

Rise of container structures along the Danube River in Bratislava: Transformation of the embankment after the river regulation

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Abstract: The paper traces the particular moments of historical development of the Bratislava (now the capital of Slovakia) embankment along the Danube River during the 20th century until present. The observed territory is understood as a relatively newly formed terrain that resulted as a by-product of river regulation at the end of the 19th century. The emerged space offered attractive and spacious building plots for various new typologies and rather than a compact city block, these were mostly hosted in the container-like structures. Referencing the theoretical work of De Solà-Morales, the containers are understood as self-standing, large-volume envelopes creating a controlled platform for order and consumption. Research was focused on the study of visual archival materials and contributions in architectural journals of the period. The selected aspects were subsequently displayed in the form of author's schemes, which combine map data with an axonometric representation of the described objects. The paper distinguishes three different periods of embankment development that correspond to the political and economic historical framework and highlights the specific characteristics of each of them. While the interwar era brought the concept of free-standing palaces on the waterfront, the period of socialism was generally characterised by failed ambitious plans. Finally, the period of the neoliberal transformation of the city set the new condition for real estate market and resulted in the construction boom on the waterfront. The long-awaited construction on the waterfront is now in the hands of the private sector, while containers-like residence complexes and shopping malls are ultimately raising the questions about their generic nature.

Keywords: Bratislava, Danube, embankment, urban history, post-socialist city

INTRODUCTION

Main part of the Bratislava (now the capital of Slovakia) embankment between the Lanfranconi and Apollo bridges, largely consists of private facilities built during the last two decades. Voluminous complexes that combine luxury residences and commerce are complementing the fragments of historical waterfront and currently vacant plots along the river. On a small scale, this territory illustrates the changes that the city underwent after the fall of the socialist regime under the pressure of private capital. The increasing privatisation of the riverbank puts in danger the attributes of the public space. This paper traces the particular moments of historical development that contributed to the current state of the waterfront.

The urban development of the Bratislava embankment itself was recently analysed as a result of several partially completed spatial plans and urban studies. (Moravčíková, Szalay, Haberlandová, Krišteková, Bočková, 2020) This contribution aims to describe in more detail the form and function of selected objects that were constructed on the embankment following the regulation of the river and to point out their social background. The paper distinguishes three different periods of embankment

development that correspond to the political and economic historical framework and highlights the specific characteristics of each of them.

The research was focused on the study of visual archival materials and contributions in architectural journals of the period. The selected aspects were subsequently displayed in the form of author's schemes, which combine map data with an axonometric representation of the described objects. The theoretical framework of the research is represented by a phenomenological approach. For the investigation of these objects the definition of urban categories by Ignasi De Solà-Morales was applied. The development that arose on the waterfront during the 20th century and then sharply culminated in the 21st century was examined through the urban category of a *container*.

De Solà-Morales defines containers as "the envelopes in which the ritual of consumption takes place, places where the distribution of desired goods finds its consumers ready to spend part of their accumulated wealth." (De Solà-Morales, 1996) Containers cover large interior and exterior spaces, drawing people from the city streets into an artificial environment that creates a controlled platform for order and consumption. In addition to

the clearly commercial spaces of shopping centres, containers for De Solà-Morales are also museums, stadiums, opera houses, amusement parks, or historical monuments transformed into tourist attractions. They act as bubbles of concentrated clusters that, depending on their scale, can grow into mega projects with a multifunctional content and ambitiously assume the function of the urban core. At the end of the 19th century, the frontal line of the left bank of the Danube in Bratislava was mainly composed of residential houses built in continuous compact blocks. However, the beginning of the new century brought new typologies that the concentrated urban structure could not adopt. Available building plots for larger urban palaces emerged next to the river, in an area that resulted as a by-product of the Danube regulation.

The regulation of the Danube River in the territory of Bratislava took place from the middle of the 18th century to the beginning of the 20th century in three main phases. (Pišút, 2018) The reshaping of the river was motivated by economic, practical, or political-cultural reasons. In order to narrow the river into the desired shape, transverse stone spurs were built during the second phase of the regulation, between the years 1832 and 1834. This effort was followed up by the third phase of a systematic river channelizing between the years 1886 and 1896. The narrowing of the river and the filling up of the land on its banks subsequently continued in the first decades of the 20th century. (Pišút, 2017) The interventions carried out during the regulation of the river are considered the key moment for the subsequent construction on the embankment. The newly created sites turned out to be an ideal space for the construction of objects and areas of larger scales that could not be squeezed into the historical city.

ORIGIN OF THE CONTAINER ON THE WATERFRONT DURING THE INTERWAR ERA

Although the real consumer society and its influence on construction was fully manifested only in the period of post-socialist transformation of Bratislava, the germs of the urban container can be traced back to the first Czechoslovak Republic. After the First World War, in Czechoslovakia freed from the monarchy, following the example of other developed countries, there was a need to organise a certain kind of business fair, which would both support domestic and international trade relations and at the same time demonstrate the economic maturity of the young state. The necessary space for holding the fair was found at the then south-eastern border of the city on the new embankment terrain near the winter port, which was only drained when the river had been regulated. (Bočková, 2021a) At that time, the territory fulfilled the necessary attributes for the fair, as it was close to the river and the railway, and easily accessible from the city centre. In 1921, the main pavilion in the eastern part (later referred to as Pavilion V) and two smaller pavilions were built on a plot of land 150 meters long and 120 meters wide. A year later, a two-storey pavilion was added to the area in the western part (Pavilion Z). Over time, the market was renamed the International Danube Fair and more accurately communicated the idea of Bratislava as the business centre of Europe on the Danube.

