

The Long Depression and its impact on Swiss tourism: from Manchester Liberalism to the beginnings of "organized capitalism" (1873-1913)

The extended crisis that marked the second half of the 1870s and continued in certain countries into the 1890s had a profound effect on the evolution of the world economy. Put under pressure by long-term deflation, which was kept going by the intensification of competition engendered by the first wave of globalization, companies were forced to abandon the classic schemas of liberalism and to enter the era of "organized capitalism."¹ In order to ensure capital profitability, the leaders of the economy attempted to set limits to competition (trusts, cartels), to improve the competitiveness of business enterprises through collective action, and to optimize the frameworks of economic activity by appealing to the public authorities (state, cantonal and municipal authorities). The fulfilment of this programme involved organizing the economic circles within the societies and associations that flourished at the end of the 19th century.

Up until now, the historiography devoted to organized capitalism has mainly focussed on the sectors of industry and finance. The objective of this contribution is to show that the sector of tourism was also faced with problems during the Long Depression and that this led to important structural changes. Starting out from the case of Switzerland, the foremost European tourist destination in the 19th century, the analysis will attempt to understand how the actors of the time reacted to the situation of crisis by organizing themselves and developing different forms of collective action.

Swiss tourism in crisis: the Long Depression and the rise of international competition

The construction of the European railway network led to an extended period of growth in Swiss tourism, which accelerated once again at the end of the 1860s.² A veritable boom in the hotel industry was registered in the three main tourist areas, namely the Lake Geneva region (Geneva, Lausanne, Montreux), central Switzerland (Lucerne), and the Bernese Oberland (Thun, Spiez, Interlaken). Between 1875 and 1888, however, the value added released by the hotel industry stagnated as a result of the Long Depression (graph 1). In the absence of statistics concerning the number of tourists arriving in Swiss resorts, an approximation of the evolution in demand is provided by the receipts of the shipping companies of the different tourist centres (graph 2). According to this indicator, a genuine recovery in growth seems to emerge only in 1893. The slight difference in the cyclical curves in graphs 1 and 2 is explained by the emergence of new tourist centres in Switzerland, which due to their dynamism got over the crisis more quickly. On the one hand, the drilling of the Gotthard Rail Tunnel, which opened in 1882, permitted the Ticino region to embark on a touristic development. On the other hand, new railway technologies—the rack railway, funicular cable railway, then electric traction—opened up the mountain regions to hotel development. Ushered in on Mount Rigi in 1871, this colonization continued at a moderate pace during the

¹ On the concept of "organized capitalism", see WINKLER Heinrich (Hg.), *Organisierter Kapitalismus. Voraussetzungen und Anfänge*, Göttingen : Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1974 ; on this transformation in Swiss capitalism, see HUMAIR Cédric, *Développement économique et Etat central 1815-1914. Un siècle de politique douanière suisse au service des élites*, Berne/New York : Peter Lang, 2004, pp. 313-734.

² For a periodization of the development of Swiss tourism, see FLÜCKIGER-SEILER Roland, « Zur Geschichte des Tourismus in der Schweiz » in *Denkmalpflege und Tourismus. Interdisziplinäre Tagung in Davos, 16-18. September 1992*, Bozen : Athesia, 1997, pp. 73-142 ; HUMAIR Cédric, « Introduction : Le tourisme comme moteur du développement socio-économique et vecteur du rayonnement international de la Suisse (XIXe – XXe siècles) », in HUMAIR Cédric, TISSOT Laurent (éds), *Le tourisme suisse et son rayonnement international (XIXe – XXe siècles)*. «Switzerland, the playground of the World», Lausanne : Antipodes, 2011 (forthcoming).

1880s, before exploding in the 1890s. This trend profited, above all, from two emerging regions, the Valais and the Grisons.

