



WHY IS THE FATE OF LANDSCAPE IMPORTANT TO US?

The world is torn asunder!

Today it can clearly be recognised that the communist era carved a deep and irremediable mark in people's life and mentality. Those who live in the 'Eastern block' of Europe are not able to live in peace. After 50 years of socialism, the change of the political system forced people to quickly adapt to wild capitalism in the span of two to three years. This is seemingly inconceivable, only those who had to undergo it can understand. It cannot be described.

We perceived that there is an almost insurmountable gap between the approaches and sentiments of Eastern and Western Europe. We questioned ourselves: What is the role of Hungary? Could we find a way between the two parties since we belong to both and none of them? We hoped that the nations of Europe would open up to each other. We thought that

Central Europe would find its own mission. But 54 years after the last war, we took notice of bel-
lowing air-armadas – known only from war-films – from the neighbouring country.

How should we work from now on? What does the aesthetics of the landscape and garden mean at all? What should we do? For this reason, in 1999 we published the Bonnyai Manifesto, perhaps for the acquittal of our conscience:

The world is torn asunder!

The relationship between men, the harmony between man and nature is breaking down. The people of Europe are floating apart rather than steering toward common goals. The gap between East and West does not seem to diminish. Man does not have a real connection with his country and the landscape which he enjoys.

We must acknowledge that this is inherent to our fate, which we have to secure either individually or together. Our relation to nature and landscape can

FIGURE 1 Typical Hungarian men and women at the beginning the 20th century. The message of faces changes in time just as the message of landscape portraits does.



FIGURE 2 Four impressions of the Landscape Workshop in Dörög 1995.

be based only upon our own self-knowledge. We must understand our status and location in Europe. We must paint an honest picture of that landscape that has been created in two millennia, in which we live and which determines our destination. Degradation of nature is due to our ignorance and indifference, from our belief that it will have no effect on our environment. Europe cannot be put together by monetary union but by common will!

We do not want wars! Instead of destroying bridges, let us build bridges between men, between people and between man and nature!

Let us send off a ship, a floating island, on which every community, nation can plant a tree in the name of love, self-knowledge, intelligence and liberty. This Floating Ecological Island can start off on the Danube, in the heart of Europe which is supposed to

'Pagony' means 'little wood'. The word has become especially well-known after Karinthy Frigyes (a famous Hungarian writer and translator) has used it for the '100 acre wood' in Milne's Winnie the Pooh. The word is not common, and it has pleasant associations. On hearing it one can almost feel the shade, hear the running stream and see the giant old oak trees.

connect and not to separate the people living there in throwing their lot with each other. It would call at all ports where this idea is shared and where people want to join this Manifesto.

PAGONY, an initiative caring for landscape between man and nature

You might wonder who 'we' are. Let us tell a little of the biography of Pagony. Pagony is a group of designers, a workshop. The Pagony Studio for Landscape and Garden Architecture was established in Budapest, Hungary, in the early 1990s by newly graduated people and young landscape architects with children. The members are Monika Buella, Ágnes Herczeg, Zsuzsa Illyés, Gábor Szücs, and Attila Vincze. The founding of the studio was encouraged by a common interest in anthroposophy and a professional ambition, which provided external impetus in addition to the circumstances and existential difficulties brought by the change of the political system.



FIGURE 3 Aerial photographs of Öcs village in Dörög 1950, 1968, 1980 show huge changes in landscape pattern.

FIGURE 4 Changes in land use pattern from 1780 to 1984.

At that historical moment, István Kálmán – one of the leading anthroposophists whom we owe much inspiration –, giving seminars in the field of anthroposophy, recommended the landscape architects visiting his classes: 'Start a studio together on your own!' Looking back at those times, hundreds of excuses could have been given for not establishing a studio. Today it is almost inexplicable how brave we were to start. Encouraged again by István Kálmán, we turned to Jochen Bockemühl, the leader of the Goetheanum Science Section in Dornach for professional assistance in our activity, and we acquainted ourselves with the aspects of nature based on the studies of Goethe. We educated ourselves at the summer programs in Dornach for years. We discovered that the exercises in observing nature lead us primarily to empirical knowledge. The concern with daily questions and tasks often closes our eyes to real values. We started to try to develop tolerance and interest, and embrace the observations of the world of senses more comprehensively.

