

SUMMARY OF Ph.D. THESIS

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DEVELOPMENT POSSIBILITIES AND TASKS
OF THE BALATON REGION

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KAPOSVÁR
2008.

1. The antecedents of the research, its aims

The development of Balaton happened mainly from state sources before the change of the regime. From the nineteen's the role of the state in the definition of developments and their financing were driven back and the importance of private capital grew. After joining the European Union new sources were opened for the subsidization of the developments in Hungary, mainly in the forms of allotments from the structural and cohesion funds of the Union. From this time on the state role in the developments restricted mainly to the rounding out of the support of the Union.

The changes mentioned mean that the development of each district or region will depend in the future on the procurement of the Union (and together with this some budgetary once as well) and on the fact how successfully the regions and the settlements are able to help the investment of private capital. So the membership the Union sets up new requirements in the field of getting development sources and urging private investments, and from the point of view how the parties of the development can elaborate the most reasonable combination of the union sources, the budget one and the private one.

The novelty and at the same time the aim of the dissertation can be stated to look for the possibilities and methods of the dynamic, balanced regional development of the region taking into consideration the changing conditions. It would like to find an answer for the question if there is a possibility to elaborate a development policy with the help of the coordination of the different (economic, environmental and regional) interests which makes it possible to realize the marketability of the region, the maintenance of the ecological balance of the lake, the expedience of the holiday resort in an environmental friendly and maintainable ways as claims which are common and comprehensive demands at the same time.

The topic is given a peculiar stress by the fact that the Balaton region lies on the territory of three planning-statistic regions (the region does not have an "independent" operative programme), so the efficiency of the developments are determined mainly by the efficiency of the coordination between the operative

programmes of the regions and the successfulness of the encouragement of private capital investments. According to this, I have looked for an answer in my thesis for the following questions:

1. Which places does Balaton occupy in the country-wide concept and the middle-distance plans?
2. What kind of development tendencies can be pointed out for the more important economic sections and the infrastructural networks?
3. How can we observe the expected social, economic and environmental effects of the developments?

Further claims:

4. The examination of the background of the developmental differences within the region, and of the conditions and possible directions of a regional balanced development;
5. The comparison of the fundamentals, problems and development ways of the Balaton region with other European lake districts of the same fundamentals.

2. Material and method

The examination of the social-economic conditions of the Balaton region were done with the utilization of primary and secondary data. The primary data and information derived mainly from deep interviews and experience gained of professional trips, the aim of which was to examine the conditions of foreign lakes. I had an interview with the leader of the South-Transdanubian Regional Development Agency, and the boss of the Balaton Integration and Development Agency, and relied on the experience gained as a member of the agricultural preparatory committee of the Balaton Development Strategy. Which comparing the environmental problems and development possibilities of the Balaton with foreign lakes and their districts I drew into the examination the lakes belonging to the “Living Lakes” international network: the Broads lakes, the Milicz Lakes, Lake Trasimeno, Lake Vörstjärv and Lake Constance because these lakes are the closest ones to Lake Balaton in this respect. The comparative analysis included the natural endowments, the main environmental problems, the role of tourism and agriculture, and the cooperation between the regions.

The source of the secondary data base was taken from the Central Statistical Bureau T-STAR and the data base of the State Employment Service. During the data processing and the evaluation the following methods have been used: relative numbers and their simultaneous application, more simple analyses done with the help of mean values time lines. For the examination of the differences within the settlement types (village-town) of the region and of the regional ones settlements line data have been used. Among the social and economic features the processor of demography have been examined, and the main data concerning economy, tourism and infrastructure have been analysed.

The statistical data have been analysed according to the following dimensions:

- Shoreline-background settlements;
- Towns-villages;

- Settlement belonging to Somogy-Veszprém-Zala counties.

The examination includes the Balaton Holiday Resort Area (BHRA, or Balaton region) territory, which is defined by the “Balaton Law” (Balaton Law, 2000).

