

## Article

# Building Coalitions for a Diversified and Sustainable Tourism: Two Case Studies from Hungary

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**Abstract:** The development of the tourism sector has been a question of strategic importance for Hungary, a small, open economy with limited natural resources. At the same time, these efforts often generate considerable environmental conflicts, decreasing the sustainability of the environment. To understand the potential methods of sustainable tourism development, and to develop the optimal policy, it is essential to clarify the actors, their systems of interest and the potential ways of forging coalitions between them. The article presents an analysis of two case studies of rural tourism development: the “softening” of tourism at the most important touristic attraction in Hungary, Lake Balaton; and the conflicts arising from wine tourism development. Based on institutional economics, principle–agent theory and strategic management, and applying the MACTOR method, the authors identify the key actors, present the network of their mutual influences and goals, determine the most important conflicts and highlight the potential coalitions between them from the point of view of sustainable rural tourism development, as well as ways to further develop the regulatory environment. Based on this analysis, the article proves: (1) the importance of the modernization and re-organization of the public administration structure, focusing on optimal utilization of resources, as opposed to attaching to traditions; (2) the importance of forming clusters of different partners; (3) the strengthening of the knowledge base of decisions concerning sustainable tourism management; and (4) increasing conscious planning, based on the inclusion of different interest groups and long-term prognoses in local decision making, minimises the environmental burden of tourism.

**Keywords:** actors analysis; institutional economics; cluster development; decision making; MACTOR model; strategic planning

## 1. Introduction

Hungary, a relatively small, Central-European country, characterised by an open economy [1] with limited natural resources, has considered the development of tourism as one of the most important drivers of economic development over the last half century [2].

The comprehensive development of the tourism sector is one of the priorities of the current Hungarian government, which plans to increase the share of the tourism sector in Hungary’s GDP

from the current 9.8% to 16% by 2030. For this purpose, at the end of 2017, the Hungarian government issued a National Tourism Development Plan. This plan identifies some key trends in world tourism, among others: “the need for experiences, emotions, and an increase in the value placed on travel” [3].

Beside the political declarations on the importance of the tourism development sector (as a key possibility for the diversification of the Hungarian economy, which is heavily dependent on foreign automotive companies [4,5]), there are also some negative tendencies in tourism development. (1) The position of Hungary has been considerably worsened in international comparison: according to the rate of travel and tourism competitiveness index [6], Hungary has fallen nine places. In 2015, the country was ranked 40th, but, in 2017, only 49th (at the same time, this rank is even higher than in the case of some neighbouring countries, e.g., Slovakia (59), Romania (68), and Serbia (95), but considerably lower than in the case of Croatia (32) or Slovenia (41). (2) The efficiency of the Hungarian tourism system is relatively low [7,8] due to the low value-added content of tourist services, high seasonality (the majority of guests arrive in the second half of July and the first half of August) [9], and the geographic concentration of touristic attractions. (3) In previous tourism planning practice, considerations of sustainability had only marginal importance. A previous version of the current development strategy received considerable criticism for this [10].

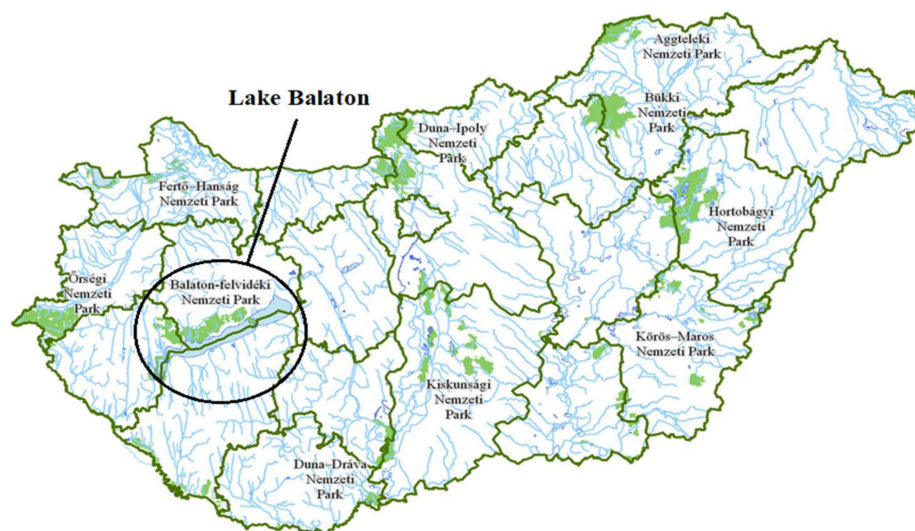
The flagship of Hungarian tourism is Lake Balaton (Figure 1), the largest so-called “sea” in Central Europe, with a surface area of 594 km<sup>2</sup>. There are numerous specific aspects and values of the Balaton geographic region in terms of natural geography, flora [11], fauna [12], history [13], ethnography [14] and culture [15]. The northern part of the lake is a National Park [16], but, from our point of view, the most important feature is the role of the Balaton in Hungarian tourism. Currently, the lake is the target of 13% of the total number of foreign tourist arrivals to Hungary. The share of Lake Balaton in domestic tourism, based on guest-nights, is around 23% [17].

The history of tourism around the Balaton can be divided into three periods. Up to the Second World War it was a holiday resort for the middle class [18]. The most rapid development and the “golden era” of Balaton tourism was in the communist period, from 1945 to 1989. At this time, considerable investments were made in mass-tourism development around the lake. On the one hand, the political regime tried to demonstrate that it supports recreation for the working class [19], while, on the other hand, the tourism development contributed to the improvement of the country’s foreign exchange balance. At that time, Lake Balaton was a very important meeting point for separated families from East and West Germany. After the system-change, it became obvious that low quality, low efficiency tourism is not an alternative for Lake Balaton tourism, and intensive discussions began on further options for development [20,21]. According to the study of the Hungarian Court of Auditors, between 1990 and 2007, more than half a billion HUF (ca. 2 million Euros) had been spent from the state budget on different studies on the development of tourism at Lake Balaton [22]. The only practically realised result of these studies was the introduction of a specific voucher system (Balaton Card). Owners of this card enjoy a range of benefits including free entry to tourist attractions, and discounts from retailers and stores, and on public transport. The Hungarian literature on economic geography and regional planning is full of concepts relating to the development of tourism at Lake Balaton [23], but even today the lake is characterised by mass tourism [24]. Under these conditions it seems to be a natural step to dis-burden the lake, at least partially, from mass tourism and re-orientate this kind of tourism towards quality-oriented rural tourism, based on the natural values of the region around the lake, but not directly on the shores of the lake itself. This would be a considerable step towards decreasing the environmental burden [25] of the lake because it is well documented that rural tourism results in less burdensome impacts than mass tourism [26].

