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Terroir: Wine, Winery, Landscape

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Introduction

Wine production has a long history in Hungary, but the system was totally rearranged following the change in the political-economic system. Due to the change in the ownership structure and in the scale of wine production several new wineries were built in the country in the last fifteen years, most of them also representing a high architectural quality.

Parallel with the development of wine tasting culture these buildings had to answer to multiple requirements: they had not only to accommodate to the production but also to represent the firm, and being the part of the new brand. Taste of wine is also based on the territory where the grape was grown, consequently the land means more than just the soil or the climate, but it refers also to the culture of the place. Like the terroir gives the accent to wine, the local land may have an impact on the winery. New Hungarian wineries are mostly situated close to the vineyards that is in a characteristic landscape. The owners often connect the two touristic attractions: wine tasting and enjoying nature. They require a building which is not only practical but also expressive that reflects nature, the culture, the culture of wine and the place, the genius loci.

Background

The architects responded to all the above mentioned requirements – in addition to the functional and economic demands. However when reading the architects' description, they stress the building's relationship to the landscape and especially to the territory. To fit into the landscape, to express its character as well as the tradition and the mystery of wine production seems to be the basic evaluation criteria for wine architecture. (Merta, 2013) This aspect is even stronger in a region where natural environment has long been a touristic attraction, as in the case of the Balaton region.

Vineyards have a long history on both the Northern and Southern shore of the lake, while it has been used as a resort place since the late 19th century. Viticulture and wine production is the most important agricultural activity in this region. Territory or – according to their terminology – terroir is a key concept also in viticulture which interprets it as a result of many factors including climate, soil, cultivar, human practices and their interactions (Van

Leeuwen and Seguin 2006). Besides water, vine is the primary element shaping the landscape, whose assessment methodology has already been developed. (Guidelines 2013).

Goals and objectives

The complexity of architecture, viticulture and landscape situation, combined with touristic demands makes this field proper for research. We analyse winery architecture from two aspects: the first we analyse the evaluation and interpretation of the buildings from architectural approach and secondly from a landscape approach. Based on case studies the aim of this paper is to answer the following questions: Which landscape elements do the architects and architectural critics stress? What kind of techniques do the designers use to fit into the landscape? How is the linkage of the buildings to the larger landscape through the interior-exterior connection? Furthermore: How does the landscape character influence the building? What does terroir mean in the designers' interpretation? Do these wineries enhance the landscape potential?

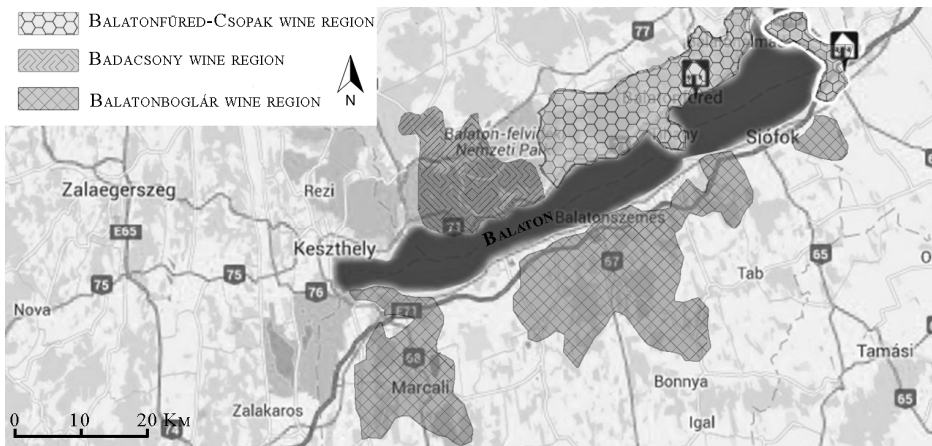


Figure 1. Three Balaton wine regions discussed in the paper

The wine region around Lake Balaton contains six wine districts. The selected four case study buildings are situated on both shores of the lake and they cover three wine districts. The *Konyári Winery* (Arch.: Zsuffa & Kalmár Architects, 2004) and the *Ikon Winery* (2007) are both settled in Balatonboglár, and process the grape of the same territory. The *St. Donat Cellar and Winery's* (Arch.: Endre Szűcs and Csaba Sallós, MÉRMŰ Studio, 2005) production is based on the vineyards of Balatonfüred–Csopak region, while the owners of the *Bazaltbor–Laposa Winery* (Arch.: Péter Kis and Bea Molnár, Atelier Péter Kis, 2010) produce wine from grapes harvested in the Badacsony region.

Method

To carry out the study, we rely on written materials: designers' texts, architectural critics' reviews and on the detailed, on-site analysis of the selected buildings.