The analysis concerning the development possibilities of the region in a middle distance (between the period of 2007-2013) has been done on the basis of country-wide concepts and development documents of middle distance.

3. Results

3.1 The social and economic situation of the Balaton region

The natural decrease of population can be observed on the territory of the region from the 1980-ies. The high decrease of birth numbers in the shoreline area, and the faster increase of death rate in the background settlements can be found in the background of the process. The lower birth rate of the shoreline settlements is due to the more modern view of life coming from the better material conditions, and higher life standard, while the higher death rates of the background settlements can be traced back to the relative worse health conditions of the people living there.

After the change of the regime the migration tendency of the previous two decades turned back and the migration took a direction to the villages from the towns. The immigration into the Balaton region compensated for the natural decrease of the population up to the turn of the millennium, and due to the positive migration balance the population of the region – although more and more slowly - increased. Since the turn of the millennium immigration has not been able to compensate for the “migration loss”.

The most characteristic feature of the labour market of the region is that because of the seasonally changing demand of tourism, the unemployment rate of the region is characterized by a cyclic fluctuation which rises above the rural rate (the country rate without the capital) several times.

The BHRA can be found in the middle of the hierarchy concerning the income per head. We can draw the conclusion though that there are more favourable income conditions than the statistical data show, because the Balaton region is preceded only by the Middle Hungarian region concerning the indicators referring to income conditions indirectly (cars, the number of houses built, their convenience, the value of personal property). The characteristic features of the BHRA can also be observed in the heterogeneous distribution of income: in the shoreline area and in the towns the average income is higher because of the more favourable enterprising conditions, the better infrastructure and the more concentrated demand for goods and services.

The region has been characterized by high enterprise density since the changing of the regime. The specific number of enterprises – similarly to other indicators – is defined by the geographical situation (the distance from Balaton), and by the size of the settlement. While 98 working enterprises fall to a thousand inhabitants of the shoreline settlements (a higher enterprise density can only be found in the capital), it does not reach the average of the Hungarian rural territories in the background settlements (57,3). The former factor is due to the effect of tourism which becomes concentrated on the shoreline, the later one can be traced back to the constant demand which is more concentrated in the towns and of higher volume.

The stressed role of tourism is reflected by the structure of the economy of the region and the important stress of the branches connected to tourism: the ratio of enterprises dealing with catering and accommodation is nearly three times as much as the country average in spite of the decreasing tendency of past five years.

Balaton is the second most popular touristic destination of the country. The “devaluation” of the region, the weakening of its competitiveness can be seen if we take into consideration that its share from the guest turnover was decreasing continuously during the last decade. The most important structural change in the tourism of the region during the last decade was the increasing share of the home guest and the decreasing one of the foreigners (in number and in ratio as well). The non-arrival of the foreigner guests has been caused by the powerful decrease of the number of German tourists, who used to give two third of the foreign guest circle of the region, in the background of which we can find the slower German economic prosperity beyond the consequences of the opening of the borders. The rise of home tourism can be traced back to a bit better home economic environment at the turn of the millennium, to the decrease of the “magic” of foreign holidays, to the strengthening Balaton publicity and nostalgia, but the introduction of holiday cheques had the greatest effect.

While the number of tourists increased as a whole parallel to the restructuring of the guest circle, the number of guest nights decreased. It is the

consequence of:

- the fact that the number of foreign tourists decreased and as they usually spend longer time there, it influenced more the number of guests;
- the act that the average length of stay (following the tendency of the world) becomes shorter and shorter every year, both in the case of home and foreign tourists as well.

The most important problem of the Balaton region is the strong territorial and time concentration: 93% of the visitors stay in the shoreline settlements (including Hévíz), a further 5% stays in one background settlement (Zalakaros). The strong seasonality of guests, so its time concentration has not lessened significantly – in 1998 64%, in 2005 60% of the total guest nights fell to the three summer months.