The development of rural tourism in the Lake Balaton region is regarded as a more sustainable alternative compared to mass tourism. The size of the area within the jurisdiction of municipalities located around the Lake Balaton is nearly five times as large as the area of municipalities situated directly at the lake rural tourism could be considered more sustainable than mass tourism because tourists would be spread over a larger geographical area around the Lake. The partial re-orientation

of tourism from the Lake to rural regions could be an important step to decrease the environmental burden (road traffic noise, exhaust emissions, and *water*-associated burden created by chemical sun protection factors). Decreasing seasonality could mitigate the over-burdened traffic infrastructure and congestion on roads especially in the high season. Furthermore, the re-orientation of tourism can give a new impetus to rural tourism by re-vitalising the socio-economic life in the Lake Balaton region. The development of rural tourism would further contribute to the enhancement of efforts to preserve and develop local agriculture and architectural values instead of losing them. Finally, a considerable migration to abroad and other regions of Hungary from the villages and towns of the Lake Balaton region can be observed. The consequence of this phenomenon is the abandonment of agricultural land and rural houses leading to the rapid degradation of agricultural landscape, architectural values and ethnographic treasures. The development of rural tourism offers an important opportunity to restore these negative tendencies to a certain extent.

Garcia-Ramon et al. [27] proved that the participation of women in the creation and running of rural tourist attractions has contributed to their sensibilisation to the problems of environmental protection. Slee et al. [28] demonstrated that rural tourism is more tightly embedded in the local economy than traditional forms of tourism, which is why this form of tourism generates more income and employment. Clark and Chabrel [29] pointed out that well organised local tourism (e.g., a visitor pay-back scheme) can be an important contribution to decreasing the environmental burden and repairing environmental damage. Of course, rural tourism creates new problems from the point of view of environmental protection, which is why the classic guidelines for defensive tourism should be followed [30]. Applying the categorization generally applied to differentiate forms of tourism [31] it would seem that diverting tourism away from Lake Balaton to Hungary's rural regions offers a good possibility to transform a proportion of current tourist activity from mass to soft forms of tourism. The development of rural tourism would be an important step towards the development of the region in general [32].



**Figure 1.** Hydro-geographic map of Hungary, with Lake Balaton. The National Parks (specific protected areas) are indicated in green. Source: [33].

Wine tourism is organically linked to agriculture [34]. Wine and wine making has played a traditional role in Hungarian life and culture [35]. One of the most important directions of Hungarian tourism is gastro-tourism, and wine tourism is an important part of this. Wine tourism in Hungary is an especially important possibility for development, because: (1) there are large variations in wine producing terroirs [36]; (2) there are a large number of vine varieties [37]; and (3) there is a very rich traditional architecture [38] which often reflects the colourful variety of the Carpathian basin's

ethnic heterogeneity and the traditions of co-habitation of different cultures, from Jewish [39] to Romanian [40] and German. This serves as a backdrop for the activity, although they are employed mainly in the promotion of mass tourism. The preservation of vineyards is an important step towards sustainability because vines are able to prevent the soil degradation process [41]. (Montella M.M. [42] offers a detailed overview of another positive aspect of vine tourism as regards sustainability.)

In summary, it can be stated that the development of rural tourism is closely linked to sustainability, because it is well documented that: (1) the development of tourism can generate negative externalities and exercise an adverse effect on the environment, e.g., more intense transport, increasing noise, tree cover loss on land surface, etc. [43]; (2) the touristic product is an extremely complex one, which necessitates the coordinated action of different stakeholders [44,45]; and (3) these theses are especially true for rural tourism, which is realised in an environment which is “virgin”, often under conditions of environmental protection, necessitating the coordinated action of different stakeholders for the creation of a competitive and sustainable touristic product [2,46].

The present study is structured as follows: after a short introduction and literature review, the research problem is presented. Section 2 offers a description of the MACTOR model applied to the analysis of the position of different actors, as well as their strategies, and the procedure used to collect expert opinion. Section 3 summarises the results of our study by highlighting the most important steps that should be taken to strengthen the sustainability of the Hungarian tourism system. Section 4 offers short conclusions highlighting some generalizable lessons for other post-transition countries.

## 2. The Research Problem

Tourism is a key sector in Hungary. However, an important question arises: how can the tourism sector be further developed in such a way as to satisfy the following conditions: decreasing the environmental burden caused by mass tourism, and concentrating tourism geographically and seasonally in parallel with an enhancement of its income generating capacity? Based on our interviews high seasonality and considerable concentration of tourism demand causes socio-economic burden (congestion on roads, road traffic noise, exhaust emissions, etc.). This is in itself a multi-criteria optimization problem with considerable limitations because—naturally—the elasticity of demand for mass-tourism is relatively low due to these consumer’s sensitivity to price, who are rather conservative spenders, which is why it would be naive to suppose that families with small children do not wish to enjoy the hotels at Lake Balaton, or that young party-goers could be re-orientated towards rural tourism. It is probable that the demands of these tourists will be satisfied at Lake Balaton and at an increasing rate at the Adriatic Sea coast in Croatia. At the same time, it seems to be a realistic possibility to maintain or increase the income generating capacity of tourism in the region around Lake Balaton because, according to our hypothesis, a proportion of sand and sun oriented mass tourism can be replaced by rural tourism. The other example, namely wine tourism, demonstrates that this form of tourism is an important way of utilizing the natural and human qualities of the wine-producing regions.

It is an open-ended question as to how the rural tourism system can be optimised under the kind of conditions which prevail in a country where: (1) there is a lack of traditions of democratic, bottom-up decision making processes [47]; (2) the social capital is low [48]; and, as in other post-communist countries, (3) there is an attempt to improve public planning and the administrative system [49] while taking sustainability into account.

From this, it follows that the goal of the current article is to determine how a touristic attraction can be transformed from one based on mass tourism to a more complex tourism destination by the integration of sustainable rural tourism; and how the problems related to the environment can be prevented and managed in a specific form of an extremely complex touristic attraction, i.e., in the case of wine tourism.

### 3. Materials and Methods

#### 3.1. Basic Principles

There were three basic paradigms of our analysis: (1) institutional economics [50]; (2) principle–agent theory [51]; and (3) strategic management [52].

The so-called “French school of strategy” based on institutional economics [53] considers the different socio-economic systems as an arena [54] which has different groups of participants (actors, agents) who follow their specific interests. Godet M. [55] proved that, by an appropriate simplification of the actors and the most characteristic features of their interests, it is possible to determine the chances different actors have to realise their goals. Based on this theory, he developed a method and algorithm for the analysis of social bargaining mechanisms. Godet M. [55] can be described using the MACTOR (Matrix of Alliances and Conflicts: Tactics, Objectives and Recommendations) model. In the literature, this model has been used in different research fields: [56–61], but—obviously—different countries, regions and research problems do not offer the possibility to generalise the results.

One of the key concepts of the model is that the possibilities of actors to influence other actors are determined by their potential to influence (put pressure on) other actors directly or indirectly with the purpose of affecting their behaviour. The influence of Actor A on Actor C is the sum of the direct and indirect influences of Actor A on Actor C.

The cells of the matrix express the intensity of the influence of any actor in a row on any actor in a column on a 0–4 scale, ranging from no influence to total influence. The matrix of direct and indirect influences (MIDI (Equation (1)) quantifies the sum of direct and indirect influences for each pair of actors.

The quantification of mutual influences can be characterised by a rectangular matrix. The cells of the matrix reflect the intensity of the influence of an actor in a row on an actor in a column [62]. The intensity of the direct influence of one actor on another is measured on a 0–4 scale, from no influence to absolute influence, determining the existence of the respective actor.

