

TIMEZONES BUDAPEST TRANSCRIPT

DIY or DIE: Budapest Beneath the Surface

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[1:01] **Gáspár Miklós Tamás**

What seems to be quite tragic, though, in this is that in spite of all the changes, the differences between Eastern Europe and Central and Western Europe persist. So, you know, the political dividing lines are exactly like they were, say, in 1980, or in 1930. And there's no great desire for or confidence in any sort of freer society. And yeah, you know, but we are in Budapest, where of course there's a majority for the opposition (it's the only place). This is quite general. I mean, look at Prague, look at Bratislava, look at Warsaw – the difference between town and country persists. Well, that was the same thing in the 18th century. I mean, not much is changing in this respect, and that's very sad really. That's very sad. So, you know, I have a daughter who is 17 – I mean, she lives a life that she could live in Berlin. Then, you go 30 kilometers out of Budapest, and there you can lead a life you would lead in Moscow. Or worse.

[2:43] **Gáspár Miklós Tamás**

The government can, and has indeed done everything they could to preclude the autonomy of institutions – you know, nobody would've thought that anybody could really ban the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and reform universities in a way where, you know, fake foundations steered by influential figures of the official right would put an end to the autonomy of universities. And there's a whole system of state financing of the arts, and of culture, and of scientific research, that is really not niggardly – they are paying a great deal – but of course, mostly people on the right do benefit – or people who are prepared to shut up about political problems. And you can indeed observe, that unlike in other Eastern European countries, the intelligentsia is mostly silent about public affairs. Of course, everyone knows that people are disgusted, and they don't like the system, and mass emigration of young intellectuals is quite frightening. My young friends are just everywhere. It's a very sad, very scary situation and of course some people are still stubborn and trying to do various things here for a while, but most think that there's no point in making sacrifices. I mean, people who would be able and willing to make sacrifices, but their reasonable evaluation of the situation is such that they don't feel that it makes any sense to destroy their lives for nothing.

[6:09] **Marci Bíró**

Buongiorno, my name is Bíró Marci. I'm a random guy from around. Right now, we are in Lahmacun Radio studio, which is a community radio in Budapest. The radio itself is in the complex of Kazán Community House, which is like a conjoined twin of Gólya, which is a cooperative-run community house / venue / bar / whatnot that I have worked at for the past six years.

[7:02] Marci Bíró

Our aim is to somehow have a workspace where everyone has their own things that they do, but everybody works the same amount of work for the same amount of money, and everybody should be a member of the cooperative. At the end of the day, we try to stay afloat with a very different working method and community structure implemented in the present-day capitalist world, so to say.

[7:51] Marci Bíró

For many, many years, we tried to network and find actual existing cooperatives, because the cooperative movement has one very strong principle: that if you do a cooperative, cooperatives need to work together. We tried to find a bunch of cooperatives – it was really hard – and at the end of the day, we just built our own network of like-minded people and started to see grey areas, blind spots in the Hungarian fair, social economic space – which didn't really exist - and that's what most of the people in the building are trying to do. We're trying to be very self-sufficient, in terms of getting food from farmers without any middlemen. We have a kindergarten inside, for like-minded parents who are not really relying on the educational system at the moment. We also have a gym in the building, because working out and doing sports together is more fun. We have this radio for instance, we have a communal workshop next to us for ceramics, silk-screening and a bunch of other stuff. We host a leftist news agency – most likely the only one in the country – called Mércé.

[9:48] Marci Bíró

We try to push people into thinking about why we are here right now, and what the exit from the whole squirrel wheel could be.

[10:18] Nándor Hevesi aka Ivan Buharov

The most important thing is independence. Not only in the past, but more and more in this time now. You know, maybe we show a kind of a way for how you can still make your stuff without depending on the government, or something like governmental money. But I don't believe that exists, because all of the money is not the government's money, it is people's money. The people who are watching our movies and coming out of the cinema, in Marseille, in Paris, in Belgrade or anywhere – they are always telling us there is something which sets them free whilst watching our movies. Many people say that we gave them back hope – there is hope in the cinema. Because you know, many times it's a kind of boring narrative, and you know, like film music tells what you feel and a lot of things, and we like to play with these thoughts and narratives – it's not like Hollywood stuff – and because the human brain is a miracle. So, if there is a story which has kind of holes, or it's not very clear, you know – your brain starts to structure it. In reality, we also have to live as if we are watching reality as a dream, there is not a big difference, or there are no big differences. My English is like that.