The fair was more spectacular than a traditional marketplace. Over 1500 exhibitors participated in the first year and it was visited by almost 145,000 people, while the entire population of Bratislava at the time was around 93,000. (Komora, 2021) At the fair, sellers presented exhibition samples of goods to traders, which they subsequently ordered in bulk. The fair thus illustrated the general phenomenon of the transformation of small craft production into mass production of goods, which was gradually gaining economic dominance. These shopping

festivities, which lasted on average from 8 to 13 days, were a kind of *spectacle*, as the situationist Guy Debord later elaborated on these events. (Debord, 1970) The fair included various exhibitions, entertainment attractions, fashion shows and musical productions, which the organisers used to attract mass participation. It was a show that already artfully used advertising to express what modern man needs and cannot do without. From today's point of view, we can say that the form and the content of the fair made its pavilions real containers, as described by De Solà-Morales. (Fig. 1)

At the background of the fair happenings around the port, in the interwar period, several other large free-standing buildings were built on the embankment. The neoclassical building of the Agricultural Museum (Milan Michal Harminc, 1928) was built the area of the newly formed Fajnorovo nábrežie, fulfilling its container-like character as the envelope for a cultural collection. Two other interwar realisations were manifestations of the container in its scale, as solitary units protruding from block buildings. In the eastern part of the embankment, on the Danube floodplain near the harbour close to the railway line leading over the bridge, a massive building comprising financial offices was built (Krupka, 1933) and in the western part, an extensive functionalist student dormitory complex (Šilinger, 1931) was built as the first of its kind.

The economically more promising era of the 1920s and 1930s brought arguments for the enlargement and especially the relocation of the Danube Fair. The long, relatively narrow space proved to be insufficient, and moreover, was required for the announced expansion of the port. Besides, the wooden pavilions in which the fair was located were designed with a limited lifespan and after two decades were no longer presentable or safe. (Gross, 1940) After 1939, during the period of the Slovak State, the appeal for building a representative embankment and finally the whole city intensified even more. The new form of the left bank was supposed to reflect the economic conditions of Bratislava, as the new seat of the head of state, and fulfil the role of an "entrance gate" to Slovakia.

The territory chosen as the new location for the exhibition centre was the western part of the embankment, the place where the river widened before the regulation. (Bočková, 2021b) A total of approximately 700,000 m³ of gravel was poured into the section (Fig. 2, 3, 4) and in 1940 a public, anonymous competition was launched to develop conceptual designs for the exhibition centre. (Gross, 1939) There was a total of 7 competition proposals, but the jury decided not to award the first prize. The second place was awarded to the design of architects Ján Štefanec and Pavel Andrič. The architects composed the complex as a line of longitudinal halls parallel to the river. The entrance pavilion was accentuated by the shape of a 13-storey tower for administrative spaces and the rounded volume of a restaurant extended above the surface of the Danube. (Šlachta, 1991)

While the pre-war 1930s were characterised by economic growth and high construction output, thanks to German investments, the twist of the military situation at the turn of 1942 and 1943 caused supply problems and a construction slowdown. (Hrdina, 2010) However, the International Danube Fair did not have time to move to the new premises. The last annual of the fair was held in 1942, and in 1944 the exhibition complex was destroyed during the bombing of the city. The area under construction on the waterfront was no longer relevant given the change of political regime after the Second World War. The idea of a trade fair was contrary to socialist principles: suppressed private property, nationalization of enterprises and a planned economy. (Moravčíková, Szalay, Haberlandová, Krišteková,

Bočková, 2020) In the years 1951–1954, the construction and conversion of the built industrial-exhibition pavilions into cultural-social pavilions took place. The complex originally meant to host the trade fair was completed in 1955 as a Park of Culture and Recreation abbreviated in Slovak to PKO). With its pro-

gramme and scale, it also represented a certain form of urban container, albeit of a non-commercial nature. In the following decades, countless balls, congresses, exhibitions, concerts, dance and singing competitions and sports events took place there.