The cells of the matrix of direct and indirect influences contain the sum of one direct and  $n - 2$  indirect intensity relations.

$$MIDI_{a,b} = MID_{a,b} + \sum_c (\min(MID_{a,c}, MID_{c,b})) \quad (1)$$

In this way, the vector influences ( $I_a$ ) and dependences ( $D_a$ ) for each and every actor can be determined by Equations (2) and (3):

$$I_a = \sum_b (MIDI_{a,b}) - MIDI_{a,a} \quad (2)$$

$$D_a = \sum_b (MIDI_{b,a}) - MIDI_{a,a} \quad (3)$$

Based on the indicators above, a normalised value can be calculated for each of the actors:

$$r_a = \left( \frac{(I_a - MIDI_{a,a})}{\sum_a (I_a)} \right) \cdot \left( \frac{I_a}{(I_a + D_a)} \right) \quad (4)$$

Applying the vector  $r_a$ , the matrix of influence-possibilities for each of the actors for different issues can be defined (Equation (5)).

The importance of each goal from the point of view of different actors is expressed by the Matrix of Actor–Objective. This is the so-called 1MAO matrix, in which the cells of the matrix contain the attitude of an actor towards a given goal in the form of a positive, 0, or negative sign. In the second phase, the 2MAO matrix is determined, which contains the intensity of these attitudes which have been determined for different actors, measured on a  $-4$  to  $+4$  scale, where  $-4$  denotes the



total negation of the given goal, and +4 denotes total support. The 3MAO matrix also considers the influence-possibilities of the different actors (Equation (5)).

$$3MAO_{a,i} = 2MAO_{a,i} \cdot r_a \quad (5)$$

This matrix is the basis of most of the analyses proposed by our method, because a number of important values are directly drawn from the 3MAO matrix. The mobilization coefficient (Equation (6)) quantifies how much the different actors are involved in the system of interests. The agreement (Equation (7)) and disagreement (Equation (8)) coefficients indicate how controversial the different issues are for each actor.

$$Mob_a = \sum_i |3MAO_{a,i}| \quad (6)$$

$$Ag_i = \sum_a (3MAO_{a,i} \cdot (3MAO_{a,i} > 0)) \quad (7)$$

$$Disag_i = \sum_a (3MAO_{a,i} \cdot (3MAO_{a,i} < 0)) \quad (8)$$

The 3MAO matrix is applied to obtain the convergence matrix (3CAA (Equation (9))) and divergence matrix (3DAA (Equation (10))). For each actor-pair, these matrices express how much they agree or disagree on different issues.

$$3CAA_{a,b} = \frac{1}{2} \cdot \sum_i ((|3MAO_{a,i}| + |3MAO_{b,i}|) \cdot (3MAO_{a,i} \cdot 3MAO_{b,i} > 0)) \quad (9)$$

$$3DAA_{a,b} = \frac{1}{2} \cdot \sum_i ((|3MAO_{a,i}| + |3MAO_{b,i}|) \cdot (3MAO_{a,i} \cdot 3MAO_{b,i} < 0)) \quad (10)$$

The ambivalence coefficient Equation (11) gives an indication of the expected stability of their potential alliances.

$$3EQ_i = 1 - \left[ \frac{(\sum_k ||3CAA_{ik}| - |3DAA_{ik}||)}{(\sum_k ||3CAA_{ik}| + |3DAA_{ik}||)} \right] \quad (11)$$

### 3.2. The Data Collection Process

The present study employed a self-designed interview method. Besides analysis of public declarations, face-to-face expert estimations were made with 18 stakeholders in Balaton tourism related fields and 15 stakeholders in the case of wine tourism. We conducted interviews with six researchers and lecturers from the academic sphere, nine experts from the tourism sector and three experts from the governmental sphere. We conducted interviews with six researchers and lecturers from the academic sphere (in the fields of tourism management, economics, rural development and landscape architecture). Nine experts represented the tourism sector at municipality, county and governmental level. In the case of wine tourism, five respondents represented the academic sphere (education in the fields of wine production, rural development, small business management and regional planning), four experts the governmental sphere (at municipality, county and governmental level), and six stakeholders were involved in activities related to wine tourism (in the Balaton, Etyek and Tokay wine regions).

This series of preliminary (explorative) interviews conducted with the purpose of outlining the set of relevant actors and interests was carried out between 2008 and 2013. The aim of this preliminary interview phase was to outline the most important stakeholder groups and the set of their potential objectives. As a result of these investigations, a conscious, robust and well-manageable set of actors and goals could be created. The protocol of the interviews with experts is presented in Appendix A.

Before beginning the face-to-face interviews for the study, following the guidelines of leading professional associations [63–65], the authors analysed the critical ethical aspects of the research. It was unanimously determined that, because the study was not funded, there is no conflict of interest. The

Ethical Council of the Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Debrecen, which hosts the two authors, has approved the concept and procedure of the research. The interviews were conducted in a separate room, and the respondents could not meet each other, neither before nor after the interviews. The confidentiality of the respondents was maintained appropriately at all stages of the enquiry.

In setting up a pool of experts, a specific procedure was followed. We considered experts to be people: (1) who have a specific responsibility for decision-making in Balaton-tourism and wine tourism related fields; (2) who have proven their specific knowledge relevant for our research field by the publication of high-quality peer reviewed papers on topics related to the study; or (3) who have been especially active in professional social debates concerning regulation in printed and electronic media. The attitude of experts towards our questions has not been taken into consideration, neither in the choice of the experts, nor in the interview phase.

The list of potential participants was collected based on intensive research of publications, membership-lists of professional organisations and the personal recommendation of other experts (snowball method). In Hungary, the professional community is relatively small, which is why the potential circle of respondents was cross-checked by the authors.

In summary, the names of 105 experts were collected for the “sustainable Balaton” project and 45 experts for the “sustainable wine tourism” project. In the next phase, experts were selected who supposedly—in the opinion of at least two members of the authors’ community—have a more “holistic” approach to the issues investigated, without considering whether their attitude to the question was pro or contra. In this way, 98 experts were selected for the “sustainable Balaton” project and 40 experts for the “sustainable wine tourism” project. Seventy-eight respondents expressed their willingness to participate in the “sustainable Balaton” and 38 in the “sustainable wine tourism” research. Due to time and financial constraints, 68 and 30 face-to-face expert-interviews were carried out, respectively.

The quantification of the intensity of actor–actor influences, as well as actor–objective relations is a relatively difficult process [66] which developed in an evolving manner. As we experienced, filling out the input matrices in the form of MS Excel worksheets for research was a very time-consuming process, often causing conflict because it was extremely difficult to achieve a general common interpretation of different scales. That is why a semi-structured interview was used [67]. The conversion of the verbal estimations was carried out during the report phase, with the help of the researchers. The only task of the researchers was to help to interpret the different scales. This quantification technique proved to be an efficient practical method for achieving consistency in input data for analysis.

