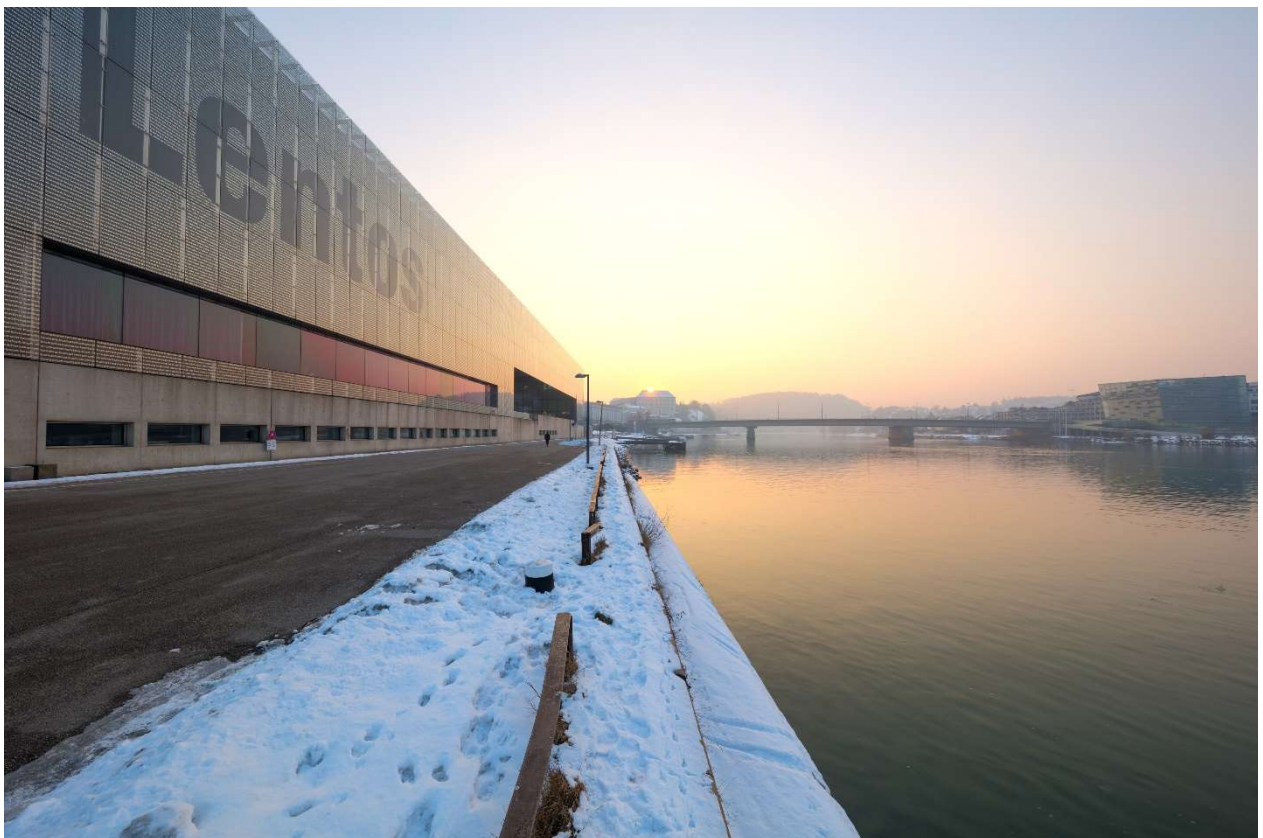


# Transdanube Travel Stories

Narrative development



GEORG STEINER, LINZ, 7.2.2021

Dear coordinators,

Based on the various telephone conversations and e-mails - especially regarding the deployment and also the billing of the experts - I would like to make the following considerations regarding the further procedure:

We have jointly defined the respective routes. On the basis of these "corridors" and the formulation of the topics, 10 to 15 so-called points of interest are currently being defined by you for each route. I think that this does not require the participation of experts. What the experts should be used for is the elaboration, the discussion of narrative approaches. I would like to give a few more thoughts and hints on how narratives should be created.