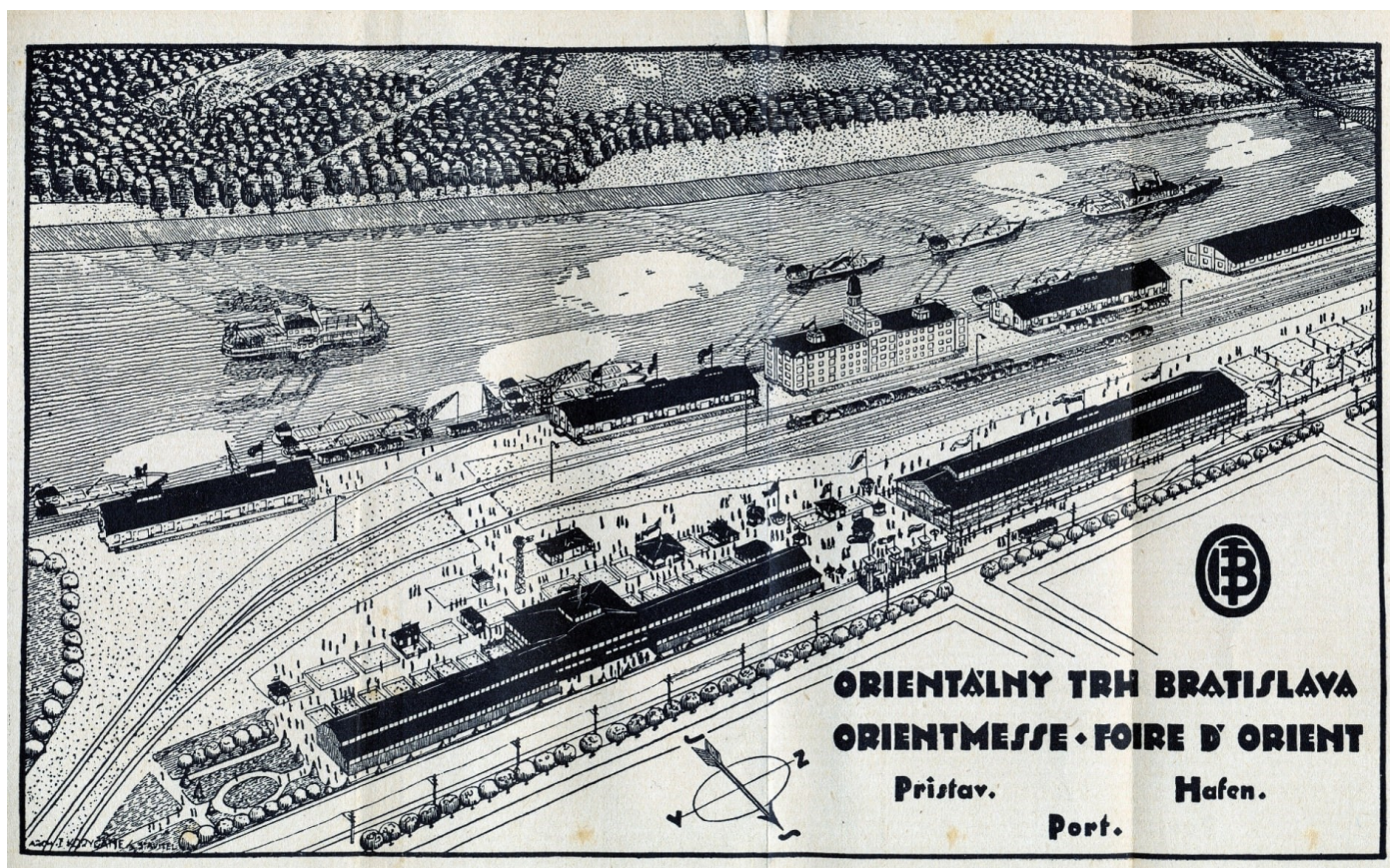


Fig. 1. Plan of the 2nd Annual Danube Fair near the winter port, 1922. Graphics: Jozef Koryčánek. (Source: Komora, 2021)

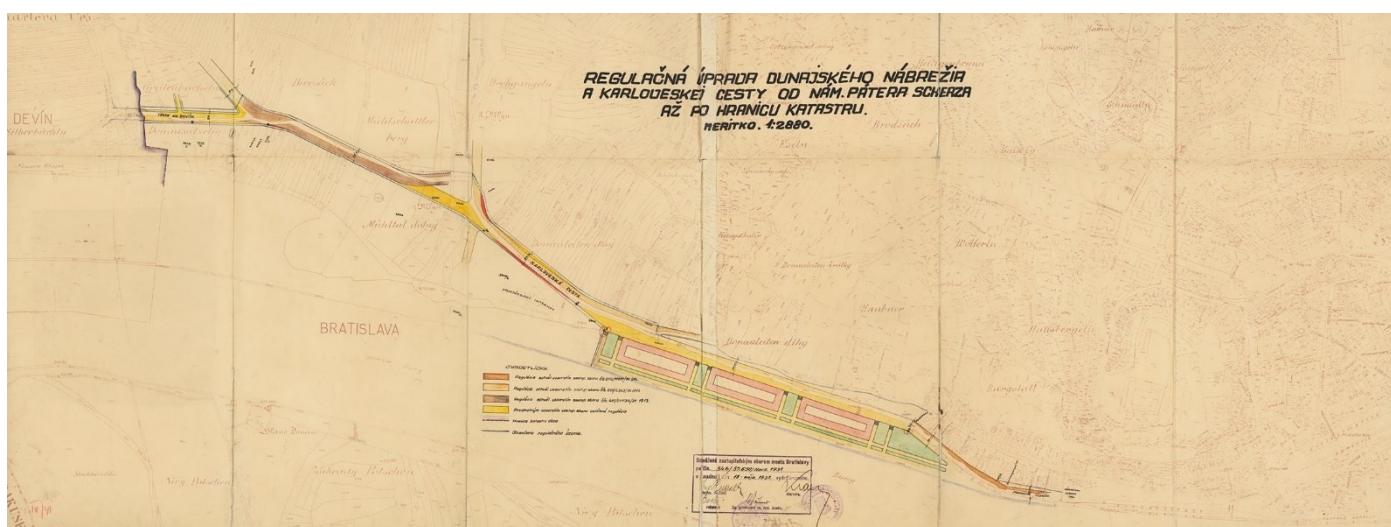


Fig. 2. Regulation of the Danube embankment approved by the Bratislava City Council in 1931. (Source: Bratislava City Archives, Fund of the Office of the Chief Architect, 1931)



Fig. 3. Construction of the embankment. Photo: Pavol Poljak. (Source: Slovak National Gallery, after 1945)



Fig. 4. Construction of the embankment. Photo: Pavol Poljak. (Source: Slovak National Gallery, after 1945)

GRADING OF VOLUMES DURING SOCIALISM

The restoration of the trade fair tradition began to be considered as early as 1963. Since Bratislava did not have any other large-capacity exhibition space, the fair eventually took place temporarily in the halls of the Park of Culture and Recreation, but at that time it had already been decided that a completely new multipurpose complex would be built. The area on the right bank of the Danube was chosen as the most suitable place for such a complex. (Bodický, 1972) The location had direct access to the river (which allowed for the establishment of a passenger port in front of the exhibition centre), it was in a convenient position in relation to the centre, and at the same time was consistent with the development tendencies of the city focused on the right bank at that time. The urban-architectural competition for the multipurpose area took place in 1972 without awarding the first prize.