The most important socio-economic indicators of the respondents are summarised in Table 1. It is obvious that the socio-economic position, as well as the relatively high level of qualifications of respondents offers a favourable possibility to acquire a relatively wide and reliable picture of the current landscape of actors and forces shaping the socio-economic environment of tourism in general, and rural tourism in particular, in the case of Hungary. It should be emphasised that with this type of analysis we could not follow the well-established opinion research methods because: (1) representativeness as a basic postulate of this type of research is not applicable since it is impossible to define the “population”; and (2) the length of the interviews does not allow us to have a high enough number of respondents to carry out a statistical analysis of the results. At the same time, this research concept seemed to be useful for the analysis of the relevant actors and their goals.

In the design of the panel of respondents, our aim was not to achieve representativeness, because—due to the wide and diverse sets of stakeholders—this would be impossible. The high proportion of specialists working in higher education and academic research offered a favourable opportunity to obtain the information from specialists with a broad overview and a perspective on the area analysed.

**Table 1.** Basic characteristics of respondents enrolled in the studies (%).

Characteristics of Respondents	Share of Respondents in “Sustainable Balaton” Research <i>n</i> = 68	Share of Respondents in “Sustainable Wine Tourism” Research <i>n</i> = 30
<b>Gender</b>		
Women	42	24
Men	58	76
<b>Type of qualification</b>		
Agriculture	43	35
Other natural science (e.g., chemistry, biochemistry)	8	18
Engineering	4	12
Economics	28	25
Social sciences (e.g., political science, law)	18	10
<b>Academic background</b>		
at least PhD	8	6
Master’s degree (MSc, MA)	92	94
<b>Field of activity</b>		
Higher education	13	8
Scientific research	16	15
Agricultural production	16	20
Food Processing	8	5
Food Trade	18	40
Policy analysis, legislation, politics	27	12
<b>Professional experience (years) <sup>a</sup></b>		
0–5	16	30
6–20	22	38
>20	63	22

Source: Authors’ own construction; All results are shown as percentages. <sup>a</sup> Professional experience represents years after completing graduate studies.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Rural Development in the Balaton Region

In first phase of investigations, the key actors and their strategies were determined. The set of the most important actors is summarised in Tables 2 and 3. To avoid any ambiguity or preconception, the actors in the research were mentioned in alphabetical order of their abbreviation. The same applies in the tables, too.

**Table 2.** The key actors of tourism development at Lake Balaton (in ABC order, avoiding any preconceptions).

Name of the Actor	Abbreviation
(a) Academic community	ACAD
(b) County level local authority (County municipality)	CO
(c) European Union	EU
(d) Hungarian Government	HUG
(e) Local municipalities directly at the lake	LOC
(f) Local municipalities not-directly at the lake, but in its surrounding (30 km from the border of the lake)	LOCNONLAKE
(g) Local residents in settlements	LOCRES
(h) Non-governmental (civil) organisations	NGO
(i) Non-tourism related entrepreneurs	NON-TENTR
(j) Press	PRESS
(k) Rural-tourism related entrepreneurs	RUT
(l) Second home, non-local residents	NONLOCRES
(m) Tourism-related entrepreneurs	TENT

Source: Authors’ own construction.



**Table 3.** Set of potential strategic goals.

Potential Strategic Goals	Abbreviation
(a) Protection of natural as well as man-made environment	ENVIRONMENT
(b) Creation of new workplaces	WORKPLACE
(c) Development of mass tourism	MASS TOUR
(d) Development of rural tourism	SOFT TOUR
(e) Development of tourism-related infrastructure	TURINFDEV
(f) Development of non-tourism related infrastructure (e.g., kindergarten, school, health care services ... )	NONTURINFDEV
(g) Maximisation of attention of audience	AUDMAX

Source: Authors' own construction.

The set of key actors, identified by the competent specialist is in some cases self-explanatory (e.g., EU, HUG, and LOCRES), but in some cases some comments seem to be needed:

- (a) There are considerable intellectual (academic) capacities around the lake (e.g., Balaton Limnological Institute and Georgikon Faculty of Pannon University in Keszthely).
- (b) According to the Hungarian Basic Law (Constitution), Hungary is divided into 19 counties and the capital. These counties (according to the EU-terminology: NUTS 3 regions) have an elected local authority [68,69]. This system is a highly debated issue because this division has been based on old-style traditions, and not on rationality [70]. It has been intensively discussed over the last century [71] (it is worth mentioning that the author of this suggestion is not just someone from the average academic sphere: Radó was a key figure in Soviet military intelligence in the Second World War and in this way he had a very specific and important role in the political decision system in Hungary, which at that time was a country in the Soviet sphere of influence), but opponents of the old style public administration system have not been able to achieve any success. Now, there are three different counties around the lake. Formerly, this had been somewhat logical, because some hundred years ago the Balaton separated, rather than joined the people around it [72], but in the last century many more similarities than differences have been formed between different settlements around the lake. There is a relatively strong regional identity around Lake Balaton, which reflects much more intensively the common interests of parties, who share similar problems in economic life (e.g., mass tourism, and a relatively low level of development of animal husbandry). At the same time—an observation supported by experience and the interviews conducted by the authors of the current paper—the decision makers do not consider the settlements near Balaton as a part of their county because they “have so many specific problems, and a lot of money from tourism”—as one of our interview-partners put it. Over the last few decades, there have been different initiatives to coordinate Balaton-related regulation, but these institutions (e.g., Balaton Tourism Development Non-profit Ltd, Balatonfüred, Hungary) have not solved the problems of the coordination and concentration of financial resources, according to the majority of our interview partners. Based on this situation, the establishment of a Balaton-county seems to be a logical consequence. Interestingly, the concept of a “Balaton region” was formulated in the days of the Hungarian Soviet Republic 1919. This short lived (133 days) historical clone of the Soviet “dictatorship of the proletariat” declared the Balaton region an independent region, but after its collapse the political regime which followed was reluctant to take any political decision similar to one accepted in the time of its hated predecessor [73].
- (c) There are 41 towns or villages with direct access to the lake. This fact shows a high level of fragmentation [74]. Swianiewicz [75] offered a detailed analysis of territorial fragmentation in Eastern Europe, focussing on its historic roots and consequences.
- (d) There are a further 67 settlements in the 20 km surroundings of the lake [74].
- (e) The population around Balaton is 262 thousand [74].
- (f) NGOs can be important actors in the sustainable development of tourism resorts [76]. However, in Hungary in the last three decades, an active and independent civil society has not developed. In the opinion of Gerő M. and Kopper Á. [77], this phenomenon can be explained by the fact that

*“party politics pervades every aspect of political life, undermining the autonomy of civil actors, treating them as a “fan club” of parties rather than cooperating and consultative partners”*. The professional level of NGOs—as in the majority of post-socialist countries—is rather weak [78]. Given this lack of genuinely independent NGOs, there is a wide space for individuals and organisations which try to obtain a high level of publicity and self-promotion. As in other fields of international NGO activity, it is very hard to determine the real political background and financial resources of these organisations [79]. Under these conditions, the NGOs are not reliable enough partners in sustainable development in most cases, although there are some positive exceptions, where NGOs working in close cooperation with the media have taken an active part in the protection of the natural environment [80].

