

Great plans, uncertain interests

Geopolitical background of the appearance, disappearance and reappearance of the great development plans in the middle Danube valley

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The transformation of waterways is a good opportunity for the brainstorming of politicians, experts and laics as well. Behind these great plans and their realization or non-realization and their subsidy by the great powers can we find usually geopolitical, geoeconomic reasons. If we measured the “implementation rate”, the waterway plans would definitely have a very low index. On the middle reaches of the Danube River, several canal and/or energetic construction plans were made in the last one hundred and fifty years which have not been realised. Some of these plans are still raised again and again, without much of a chance of implementation. As a matter of fact, they are usually demonstrated as large-scale programmes seeking solutions for the improvement of the present spatial structure of the economy, and are meant to improve the utilisation of the economic potential of the Danube River and its valley by the means of networking the waterway system. Looking at these plans today, many of them seem to be wishful thinking, because even if they could have been realised at the technical level of the given historical time, the expenses would have been excessive.

Even so some plans have been raised in each decade. Owing to the international aspect of the Danube almost each development plan has geopolitical significance, the current aspect of international relations and the interests of the great powers considerably influence the content, highlighting and realization of plans.

Based on the archival and literature researches the paper groups the fairways and energetic development plans on the basis of their geopolitical and geoeconomic relevance. It also reveals those geopolitical reasons which have raised the necessity of often unrealistic development plans regarding the Danube or which have prevented the realization of economically realistic plans. These factors can be grouped in different periods. Through analysing these periods we can discern the interests of the states and powers which are behind the river valley development plans and behind the possibility of realization of the plans.