

Project Šafko initially gained public attention primarily through the controversy surrounding the decisions of local politicians regarding its functioning and its eventual cancellation. Yet its exceptional standing within the professional community of architects, however, makes it clear that the realisation was of notable value as much as an architectural achievement as an instance of urban and community-based activism.

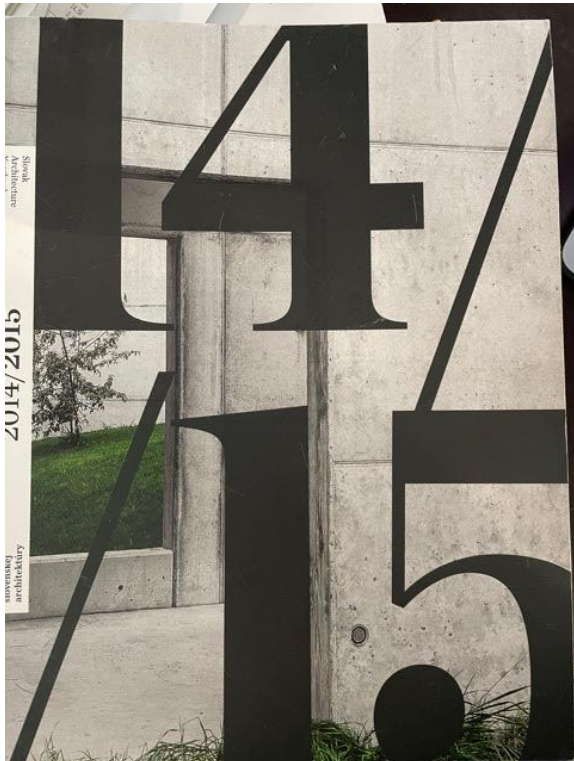
Even though we cannot necessarily consider Šafko to be an entirely new architectonic idea, there are very few other instances in Central Europe involving such a use of container architecture. In this sense, the container is “only” one further instance of prefabrication and unification, advantages used by the construction industry for many decades. Šafko deliberately presented an even more economical “sub-species” of this architectural typology, making use of constructions of metal shipping containers to enliven a public space. And within the project, the intention of the author, Oliver Kleinert, was to create something universal, economical, environmentally sustainable and quickly transportable. The containers were left in their “raw” minimally architectonic form, yet interpreted through a perspective of great architectural sophistication. Space was available for design, fashion, culture, and equally a broad spectrum of civic activities and organisations. Initially, the project was to have been realised below the SNP Bridge. As it happened, it instead laid anchor on Šafárikovo námestie, in a small park at a little-used point beside a busy road intersection, yet also within the frontage of the ‘Old Bridge’ close to several university buildings, the ‘Umelka’ gallery and the National Theatre.

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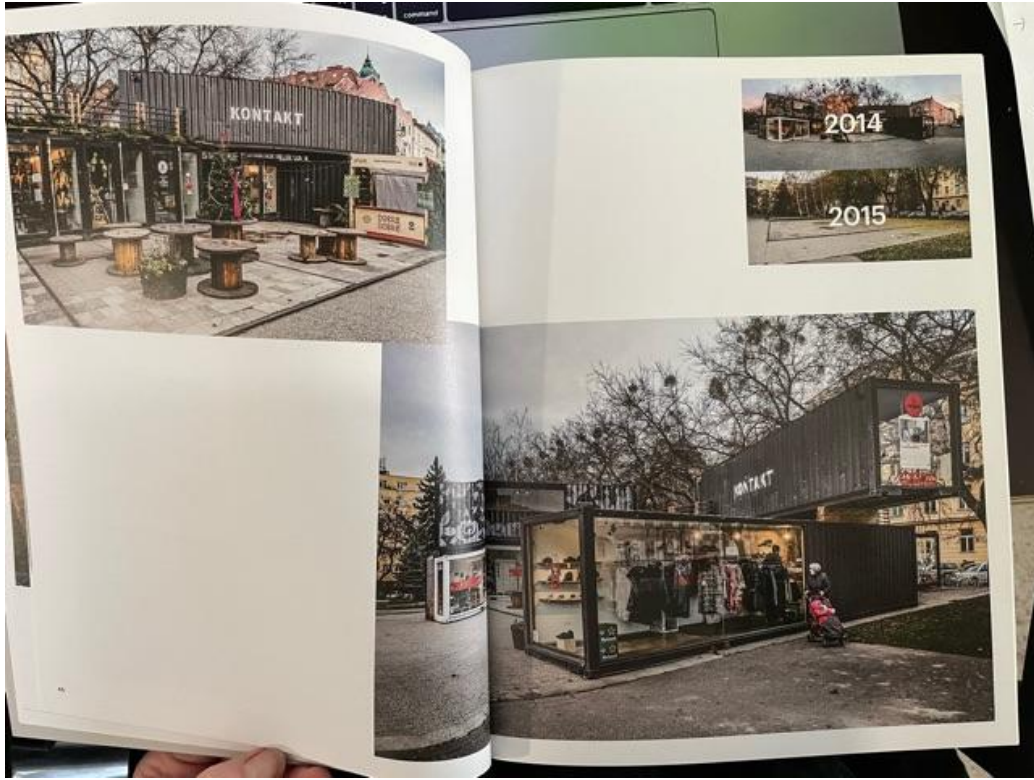
Container architecture began to be the subject of intensive discussion in Slovakia at roughly around the same time as the visit to Bratislava by the German architect Han Slawik (2011). His project 'Campus' in the Netherlands (1993) is regarded as the very first effort in the area of container architecture in Europe. Since the completion of this work, several dozen other container-constructions have arisen not only in Europe but also in the Americas. And by now, container architecture is regularly encountered even in Slovakia, with containers adapted to serve as single-family houses, social housing, or educational structures. Yet their employment for humanisation of public spaces is truly a rarity. Moreover, there is little favour extended to such projects from Bratislava's elected representatives; abroad, the situation is quite the opposite, as can be seen from the example of London's Boxpark, with whose creators Oliver Kleinert regularly corresponds. There, the city itself is practically the moving force of the project.