Individuality of the landscape

In 1995, we organised the International Landscape Architecture Meeting lead by Jochen Bockemühl with the title: 'Individuality of the landscape'. After this event, to which we attached great importance and which had taken us years of considerable work to organise and prepare, we desperately recognised a gap. Though we share the intellectual aims of Bockemühl's School, when left alone in this corner of Central-Eastern Europe, we could not reach adequate decisions or proper actions by merely proceeding from this concept. We needed additional knowledge. We needed the knowledge of the social aspect of the landscape. Thus, we wanted to find out how the individual initiatives, ideas and efforts could appropriately be integrated into a historical progress, into a landscape that is shaped and should be shaped by a community.



FIGURE 5 Views of Ormánáság

FIGURE 6 Views of the Dörögöd basin

Places, just occasional scenes of our life?

To experience the consequences of these thoughts, in 1997 we organised a ten-day camp where young people created a communal place around the ruins of the church of Taliándörögöd, on the basis of the following invitation referring to the difference between Places and Communal Places:

This is an invitation to those people who think that there is a gap between their ideas and realising them, who experienced that the knowledge acquired in schools is not enough for them to be creative and active participants of the world, and those who want to feel comfortable in human relations in our poorer age even when stepping out of their homes. We wonder whether these Places surrounding our homes are just occasional scenes of our life?

We grow into them, take them as they are – may they be nice or ugly – since they do not belong to us. We think streets, parks and squares are constant and unchangeable. They are parts of a village, a city.

They are not our property even though we use them for traffic, playing or rendezvous. Places are communal places, aren't they? Do we need a communal place, a communal existence at all? Place, Space, Town, Community – is there any relationship between these words?

Personal relationship to landscape

We got to the point where knowing our fate cannot be ignored neither in our life nor in our work. How can we reach this knowledge? We see the way in the approach based on observing the phenomena. However, we draw our attention more empathetically to the correlation of landscape, we would like to understand how the landscape reflects the correlation of fate. We want to experience and understand our fate, our destiny in our everyday activity and work; the practice of which makes us happy. We consider landscape as a living, vital organism. It is such a creature that has its own character, individuality and his-



FIGURE 7 Social work and village forum in Dörögöd

tory. If we turn to the nature this way and are interested in it, love awakes by learning it. Therefore our relationship with that territory where we work becomes personal. We are lucky that our profession is beautiful. What we are dealing with is beautiful. It is vivid, it is all about life. We experience a loving affection toward what we are doing.

Today's summary: landscape as a self-portrait

In this ten years of history, the concept of 'what a landscape means to us' is continuously improving and hopefully will improve in the future, too. Today we summarise it as follows. A landscape is a portrait. A self-portrait of the creator, the designer of the landscape. Its historical change is the same as the metamorphosis of the human conscience. Our task is to identify and understand those processes that caused the external effects and those that formed its internal

processes that lead them towards the unknown. Man is part of the nature, and at the same time nature is a part of man. It is not only an impression, nor a reflection. Landscape is an individual entity with its own history. Without each other man and landscape can not be interpreted and recognised. This interests us. What is the nature of this relation and what should it be like in the 21st century?

To answer these questions, we consciously seek for a way, a method for working out a designer attitude that harmonises our aims, in addition to the challenge to develop an ethical approach in landscape architecture. By working on a local level (for local governments, private owners) the relative unimportance of our professional decision-making – when based solely on natural correlations – turns out to be our crucial experience.

FIGURE 7 Social work and village forum in Dörögöd



FIGURE 8 Map of Europe showing the Carpathian Basin

Social life, key for landscape development

The issue of relationship between man and nature is a question of general social and economical problems and of the development of European civilisation. We experience it as a severe global crisis which puts huge pressure on our shoulders. Controversially, geographical and social space, in which our work evolves, is limited to a few small hectares, square-kilometres, to those interested people or communities. From this point of view the solutions of problems have local characteristics. The answer to be given to the same natural and ecological question also varies according to the history of the place. We try to deepen our view and make it flexible primarily in time instead of broadening it in space. In addition to knowing nature and landscape, we need to find links with social circumstances. After all, the notion and deeds of people living in that area represent the future of that landscape. This approach reflects an attitude that is not lim-

ited to designing only, but presumes a lengthy, sometimes years-long professional co-involvement. It is clear that developing landscape cannot be carried out without the support of the society of people living there. The appropriate formation of social life is the key to the development of landscape, and cannot be separated from it.