It is particularly inspiring to look again at the discussions in our workshop on October 28/29 in Linz - see the two links:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ri-e-DT1uXQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8OE8laQgkyw>

I may first remind you of my approach that we should succeed in "composing symphonies" along the Danube. The POI's serve as landmarks, which are to be connected narratively. It is not so much about the elaboration of the itinerary, but about the theme, the sound that lies over this route. The book "Narrative Economics" by Nobel Laureate Robert J. Shiller (Economics 2013) states, "...According to musicologist Anthony Newcomb, a classical symphony is, in effect, a "composed novel" that at least vaguely hints at a story on an emotional level." And it goes on to say:

"...According to Ronald B. Tobias, there are only 20 major plots in all of narrative literature: quest, adventure, quest, rescue, escape, revenge, the enigma, rivalry, underdog, temptation, metamorphosis, transformation, coming of age, love, forbidden love, sacrifice, discovery, miserable excess, ascent, and descent." Christopher Booker suggests that there are only seven basic plots: "Defeat the monster, rags to riches, the quest, journey and return, comedy, tragedy, and rebirth."

Sebastian Frankenberger also pointed this out in our workshop: Narratives must start with themes and stories that our brains can already build on. There is also the term "framing" for this.

In my opinion, this describes the range for our narratives very well.

It is about powerful stories that give meaning and a framework to our thoughts, aspirations and actions. Stories that have the power to be retold and that have a mobilization potential or that inspire to go on journeys along the Danube under this motif or several motifs. Stories that are retold to others. Stories that, however, in an emergent process also result in new, individual stories of our travellers based on what already exists and what they have experienced.

Jörg Zenker has suggested using adjectives for the routes, rather than just colours, to get to the heart of the narrative. These include

Strong/powerful, wild, smart, rich, joyful, thoughtful....

**Some things again to remember from our workshop:**

**Erhard Busek:**

- We must free the Danube monarchy from kitsch.
- The unusual thing about the Danube to most of the great rivers of this world is the connection of 10 or with tributaries 14 countries.
- The Danube is a great narrative about what separates. But it needs understanding for the different countries, for their history, which still lingers and sits deep, for the many ethnic groups or minorities.

**Joachim Eckl:**

- You must succeed in recognizing the river in its essence - the river is altogether "life" - from the source (birth) to the mouth (end and new beginning)
- Along the Danube, East and West connect - very well symbolized in the iconographic representation of the art of the East - the image looks at you - and the new Danube school (emerged from the Renaissance) - you look at the image, you look into the image.
- The Danube is the place to discover Europe. The Danube is also a symbol of a balance that is needed between East and West.
- His Danube Creation Project is a cultural project to symbolize the connection of everything with everything along the Danube. Travel programs should also include elements of how guests experience connection.
- The Danube is a development space of European identity, which already starts with prehistory and early history (Venus of Willendorf etc.).

**Trautl Brandstaller:**

- The Danube is centrally about getting to know the neighbours better.
- Especially the changes of the last 30 years are much too little in focus.
- Enable encounters, everyday reality through cultural encounters, through encounters with fishermen, farmers, ordinary people - address senses and not only ratio.

**Petra Riffert:**

- Let the Danube speak - the Danube enables life, is a trade route, is a border, is a connection, one finds happiness (sustainable travel, beautiful views, insights, places of power, experience Danube flow)
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**Dr. Roland Kastler:**

- The Danube is a stream of consciousness in the sense of William James.
- There are super-narratives (diversity/diversity, integration/identity of Europe) that can be developed into sub-narratives.

**Renate Hellwig-Schmidt:**

- Indicates that everything has already been written / told before. It's good now to achieve a mapping, so to speak, that puts the different contents on top of each other and connects them anew.

**Dr. Andreas Rathberger:**

- Experience of change - the Danube as a whole and in detail is a big book of change. He also points to the historical analyses that Europe first defined itself through the Mediterranean and then became Atlantic. The Danube is another European narrative that is oriented around a body of water.

From the discussions with you, I have now already received approaches for narratives, which I would like to present briefly:

**Nature and man - the Danube between wilderness and taming (Eszter Buchert)**

It deals with the eastern part of the Danube up to its mouth and reflects on the concept of "the last Danube" - not only geographically, but also in its natural whereabouts. The further one comes towards the source, the more shaped, reshaped, less natural the Danube presents itself. In the "lower" part of the Danube, the Danube is still preserved as nature has developed it. This is not only a question of damming by power plants, but also of the approach of cities, of civilization to the river. Tearing along the Danube, one discovers how the river has been appropriated, narrowed, changed by people.

