivista.aspx?IDArticolo=25628) (accessed on 15 July 2024).
24. Williams, G. Saving Towns by Filling Rooms in Italy. *The New York Times*, 19 May 2010. Available online: <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/23/travel/23journeys.html> (accessed on 15 July 2024).
25. Dropulić, M.; Krajnović, A.; Ružić, P. Albergo Diffuso Hotels—A Solution to Sustainable Development of Tourism. In *Proceedings of the Knowledge for Sustainable Development—Conference Proceedings. 27th International Conference on Organizational Science Development*, Portorož, Slovenia, 19–21 March 2008. Available online: <http://bib.irb.hr/datoteka/361120.077Dropulic.pdf> (accessed on 15 July 2024).
26. Iannone, B.; Marcella, L. The Brand Value in a New Concept of Hotel: The Albergo Diffuso Sextantio Case. *Int. Bus. Res.* **2019**, *12*, 81–93. [CrossRef]
27. Cucari, N.; Wankowicz, E.; Esposito De Falco, S. Rural tourism and Albergo Diffuso: A case study for sustainable land-use planning. *Land Use Policy* **2019**, *82*, 105–119. [CrossRef]
28. Presenza, A.; Yucelen, M.; Camillo, A. Passion before profit in hospitality ventures. Some thoughts on Lifestyle Entrepreneur and the case of “Albergo Diffuso”. *Sinergie—Ital. J. Manag.* **2016**, *34*, 221–239.
29. Dichter, G.; Dall’Ara, G. Albergo Diffuso: Developing Tourism through Innovation and Tradition. Available online: [https://www.ideassonline.org/public/pdf/br\\_47\\_01.pdf](https://www.ideassonline.org/public/pdf/br_47_01.pdf) (accessed on 15 August 2024).
30. Valeri, M.; Paoloni, P. Competitiveness and Sustainability in Tourism Industry: The Albergo Diffuso Case Study. *Int. J. Bus. Manag.* **2017**, *12*, 108–118. [CrossRef]
31. De Montis, A.; Ledda, A.; Ganciu, A.; Serra, V.; De Montis, S. Recovery of rural centres and “albergo diffuso”: A case study in Sardinia, Italy. *Land Use Policy* **2015**, *47*, 12–28. [CrossRef]