Albeit in a geographically differentiated way, the Swiss hotel industry suffered from the Long Depression, which undermined the profitability of even the most reputed establishments. A top-class hotel opening in 1861, the Beau-Rivage in Ouchy, near Lausanne, saw its turnover diminish by 48% between 1874 and 1889,³ leading to a fall in net profits (graph 3). In the regions most affected by the crisis, hotel facilities as a whole even underwent a reduction in their capacity (graph 4). This was particularly true in Geneva, where tourist flows suffered on account of the development of the railway system—the opening of the Gotthard Tunnel, which reduced the value of the transit axis of the Simplon, and the arrival of the railway in Evian (1882).

Starting in the 1880s, structural pressure was superimposed on the cyclical crisis. The emergence of international competition in the neighbouring countries (Germany, Austria-Hungary, France and Italy), then in other, more remote areas of the world, put an end to Swiss tourist hegemony in the summer season.⁴ This more desperate competition generated rumours aimed at denigrating Swiss resorts, which were conveyed in the foreign press: tourists as the victims of abuse, insanitariness and outbreaks of contagious diseases, and a lack of entertainment were the reproaches aimed at Swiss tourism in order to capture its clientele. To prevent the manna of European tourists being disbursed on other regions with similar landscapes and climates, it became necessary to convince the clientele of the quality of the Swiss tourism on offer. It should be noted that this structural pressure continued after the upturn in growth and became accentuated, even, during the boom of the Belle Epoque.

Subject to a twofold cyclical and structural pressure, the actors of Swiss tourism were forced to react in order to improve their competitiveness and to maintain the profitability of their investments. To assert themselves in the face of competition, two main strategies were adhered to. The first was to take pains over the offer in all areas of the tourist system: service and hotel comfort, quality and price in terms of transport, the diversification of forms of entertainment, and the embellishing of places to stay. The second was to develop a more effective form of communication vis-à-vis both tourists and travel agencies. Through information and seductive advertising an attractive image was constructed and disseminated. In other words, it became necessary to sell Swiss tourism. In order to optimize profitability, two main strategies were also followed. The first was to reduce costs by initiating a rationalization of the tourist business. The second was to restrict internal competition by establishing operating rules and minimum prices, the first steps towards a cartelization of the sector.

To begin with, the promoters of tourism applied themselves to improving their competitiveness and their profitability at the individual business level, but they soon became aware of the need to get organized and to take collective action of a complementary kind. Moreover, the fulfilling of certain points in the crisis programme could not take place without the collaboration of the public authorities, which had to be convinced to intervene in favour of tourism. There were many different motives, then, for an associative organization of the milieus of tourism.

From individual entrepreneur to collective organization: hotelier societies and societies for development

As early as the end of the 1870s, the need to struggle against the crisis and foreign competition engendered a twofold organizational movement. In keeping with professional logic, hotel employers regrouped in societies, associations or syndicates. Alongside this, the

³ HUMAIR Cédric, «Tourism and Technology Transfer : Beau-Rivage Palace and the Challenges of Technical Progress 1861-1914», in MAILLARD Nadja (dir.), *Beau-Rivage Palace, 150 Years of History*, Lausanne : Infolio, 2008, pp. 82-100 (here 98).

⁴ Marc Boyer, *Histoire générale du tourisme du XVIe au XXIe siècle*, Paris : l'Harmattan, 2005, pp. 181-321 ; Équipe MIT, *Tourismes 2. Moments de lieux*, Paris : Belin, 2005, pp. 57-138.

different professions interested in the good health of tourism created inter-professional structures enabling them to intensify their collaboration, the names of which varied according to location: *société de développement* (subsequently used as a generic term), *société d'utilité publique*, *syndicat des intérêts* and *société d'embellissement* in Romandy; *Verkehrsverein*, *Kurverein* and *Verschönerungsverein* in German Switzerland; and *Pro Loco* in Italian Switzerland⁵. These new collective actors, the members of which were hoteliers, but also professionals in transport, merchants, bankers and even doctors, engineers and architects, were the forerunners of today's tourist offices. When it comes to analyzing these two types of association, Swiss historiography offers little in the way of resources. Apart from hagiographic publications put out on the occasion of the anniversaries of these societies,⁶ only a few scientific monographs have been produced, most of them unpublished.⁷ Thanks to an ongoing work of research, the Lake Geneva region is a little better known.⁸ No synthesis that is national in scope is currently available.⁹