- (g) The majority of interview partners considered rural-tourism related enterprises (e.g., owners of local, rural guest houses, small-scale wineries, restaurants, souvenir and other shops) and entrepreneurs, whose activity is based on mass tourism. A frequent conflict of interest occurs when large-scale actors in the tourism industry try to offer as many services as possible within their enterprise, which is why small-scale actors in rural tourism consider themselves in a rather disadvantaged position. A typical example of this are the large-scale hotels, which offer within their walls numerous services from local souvenirs shops to the organisation of touristic attractions. Another typical example is the Greek Village at Lake Balaton. This is a tourist centre built in the style of Greek seaside-villages, consisting of local shops and discotheques, ideal for spending a lot of money but absolutely alien from the local culture and built environment.
- (h) At first sight, it seems somewhat odd to place the press among the actors of tourism development but in the formation of the image of Lake Balaton and its surroundings the press plays an unquestionable role [81]. After the system change in 1990 international media enterprises acquired large parts of the Hungarian market [82]. As in most Central European countries, tabloids have become extremely popular in Hungary. Unlike their Western European counterparts, they carry a considerable amount of public information, but presented in a sensational and over-simplistic style [83]. This media focuses on scandals [84]. The putative risks of Balaton-related natural phenomena (e.g., problems of water quality [85]) is a popular topic for the media, which is able to increase its audience by featuring this subject.
- (i) There is a considerable number of people who have a second (weekend) house around the Lake. Their number is estimated as ca. 165 thousand [24]. Under current Hungarian regulations, they do not have any say in the decisions taken by local governments.

The set of goals (which are important from point of view of at least one actor) are self-explanatory and can be deduced from the presentation of the actors. The creation of workplaces is an extremely important factor because traditional industries (chemical industry, food processing, and textiles) have collapsed in the region, and agriculture is not able to offer enough possibilities for employment. In the region, the protection of man-made landscapes and architecture is gaining in importance because the surroundings of Lake Balaton are rich in historical monuments and traditional buildings. The concept of the “development of infrastructure” needs a more detailed analysis because there are elements of infrastructure which are related to the everyday life of the local population (e.g., institutions and buildings used for child care, education and the social welfare system) and infrastructure directly related to tourism development (e.g., discos and entertainment facilities). This categorisation is rather rigid since, for example, in the case of transportation infrastructure development, both local residents and tourists are the beneficiaries of development.

Based on our interviews, we have determined the matrix of direct influences (Table 4). The cells of this matrix have been filled out as an average of responses.

The visualization of dependence-influence relations has been carried out based on Equations (2) and (3) (Figure 2).

**Table 4.** The matrix of direct influences.

	ACAD	COUNTY	EU	HUG	LOCLAC	LOCNONLAC	LOCRES	NGO	NONTENTR	PRESS	RUT	NONLOCRES	TENT
ACAD	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
COUNTY	0	0	0	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
EU	1	0	0	3	2	2	0	0	2	0	2	0	2
HUG	4	3	1	0	3	3	0	0	4	1	2	0	2
LOCLAC	0	1	0	1	0	0	3	0	3	0	3	3	3
LOCNONLAC	0	1	0	1	0	0	3	0	3	0	3	3	3
LOCRES	0	1	0	1	3	3	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
NGO	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
NONTENTR	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
PRESS	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	0
RUT	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NONLOCRES	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TENT	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: Authors' own construction.

Interpretation of values, estimated on a 0–4 interval scale:

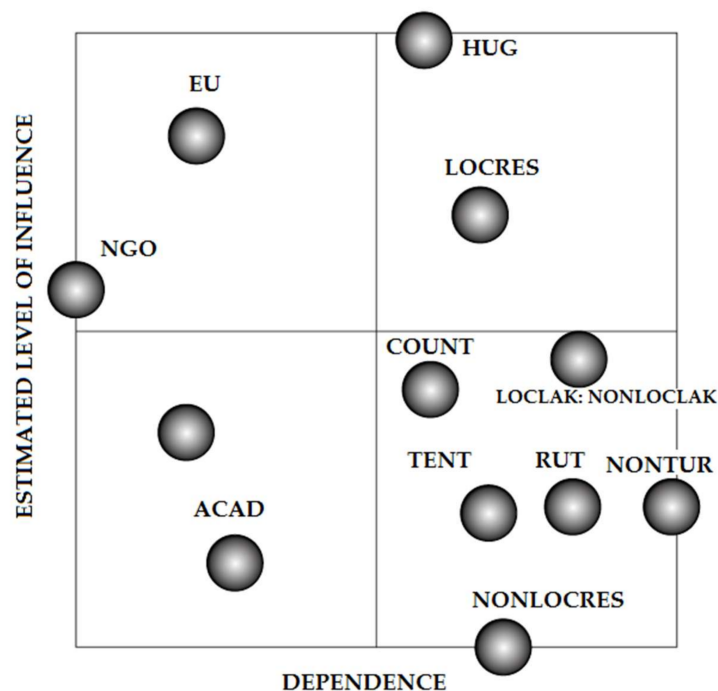
0—No direct influence.

1—Actor A can eliminate the tactical steps of Actor B.

2—Actor A can jeopardise/eliminate the projects of Actor B.

3—Actor A can jeopardise/eliminate the strategic goals of Actor B.

4—Actor A can substantially influence/dominate Actor B.



**Figure 2.** Direct influence and dependence rate of actors. Source: Authors' own construction. Abbreviations: ACAD (Academic community); CO (County level local authority); EU (European Union); HUG (Hungarian Government); LOC (Local municipalities directly at the lake); LOCNONLAKE (Local municipalities not-directly at the lake, but in its surroundings up to 30 km from the border of the lake); LOCRES (Local residents in settlements); NGO (Non-governmental organizations); NON-TENTR (Non-tourism related entrepreneurs); PRESS (Press); RUT (Rural-tourism related entrepreneurs); NONLOCRES (Second home non-local residents); TENT (Tourism-related entrepreneurs).

Analysing the direct influences of actors (Figure 2), it is obvious that the influence-dependence structures of the actors show considerable differences. The majority of actors has a relatively high level of dependence and low level of influence. This fact highlights that the most important local actors (e.g., enterprises and local municipalities) have an extremely low level of influence; however, they should be the engines of local development and sustainability-related projects generation. The lowest influence of all is enjoyed by the non-residents, who have a second house in the region. This is a serious problem, but worldwide there are relatively few methods for this group to become involved in the local decision making process [86,87]. The situation at county-level local authorities is extremely piquant: on the one hand, these organizations could be important in regional planning; in practice, they can be described by a relatively low level of influence and a high level of dependence. The academic community has a marginal role in the system. Interestingly, the press and the NGOs have a low level of dependence and a relatively high level of influence. The explication of this situation can be found in the socio-economic history of the last three decades: in the last two and a half decades, an active and independent civil society has not developed.

The goals of different actors are summarised in Table 5. The most important strategic goal of the academic community is the protection of the natural and man-made environment. Obviously, environmental protection and sustainability are priorities for the majority of the political sphere, but to a lesser degree for non-tourism related entrepreneurs and for the press as well. There is a strong commitment from rural tourism related entrepreneurs to environmental protection. For the county municipality, the creation of workplaces is an extremely important political priority because in this region there is only a limited possibility to establish new jobs as a consequence of the inability to attract investments into the Hungarian economy in general, and into a strictly regulated, natural protection

area in particular. The most important differences derive from interests related to aspects of mass tourism development. Tourism related entrepreneurs are motivated to increase mass tourism, but this goes against the interests of second home owners, who prefer to keep the place for themselves. Rural tourism development is important to some degree to mass tourism based entrepreneurs because a well-developed soft tourism service system contributes to increasing the attractiveness of their offer. *Soft tourism*, another dimension of tourism, is environmentally and socially compatible tourism, i.e., close to nature, respecting the host culture and not relying on technology (intensive infrastructure).

