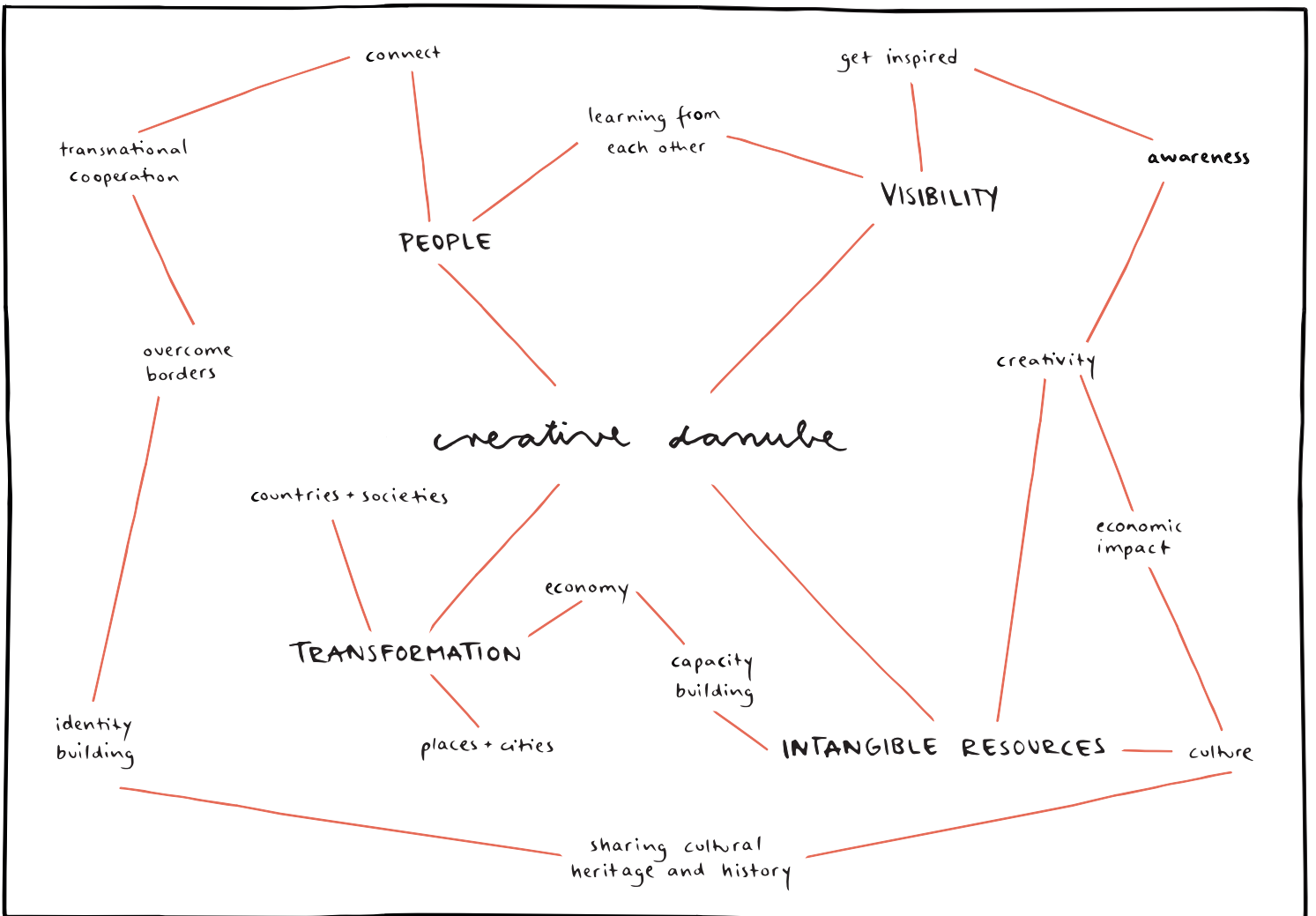


Creative Danube
places to see places to be

creative danube

» PLACES TO SEE PLACES TO BE «





EDITORIAL

Every art lover knows that a journey along the Danube river will offer a rich cultural experience. One envisions picturesque cities, the great composers, and the literary figures of the 19th century huddling together in coffee houses to promote the cultural independence of their countries.

Who travels today through the Danube region, will also encounter a very modern cultural scene: graffiti artists at Belgrade exhibiting in leading art galleries, young fashion designers from Bratislava conquering the catwalks worldwide, and the film festival of Timisoara attracting connoisseurs from all over Europe. Cities of the Danube region, which for 30 years had been bordering the iron curtain, have now returned to the cultural heart of Europe. As an artist from Vienna puts it: “10 years ago, young Viennese artists would have a great idea and say: ‘Let’s go to Berlin and do it!’ Now, more and more people are saying: ‘Let’s do it here – in Vienna.’”