Project Šafko came to an end in mid- 2015. One of the containers found a new use in front of the cultural centre in the town of Považská Bystrica. Other containers were used by the association OZ Kontakt at the summer music festival Pohoda 2015. Currently in preparation is a new project "The Most", in which Oliver and Dana Kleinert plan to create beside the SNP Bridge in Bratislava a creative district. In the interim, they equally plan to offer support to the idea of 'Šafko' through a petition, clearly revealing how the residents of Bratislava increasingly find the philosophy behind the Šafko project to their liking. KH

Text: Katarina Haberlandova for Slovak Architecture Yearbook:



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Projekt Šafko spoľučila viaceré verejnosť predmetným ier  
 reorganizáciu mestského priestoru v jeho funk-  
 čnosti a náročnosťou. Otvorená v súhrne odborníkov  
 architektúry však pripomína, že ide o realizáciu hodnotní  
 náročnosť a projektovostného a komunitného aktívizmu.

Najprv však je Šafko nemôže považovať za nový architek-  
 tuný štýl, ale skôr za výraznú reakciu na existujúce podmienky  
 a potreby. Jeho výzva spočíva v tom, aby architektúra ne-  
 bola len estetickým nástrojom, ale aj nástrojom na riešenie  
 sociálnych problémov a na vytváranie komunitného ducha.

Projekt Šafko získal veľkú podporu verejnosti a štátu. Jeho  
 realizácia je výsledkom úspešnej spolupráce architektov a  
 verejnosti. Tento projekt je príkladom toho, ako architektúra  
 môže byť nástrojom na riešenie sociálnych problémov a na  
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 the controversy surrounding the decision of local public  
 officials regarding its functioning and its eventual construction.  
 Yet its exceptional standing within the professional community  
 of architects, however, makes it clear that the realization  
 was of notable value as such as an architectural experiment  
 as an instance of urban and community-based architecture.

Even though we cannot necessarily consider Šafko to be  
 entirely new architectural ideas, there are very few other examples  
 in Central Europe involving such a use of container architecture  
 in this sense. The container is "only" one of the means of architec-  
 tural realization, and its use is not a goal in itself. It is a means  
 of realization and verification, strategies used by the architect for  
 many decades. Šafko deliberately presented an unconventional  
 mental "work space" of this architectural typology. In contrast to  
 the construction of metal shopping containers to address a specific  
 need, the intention of the author, Oliver Kliment, was to  
 create something universal, economical, environmentally  
 sustainable and quickly transportable. The container was used  
 as a perspective of great architectural sophistication. There are  
 their "raw" minimalist architectural forms, yet they provide a  
 wide range of possibilities for use in various contexts. They are  
 available for design, fashion, culture, and equally important  
 for civic activities and organizations. Initially, the project team  
 have been realized below the SNP Bridge. As a temporary and  
 mobile structure, it was located in a small part of a city and  
 point beside a busy road intersection, yet also within the range  
 of the "Old Bridge" close to several university buildings, the  
 gallery, the Euroera office complex and the Slovak National  
 Theatre. As such, the containers brought to this heterogenous  
 environment a new architectural element and functions something  
 previously missing.

Container architecture began to be the subject of intensive  
 discussion in Slovakia at roughly around the same time as the  
 visit to Bratislava by the German architect Hans Scharoun. His  
 project "Campus" in the Netherlands (1993) is regarded as the  
 first effort in the area of container architecture in Europe. Since  
 the completion of this work, several dozen other container archi-  
 tectures have arisen not only in Europe but also in the Ameri-  
 cas. And by now, container architecture is regularly encountered  
 even in Slovakia, with containers adapted to serve as single- and  
 multi-unit housing, or educational structures. The main  
 reason for the humanisation of public spaces is to create quality  
 environment. There is little focus extended to such projects from  
 Bratislava's elected representatives, instead, the situation is quite  
 the opposite, as can be seen from the example of Lunas in the  
 park, with whose creators Oliver Kliment regularly cooperates.  
 There, the city itself is practically the moving force of the project.  
 Project Šafko came to an end in mid-2015. One of the contain-  
 ers housed a new use in front of the cultural centre in the area  
 of Považská Bystrica. Other containers were used by the archi-  
 tectural studio O2 Kontakt at the summer music festival Púchov 2015.  
 Currently in preparation is a new project "The Store" by which  
 Oliver and Dana Kliment plan to create a creative district in  
 Bratislava a creative district. In the interim, they equally support  
 to offer support to the ideas of Šafko through a petition, arguing  
 regarding how the realization of the project could be improved.