At the end of 1973, the ministry assigned the task to design an exhibition centre to the studio of architect Vladimír Deděček, who did not participate in the original competition. Several determinants were key to Deděček's proposal: the territory was divided both by an expressway and by a protective barrier, into which engineering networks were to be inserted. The presence of both was definitively stabilised, and they fundamentally influenced the subsequent architectural-urbanistic solution. The design was limited by the investment funds and their several reductions over time, to which the architects responded by dividing the construction into three stages. The design of the

new multipurpose centre (later named Incheba) was a megalomaniac project, a true container in its cubic capacity but also in its multifunctional content. The project was meant to create an autonomous "cultural and sports city" for 40,000 visitors on the right bank of the river. The construction took place between 1977 and 1989, and due to financial demands and a change in the political regime, it was implemented only to a very limited extent. (Fig. 5, 6)

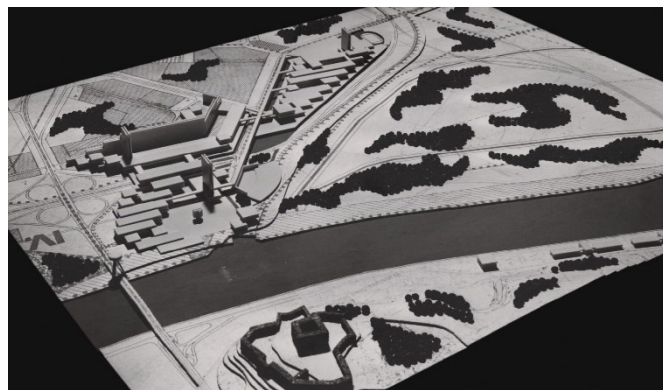


Fig. 5. Model of the originally projected Multipurpose exhibition complex on the right bank (later known as Incheba). Architect: Vladimír Deděček. (Source: Slovak National Gallery, 1974-79)



Fig. 6. Plan of the originally projected Multipurpose exhibition complex on the right bank (later known as Incheba). Architect: Vladimír Deděček. (Source: Slovak National Gallery, 1974-79)

Ambitious plans and at the same time the inability to implement them were characteristic of the socialist period. On the left bank, only a small fragment of the project of the Podhradie housing estate (Alois Daříček, Ferdinand Konček and Ilja Skoček, 1955) was built, even though the design included the placement of such representative solitaires, containers, as the Philharmonic, the Parliament and the College of Fine Arts. (Moravčíková, Szalay, Haberlandová, Křišteková, Bočková, 2020) Another topic discussed was the extension of the embankment to include the territory of the former factory district, where a new city centre was to be built. The form of the centre was sought in an urban planning competition, which was won by the collective of architects Jozef Lacko, Ladislav Kušník and Ivan Slameň in 1967. Their proposal included the buildings of the central Slovak authorities in the form of a double pyramid as the main structures, and the focal point of the public space was a pair of pedestrian routes that led to the central square open towards the river. (Zářiš, 1968) However, only a few buildings were built based on the proposal and the territory of the former factory quarter was not a topic until the 1980s when it was raised again in the urban-architectural competition for the solution of the

new building of the Slovak National Theatre (1979) and subsequently in the creation of the Territorial Plan of the Martanovičova Zone (Peter Bauer, Martin Kusý, Pavel Paňák, 1982).

The spatial plan of the zone from the 1980s used "postmodern principles of the rehabilitation of a compact city" (Moravčíková, Szalay, Haberlandová, Krišteková, Bočková, 2020) based on layering and complementing the existing mass. The authors proposed to transform the former industrial area in terms of block development. The goal was also to correct the "hostile" relationship between the city and the river in the newly created 900-meter embankment. (Bauer, Kusý, Paňák, 1982) From this complex proposal for the transformation of the factory district, the construction of the Slovak National Theatre building and its forecourt (Peter Bauer, Martin Kusý, Pavel Paňák, Eduard Šutek, 1980–2007), the building of the Slovak Insurance Headquarters (Eduard Šutek, 1990–1995), and the basic street structure of the neighbourhood were realised. The rest of the district was already built in a different political-economic context with other key actors. Finally, the zone has become a new city centre, but instead of the cultural and social functions it saturates different needs of the market.

WATERFRONT SPACE PRIVATISATION DURING THE NEOLIBERAL TRANSFORMATION OF BRATISLAVA

The construction of real private container-like structures in the sense of their commercial programme and isolated form occurred on the linear space of the embankment only after the fall of socialism. The city was undergoing a post-socialist transformation, a lengthy process that led from the rejection of communism and central planning to the building of democracy with a market economy. For some time, Bratislava became a typical post-socialist city, i.e., *"a city temporarily characterised by the adaptation of the inherited socialist environment to the new political, economic and cultural conditions of capitalism."* (Sýkora, 2009) After decades of centrally managed development, the transformation resulted in an unplanned distribution of growth. (Korec, Ondoš, 2009) It took several years for this process to manifest also in the physical form of the city.

