

**Magdolna Zelei-Pintér**

## **The community formation role of wine culture – informative lecture series with wine tasting**

### **1. Best practice selection criteria**

Knowledge about wines and cultured wine consumption have become parts of Hungarian and universal culture by today. Building on this, the practice of the interactive lecture series combined with wine tasting provides unique and novel knowledge dissemination occasions for small communities whose members wish to widen their knowledge in the field of wine culture. The uniqueness arises from the widest possible interpretation of wine culture, since in the course of the lectures it is not only the fundamentals of wine tasting, Hungarian wines/wine regions and their winery and winery traditions as well as the tasted wines and their makers that are presented, as is the custom at similar wine tasting occasions. Based on the topics and methodology of the lecture series there is also the opportunity to combine the tasting of and information dissemination about the wines with a branch of art or an issue of interest on each occasion. Thus the respective occasions do not focus on wine tasting but on information acquisition; the wines selected adjusted to the respective topics are additional experience to the topics. Accordingly, it is not lecture topics chosen to match wines, but wines must be selected to closely match with the respective lecture topics. While the selection and matching of wines are a bigger challenge from the point of view of the lecturers and are the results of continuous learning and research work, for the audience this results in an exciting and experience-based learning process with a new approach.

### **2. Organization(s) / person(s) the best practice can be related to**

BorOskola of Debrecen as a wine club was established as a member organization of KultúrÁsz Public Benefit Association with 10 founding members in 2011. The idea of its foundation was first formulated so as to meet the individual needs of a small circle of friends and was confirmed by feedback from acknowledged representatives of wine culture in Hungary. The wine club regards it as its mission to consciously taste and evaluate the most high-quality Hungarian wines possible, in addition to which, performing

a kind of wine ambassador's mission, it makes efforts to explore and disseminate information on Hungarian wine culture and related traditions, practice and popularize sophisticated social wine consumption. Its activities include thematic wine tasting, visiting wine cellars and events supporting sophisticated wine culture, delivering knowledge dissemination lectures. The organization took over at the time of its foundation the organization of the *Wine course* at the university, organized by the chairman of the Association since 2001 (and has organized it ever since). The Wine course is an intellectual module for enrolled students of the University of Debrecen, aimed to popularize Hungarian wine culture and disseminate information about Hungarian wines. The process of taking over this activity was facilitated by the fact that the leader of the wine course at the university, Dr. Erika Juhász, is at the same time elected chairperson of the wine club. Thanks to the popularity of the wine course and the wine club, a growing number of communities in and around Debrecen have developed demand for knowledge dissemination programmes combined with wine tasting in order to widen their local programme offer. It was as a stop-gap service based on these individual needs that BorOskola of Debrecen worked out the thematics and methodology of the knowledge dissemination lecture series combined with wine tasting. The interactive lectures with wine tasting are given by members of the wine club. Since the foundation of the wine club its members have comprised the circle of friends of KultúrÁsz Association who live in various parts of Hungary and are active in various disciplines but are all committed to Hungarian wine culture. The members keep widening their knowledge, collect information and educate themselves about wine culture and closely related topics, be it about formal (e.g. further training related to university specialization, wine expert courses), non-formal (wine tasting events, cellar visits, self-organized blind tasting events), or informal occasions of learning (e.g. wine dinners, wine gastronomy festivals, wine magazines).

### **3. Beneficiaries of the best practice**

Through awareness raising lectures, the lecture series provides opportunity primarily to disadvantaged or marginalized social groups (people above 60 years of age, inhabitants of small settlements, members of civil organizations) to recognize wine and other local values as well as their effects in community building and stimulating the local economy, preserve these and pass them on to further generations. In this, local authorities and cultural institutions may be of great help by advertising and organizing the lectures, providing venues for them, building regular participants into small communities and helping to sustain these. By today, the dissemination of knowledge related to the wine course has arisen as a demand in several other areas as well and we have regularly provided interactive wine events for cities, multinational companies and public personalities (e.g. mayors), too.

### **4. Objectives and activities of the best practice**

By its knowledge dissemination lectures combined with wine tasting, BorOskola of Debrecen raises awareness of the traditions of high-quality and cultured wine consumption as well as its effects in community formation.

The knowledge dissemination programme series processing specific knowledge content is implemented with the adult population involved, based on the interest and activity of the local population. Thereby not only the information dissemination but the community development effects, too, are decisive:

- creation of community experience,
- deeper understanding of community identity,
- emergence of new communication channel between generations and different social groups,
- establishment of new relations, expansion of relations network,
- exploration and familiarization with local resources and traditions,
- enhancing local participation,
- through the formation of a more active and conscious community.