On the bases of the examination of the above social, economic characteristic features the region can be divided into two “concentric rings”: an inner one, which embraces the shoreline directly and an outer one, which includes the background settlements. The settlements of the “inner ring” are characterized by more developed infrastructure, better employment and income conditions, more favourable demographic processes, higher life standard, while the “outer ring” – with the exception of the towns – succumb the parameters of the shoreline area in every index –number. The difference in development can be traced back to the territorial concentration of tourism and the developments in connection with it. It also plays a part in the backwardness of the background settlements that they did not have any complementary or independent functions which could have connected them to the “blood circulation” of the inner ring. Besides this the lack of direct transport connections is also a problem (mainly in the part of Somogy county of the region), because it does not make it possible to reach the shoreline area in a sensible way and to switch it into the service of the population (the holiday guests) there in a stronger way.

3.2 The development of the main economic branches

In the period between 2007-2013 the financing of the tourist development of Balaton can be realised mainly from two subsidy sources – from the regional

operative programmes of the New Hungary Development Plan (NHDP) and from the New Hungary Rural Development Programme (NHRDP). It is favourable that most of the subsidized attractions are due to lessen more or less the one-sided seasonality, but they play only a minor role in the territorial spreading of tourism (first of all medical and thermal, riding and ecotourism, to a smaller extent nine, cultural and cycling tourism).

The subsidization sources of tourism will be extended considerably in 2007-2013 compared to the period of the National Development Plan (2004-2006). In spite of this it can be said that the developments which influence the structure of the tourist supply of the region considerably can only be realized with the involvement of major private capital, so the “non-state” capital will have a more and more important role (what is more a decisive one in a short term) in the Balaton region as well. But there is strong competitiveness on the market of investments, so it is basically important that the region should be able to provide favourable conditions for the potential investors.

It is necessary for the development of the BHRA to urge the settlement of new enterprises and to create the competitive entrepreneur structure of the region. The major conditions of this are:

- the increase of the interest of the enterprises concerned with tourism in developments;
- the urge of the “re-drawal” of capital produced in the region to a greater extent;
- the establishment of the labour force supply according to the demand of the labour force market.

Because of the sensitivity of the environmental conditions of Balaton and the defence of the interests of tourism, only the introduction, extension of environmentally friendly activities can be considered in industry. That is why – besides the touristic services – it is reasonable to develop industrial branches which have low raw material demand which represent high added value (electronics, environmental industry). Because of natural endowments of the region the two ways of development can be on one hand the certain branches of food industry (viticulture, soft drink production, fruit and forest

product processing) and the production of local products on the other.

The traditional role of agriculture (production of agriculture products, utilization of agrarian potential) has been extended with new functions as well in the region. These ones are:

- the reservation of landscape elements (forests, meadows, grapevine gardens etc.) which are characteristic of the region;
- the protection of life spaces, the upkeep of biodiversity;
- the protection of surface and underground water, the reduction of erosion, deflation;
- the enforcement of touristic and recreation prints of view (welfare forests, village and nature tourism).

According to the facts above the aim could be to develop agrarian industry in the Balaton region which adjust itself to the ecological fundamentals of the region concerning its structure of products and which plays the role of landscape conservation and tourism besides the production of goods.

The subsidization of developments connected to the productive and other functions (environmental, landscape and nature protection) of agricultural economy is realized from the sources of the New Hungary Rural Development Programme. This programme does not contain stressed projects, so the beneficiaries have to apply for all the sources. Consequently, the share of the region from the supports mentioned depends on the “source-adsorption” ability of the region.

The stabilization of the environmental condition, the protection of natural and built values and their restoration play an important part in the conservation of the resort and settlement attraction and their genuineness. During the developments of the last decades the landscape and settlement view concepts were not taken into consideration, because of the parcellisations, holiday resort buildings, then the privatization on after the change of the regime the lake shore became quite “rugged”.