The transition to a market economy had several common features in central and eastern European capitals. In general, the crisis of expert planning and the adoption of deregulatory neoliberal policies quickly became apparent. (Cook, 2010) After 1989, Bratislava's territorial strategies also changed. A former *"caring"* socialist city has gradually become an entrepreneurial capital that did not hesitate to privatise the housing stock and sell off large areas for new, private developments. While the metropolises of neighbouring post-socialist states were changing under the influence of foreign capital, strong domestic financial elites were forming in Slovakia, which later focused their activities on the real estate market. (Šuška, 2014) The key players in urban development thus became primarily domestic businessmen and various financial groups (Penta, HB Reavis, or J&T), while the influx of foreign investors arrived only on the threshold of the millennium. A turnaround also occurred in the understanding of spatial planning documentation. The city's spatial plan represented *"on the one hand, a less flexible tool that could not grasp and influence dynamic changes in construction, on the other hand, via various changes and additions, it created space for non-transparent transactions and trading of investors, city councillors and representatives of the city administration related to specific plots of land as well as to the overall image of the city."* (Moravčíková, 2010)

The construction boom starting in the second half of the nineties and lasting practically until the economic crisis in 2007 was characterised by some new typologies, often concentrated in

central locations of the city. The commercialization and expansion of the city centre, the dynamic revitalization of long-standing stagnant places inside the city, and commercial and residential suburbanization on its outskirts have become characteristic of the period. (Sýkora, 2009) The arrival of foreign companies caused a great demand for office space. From this point of view, Bratislava was under-equipped, and the existing buildings could not be adapted for the purposes of open *Bürolandschaften*. A significant part of the investments was therefore directed to the construction of new office and administrative buildings (the emerging business centre phenomenon), another focused on the construction of exclusive (unavailable to the general population) residences intended in part for foreign clientele. The space for the realisation of these investments was to a large extent also the river embankment, as the one with large vacant areas available. These activities contributed to the typical post-socialist generic image of the city.

A project par excellence of this kind, which was later to occupy more than 2.5 hectares of the waterfront area to accommodate a multifunctional complex comprising administrative, residential, and commercial spaces, was River Park. The complex is the result of the real estate activities of the financial group J&T from the beginning of the millennium. At that time, the financial group already owned a fifth of the land on the embankment and in 2001 it announced an architectural and urban planning competition for the future appearance of the embankment near the Park of Culture and Recreation. The resolution adopted by the city council obliged the private investor to organise a public tender. The demanding location program assigned by the investor revealed the effort to maximise the use of the land, which several proposals solved with high-rise dominants. The jury evaluated 10 competition proposals but did not award the first prize. Already during the competition, critical voices stressed that *"the waterfront promenade is unique and should not have the character of a one-sided urban class with permanent housing and commercial polyfunction"*. (Gašparec, 2002) As a follow-up to the competition, J&T commissioned an urban study of Bratislava embankment. Functionally, the planned construction was stable, but the placement of high-rise accents remained "perplexing and unconvincing". (Svetko, 2002)

In this case, the private investor was ahead in the preparation of urban plans, which should be provided by the city by default. A rather unfortunate situation arose when the city sold land without prior formulation of the future use of the territory. The owner de facto determined the size and function of the completed construction, and the city's professional departments only subsequently set the height regulations for the future construction, to gain at least some control over its future form. Finally, in 2003, the city council changed the established regulations in favour of the investor that subsequently organised a second, this time a private invited competition, in which it chose the design of the Dutch architect Erick van Egeraat. The River Park project started a line of large developments in the central locations of the city designed by a foreign office with a famous name. The invitation of the foreign architect was undoubtedly intended to underline the stamp of lucrativeness. The project conceived according to van Egeraat as a "vibrant neighbourhood that reflects a modern cosmopolitan lifestyle" no longer considered a high-rise dominant, but several tall blocks compacted into a continuous volume.

The masterplan was then taken over by local architects (Juraj Almássy, Peter Bouda, Richard Čečetka, Ivan Masár, 2010–2011) and the project was implemented with changes. Although the accentuating element of the protruding mass above the river has been preserved, the overall result rather evokes thoughts of a generic city, as Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas described it in the early 1990s. By generic, Koolhaas means such construction

production that negates urban space by standardising it. Without the inclusion of local specifics and historical context, developments are created by the continuous recycling of what has been seen and tried already. (Koolhaas, 1998) The symbolic moment of ownership and physical transformation of the embankment was the demolition of the Park of Culture and Recreation. In 2005, the city sold the Park plots to Henbury development (a consortium of investors including J&T and Cresco Group) for 281 million Slovak korunas (about 9.3 million euros). The unfavourable sale was argued by the management at the time due to the lack of funds for the reconstruction of the derelict area. After a wave of criticism from the public, there was a 10-year period of litigation and civil activism, which, however, did not prevent the demolition of the PKO complex. The large-capacity cultural complex was definitively demolished in 2015 without any future replacement. (Fig. 7)

The left-bank development also focused on transformation of the former factory district and the regeneration of the area under the castle. After a series of numerous private competitions as well as zoning plans, the construction of mainly residential projects started only recently. The names of the new developments Zuckerman (Juraj Almásy, Peter Bouda, Richard Čečetka, Ivan Masár, 2017) and Vydrlica (Compass Architekti, planned completion in 2025), taken from the original historical settlements in the castle grounds, today name residential and administrative mega complexes with retail and with several floors of underground garages excavated in the castle hill. These projects are a perfect example of “containerisation” of the form of residential buildings. (Fig. 8)