Thereby the population retaining force and the local economy stimulation force of the programme are also measurable.

The knowledge dissemination function of the interactive lectures committed to popularize Hungarian wine culture not only serves familiarization with the fundamentals of wine tasting and with Hungarian wines/wine regions and their vinery and winery traditions but on each occasion it connects wine tasting and education with a different branch of art or topic of interest. The topics discussed so far are:

- The fundamentals of wine tasting
- Hungarian wines and wine regions
- Rules of wine evaluation and wine scoring
- From the shelf to the glass – wine accessories
- Wine as cultural heritage
- Wine and traditions
- Wine and film culture
- Wine and literature
- Legendary wines – Wine legends
- The truth is in the wine – Wine and law
- Wine and women
- Wines and festivals
- Wines and gastronomy
- Wine and marketing
- Wine and tourism

The topics and occasions of the lecture series are free to vary according to individual needs.

Each occasion is minimally 90 minutes typically and is implemented with the following methods alternately in order to make the occasions as varied as possible. The interactive practical tasks also help participants' activity.

Methods applied:

- *Situation assessment*: a discussion with the participants about local small communities, their activities, needs or previous knowledge about the topic.
- *Transfer of fundamental information*: in the form of lecture, for the transfer of theoretical information related to the topic, for practical application and the development of related competencies.
- *Knowledge transfer/processing with playful methods*: task solving individually, in pairs, team work or using the method of discussion,

alternately. The tasks are performed using accessories and realia adjusted to the topic, serving the creation and reinforcement of cultured wine consumption habits and familiarization with Hungarian wine culture (e.g. winery-vinery-wine tasting accessories, objects, publications, short film extracts, fragrance pads, etc.), and interactive methods (e.g. quiz games, activity, etc.).

- *Wine tasting*: the tasting of wines in harmony with the topics (3-7 items per occasion, depending on need) so as to try the steps of wine tasting and acquire the rules of tasting and evaluation. The tasting of various items helps the sensory analysis, objective description and the analysis of the wines. This is an analysing (evaluative by sensory organs) and synthesizing (evaluative by comparing the wine concerned with previously tasted wines), coordinated by the session leader.
- *Gastronomic elements*: depending on needs and opportunities, wine tasting combines with mineral water, savory snacks or a complete dinner. In the case of wine events where dinner is served, the food and wine combinations are previously to be consulted with the cook providing the meals.

## **5. Area(s) affected by the best practice**

### *Knowledge dissemination*

The knowledge dissemination function of the interactive lecture series helps enlarge the wine culture-related knowledge as well as, in relation to the topic processed, the general knowledge of the group comprising local citizens. The group has the same size and composition and is characterized by a common interest in wine culture, but its members have different social and professional backgrounds.

### *Non-formal learning occasions*

The lectures combined with wine tasting are learning occasions for a group of persons sharing the same interest, at a previously agreed time outside work/school hours.

## **6. Territorial scope of the best practice**

Our wine tasting sessions are implemented in regions of Hungary East to the river Danube primarily; there have been occasions at several settlements, which does not necessarily refer to the population of these settlements as in several cases participants come from other settlements within the framework of off-site trainings. The following settlements (in alphabetical order) have frequently served as venues: Bagamér, Biharkeresztes, Debrecen, Egerszalók, Földes, Hajdúszoboszló, Heves, Nádudvar, Ópályi, Sárospatak.

## **7. The conditions (human, financial, technical) required for the best practice**

### *Human conditions*

In each case the interactive lectures with wine tasting are organized at the request of the local authority and/or a local cultural organization for local inhabitants or in the case of an off-site camp or training, for the invited participants.

The interactive lectures with wine tasting are given by members of BorOskola of Debrecen wine club. On each occasion the session is led by a lecturer and at least one assistant. The lecturer is an expert proficient in the given topic, with practical experience, who has several years' experience in wine tasting. The assistant helps with the realia applied and the practical tasks implemented in the course of the lecture, as well as in offering the wines. Usually the assistant, too, has several years' experience in wine tasting or helps out as a volunteer/trainee. In the past years several students of the University of Debrecen have joined the task that way.

The ideal size of the groups of participants is 10-12 people or the multiple of these because in the case of groups of such a size, one bottle of wine (0.75 l) is enough for tasting, including the opportunity of additional tasting. Wine tasting with a smaller group of 10-12 people is relatively rare; 20-24 member wine tastings or 100-member wine courses are the most frequent.