The organization of the actors of the tourist trade was structured almost simultaneously at three scales: local, regional and national. Beginning in 1882 for the hoteliers and 1893 for the societies for development, associations were set up that were national in scope. The apparent speed of the process hid huge problems of organization, however. Indeed, when the crisis broke out, liberal individualism was deep-rooted in the minds of hotel owners, who balked at the idea of losing part of their independence by acting collectively. When shifting to the regional and national level, other restraints came into play. The actors of the tourist trade experienced tremendous difficulty in going beyond local egoism, as well as in delegating a part of their jurisdiction to centralized organizations. Moreover, the federalist political structure of Switzerland and its religious and linguistic segmentation complicated any collaboration. The beginnings of the process of organization were therefore somewhat anarchic. Societies were quickly formed and just as quickly dismantled; statutes were frequently revised and designations modified. To begin with, the number of society members was rather small, which limited their financial standing and their ability to act. Despite these difficulties, the organization gradually coalesced and gained in effectiveness. It is important to note that the process of organization was particularly advanced and intense in the Lake Geneva area, where the unfortunate situation of the 1870s and 80s was acutely felt. In 1879 the first known formal organization of hoteliers was formed, the *Société des maîtres d'hôtels et pensions de Lausanne, Vevey, Montreux et environs*.¹⁰ Quickly abandoned by the hoteliers of Lausanne and Vevey, whose interests diverged, it became the *Société des hôteliers de Montreux et environs* in 1891. At the end of 1879 a

⁵ It has to be said that some of these associations had aims to do with public utility that went beyond the promoting of tourism itself.

⁶ RATHGEB Hans, *Die Schweiz als Ferienland und Lebensraum. 100 Jahre im Dienste des Tourismus und der Einwohner*, s.l.: Union des sociétés suisses de développement, 1993; BERNASCONI Pierre, *Cent ans au service de Genève*, Geneva: Office du tourisme de Genève, 1986; *75 ans. Anniversaire. Société suisse des hôteliers*, rapport de gestion 1956, Basel: Boehm & Co, 1957; METTLER Jean-Louis, *Montreux. 100 ans d'hôtellerie*, Montreux: Corbaz, 1979; DE SENARCLENS Jean et al. (eds), *L'hôtellerie genevoise. A l'occasion du centenaire de la Société des hôteliers de Genève*, Geneva: Société des hôteliers de Genève, 1993.

⁷ DASEN Hans, *Entstehung und Entwicklung der gesamtwirtschaftlichen Zusammenschlüsse im schweizerischen Fremdenverkehr*, Berne: Stämpfli, 1948; BAVAUD Serge, *L'action de la Société de développement de la ville de Fribourg (1899-1960)*, Mémoire de licence, Université de Fribourg, 1998 (unpublished); SULMONI Stefano, «*Pro Lugano*». *Una società al servizio della promozione turistica nella Lugano della Belle Epoque (1888-1920)*, Mémoire de licence, Université de Fribourg, 2005 (unpublished).

⁸ Stefano Sulmoni is doing a doctorate on the activity of the societies for development as part of a project financed by the Fonds national suisse de la recherche entitled «Système touristique et culture technique dans l'Arc lémanique: acteurs, réseaux sociaux et synergies (1852-1914)», which is directed by the author of this contribution. I wish to thank him for the many bits of information he has passed on to me. I also thank Julie Lapointe and Marc Gigase, who have helped in the compilation of the statistics used in several of the graphs.

⁹ For a short synthesis, see www.dhs.ch, Laurent Tissot, «Offices du tourisme».