[12:49] Andi Soós

I always felt I lived on the periphery, but I still would like to belong to the cultural scene of Europe, and I'm not saying to the Western side of Europe, but still, to somehow engage with countries outside of Hungary. And like I always felt my English is pretty bad, and when I start to talk to natives, or even if I'm dating native English speakers, I feel like I'm an outsider. That's how our song «Eastern European Accent» was inspired. It was shocking for me to experience how the music scene is still very patriarchal, because in the art scene I think most

of the curators are women, so I was also socialized among female professionals. And I didn't really feel that there were a lot of downsides to being a woman in this profession. Or maybe I was just very lucky that I never really encountered major issues. But in the music scene, when we started the band, we met Hungarian female musicians, to ask for some advice from them, because we had no experience in making music because we had just started. And all of them told us «Oh, I can't even play the guitar», and «I'm not a real musician anyway», so it was really interesting to see how these wonderful musicians thought they were not professional.

[15:16] **Gábor Kovács aka Új Bála**

The music scene is also heavily influenced by this political climate. The so-called counterculture or underground doesn't really function in the way it's supposed to, I guess, because you know, we have chances to open discussions about topics or kind of unite and articulate problems, but it seems like we just keep on losing these opportunities to find a voice for ourselves. It's just, somehow the music scene like this so-called underground, looks like a group of people based on more formal clichés than actual values or morals. We're just losing venues, we're losing chances to stay open, and how the government is getting more and more involved in these venues, how they're changing the city's structure and infrastructure. It seems to me that many people don't really find these tendencies as problematic as, for example, myself.

[17:12] **Lucia Udvardyová**

Why do you think this is the case? Why do you think there's no more resistance or protest?

[17:20] **Gábor Kovács aka Új Bála**

I guess the reason why we don't really have resistance is because we don't really have any tradition of civil right movements or democracy in general. So, we have this socialist-communist heritage, and it seems like people are really bringing this conformist attitude with them. Or learning it from previous generations. For me, it seems like nobody really cares about the big picture, everybody is more about, you know, just trying to protect their own comfort and lifestyle. So, yeah, that's why I mentioned that this scene is centered around stylistic choices more than actual values. You know, underground or even dance music has a rich tradition involving minorities and presenting counterculture and all these values, and we're just losing all that. What will stay in the end is just really the structural form of certain genres or formalistic clichés.

[20:13] **Lilla Lőrinc**

Well, what you experience. I'm a pragmatic person – what I go through, that's what I work with, that's what I deal with, and in this sense, it can be a very mixed thing from politics to religion to personal or even psychedelic experiences, or whatever. Nowadays it's mostly looking inside, as inside as you can, and from that point of view, seeing the others and the outside world. So, the first step is always to look inside. We don't really like it when it's very fragmented, you know, like being part of the professional art scene only with visual artists, and the other part is the music – we don't like to separate it, we like to bring it together somehow. We had a chance to do these kinds of parties in this space where we have our studio. It's called Art Quarter Budapest, and I think it became an important part in the city being one of the last independent bigger institutions.

[21:41] Lilla Lőrinc

When we started around 2006 – that’s when I came out of university, being a painter – the whole institutional system and the whole funding system was very different, of course. Before the Orbán government everything seemed a little bit easier. We kind of saw a linear pathway – you do this, you get that – but then that changed radically after 2010, because everything was kind of distracted in my point of view. And it became harder and harder to get support and chances to work in places or with people or whatever. Because of our practice, that we were dealing with political topics a lot, we became a little bit like these dark sheep, I think, in this sense – but I think it gave us so much more energy and so much more creativity – so we couldn’t be lazy. And that’s good, I think. We met so many really amazing people, who, like – you know – you just have to do it, anyway. You just have to go and just do it, I mean, wherever you can.