### *Financial conditions*

A cost item to be certainly reckoned with for the lectures is the cost of the wines required for the tasting of 3-7 items per occasion. If the group is larger than 10-12 people, 2 or more bottles per item are required (depending on the group size).

Another cost item of the lectures may be the lecturer's fee and travel expenses. If the lecture is of a charity nature, members of the wine club hold the lectures on a voluntary basis.

Related to the wine tasting, the need may arise for the consumption of water and savory snacks, the costs of which should also be reckoned with, while it may happen in their case, too, that e.g. the members of the small community offer these on a voluntary basis (home-baked salty cookies, scones, home-made cheese, own grown apples, etc.). A complete wine dinner may also arise as a demand, in which case you can speak of wine tasting of a higher price category.

The costs can be self-financed (participants pay for participation), project-financed (from domestic or EU funds) or sponsored (by a local authority, employer or other organization), or a combination of these (e.g. the lecturer is paid by the local authority and the cost of the wines and savory snacks are covered from participants' payment).

### *Technical conditions*

In every case, the venues of the interactive lectures with wine tasting has been provided by the client for the group comprising local inhabitants free of charge. There are several aspects that the venues, their characteristics and facilities are supposed to comply with: the expected size of the group, the methods used in the course of the lecture and the conditions required for professional wine tasting. The venues should be suitable for accommodating the number of persons in the group, where possible, should have movable furniture in order to be suitable for both plenary/frontal and small group setting as required by the individual tasks. The lectures also require education technology tools for the presentations like a laptop,

projector (projection and short films) which help visualisation and the transfer of theoretical material.

Beyond these, the venue is also to comply with the conditions required for professional wine tasting: sufficient light with air condition or ventilation (for the suitable temperature), fridge for the storage/chilling of the wines.

For the tasting of wines, wine tasting glasses are required for each participant and the lecturer. A wine tasting glass is a kind of glass made of glass for professional wine tasting. An official wine tasting glass has a volume of 227 cc, which is big enough for rotating the wine in it. The opening of the glass is slightly narrower to concentrate the aroma. The stem of the glass enables one to hold the glass without warming up the wine or contaminating the glass.

## **8. Results and short-, mid- and long-term impact of the best practice**

It can be considered as a short-term result that participants use the information shared at the interactive lecture in their own everyday lives (e.g. matching wine to food for a festive family dinner).

In the mid run, participants experience in the course of the interactive lectures and discussions the occasion creating and community building power of wine, and the shared interest results in cooperation, local collaboration and the formation of a new small community. In Biharkeresztes, for instance, the members of the 12-member group attending the monthly sessions have started to organize for themselves, outside the formal sessions, their own events supporting wine culture (visits to wine cellars, wine dinners).

As a long-term effect, participants of the lecture series practice and popularize cultured and sophisticated social wine consumption in their everyday lives as well. Beyond this, the established small communities may enhance, through their continuous operation, the population retaining force of the settlement, intergenerational cultural transmission and have a local economy stimulating function as well.

## **9. Sustainability of the best practice**

The key to the sustainability of the best practice is in the cooperation and the long-term availability of the human resources base for the programme. The cooperation between the BorOskola of Debrecen providing the lecture series and the organizations/institutions as well as their members using the service is based on good relations (professional and personal) going back to several years/decades. The provision of the human resources base refers to the lecturers on the one hand. Since BorOskola of Debrecen is a small civilian community organized bottom-up from a group of friends, its long-term operation is based on its committed members. On the other hand, the experts of the organizations/institutions responsible for the organization of the lectures are also motivated by their commitment and local patriotism when organizing these cultural/educational occasions for local citizens.

Beyond the currently 15 topics of the lecture series new topics can be arranged and worked out any time meeting the group's demand so that lecture attendants' interest can be maintained on a continuous basis.

The sustainability of the lecture series combined with wine tasting depends on financial conditions to a lesser extent as it can be implemented as a low-budget programme, too: beyond the acquisition of wines and the provision of the lecturer, most expenses can be covered from voluntary offers (venue, organization, technical facilities, savory snacks, etc.)

## **10. Adaptability of the best practice**

The informative lecture series combined with wine tasting is easy to adapt to any group of settlements where there is an NGO some of whose members are dedicated to wine culture and local values and communities who, with local intellectuals from various disciplines involved, are together able, while popularizing wine culture, to enrich the topics of the lecture series with issues of interest for the local population. The choice of topic of the lecture series can be adapted to any other discipline.