**Table 5.** The structure of goals of different actors.

	Environment	Workplace	Mass Tour	Soft Tour	Turinfdev	Nonturinfdev	Audmax
Academic community	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
County municipality	3	4	2	2	1	1	0
European Union	3	1	0	0	0	0	0
Hungarian Government	4	4	4	4	2	2	0
Local municipality	2	4	4	2	4	4	0
Local residents	4	4	1	2	2	4	0
Non-governmental (civil) organizations	3	0	0	0	0	0	4
Non-tourism related entrepreneurs	0	0	0	0	0	4	0
Press	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Rural-tourism related entrepreneurs	4	1	−1	4	4	1	0
Second home, non-local residents	2	0	−4	2	4	0	0
Tourism-related entrepreneurs	2	0	4	2	4	0	0

Source: Authors' own construction.

Analysing Figure 3, it is obvious that in the first group there is a relatively close relationship between the interests of municipalities, local populations and the Hungarian government. A second characteristic group is the academic sphere with no close relationship to the actors of the first group, as well as the press, which cannot be attached to the first group of actors either. The academic community has only limited connections to any other entity and the press is mainly interested in increasing its audience. In summary, it can be stated that rural tourism can be an important supplement to mass tourism, contributing to reducing the environmental burden on the lake.

- (1) Based on our analysis, the most important methods of development can be determined. These are as follows: There is an urgent need for the modernisation of the public administration system because a modern environmental management and the sustainable development of the region around Lake Balaton makes the concentration of resources for development necessary. In our opinion, the optimal solution would be to establish a “Balaton County” consisting of municipalities within a well-defined distance (e.g., 30 km) from the Lake. The Hungarian Parliament has the right to approve the creation of counties. Such a large-scale re-organisation of the Hungarian public administration system has not taken place since the end of the First World War but this idea seems to be a necessary precondition to achieve a more focussed development and concentration of financial and human resources.
- (2) The academic community has not been integrated in an organic way into the decision making processes, even though the consideration of scientific results is extremely important for the decision support system, especially for environment-related decisions. That is why the intellectual capacities of local research institutes and universities should be better integrated into the activity of public administration and tourism management systems. This needs a considerable change in general mentality in the Hungarian public administration system: a shift from a “subsidy” driven mentality to the strategy driven approach. The regional decision making system at municipality and county levels is relatively slow and rigid. This can be explained on one hand by the over-centralised system, and on the other hand by the high level of inflow of EU subsidies,



which have created a relatively convenient situation for the municipalities. This fact has not supported the development of an entrepreneurial mentality. To regain the momentum of rural development based on low-level initiatives, there is a great need to mobilise local capacities, especially intellectual resources.

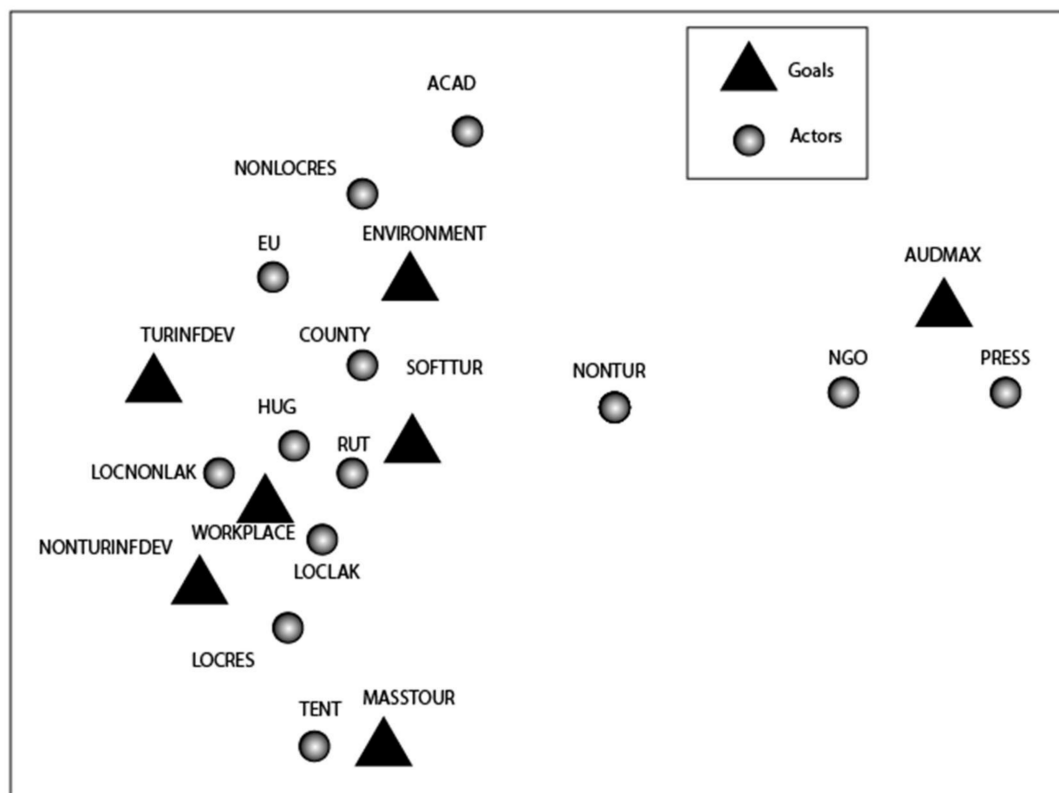
- (3) There is an inherent contradiction between the interests of local governments and the (tabloidizing) press. The media is considerably influenced by the government and is highly motivated to transmit any news which could serve the growing audience. The majority of the Hungarian media is state-controlled and the rest in private hands. Under these conditions, it is extremely important for the municipalities at local and county level (with close collaboration with the academic sphere) to formulate adequate and rapid responses to the media because distorted, sensationalist news, or fake news (scandals) can damage the image of the region. This needs a well-defined communication strategy, which has to be built on two pillars: a long-range constructive relationship with the press, which should be based on a mutual acknowledgement of the interests of the partners, and on well-built crisis communication strategy and tactics based on rapidity and professionalism. Specific attention should be devoted to targeted communication with the press. These are mainly the tasks of the local and county level municipalities, but the government needs to promote communication by preparing communication specialists and advisory services.
- (4) There should be a clarification of the strategy of local and county level authorities with NGOs. As experience has shown, they can be important partners in sustainability and the preservation of natural and cultural values, being key actors for the development of rural tourism. There is a great demand for the re-organisation of relations between government and NGOs. On this basis, there is a possibility to reconstruct a new dialogue on the local level between county, city/village level municipalities and NGOs.
- (5) The re-structuring of the public administration should serve the better articulation of different interests at government level. For example, up to 2010, there was a separate Ministry of Environmental Protection, which subsequently merged with the Ministry of Agriculture. The Ministry of Agriculture has only a State Secretariat for environmental protection, agricultural development and Hungaricums (original Hungarian products). This means that the environment-related problems are decided at ministry level, and not at government level. This would be an extremely important step because a considerable number of environment-related problems (e.g., the environmental burden of mass tourism) do not fall within the competence of the Ministry of Agriculture. The environmental burden, caused by mass tourism around Lake Balaton, is analysed in detail in the literature [15,88].
- (6) The non-local residents should be better integrated into the local development processes because: (1) this seems to be a more equitable solution than the current practice; and (2) in this way, their social network and knowledge could be integrated in a more efficient way into development. The integration of non-residents into the decision making process in towns and villages around Lake Balaton is an extremely difficult process because there are serious limitations in the election system of participation of non-residents. Nevertheless, some well-elaborated mechanisms of integration of the interest of non-residents should be introduced in the local decision making process, e.g., invitation of representatives of non-residents to the meetings of local municipalities for consultation.