After the opening of M7 motorway the reach ability of Balaton (especially on the side of Somogy) became better, at the same time the traffic became less heavier on the southern shore. The biggest problem of the traffic network in the

region is the lack of roads connecting further settlements from Balaton and the ones connecting it with the centre of the region, so it is necessary to improve the road connections between background settlements which are closed from Balaton with the ones on the shore. The regional division determined by “Balaton law” adjust itself neither to the natural nor to the artificial administrative or touristic units. This circumstance binders territorial development planning and programming and it reduces the success of developments. According to this, the efficacy of coordination between the regional development institutions (municipalities, counties, regional development committees, ministries, authorities) is of vital importance in the development of the region.

Today several organizations and institutions deal with the matters of Balaton region – similarly to the past decades. Among them, taking into consideration territorial and economic development, the Balaton Development Council (BDC) has the strongest “legitimacy”. So the favoured player of the coordination can be this organization in the future because of its preparedness and experience.

3.3 Balaton and other European lakes

The lakes examined according to the natural endowments have the following common characteristic features:

- low average depth (with the exception of Lake Constance);
- notable (natural) water level fluctuation;
- the ratio of natural or close to natural territorial usage (meadow, field, marsh, forest) is high;
- the ecological, natural region does not coincide with the administrative boundaries;
- they are characterized with major touristic potential because of natural and landscape values.

In the lake districts examined a lot of similarities – what is more identities – can be found among the factors threatening the social and economic conditions of these regions.

All the experience of the lake districts sustains that the development

of sewage purification infrastructure has a vital role in the conservation (or improvement) the quality of water. Besides the communal pollution agricultural production is also responsible for the deterioration of the water quality of the lakes. It is a favourable process from an environmental point of view as well that environmental burden caused by agricultural production has decreasing tendency in the whole of Europe. Behind the same “results” we can find different reasons in each region according to its “development”. In Western Europe the switch-over to the application of more environmentally friendly production methods goes on in a more controlled (planned) way, in the Eastern states of Europe it is due to the consequence of spontaneous processes the recession, which follows the political and economical changes.

The environmental risk caused by the accumulated pollution in the deposit of the lakes can be reduced or stopped with the removal of the polluted mud on the present technological level on the basis of the European examples.

The most important characteristic feature of the lake districts is the diversity of the usage of territory to a great extent, the higher rate of extensively used territories (meadows, fields, moorland, cover with reeds and forests) than those of the more spacious territories around the lakes. The image of the lake districts concerned is threatened by the change of the agricultural territory usage. On one hand the ratio of “valuable” territories is decreased by the more intensive agricultural utilization (the drainage of moorlands, the ploughing of fields and meadows) which replace the traditional utilization methods. On the other hand it is to the contrary, because of the giving up of agricultural utilization (the neglect of the keeping of meadows, the ceasing of grazing animal breeding) the open grassy living places disappear and become valueless territories both in economical and ecological senses. The two processes usually happen at the same time, the territorial differences can be seen in their intensity and ratio. The same phenomena threaten the conversation of the image of the Balaton landscape, among them mainly the increase of waste territories (as a consequence of the disordered ownership and the decrease of the profitability of production) can be regarded as the most important risks.

Among the lake districts examined the situation of the Balaton region can

be said as a good one, as with the inauguration of the “Balaton Law” the legal conditions of regulation of the unified territorial usage have been created, but the “execution” of the law requires further measures (for example the acceptance of the plan of the rehabilitation of the shoreline, the compulsory purchase and compensation of the territories marked for public usage).

The protection and defence against alluvium on the lakes concerned goes on basically in two ways. One of them is the reduction of erosion (with the incitement of the application of suitable agro technology and cultivation methods), the other one is the “capture” of the alluvial deposit of the natural watercourse and the development of the drainage systems connected to it.

The level of the lakes is characterized by significant fluctuation of diverse periodicity in different periods, which has a harmful effect on human activities. As the regulation of the water level is possible only to a certain extent because of technological and environmental reasons, the stress has been put in every region on adaptation.

The economy of the lake districts examined (enterprises, services, employment) depends mainly on tourism. The majority of the lakes concerned reached the highest level of their “natural” capacities, the touristic turnover cannot be extended further without damaging the environment to a great extent, which means the decrease of its attraction. That is why in each region the stress is laid on the improvement of services, the enforcement of the principle of maintainability.