The Danube region is a region in transformation – and creatives have profited from these dynamics. Social, economic and political change has become the humus for a blooming and unique creative scene. At the same time, the creative potential of the region is becoming more and more of a resource for economic and social development. Young start-ups have settled in rundown factory halls, creating new jobs – the Tobacco Factory in Linz may be the most prominent, but by

far not the only example for this trend. Young creatives are getting involved in politics and participate in building up the civil society of their country – they help refugees, found independent discussion portals, and organise political flash mobs when they want to fight corruption and mismanagement.

Together, students from Josip-Juraj-Strossmayer University in Osijek and Stuttgart Media University set out in summer 2015 to portrait the faces of this creative scene. In German-Croatian tandem teams, they travelled to 14 cities of the extended Danube region, and met with local artists, musicians and cultural activists. They explored basement clubs, back-street artist workshops, and of course, huddled together in traditional and new coffee houses with web designers and poetry slammers. Then, the layout, concept and design for the project was developed in Stuttgart and Osijek. The result of these efforts is a cross-media travel guide, comprised of this book and a supplementary app, which can be downloaded for free via www.creative-danube.eu.

We wish all readers a pleasant journey, whether they will discover the creative potential of the Danube region by foot, by bike, by ship, by car, by plane or just in their imagination.

Katarina Bader and Boris Alexander Kühnle





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BUDAPEST

The city that never stands still

The Danube divides Budapest into two parts. On the Pest side of the river lies the Jewish Quarter. Here the creative scene blossoms. A scene that has undergone dramatic changes in the last few years. Only those who were willing to constantly work on themselves and at the same time never lost sight of their creative vision, were able to survive.

The door opens and you enter another world. An oversized kangaroo is grinning right at you, a piece you will normally only find on merry-go-rounds. There is music in the background but also other sounds are whirring through the air: hammering, drilling, sawing. It is a world full of curiosities and peculiarities. At once, you feel the urge to discover it all, all those hidden details and to leave not before you have seen everything, really everything. 1,000 impressions overwhelm you and you feel like a little child in a toy store, or like Alice in Wonderland.

A ruin full of life

Already from the outside, you can guess that this is no ordinary building and that nothing ordinary awaits you inside these walls. An old ruin, in the middle of the Jewish Quarter, the inner city of Budapest. Old, broken, grey. If it were not for all these colourful flowers that someone has put out one floor above the entrance door. The balcony door is open, which proves that even though the facade may suggest the old house is fit for demolition, there is life to be found inside. “Officially, this is designated as gastronomy,” Barna Vendely explains, one of the co-founders of Szimpla Kert. At the beginning, they had spread the word that anything

could be dropped off here: old lamps, chairs, refrigerators and radios. And everything has found its proper place at Szimpla Kert. Barna and his team even drove out to old movie theatres or clubs to pick up the things that nobody needed. Back then at the beginning, that was 11 years ago. Meanwhile, Szimpla has made a name for itself in Budapest. And you cannot drop off your old stuff anymore. There are already too many things here. It is really hard to tell what exactly Szimpla is. By day, it is a café or some kind of bar. At night, it becomes a pub or a club, depending on the preferences of the guests – if they want to dance or just have a drink. There are also concerts on a regular basis. You can smoke





Barna Vendely

The Szimpla Kert





hookah or rummage on the occasional flea market. There is even a cinema. And no one really cares that it is just a bed sheet and a video projector and that they show only short video clips without sound. In the end, it is a cinema. There is also food, which makes the place also some sort of restaurant

or bistro. Szimpla simply does not fit into any common category. One would need to make a new one for this truly special place.

Barna is sitting casually on a chair in the office, a rather plain room compared to the rest of the building. One of his arms rests on the back support,

his legs are stretched out. In the other corner of the room, two men are sitting around, one of them playing guitar and singing. “This is my favourite kind of music,” Barna says with a smile. The other guy is looking deeply into his laptop. A dog is lying at his feet. Like so many other things at Szimpla, the



The Szimpla Kert

dog was no longer needed or wanted. Unfortunately, he was not dropped off, but dumped. The Szimpla-team found him and adopted him. Ever since he has been an integral part of the team.