#### 4.2. Wine Tourism Development and Sustainability

Wine tourism is a strategic field of development. Wine-based tourism activities should be developed as well.

The most important actors in wine tourism are summarised in Table 6. In Hungarian wine making, there is a considerable difference in the ownership structure, capital endowment and size of different wine making enterprises. The majority of them are small-scale, family owned enterprises. A good

indicator of the scattered structure is the fact that 86% of vine-growing enterprises have no more than one hectare of vineyards. At the same time, there are approximately 100 firms which can be considered important wine producers with a yearly turnover above 1 million Euro [74].



**Figure 3.** Results of correspondence analysis between actors and goals. Source: Authors' own construction. Abbreviations: ACAD (Academic community); CO (County level local authority); EU (European Union); HUG (Hungarian Government); LOC (Local municipalities directly at the lake); LOCNONLAKE (Local municipalities not-directly at the lake, but in its surroundings up to 30 km from the border of the lake); LOCRES (Local residents in settlements); NGO (Non-governmental organizations); NON-TENTR (Non-tourism related entrepreneurs); PRESS (Press); RUT (Rural-tourism related entrepreneurs); NONLOCRES (Second home non-local residents); TENT (Tourism-related entrepreneurs); ENVIRONMENT (Protection of natural as well as man-made environment); WORKPLACE (Creation of new workplaces); MASS TOUR (Development of mass tourism); SOFT TOUR (Development of rural tourism); TURINFDEV (Development of tourism-related infrastructure); NONTURINFDEV (Development of non-tourism related infrastructure); AUDMAX (Maximization of attention of audience).

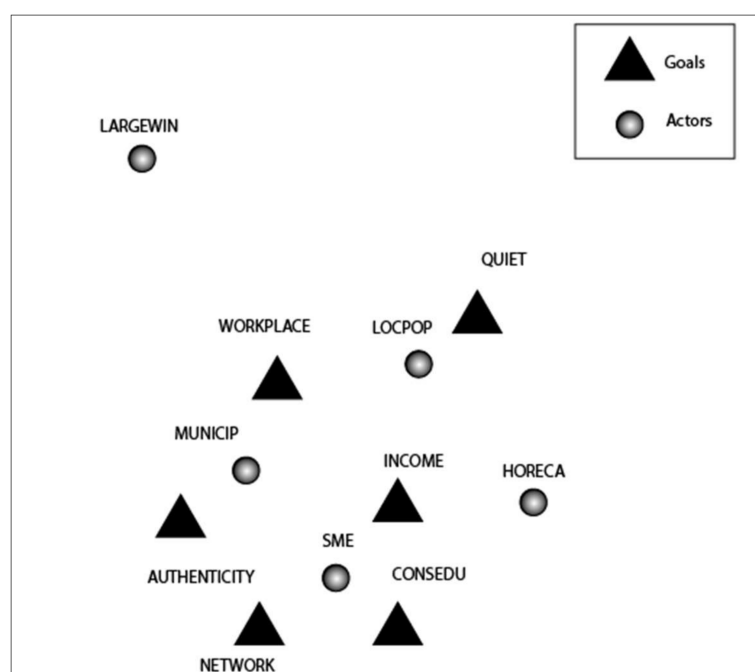
According to experts' estimations, the large-scale entrepreneurs are able to influence the local decision making process in a relatively efficient way because they can achieve this by their capital resources. For example, in the case of local electoral campaigns, they can finance candidates. This explains the fact that, when calculating the normalised net influence of actors ( $r_a$ ) based on Equation (4), it is obvious that the large-scale wine makers show the highest influence (1.68), ahead of municipalities (1.24) and local citizens (1.27). The SMEs and the Hotel, Restaurant and Coffee (HORECA) sector show by far the lowest influence (0.41 and 0.39, respectively). There are considerable differences in the size of wine-making enterprises. In each wine region, there are some large-scale producers, which have a relatively high capacity to influence local and regional decision making, and attract great numbers of tourists. The local residents want to live in a quiet place without any disturbance from the often noisy activities of tourism. This demand has been indicated as "quietness".

**Table 6.** The set of actors and the goals of wine tourism.

Actors		Goals	
Name	Abbreviation	Name	Abbreviation
Large-scale wine makers	LARGEWIN	Quietness	QUIET
Municipalities	MUNICIP	Income maximisation from wine tourism	INCOME
Local population	LOCPOP	Preservation of environment	ENVIRON
Small and medium size wine makers	SME	Preservation of authenticity	AUTENTICITY
Tourism service providers	HORECA	Workplace creation	WORKPLACE
		Education of wine consumers	CONSEDU
		Network building and strengthening between economic actors, joining wine tourism	NETWORK

Source: Authors' own construction.

In the opinion of interview partners in the data collection phase, the large-scale entrepreneurs often consider the traditional natural and architectural environment as just an adjunct to tourism, and not as an organic part of it. This “Wine Disneyland” strategy is a method of wine tourism which is much used in other countries, too [89], but does not integrate the natural and architectural values of the region, and consequently is not a real method of sustainable development. The two-dimensional coordinate system, determined by the application of correspondence analysis offers a favourable possibility to position the actor as well as their goals in the case of wine tourism development. Analysing Figure 4, it is obvious that the large-scale wine makers are in a relatively separate position because their interests have no close relationship with the interests of other actors [34]. This can be explained by the fact that for them wine-tourism is just a secondary income-generating activity, as opposed to the small- and medium-sized wine makers, for whom it is extremely important. As we have seen, they are much more interested in the preservation of authenticity by protecting natural and architectural culture than the large-scale entrepreneurs [90].

**Figure 4.** Results of correspondence analysis between actors and goals. Source: Authors' own construction.

The small-scale wine growers are highly motivated in consumer education because this is an extremely important possibility for building up the image of their winery. This is in line with the approach of Ohe Y. [91] who has proven that rural tourism can be an important actor in education.