The lake districts form “natural regions” which do not coincide with the administrative unit borders in most cases. But tourism, and environmental protection and tourism itself require a uniform guidance and regulation. In the regions concerned usually inter-regional organizations are created for the cooperation ranging beyond the administrative borders. In inter-regional cooperation besides the government institutions the civil organizations play an important role. As the civil sphere supports an important integrative power and potential, being embedded deeply in the local society, and through its activity, so it plays a prominent part in the lives of the regions.

4. Conclusions, suggestions

The development concepts of the 50ies and 60ies of the last century dealt with the water management of Balaton only oscularly, the harmful effects of extending tourism and of agricultural and industrial activities on the environmental conditions and the water quality of the lake were pushed into the background by the claim to make up for the infrastructural backwardness. The protection of water quality became a strategic plan of the development documents in the mid 70ies, but the practical execution of the measures planned started only a decade later, after the decomposition of the ecological balance of the lake. The “protective” measures resulted in the significant improvement of water quality by the turn of the millennium, but the late reaction increased the costs of “reconstruction” expenses to a great extent, it drew away sources from the further development of infrastructure and tourism. All this led to the weakening of the competitiveness of the region, as consequence of which the relative advantage of Balaton compared to other regions of the country has been decreasing continuously up to now:

- the region fell from the second place to the midfield in the gradation of the regions concerning the GDP per head during a decade;
- the holiday resort area was a positive immigration destination for more than a century, the process seems to be revolving by now (mainly the young, skilled population migration has been increasing);
- besides the absolute value rise of unemployment its seasonal sway also has been increasing;
- in the most important sector of the region, which is the accommodation service and public catering branch, the number of enterprises decreased by 60% during six years;
- the tourism share of Balaton from the tourism of the country (the number of guests, tourism income) has a decreasing tendency as well.

In the background of the above mentioned phenomena the structural change of tourism of the region of today also plays a role, too, which is characterized by favourable and unfavourable processes as well:

- the number of guest nights has been increasing slightly for a decade, but at the same time – with the shortening of the average time of staying – the number of guest nights shows a decreasing tendency;
- the number and ratio of home guests has been increasing continuously;
- the structure of accommodation supply is being “pushed” towards higher categories, but there is still capacity surplus concerning quantity and accommodation “shortage” concerning quality.

On the whole it can be said that the touristic demand of the region – in spite of the changes going on these days, too – does not adapt to the demands of the certain market segments duly, so it is necessary to accelerate the restructuring of the supply structure. During the development of the attractions besides the better utilization of the special characteristic features of the region it is vitally important to “position” the supply elements and to adapt them to the particular claims of the certain “customer” layers and groups. Besides this, with the help of the strengthening of the cooperation between the servicing enterprises, the complexity of “touristic products” must be increased. The efficacy of community marketing and promotion must be improved, the institutional and financial framework of regional marketing activity must be created. Besides the country-wide touristic marketing, another one based on regional level must be set up built on local touristic organizations (associations) and the regional financial base necessary for that must be developed. In the weakling of the competitiveness of the region an important part is played by the fact – besides the outer factors – that the region forms a “unit” in the ecological sense, but on the basis of social-economical characteristic features it can be divided into two territories which can be separated from each other significantly (and they embrace the lake like “concentric circles”). The “inner circle” consisting entirely of the shoreline settlements is characterized by more developed infrastructure, better employment and income conditions, higher life standard due to the economy intensifying effects of tourism, while the “outer circle” (the so called background territory) falls behind the first one in each indicator. The concepts of the past decades also aimed at the development of the background

territories, but the investments realized were concentrated on the shoreline all the time. As the consequence of this the development “gap” between the two circles continuously grew and it has become one of the most important barrier of the competitiveness of the region by now. The moderation of the development differences and a more balanced territorial development can be realized on one hand with the strengthening of the “serving” functions of the background territories of the tourism of Balaton, with the “integration” of the shoreline and the territories concerned on a higher level employment, touristic services, food supply), on the other hand with the development of the sectors suitable of the creation of the own “economic basis” of the region in the following areas:

- The development of the services which adapt to the features of the region and the changes of the touristic demand, and the decrease of the burdening of the shoreline with the helps of the spreading of tourism in space and time. The latest touristic demand trends (because of the coming to the front of spending free time in active ways) provide a good basis for the solution of the territorial and seasonal concentration of tourism, so it is reasonable to develop medical, eco-, nature and active tourism from the point of view of the utilization of the fundamentals of the background territories.
- One of the most important conditions of the development of enterprises and the urging of investments is the skill labour force with marketable knowledge, so peculiar stress must be laid on the development of human resource. Because of the more active “role playing” on the labour market of shoreline tourism, the extension of employment the efficacy and access ability of adult education must be developed on one hand, on the other one it is necessary to strive for a secondary school profile which adapts better to the labour market demand of the region.
- It is necessary to develop the competitiveness of the enterprises dealing with the “traditional” branches of economy of the region (forestry, wood processing, viticulture, wine production, food processing). On

the course of this process it is vital to break off with the development strategy which is built exclusively on tourism, although the demands of tourism and environmental prints of view must be considered seriously. In the sectors which do not belong to tourism it also necessary to have the brand name Balaton based on traditions recognized in a wide circle and develop it to a greater extent. It is an important task to deepen the interpretation between the producers. So as to reach the market the setting up of local sales networks owned by the producers must be urged as well as the building of the necessary logistic, informatics and expert background. All these can help the role play of the local producers and of the products (local or regional ones) produced locally in the food supply of the shoreline.

- Having the status of an ecological “buffer zone”, the background territories play an important role in the protection of the water quality of Balaton. So it is expedient to change the production structure of agriculture in a way, which emphasizes the conservation of the traditional image of the landscape and its biological multi-coloured nature, the protection of surface water and touristic points of view instead of the priority of commodity production in the settlements further from the lake. Anyway, it is must be considered that the agricultural producers can only be concerned with an economy which protects the lake and its ecological state, if their extra expenses or their abolished income emerging in this way are compensated for from any source. It is about the production of so called common goods in most cases, for the compensation of extra money and loss the community (and home) agrarian and rural policy can provide sources.

During the past decades the Balaton development relied mainly on central (state) sources and the development requirements exceeded the financial frameworks manifold in every case. The source requirements of the measurements in the Balaton development plans for the years 2007-2013 are several times as many as it can be expected from the actual support frames (from the branch and regional operative programmes), similarly to the former ones. The money

missing must arrive from the sphere of economy. So the municipalities and the other members of tourism and economy as well have to make serious efforts to arouse the interest of home and foreign private investors in developments of Balaton and they have to help them establish their interest in it.

On the “market of investments” there is a strong competition between the regions, in which Balaton has several handicaps. In the background territories the insufficient development of basic infrastructure, in the shoreline area the tightness of “free territories” usually the lack of well-qualified labour force binder investments. At the same time it can be felt that the building of M7 motorway itself “rose” the investment interest of private investors, so on the southern shore of the lake a great emphasis must be laid on the improvement of the accessibility of the motorway and financial sources must be concentrated. The development of the transport network can help a lot of set up workplaces and to improve the competitiveness of the enterprises in the background settlements which are further from the lake.

It can be supposed that some great touristic investments which are in progress or planned will have a great effect on the touristic supply of the region because beyond the direct results (the rise of guest turnover, and tourist income) the “multiplying effect” of these developments will be felt – the expanding turnover, the longer season will improve the conditions of return, which will attract further investments into the region. The special (and certainly not a unique) feature of the Balaton region is that the ratio of “passive” capital, which is outside of the economic “blood circle” of the region or the one withdrawn from that. The more favourable investment has a stimulating effect on the local (regional) utilization of these sources on a larger scale as well.