Dörög, a social landscape experiment

The Dörög basin is a good example that bears the stamp of all the symptoms in its history that demonstrates the alterations of the Hungarian landscape. After the change of the political system, the socialist political and economical structure was pulled down. All state-owned lands were privatised. The little villages that lost their independence regained their local governance. They now struggle with severe social issues because of ageing, low living standard and underdeveloped infrastructure. In this situation the issue of a complete restart

arose. What can the future hold for a small region, five small villages of the Dörög-basin? We worked out short-, and long term development strategies hand in hand with the mayors just learning local governance, with the civil organisations and with the help of local people. Community-based thinking turned out to be the aim of strategy setting while identifying the local values – including natural and regional values, cultural and architectural heritage – in considering it to be the most important resource. We organised a so called ‘village-forum’ and set the scene for community-based thinking – amongst the farmers, amongst the local-governments. Everyone could join who desired to do something in accordance with his or her personality, skills and abilities.

Our studio took and still takes part in this process as initiators, professional consultants or designers in the work on land-reallotment schemes, village-image redesign plan, rehabilitation of water courses neglected, etc. But research also involves historical ecology, and an environmental awareness programme includes trainings between inhabitants and local governments, an environmental protection centre, trainings for organic farmers, publications for identifying natural values and collective tree-line planting. For developing agriculture, a Swiss-Hungarian Foundation has been established emphasising all aspects of agricultural society.

In carrying out these landscape development tasks we acquired experience with the social viewpoints of the landscape, and the reality of regional development. This way of facilitating the development of the region has a close connection with the issue whether it is possible to build an existence harmonising the landscape and the people living there.

Hungary, garden of Europe?

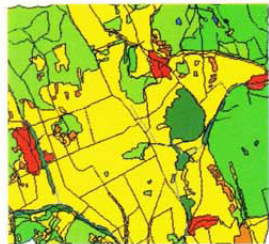
The situation and the role played by Hungary in Europe is a special issue for us. Our home country a place where more people earn their living

from the agriculture than in countries situated in Western Europe but significantly less than in the eastern part. This country used to be called the ‘garden of Europe’. It is still outstanding considering the measures and fertility of its bearings. However, the crisis of agriculture has been continuously intensified in the last ten years. Never have there been so few lea lands and so little wildlife as nowadays in Hungary. Although the Hungarian landscape and its history tend to increasingly accommodate the European landscape history, it is still very special.

Landscape, our home

The European landscape is the individual unity itself. For complete understanding it is necessary to observe all of its parts. We understand that our landscape experience has a ‘home’ aspect. According to Zoltán Szabó (a famous Hungarian writer before the 2nd World War, sociologist and researcher of the countryside and of villages), ‘Home, in geographical terms denotes a more elemental experience than in historical terms. In the European landscape I can recognise my homeland, and in my home-country I can recognise Europe. This connotation of the word home stays far beyond imperialism and competition. Landscapes do not fight against each other but create; they do not compete but inspire; it would be good to pay attention to them sometimes. Different landscapes harmonise well with each other; if different nations living in these landscapes would pay more attention perhaps they would get on better with each other. Landscapes teach us peace, love, tolerance, exhilaration and thoughts free of fanaticism, they teach us appreciation of home and respect for others’ home.’ If our intention is to predict the future of the European landscape, then we need to explore its individual landscapes. However, war is still a part of the European landscape. When talking about the European landscape we cannot conceal this. If we understand Zoltán Szabó’s old message, then let us set the goal to communicate via landscape.





KURZFASSUNG

Warum ist das Schicksal der Landschaft uns wichtig?

Vor 10 Jahren gründeten wir das Pagony Landschaftsarchitektenbüro. Seitdem wurde es immer wichtiger uns unserer eigenen Intentionen und Verwurzelungen bewußt zu werden. Unser eigenes Schicksal und das Schicksal Ungarns weckten dabei mehr und mehr unser Interesse. Klares Denken und Beobachten sind auch hierbei grundlegend, um zu einer sachgemäßen Erkenntnis zu kommen. Immer mehr beachten wir auch die Schicksalszusammenhänge einer Landschaft. Wir fassen die Landschaft als einen lebendigen Organismus auf. Sie ist ein Wesen mit eigenem Charakter, eigener Individualität und eigener Schicksalsgeschichte. Es wurde auch zunehmend deutlich, daß wir unsere Arbeit nicht nur auf Natur- und Landschaftsbeobachtung gründen dürfen.

Vielmehr müssen wir auch die sozialen Gegebenheiten beachten. Die Tätigkeiten und das Bewußtsein der in einer Gegend lebenden Menschen bestimmen die Zukunft ihrer Landschaft.

Vor diesem Hintergrund wollen wir versuchen, auch die Bedeutung der ungarischen Landschaft für Europa besser verstehen zu lernen.

Pagony

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