Results

In case of the *Konyári Winery* the architects' design intentions are not available, but all the reviewers of the widely published building agree that the basic idea is quite simple, and consists in the pursuit of ideal relationship to landscape. Most of the building is concealed underground, while the mass on the ground is a natural extension of the hill itself. (Sulyok 2007). The façade combines local stone and recycled bricks, and with its closed forms it recalls a buttressing stonewall running parallel with the layer lines. Though the roof of the building has a broken, undulating surface and is covered with copper plate, the reviewers stress that the winery fits to the smaller buildings of the neighbourhood and conforms to the local tradition of agricultural buildings (Merta 2013).

The owners of the *Ikon Winery* are partly the same as that of the *Konyári Winery*, but in this case the not named architects were responsible only for the construction. According to the owner the leading concept of the building was the perfect fit into the landscape: the layout of the winery follows the layer lines and creates a mild curved shape (Dékány 2009). However – despite the intention of hiding – the impression of the realized building recalls rather the form of an amphitheatre, as it appears also in another review (Viniczai 2009). The analogy is based on the regular and – seen from the main direction of approach – closed, convex wall which covers the whole slope behind the building. The ruling building materials, brick, rubble and timber, are all traditional building materials.

In case of the *St. Donat Cellar and Winery*, the architect's own interpretation is available. As he states, “the end result is the unusually inspired combination of a wine press house of multiple floors typical of the Balaton Highlands and a dwelling house with a porch” (Szűcs 2014). In terms of formal construction and material, the large ground floor space and the porch are distinctly traditional, while hinting at their contemporariness with small gestures. The cellar is built from old dismantled bricks and divided into two naves with a vaulted ceiling. The above-ground parts of the complex have a pitch roof covered with dark tiles and a porch, recalling a traditional architectural element of the region.

The most published winery of the four examples is the *Bazaltbor–Laposa winery* which is located at the foot of Badacsony, the highest southern Witness Hill in the Tapolca–basin. The complex has two parts: a wine hotel higher up the slope and a wine producing unit – which includes also cellars and a visitor centre – at the foot of the hill. According to the architects their main principle was that the winery should be adapted to the nature (Kis and Molnár, 2010). They came to this conclusion after a detailed analysis of the situation. They took into consideration the geography and tectonics of the site, namely that both the vineyards and the winery are on the volcanic buttes of the hill. They also counted with the soil and the climate. Finally they had two main references: the neighbouring wine cellars and the basalt columns. However the traditional cellars are reflected only in the white colour of the building and in their gabled section. There is no separate roofing, but like the façade, the roof is constructed of prefabricated fair-faced concrete panels, which are decorated in grapevine reliefs. The size of the winery exceeds local scales, yet the larger part is hidden under ground level. The longitudinal axis of the building, which is bent several times, was inspired by the tectonics of the landscape: poured out and stiffen lava. Though the building was internationally awarded, most architectural reviews handled the situation, the unusual approach of the architects, with difficulties. Some papers thought to discover the symbolism of the building, that the architects designed a house that manifested the aromas of the ground (Szegő, 2011) or that the winery symbolized the local land and its wine (Merta, 2013). The international examples as possible reference points also occurred in some articles, while other authors expressed their hope that time would improve the situation and the vegetation would soon cover the building (Dékány, 2010).

To sum up, architects and architectural critics in most presented cases counted with the landscape, and stressed that to fit into the landscape was a decisive aspect when positioning the new building. However in practice this meant the reduction of the mass, and concealment at least part of the building into the slope. To get a smaller building – at least in appearance – was important especially because these new wineries exceeded the scale of the traditional wine cellars of the region, even if they were family businesses. As a conclusion, from architectural approach to keep the image of the landscape means to keep its historic image: the slope with vineyards and with small cellars. The used building materials also express this intention: rubble, dismantled brick, timber and pitch roof. If a project does not have all the mentioned elements, it has at least some of them.

The above mentioned expectations – that the wineries should reflect the building tradition of the vineyards – become problematic when the activity of

the enterprise also includes catering and accommodation. Traditional wine cellars weren't built to receive guests, although the feeling of drinking wine in the circle of friends, in front of cellars is an often recalled situation. Old cellars usually had a gate only at their front, so their basic image was closeness, while today's guests expect a wide vista. The presented four projects solved this problem in four different ways. The architects of the Konyári Winery put the restaurant on the upper floor of the building. Consequently the lower level could keep a closed image, a brick wall with few openings. The restaurant with large windows and the terrace are rotated with 90 degrees and they face to Lake Balaton. The restaurant of the Ikon Winery is operated on the top of the building and covered with a timber construction. This situation offers a perfect view, but it is inconsistent with traditional forms. The architects of the St. Donat Cellar and Winery intended to resolve the contradiction – open or closed façade – with the combination of two traditional models, the cellar and the peasant house. The result was not successful, because such a combination had never existed, and – as it turned out later – the traditional stone porch was not opened enough to enjoy the panorama, so the owners later added a summer catering area to the restaurant. Finally in case of the Bazaltbor–Laposa Winery the hotel and restaurant function was accommodated in a different building, though the architects even in this case limited number and scale of openings.