The important conclusion of the dissertation is that the history of the development of Balaton was followed by the lack of coordination, a uniform guidance and regulation. The institutions responsible for the development of the region were practically changing all the time, the task and sphere of activity of the certain organizations often changed, the hierarchical connections between them also changed and several times they were unclear. All this highly

aggravated long-term planning and programming and during the developments it led to parallels, the weakening of efficacy.

After the changing of the regime, a coordination plan with a regional scope of activity came into being in the new government and territorial development institutional structure – the so called Balaton Development Council (BDC). This institution however is not capable of doing the organization task of cooperation between the branches, counties and regions because of the even mobility of the coordination and decision making mechanisms and of the sources of operation. In spite of this - because of its “authorisation” provided by the territorial development law and the high rate acceptance by the members of the region – the BDC is the most suitable organization to integrate the development and other tasks connected to the Balaton Holiday Resort Area and to play an important part in their implementation. For this it would be necessary to specify properly the coordination mechanisms, to express clearly the roles and scope of activity of the “partners” (government, regions, counties) involved and to set up the financial conditions of a steady operation.

Among the regional and branch operative programmes the Mid-Transdanubian and the Environment and Energy operative programme contains so called “highlighted” projects connected directly to Balaton , so the union sources can be reached mainly through applications. So during the following seven years the share of region from the support sources will depend on the application activity, preparedness, namely the “source adsorption” ability of the region. That is why it is necessary to increase the application activity, the most important “tools” of which could be the development of the information and consultant network, education and the confirmation of the partner relationships.

The “Balaton specific” developments which are not present in the branch and regional operative programmes (the unified marketing of the region, the development of public transport shipping, the neutralization of the mud lifted out of the bed and its utilization) should be solved from home sources – even on the level of highlighted projects.

Although more or less the same natural-economic environment characterizes

the European lake districts examined in their ecological and environmental state is influenced by the same factors as the ones of Balaton and the “specific weight” of the certain factors shows a lot of similarities. Above all this in the case of each lake districts it has become a decisive print of view to harmonize the economic and ecological interests because deterioration of the environmental state has several negative social and economical consequences (the decrease of tourist attraction, the weakening of “capital attractive” ability, the deterioration of the quality of living circumstances).

The factor which threatens most the ecological condition of lake districts is the deterioration of the quality of surface and underground water, in which (to different extent but in every region) two factors, the pollution of communal and agricultural origin play an important part. My survey confirms with one voice that the development of communal sewage filtering infrastructure has a great effect on the quality of water. With full knowledge of these facts it is reasonable to build (expand) the sewage-filtering network and the cleaning capacity in the Balaton region – not only in the holiday resort but on the whole water gathering territory of the lake – which would contribute a lot to the maintainability of the presently excellent but unstable water quality in the long run. The decrease of the environmental burden caused by agricultural production, and parallel to this the maintenance of varied territory usage characteristic of the lake districts can be found among the strategic aims of the lake districts concerned, which they would like reach with the better enforcement of the ecological points of view. In the 80ies of the last century after the closing up of the animal farms of intensive technology the pollution of agricultural origin of Balaton decreased considerably and after the changing of the regime as a consequence of the recession in this branch the usage of chemicals decreased. So as to maintain the favourable environmental state formed in this way (compared to the states of the western European regions), it is vitally important to fit the production structure of agriculture, the applied technologies to the ecological conditions in the most proper way and to maintain the variability of territorial usage. For the establishment of the interests of the producers, namely the compensation for the extra expenses and the missing income the necessary sources should

be provided.

With a view to the protection of the water quality of Balaton to removal of polluted deposit from the bed is a more and more pressing task and at the same time its possible neutralization must be started and utilization alternatives must be examined.

The foreign lakes concerned are characterized by significant natural water level fluctuation, which can be influenced to a small extent “human help”, but the “whole” regulation is not solved anywhere. According to this, in each lake district adaptation (protection) plays the most important part as a consequence of the high cost of regulation, its technical boundaries and last but not least its environmental risks (for example artificial water replacement).