Before Szimpla emerged at Kazinczy utca 14, the building had been abandoned for more than 40 years, without the city or any one else taking care of it. Between new houses, bars and shops, the ruin was waiting for someone to take up the cause. The time had come in 2004. A group of young men bought the building, because it was cheap and well frequented: They wanted to make it a place for culture in Budapest, a

place that was not to be all about profit but freedom and creativity. Ever since, the work has not stopped. Something is being put up, new artwork is being created, trees are being planted and so on. Szimpla never stands still. It changes daily. During the day, people hang out scattered across the place. There is hammering, sawing and screwing. New furniture is being made. It will become the new furnishing for the bar. Shelves are built into an old piano to make a bar shelf for bottles. “We are always creating something new. Every day. We are very creative when it comes to gastronomy.” Barna smirks and strokes

his black full beard. Here, he feels free. He loves to work. Szimpla is meant to be a place for everyone. Old or young, anybody is welcome here. Where in the afternoon, one can find a calm place for relaxing and a cup of coffee, night time breathes new life into the location.

At night, the city awakes

Bright lights illuminate the city at night. Its landmarks like the Budapest Parliament or the famous Chain Bridge shine in their full glory at that time.





Zita Majoros

The Printa





The Flat Lab

The streets are buzzing with young people going from one bar to the next. On the Danube, which separates the two parts of the city, party ships are cruising with loud pumping music. At Szimpla, numerous lamps and little coloured lights have been lit. While in one corner people are smoking hookah, many people are grouping around tables on the first floor heavily engaged in conversation. Downstairs a concert is being set up. The musicians that play here are all from the area and the concerts are always for free. What creative people in Budapest fear the most is that the government may realise at some point that profits can be made with the creative scene and will start to meddle with their affairs.

Szimpla has managed to preserve its unique character. It grew out of the creative boom of the city and has survived.

Sustainable designer fashion

In the same quarter as Szimpla, at Rumbach Sebastyén utca 10, the shop Printa can be found. Zita Majoros has

specialised in sustainable fashion but Printa is like many designer shops an all-round talent. You can have a coffee here buy art, jewellery, fashion and interior design objects. "About 11 years ago, everybody wanted to live their creative side. Numerous little fashion labels and new ideas were shooting up all at once. By now, the wheat has been sorted from the chaff and only few can still make a living from their ideas," Zita recalls. Her shop is also her office and in the back there is a workshop, where all sorts of designer pieces are made, which will later be sold at the shop. Meanwhile, Zita can live well from her idea to offer sustainable designs. She has several employees and the freedom to try out many things. "Just recently, we made coats from old army sleeping bags. Unfortunately, they got so heavy that in the end no one would have worn them." She is laughing. "We are always on the lookout for new ideas and possibilities to recycle old things. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't."

Many of Zita's friends work in the creative industry. To subsist from their work, a lot of designers have joined forces. They use old apartments as com-

munal office, like at Flat Lab, which is also situated in the seventh district. Zita strongly recommends a visit at Flat Lab. It is not only a workshop, but also a salesroom, where the designers sell their pieces exclusively.

When passion can become profession

Zita is happy to be able do what she loves full-time. Many others need a second job to finance their creative work. Some did not make it in this hard business and had to give it up. After all, it is not easy to make a living from creative ideas in Budapest. Those who have made it with strong commitment and an iron will, are grateful for it and never stand still. They permanently pursue new ideas. New things are tried out, maybe thrown overboard but no one will rest on their laurels in Budapest.





Flat Lab

producing/displaying place

Flat Lab resides in a spacious old flat, where six designers have set up their workspace. You can not only buy exclusive designer pieces here but also have a look behind the scenes and talk to the designers in person.

Address:

Baross utca 3.,
1085 Budapest

Phone: +36 30 94 94 286
+36 30 62 78 790

Email: 314flatlab@gmail.com
www.flatlab.hu

Opening hours:

Mon – Fri: 1pm – 8pm



The Jewish Quarter

producing/displaying/relaxing place

The Jewish Quarter on the Pest-side of the Danube is actually the Seventh District. It is named after the Jewish synagogue at the heart of the quarter. Here, you can find little bars, pubs and clubs as well as second hand shops and small designer labels.



Warm Up Bar

displaying/relaxing place

Supposedly the best and most extraordinary cocktails in Budapest are served at the “Warm Up Bar”. Here, the bartender will fulfil any special requests, or spontaneously create an exclusive cocktail, which is not to be found on the menu. The homemade lemonade is a must.

Address:

Nagy Diófa u. 26,
1072 Budapest

Phone: +36 70 94 70 562

Email: warmupcocktailbar@gmail.com

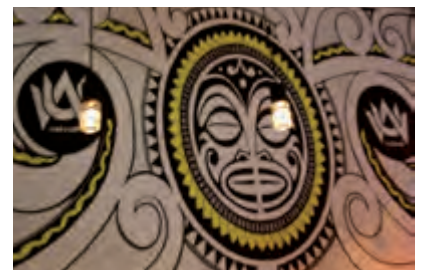
Website: www.warmupbudapest.hu

Opening hours:

Mon – Wed: 5pm – 1am

Thurs: 5pm – 2am

Fri – Sat: 6pm – 4am



IMPRESSUM

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