Discussion

Based on the analysis of the architectural reviews it can be concluded that in most cases neither the climate, nor the soil were mentioned, although both are key elements of the terroir. The climate around Lake Balaton is defined mainly by the lake itself. The Balaton, the biggest freshwater lakes in Europe, is located at the meeting point of three physical geographical units. The encounter of regions of different character (mountain range, hill ridge and plain) makes the Balaton landscape very versatile, increasing its aesthetic value. Therefore the landscape has a powerful influence on the overall continental climate of the wine region, making summer cooler, the air more humid, and the winter milder than is the norm on the same latitude elsewhere in Europe. This creates especially good conditions for viticulture. The different climatic effects have influenced the formation of the soil and resulted in the birth of different soil types. (Rohály and Mészáros, 2003)

Against the fact that the investigated four wineries are all situated around Lake Balaton, they produce the wine of three different terroir. The wine region, *Balatonboglár* extends along the southern shore of lake, reaching 20-25 km into the valley. The vines are planted on the slopes of a range of hills trending southwest. The bulk of the vineyards consists of sandy-clayey lacustrine

sediments deposited by the Pannonian inland sea and covered by Aeolian loess. The production of the region is dominated by white wines, while the red grape varieties are less frequent. The wine region *Csopak* lies on the north-east of Lake Balaton, on the sides of the mountains which run parallel with the lake and in the valleys and basins surrounded by these mountains. The angle of the slopes and the articulation of the terrain have produced some excellent microclimates in the area. The vineyards benefit from the breeze rolling out of the surrounding forest at night, offsetting the humid warmth of the lake. The region is well known for its unique geological formation, red forest soil, created by weathering Permian sandstone. Mainly great white wines are produced here. The *Badacsony* area is delimited by the taller Bakony range from the north and the lake from the south. This twofold influence biases the default continental climate in a sub-Mediterranean direction, creating weather condition more tempered. The character of the landscape is determined by a number of buttes. The foothills and steep slopes, often cultivated on terraces, are covered with a clayey soil mixed with basalt debris. The Badacsony wine region is a white wine growing area.

The condition of the ‘terroir’ (climate, soil, cultivar, human practices and their interactions) determines to a great extent the quality and characteristics of the wine. In a similar manner, the architecture of the winery should be a result of its ‘architectural terroir’. The ‘architectural terroir’ is intended to mean that the architecture emerges from and has a fundamental relationship to the earth and the landscape. The nature and potential of the site can inform the making of the building as it does the making of the wine.

Every site in the Balaton vineyards district is different, and for maintain unique site characteristics, such as natural topography, soil quality, scenic vistas etc. and for mitigate the visual impacts of proposed development, design process should follow some standard principles. According to the usual guidelines the new architecture should maintain or enhance the amenity values of the surrounding area and to follow and utilize the natural contours of the land to minimize disturbance; colours and building materials should be selected to relate to the colours of the landscape; buildings should be designed to minimize mass and volume, architectural elements that increase visual prominence should be avoided. (Riverside, 2014)

Conclusion

It is a fact that in all our four cases the architects and customers strived to fit into the landscape and don’t disturb it – though they were not always successful. They intended to lower the building and to use local and traditional materials. As a further means of integration the architects often recalled the forms of wine cellars, which concurred with the expectations of customers and

architectural reviewers: to create the architectural and landscape background of a feeling, of a calm and quiet place.

However when the architects and critics analysed the building and its connection to the landscape they concentrated on the general situation – the task was to build a winery on a hill-side – and they rarely approached the ‘terroir’ in its wider context. The only exception is the Bazaltbor–Laposa Winery, whose designers counted with all the elements of the territory: the geography of the site, the volcanic buttes of the hill, the soil and the climate. This detailed analysis of the environment led them to the solution that the shape of the winery was inspired by the tectonics of the landscape and it recalls the gabled form of cellars only an abstract manner. This winery not only follows the natural contours of the land, but it adds a new element to it, so we may state that it enhances the landscape. And yet, the result can’t be explained only with the thorough research and with the creativity of the architects. The owner of the Bazaltbor–Laposa Winery, József Laposa is a landscape architect.

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