In the case of Balaton adaptation can also be the solution because of the present regulation possibilities. The effect of water level fluctuation should be considered while building projects on the shore and marking building sites, at the same time it is necessary to protect the inhabited territories and agricultural land. The forecasts predict the increase of the frequency and time length of dry periods, so first of all the decrease of water reserve is threatening, so the research of alternative solutions which do not endanger the ecological balance of Balaton must be accelerated.

The wealth of the lake districts concerned strongly depends on tourism, which cannot be expanded boundlessly without damaging the environment significantly, so in every region concerned the improvement of the quality of services, the enforcement of the point of view maintainability were emphasized. The infrastructural element of this are started to be built now even in the most developed (and from this respect the most endangered) Western European regions, so if the supply structure of Balaton tourism is managed to be worked out according to these points of view, the region can improve its international marketability (especially because of the circumstances and endowments which are “closer to nature”).

The international comparison shows that the cooperation spreading over the administrative boundaries is effective and successful in the regions where all the three fundamental conditions (the suitable legal, institutional and financial

background) are given at the same time. With regard to this it is reasonable to create an accord between these three conditions in the Balaton region as well and to concentrate them in an institution with a regional scope of activity.

The lake districts are characterized by a stronger regional identity than the average ones, as they are “natural regions” so the civil organizations have a greater influence on them and it is expedient to built on their deeper social “embedding” during the handling of the problems in connection with the regions and during the realization of the aims of development.

5. New Scientific Results

1. In the Balaton Holiday Resort Area the developments of the past decades were concentrated on the shoreline settlements and as a consequence of this two territorial “unit” were formed in the region with different development levels. The development difference between the inner circle embracing the shore, namely the settlements of the shore line area and the background settlements which can be found them forming the outer circle has become a hindrance factor in the balanced development of the whole region. The improvement of the competitiveness of the region requires the “integration” and the deepening of cooperation between these two regions, the important condition of which is the strengthening of the supply functions of Balaton tourism of the background territories besides the qualitative development of tourism from an ecological point of view and the diversification of its supply:

- the development services, attractions fitted to the fundamentals of the region and to the new touristic trends;
- the improvement of the chances of the people living in the background settlements on the labour market – the urging of playing a stronger part in Balaton tourism (education, retraining, the improvement of travelling conditions);
- the creation of the production, marketing conditions of the local, regional products;
- the urging of agricultural activities which protect the water quality of Balaton, the natural environment and image of the landscape.

2. The development of the Balaton region was mainly based on central (state) sources during the past half century, the ratio of local (council, municipality, company, entrepreneur) sources was insignificant. The state (European Union and home) supplies will not be enough themselves for the development of the economy of the region on a larger scale, so for the improvement of the marketability of the region it is necessary to draw in significant (private)

capital amount. For the strengthening of the capital attractive ability of the region a more favourable investment environment should be set up than the present one. It includes:

- the development of basic infrastructure (public utilities, traffic network, informatics, business services);
- the improvement of the skill level of labour force;
- stronger regional marketing;
- the more effective coordination of developments with the extension of - the strengthening the integrative function and competence of Balaton Development Council.

3. The ecological state of Balaton and of the European lake districts is influenced by the same factors (pollution of communal and agricultural origin, the effects of tourism, alluvium, water level oscillation). For the protection of the environment and the “traditional” image of the landscape (which is the most important attraction of these regions) it is necessary to create the following conditions in the case of Balaton, similarly to the European lake districts:

- well developed communal and sewage filtering and cleaning infrastructure;
- the moderation of the environmental burden of the agricultural activity (environmental protective cultivation methods, the urging of the application of agrarian technique);
- the maintenance of the variability of territorial usage methods;
- the removal and neutralization of polluted deposit piled up in the bed of the lake;
- the adaptation to the natural water level oscillation (living territories, buildings, agricultural territories);
- the enforcement of ecological, environmental points of view during the development of touristic attractions.

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