32. Mortensen, A.; Di Donato, V. How Italy Accidentally Invented the Perfect Covid-Era Hotel. 2021. Available online: <https://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/italy-covid-hotel-albergo-diffuso/index.html> (accessed on 12 July 2024).
33. Hengel, L. Alberghi Diffusi Are the Most Sustainable Hotels in Italy—Here’s Why. *Forbes Online*, 27 January 2024. Available online: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/liviahengel/2021/01/27/alberghi-diffusi-are-the-most-sustainable-hotels-in-italy---heres-why/> (accessed on 12 July 2024).
34. Vallone, C.; Orlandini, P.; Cecchetti, R. Sustainability and Innovation in Tourism Services: The Albergo Diffuso Case Study. *Eurasian J. Soc. Sci.* **2013**, *1*, 21–34. Available online: [https://www.academia.edu/68855422/The\\_Albergo\\_Diffuso\\_Case\\_Study](https://www.academia.edu/68855422/The_Albergo_Diffuso_Case_Study) (accessed on 15 July 2024).
35. Droli, M. *The Albergo Diffuso Model: Community-Based Hospitality for a Sustained Competitive Advantage*; De Gruyter: Berlin, Germany; Boston, MA, USA, 2019.
36. Vallone, C.; Veglio, V. Customer Perceptions of the Albergo Diffuso Concept: What Makes the Difference in Terms of Service Excellence? *Tour. Anal.* **2019**, *24*, 367–375. [[CrossRef](#)]
37. Angelini, A. Sustainable tourism and Albergo Diffuso: A customer experience assessment. In Proceedings of the EISIC 25th Conference Proceedings. “Excellence in Services” 25th International Conference, Gotland, Sweden, 25–26 August 2022. Available online: [https://arpi.unipi.it/retrieve/44849e0a-7a78-4467-8d2e-d60737d0c9c8/PaperANGELINI\\_Def30922.pdf](https://arpi.unipi.it/retrieve/44849e0a-7a78-4467-8d2e-d60737d0c9c8/PaperANGELINI_Def30922.pdf) (accessed on 15 July 2024).
38. Vallone, C.; Capocchi, A.; Orlandini, P.; Amaduzzi, A. Can the New Hospitality Model of Albergo Diffuso Solve the Overtourism Issue? The Case of Tuscany. In *The Overtourism Debate*; Oskam, J.A., Ed.; Emerald: Leeds, UK, 2020; pp. 279–300.
39. Cass, S. Albergo Diffuso: District Hospitality + Application to Chinatown. Ph.D. Thesis, University of Hawai’i at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, USA, 2019.
40. Alberghi Diffusi Association. Available online: <https://www.alberghidiffusi.it/?lang=en> (accessed on 7 July 2024).
41. Dyer, G.; Wilkins, L.; Eisenhardt, M. Better stories, not better constructs, to generate better theory: A rejoinder to Eisenhardt; better stories and better constructs: The case for rigor and comparative logic. *Acad. Manag. Rev.* **1991**, *16*, 613. [[CrossRef](#)]
42. Gustafsson, J. Single Case Studies vs. Multiple Case Studies: A Comparative Study. Student Paper, Halmstad University, Halmstad, Sweden, 2017. Available online: <https://hh.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1064378/FULLTEXT01.pdf> (accessed on 15 July 2024).
43. Cultural Monuments of Serbia. In *Istorijsko Jezgro Sombora—‘Venac’*; National Center for Digitization: Belgrade, Serbia. Available online: <http://spomenikikulture.mi.sanu.ac.rs/spomenik.php?id=992> (accessed on 15 July 2024).
44. Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia—SORS. *Book No 20 “2011 Census of Population, Households and Dwellings: Comparative Overview of the Number of Population in 1948, 1953, 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991, 2002 and 2011: Data by Settlements*; SORS: Belgrade, Serbia, 2014.
45. Stepanović, M. In *That Sombor Town—Seen through the Prism of Time*; NGO “Norma” & “Karlo Bijelicki”; City Library: Sombor, Serbia, 2020.
46. Jerković, V.; Petrović, M. *Историја Сомбора: Град Кроз Векове [History of Sombor: The City through Centuries]*; City Library: Sombor, Serbia, 2017.
47. Djukić, A.; Stupar, A.; Antić, B. The consequences of urban policies in socialist Yugoslavia on the transformation of historic centres: The case study of cities in Northern Serbia. *J. Hous. Built Environ.* **2018**, *33*, 555–573. [[CrossRef](#)]
48. Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia—SORS. *Општине и региони у Републици Србији 2018 [Municipalities and Regions in the Republic of Serbia 2018]*; SORS: Belgrade, Serbia, 2018. Available online: <https://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2018/Pdf/G201813045.pdf> (accessed on 22 August 2024).
49. Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia—SORS. *Општине и региони у Републици Србији 2023 [Municipalities and Regions in the Republic of Serbia 2023]*; SORS: Belgrade, Serbia, 2023. Available online: <https://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2023/Pdf/G202313050.pdf> (accessed on 22 August 2024).
50. Ministry of Culture and Information of the Republic of Serbia—MCI. *Закон о културним добрима [Law on Cultural Properties]*; 1994–2021; Official Gazette of RS No 71/1994, 52/2011, 99/2011, 6/2020 & 35/2021: Belgrade, Serbia, 2021.
51. Antić, B.; Djukić, A.; Marić, J. Micro-Museum Quarter as an Approach in the Culture-Led Urban Regeneration of Small Shrinking Historic Cities: The Case of Sombor, Serbia. *Heritage* **2023**, *6*, 6616–6633. [[CrossRef](#)]
52. Jungersted, S. Localhood: The Epigou. In *The Local Turn in Tourism: Empowering Communities*; Higgins-Desbiolles, F., Chew Bigby, B., Eds.; De Gruyter: Berlin, Germany, 2023; pp. 155–168.
53. Sroda-Murawska, S.; Grzelak-Kostulska, E.; Bieganska, J.; Dabrowski, L. Culture and Sustainable Tourism: Does the Pair Pay in Medium-Sized Cities? *Sustainability* **2021**, *13*, 9072. [[CrossRef](#)]
54. Blešić, I.; Pivac, T.; Đorđević, J.; Stamenković, I.; Janičević, S. Cultural events as part of cultural tourism development. Case study: Sombor and Apatin (Serbia). *Acta Geogr. Slov.* **2014**, *54*, 381–390. [[CrossRef](#)]
55. Villani, T.; Dall’Ara, G. Albergo Diffuso as a model of original hospitality and sustainable development of small historical villages. *TECHNE* **2015**, *10*, 169–178.
56. “Urbanism” PE Sombor—US. *План Детаљне Регулације Централне Зоне „Венац” У Сомбору [Plan of Detailed Regulation of “Venac” Central Zone in Sombor]* *Tourism, Cultural Heritage and Urban Regeneration: Changing Spaces in Historical Places*; Springer: Heidelberg, Germany, 2009; p. 8.



57. Rabb, D. Redefining an Industrial Heritage. Budapest, Hungary, 2021. Available online: <https://meonline.hu/en/aktualis/tema/pari-muemlek-ujradefinialasa/> (accessed on 16 August 2024).
58. Wiener Institut für Internationale Wirtschaftsvergleiche—WIIW. Potential for the Digital Economy in the Danube Region. Available online: <https://wiiw.ac.at/potential-for-the-digital-economy-in-the-danube-region-e-658.html> (accessed on 28 June 2024).

**Disclaimer/Publisher’s Note:** The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.