"In the beginning was the river and nature" - this is what should be built upon - Here is the basis for feelings, for spirituality, for art.

Nature needs time for encounter, for understanding, for an experience.

Experience diversity - cornfield vs. oak forest - diversity in religions, in food/peppers, in music - this is what makes the Danube.

**From prehistory to the Romans**

With Guido Pinkau I discuss an approach, in how far the Romans - and also previous settlements really brought culture to the Danube, on which we still build today. There is now an opinion that those Roman soldiers, who were sent to the northern border of the Roman Empire for defense, were rather less culturally superior - rather wild fellows, who were confronted here with the barbarians on the other side. In this respect, it is necessary to think about how the development of the Danube in the cultural field can be told against this background. How and when and where did cultural leaps occur. What were cultural leaps that can be told, that can be experienced - whether building culture, food culture, physical culture, etc.?

**Trade routes, connections and human encounters, folk culture, love and joie de vivre.**

With Jörg Zenker I discuss what could be suitable for this as POI's at all - for example, the Linz main square, which had this significance as the "fairground of the Middle Ages" - at the crossroads between Venice and Prague or along the Danube. But how can trade, merchant

tradition be experienced. Perhaps it succeeds in an approach, where one from the Swabian, Protestant-correct, thrifty merchant over the baroque regions, where one experienced rather after the principle "live and let live" a certain generosity up to the Balkans/Orient, where rather the culture of the bazaar dominates(e). Smuggling has also always been an important and defining element of Danube trade. A shopping trip along the Danube, which addresses these experiences - but we are only at the beginning of our reflections.

But in my opinion, this is where discussions with experts must begin. It is not so much about experts simply suggesting and elaborating further POIs. We need competence, ideas, imagination, but also competence, which narratives are suitable for which topic and how to tell it from the point of view of the Danube.

**See further:**

Read project Danube, Christoph Leitgeb - more info to come on that

**Point of interests - as groupings:**

European Capitals of Culture on the Danube

**Approaches to Experiences:**

Experiencing common things through and with culture

Connection with creative industries

Multidimensionality: theme, people-meetings,

Experience connection along the Danube - see approach Joachim Eckl

**Goal:**

New form of travel - the Danube as an example of new travel in Europe: The Danube has always stood for social processes that have resulted in new forms, but some of which could not be resolved.

What is the narrative of narratives? (Frankenberger) - that is the Danube!

Finally, a message sent to me by Roland Nordermeer following our workshop:

He deals with the essence of life and travel. The themes of food, water, ritual/prayer are central to this. As homo sapiens in the 21st century, we have forgotten that energy flows where attention goes. That's why many can't explain why there is a certain atmosphere in a church, at a demonstration or in a soccer stadium. But 2020 has shown us what sports and church are without an audience.

2021 is the gateway to the Age of Aquarius. After 6,000 years of female yin energy followed by 6,000 years of yang energy, humanity has arrived at a point in its eternal life of cycles to spiritually ascend the evolutionary ladder from puberty to adulthood. Hence the polarization that is taking place at this very moment.

It feels as if the entire world is now being pushed through the narrowest part of an hourglass to arrive at a new epoch where the two energies have finally merged.

People will yearn for more mindfulness, cooperation, peace, personal positive influence, and respect for all living things.

One travels along the Danube in a sustainable way and learns historically how certain dishes found their way into the Danube region (The typical Central European cuisine).

One does Experiential Travelling by making/preparing/cooking/creating different dishes (with locals).

We create a (Danube) prayer/ritual before eating, so that after many guests have performed the same ritual, a positive energy flow is actually left behind.

An energy that can be felt by future travellers, creating a Danube field that connects everyone on an emotional/spiritual level... giving the Danube area a lasting value."

As far as Roland Noordermeer

Now I don't want to end up too esoteric. But it is striking, when I review the contributions in the workshop, among others by Eszter Buchert, by Joachim Eckl, by Dr. Roland Kastler, by Petra Riffert and now by Roland Noordermeer, that there is a vibration going on here, which is just more than just a new travel program. The Danube is calling to make not only the narratives and the experiences new, deeper, more human, but also to give tourism as a whole a new strength and a new dimension.

That's what it's all about and that's what we should strive for together.

I look forward to the road ahead.

Best regards

Georg Steiner  
Tourism Director