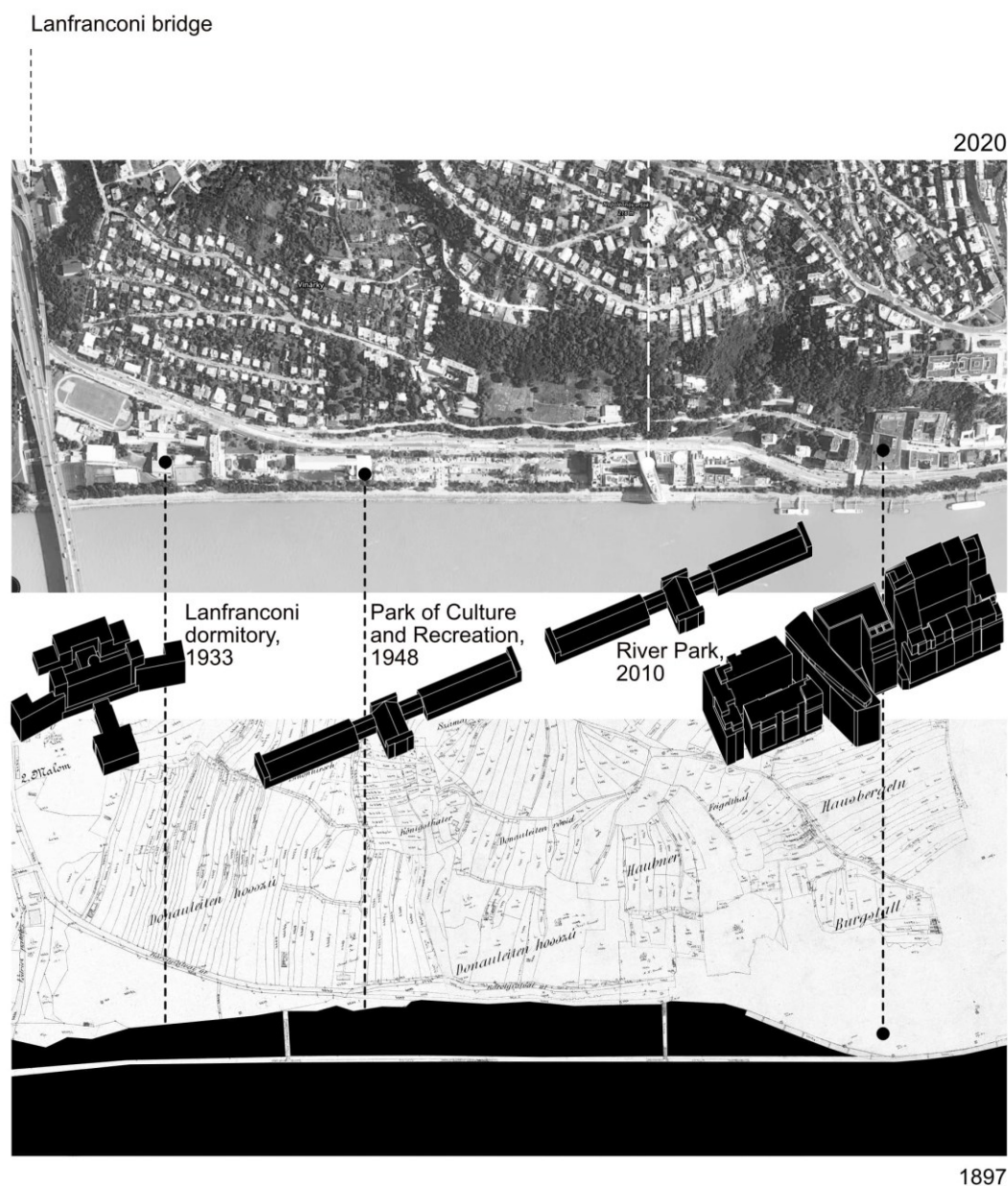


Fig. 7. The western left bank and its container structures (Source: Monika Bočková, 2022) featured on top of a cadastral map dated 1934. (Source: Archive of Geodetic and Cartographic Institute Bratislava, 1934)