In this way, they will be able to sell their wines directly to the consumers. Parallel with internet penetration and the proliferation of e-commerce, the increasing importance of this possibility will be enhanced [92]. For small-scale wine makers, the development of networks between the local actors involved in wine tourism is an extremely important driver. At the same time, the large-scale wine makers are not interested in this network-building activity, because—based on their high level of capital endowment—they can organise every part of the activity by themselves. This fact highlights the importance of social capital. This result is well reflected in the literature [93]. This is extremely important for increasing the attractiveness of wine tourism, because in this way visitors can experience different wine types and other tourism services. From this, it follows that there is an urgent need to upgrade the positions of SMEs in wine tourism because their activity is in line with the original goals of sustainable wine tourism. The most important measures should be as follows:

- (a) Organisation of adequate training programs on the technology of modern tourism management and gastronomy for SMEs in wine tourism. In the last few decades, considerable financial resources have been allocated to the development of the wine sector. As our interview partners have highlighted, these resources often did not support the increasing competitiveness of the Hungarian wine sector because, in numerous cases, parallel capacities have been developed. A typical example of this is the fact that each medium-scale wine maker bought a bottling line, even though a single bottling plant could satisfy their demands. The government should promote the organisation of adequate training programs on the technology of modern tourism management and gastronomy for SMEs in wine tourism. The financial resources for these projects is allocated for tourism development, or the EU resources for rural development from the Common Agricultural Policy could be used for this purpose, as well.
- (b) Promotion and subsidy for the organisation of wine-routes and other tourist attractions based on collective efforts by wine producers. This could also be financed from EU resources allocated for rural development.

In summary, it can be stated that: (1) The development of wine tourism is an important step towards the preservation of sustainable viticulture. (2) This should be mainly built on the activity of small- and medium-sized wine producers. (3) At the same time, we have to understand that these wineries in themselves are not able to offer a competitive touristic attraction due to their limited physical capacity (e.g., seats, and size of the cellar) and product (portfolio of different wines). Under these conditions, cooperation between them and other actors which could be important in this field, e.g., hotels, restaurants and coffee houses, is extremely important [94].

Our on-sight experiences have highlighted the importance of cooperation between the wine tourism sector and local and regional authorities. Some examples to support this thesis:

- (a) Due to lack of capital in some parts of the so-called wine villages, there is no running water and canalisation. This is a necessary precondition of modern hygienic wine making, but the wine-makers themselves are rather reluctant to support this infrastructural development due to their fear that low-income people will buy the cellars for use as houses.
- (b) The under-developed infrastructure is an effective barrier to increasing wine-tourism. A typical example is the situation in Etyek. This small town, 15 km from Budapest, has a relatively coherent wine growing community, who organise different wine-related tourist fairs on a regular basis. However, due to the lack of roads, parking places, etc., the local residents have organised various protests against this project, because they consider the festivals a disturbing factor in their quiet life [95].
- (c) The harmonic socio-economic development in the region is a very important precondition of wine tourism development. For example, in the Tokaj region, which is an emblematic vine-growing area of European wine culture in general and of Hungarian wine production in particular [96], there is a considerable population of a rather specific ethnic minority, the Roma (gypsies). It is well documented that it is widely accepted that the “Roma are one of Europe’s largest and most

vulnerable ethnic minority groups” [97,98]. Without the coherent integration of this population, it is rather difficult to imagine any sustainable rural-and wine tourism development in this region.

## 5. Conclusions

The results of these case studies offer a wide range of lessons and experiences concerning sustainable rural tourism development. In general, it can be proven that the development of rural tourism makes an important contribution to sustainable development because: (1) it decreases the environmental burden caused by mass-tourism; (2) it promotes the protection of the natural and man-made environment of the regions; (3) it creates workplaces which contribute to sustainable socio-economic development; (4) it replaces other economic activities (e.g., chemical industry, bauxite production and processing, etc.) that cause a higher level of environmental burden; and (5) it contributes to the maintenance of agricultural activity in such regions where a lack of economic activity could cause considerable environmental problems to emerge (e.g., proliferation of weeds).

Analysing the different aspects of tourism development at Lake Balaton and in the wine regions of Hungary, the most important lessons are as follows:

- (a) Rural tourism can be an important alternative and supplement to traditional mass tourism, contributing to a decrease in the undesirable environmental effects of mass-tourism. The case of the sustainable development of rural tourism at Lake Balaton highlights the fact that there is a possibility to forge a coalition between the different economic actors, but this should be promoted by active support from the state. The bold re-organisation of the public administration system would be an important contribution to a better concentration of the material resources of the lake. Based on the natural endowments of the lake (e.g., shallow water, which warms up relatively rapidly), the lake would be an ideal target for families with small children. For them, rural tourism in villages surrounding the lake would be an important alternative and a supplement to bathing in the lake itself.
- (b) Wine tourism in itself can be an important part of sustainable rural development, because it contributes to the survival of viticulture—an important economic activity in the fight against soil erosion. The most important actors in sustainable wine tourism are, on the supply side, the small- and medium-sized wine makers, because this activity offers a favourable possibility for them to utilise their natural endowment and human resources. Wine tourism not only uses, but also demands a high quality natural and built environment, which is why the SMEs in wine tourism are per se interested in sustainable development.
- (c) Both case studies highlight the importance of social capital and cooperation. The government and local municipalities should promote cooperation between different partners, because sustainable tourism should be based on voluntary cooperation between independent actors, and not on the attraction of some large, industrial-size enterprises.
- (d) There is a need to upgrade the professional knowledge of different actors in rural tourism. Education should focus not only on traditional aspects of gastronomy and tourism, but also on using the latest methods of communication with potential guests (e.g., apps for smart phones).
- (e) Beside the natural values, specific man-made architectural and folkloric values are important parts of rural tourism. Similar to other Central-European countries, industrialization and the formation of the bourgeoisie occurred relatively late. From this, it follows that the traditions in architecture and folklore have survived the last two centuries and can be enjoyed even today. The preservation of authenticity and the integration of these values are important parts of rural tourism development.

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## Appendix A. Protocol of Interviews with Experts

**Researcher:** You certainly agree with us that the tourism around Lake Balaton/(in the case of sustainable wine tourism research: Wine tourism in your region) is a result of different stakeholders. In our previous studies we have collected the most important ones. Please evaluate the direct possibility of the influence of one stakeholder on another by filling out the following table, on a 0–4 scale.

0—No direct influence.

1—Actor A can eliminate the tactical steps of Actor B.

2—Actor A can jeopardise/eliminate the projects of Actor B.

3—Actor A can jeopardize/eliminate the strategic (long range, for the next 3–10 years) goals of Actor B.

4—Actor A can substantially influence/dominate Actor B.

The order of pairs has been determined by the random-number generator of Excel software. To avoid any systematic error, the order of pairs has been re-grouped after each ten interviews.

### Appendix A.1. Here We Have Shown the Pairs

We have collected a set of goals which can be important to at least one actor (stakeholder). In the following table, please evaluate the position (attitude) of the different actors towards the different goals on a −4 ... 0 ... +4 scale.

−4—the objective is against the vital interest/jeopardises the existence of the actor.

−3—the objective jeopardises the strategic mission of actors.

−2—the objective jeopardises the tactical (short run, for the next year) goals of the actors.

−1—the objective jeopardises the operative goals of the actor.

0—the actors' attitude towards the goal is neutral.

+1—the objective of ... falls in line with the operative goals of the actor.

2—the objective falls in line with the tactical goals of the actors.

3—the objective considerably supports the strategic goals of the actor.

4—the objective is a vital interest of the actor.

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