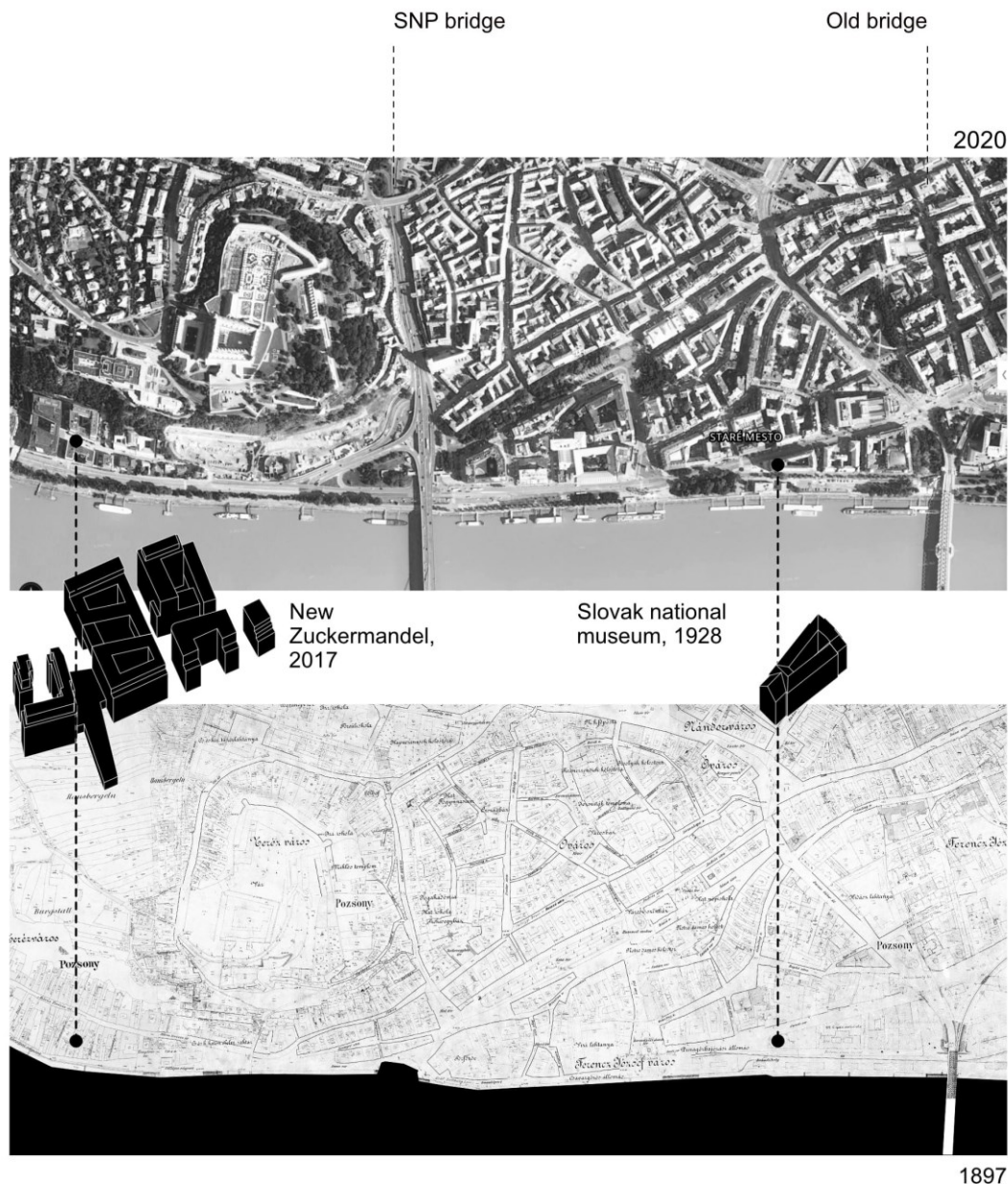


Fig. 8. The central left bank and its container structures. (Source: Monika Bočková, 2022) featured on top of a cadastral map dated 1934. (Source: Archive of Geodetic and Cartographic Institute Bratislava, 1934)

However, the containerisation of space on the banks of the Danube in Bratislava is primarily linked to the evolution of consumer behaviour and shopping culture. In the post-socialist city, retail development has skipped about 50 years of continuous evolution, and the shops selling utilitarian goods have been replaced by temples of consumption and entertainment. (Crawford, 1992) While in the past leisure activities were completely separated from shopping activities, the new arrangements of shopping malls have brought space for the fusion of entertainment and shopping. Newly, the typology of commercial premises began to be divided into “purpose-built shopping” and “recreational shopping”. (Spilková, 2012) The demand for recreational shopping was saturated on the right bank by the construction of the shopping and entertainment centre Aupark (Juraj Jančina, Ivan Kubík, 2001) by developer HB Reavis. The shopping and entertainment centre with a leasable area of 44,000 m² (more than 58,000 m² after its extension in 2006)

bears the name of the first public park in the Habsburg Monarchy established in the vicinity, which ironically illustrates the evolution of the leisure time activities. The Sunday walks have moved from the waterfront park to the artificial interior of the shopping mall while the mall itself creates the illusion of a city, including a pseudo-promenade and a pseudo-square with a fountain, all safely separated from undesirable low-income groups of the population. The layout resembles a public space with a video surveillance system and security guards, and the house operation policies are defined by the mall's owner.

The programme that Koolhaas describes as the most typical for a generic city (Koolhaas, 1998), i.e., offices (the need for which is still lower, but production does not decrease in any way), shopping (as the only activity we have left) and hotels (as a generic way of accommodation in a generic city and, like offices, absolutely redundant) was also applied on the left bank, in the Eu-

roeva complex. In the space between the Old Bridge and the New National Theatre, its first stage was built (Branislav Kaliský et al., 2010) by the Irish developer Ballymore properties. The second stage between the theatre and the Apollo Bridge, including the Eurovea Tower, is already being built by the domestic group J&T Real Estate. The Eurovea colossus is part of the new downtown, built in a renovated factory district.

Despite numerous studies of the new city centre, this district was only built in a neoliberal environment, according to the specific ideas of individual developer groups. Despite this, the Eurovea shopping and entertainment centre has architectural qualities and responds appropriately to its waterfront location,

which gives it a place-specific character. The two stages are divided in the space of an axially composed square with an exit to the waterfront steps. Part of the development was the construction of a waterfront park with a hydraulic flood protection system. The area of the shopping and entertainment centre is thus the only articulated section of the left bank that today provides direct contact with the Danube, although the emerged public space does not carry the qualities of a public promenade. On the waterfront, which is covered with terraces of private businesses, the visitor is still a customer, and the public space is more of an attraction, a tool for the multiple consumption of our highly ritualised societies. (Fig. 9)

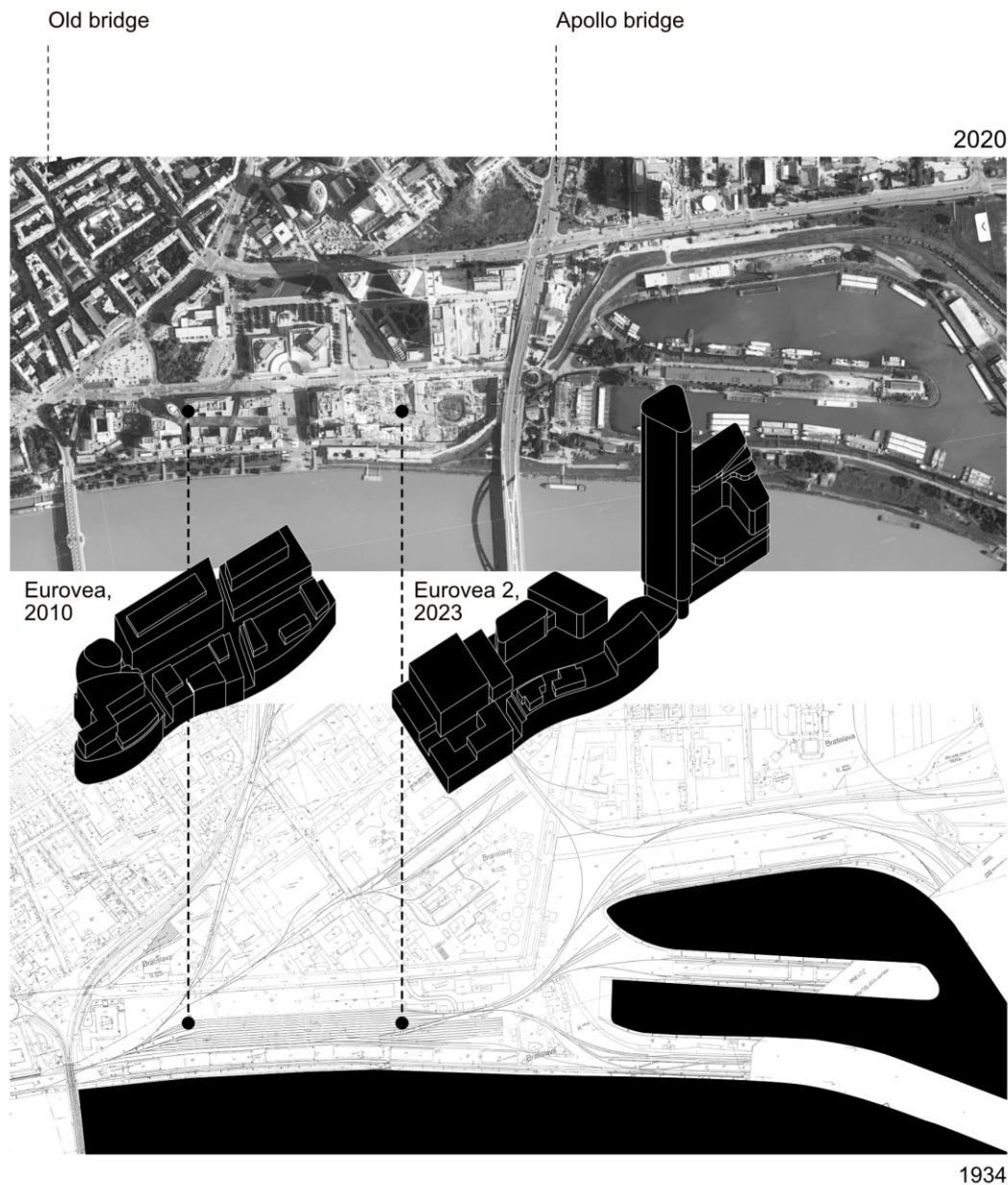


Fig. 9. The eastern left bank and its container structures (Source: Monika Bočková, 2022) featured on top of a cadastral map dated 1934. (Source: Archive of Geodetic and Cartographic Institute Bratislava, 1934)

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The current urban form of the embankment can be analysed from different points of view. This paper presents one of them,

namely an insight into the historical context and conditions that defined the development of the embankment during the 20th century and until today. As it transpired, the regulation of the Danube was an important factor discussed when comparing

Bratislava to Budapest (now the capital of Hungary) and Vienna (now the capital of Austria). The city of Budapest, just like Bratislava, historically developed on the main course of the river, but on both its banks at the same time. The oldest parts of the embankment, Belvárosz on the left bank and Vizováros on the right, were arranged in the form of compact blocks with squares in the voids. The narrowing of the Danube in the 18th century supported the formation of the banks with the focus on transport along the river. It also created space for the enlargement of the Lipótváros district. A perfect example of a container-like structure from that period is the parliament building (Imre Steindl, 1902). Other free-standing representative buildings from the twentieth century are adjacent to the city parks that respect the street network.

Vienna is, on the other hand, a very specific example in its relation to the Danube. Before the regulation of the Danube, the river created wide wetlands in the city, as a patchwork of numerous streams meandering through the area. The northern flow of the river was dominant, but the city developed on a channel diverted to the south. Although plans to break through the main course of the Danube between the canal and the original course existed already in the 19th century, this idea was realised only in the years 1972–88, when the so-called New Danube and *Donauinsel* was formed. Since the embankment was created on the banks of a calm canal, it was possible to build it in two height levels in the central part and with a continuous promenade leading past the city parks as a buffer between the river and the compact urban structure.

Unlike in these two cities, Bratislava embankments were built relatively late. The development was created mainly in the second half of the 20th century and in the 21st century. It was therefore determined by other socio-economic conditions, especially the transition from socialism to capitalism. City waterfronts generally have a unique capacity to provide an open and neutral space for all kinds of social life. By their nature, they tend to be specific and unmistakable. They are often the most attractive thing that cities have to offer. While in many European cities recreational facilities are still part of the area along the river, Bratislava has not offered this option for four decades. Instead, complexes of often questionable value and generic nature are being built on its shores. Building a comprehensive and continuous embankment in Bratislava was a vision that always beyond the possibilities of the city. Today's efforts to close gap on urban development also bring valuable waterfront space, but only under the conditions of associated commerce.

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