¹⁰ METTLER Jean-Louis, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-37; DUPONT Patricia, FREY Sabine, *Un paradis encadré. La fonction du tourisme à Vevey et Montreux 1880-1914*, Mémoire de licence, Université de Lausanne, 1989 (unpublished), pp. 70-72.

similar society, the date of whose founding is unknown, was also active in Geneva.¹¹ In 1882, at the very time the local organization was taking its first faltering steps, 169 leaders of the luxury hotel trade decided to unite at the federal level, their immediate aim being to participate in the first National Exposition in Zurich in 1883.¹² The wish to influence the increasing interventionism of the central State obliged the hoteliers to emphasize the economic importance of their activity. Consisting of individual members, the Société suisse des aubergistes et hôteliers underwent a difficult development until its reorganization in 1891, when it took the name of the Société suisse des hôteliers (SSH) (graph 5). Thanks to the inception of a professional secretary and the publication of a newspaper, the *Hotel-Revue*, the activity of the society now developed rapidly. Between 1890 and 1912 professional cohesiveness was reinforced and the number of members exploded, rising from 195 to 1,231. The rate of representativeness rose to 32.4% in terms of hotels and 57.6% in terms of beds (graph 6). It is worth noting that the influence of the SSH transcended political frontiers, since establishments from the border regions joined it—the French bank of Lake Geneva, Chamonix, the lakes of northern Italy, and the German and Austrian banks of Lake Constance. Following its reorganization, the SSH also benefited from considerable financial means. In 1905 its assets rose to 216,496 Swiss francs.¹³ A veritable driving force of the organization of hoteliers, the SSH was first structured into six, then seven, administrative districts. Local sections were nevertheless created in certain important tourist towns, like Geneva (1893), Lausanne (1895), Interlaken (1904) and Lucerne (1907).¹⁴

The organizing of societies for development followed a somewhat different course to that of the hotelier societies. On the chronological plane, several different creations were seen prior to the Long Depression. Founded in 1869, the Société d'embellissement de Montreux was transformed into a Société d'utilité publique in 1877.¹⁵ The emergence of societies for development as such took place in the Lake Geneva region at the start of the 1880s. Founded in March 1880, the Association générale pour le développement de Lausanne was transformed into the Société lausannoise d'intérêt public in December of the same year.¹⁶ In 1885 seven societies for development already existed in the Lake Geneva region and their number was at least thirteen by 1910. The movement quickly spread to other tourist areas. In 1881 central Switzerland was the first to organize itself at the regional level by creating an association in Lucerne made up of individual members.¹⁷ The transition to a regional federation of local societies proved to be more difficult. Founded in 1893 at the scale of Romandy, the first association succumbed to its internal contradictions after little more than a year¹⁸. The first success was recorded in 1897 in the Bernese Oberland.¹⁹

Launched in 1890, the idea of a national federation encountered strong resistance: for many, the logic of inter-regional competition still prevailed over the wish to collaborate. Founded in 1893, the Union suisse des sociétés de développement (USSD) had only nine

¹¹ *Société des hôteliers de Montreux et environs 1879-1929. Notice historique publiée à l'occasion du cinquantième anniversaire de sa fondation*, Montreux : Société de l'Imprimerie et lithographie, 1929, p. 22.

¹² KRAPF Kurt, «75 Jahre Schweizer Hotelier-Verein im Lichte der Entwicklung des Fremdenverkehrs», in *75 ans. Anniversaire. Société suisse des hôteliers*, op. cit., pp. 5-19 (here 5-7) ; SENN Henri-Georges, *La Suisse et le tourisme*, Lausanne : Payot, 1918, pp. 79-82.

¹³ SENN Henri-Georges, op. cit., p. 80.

¹⁴ DE SENARCLENS Jean et al. (eds), op. cit., pp. 85-94 ; ALLEMANN Valentine, *Vendre Lausanne : promotion, publicité et développement touristiques (1860-1945)*, Mémoire de licence, Université de Lausanne, 2001 (unpublished), pp. 47-49 ; SCHÄRLI Arthur, *Höhepunkt des schweizerischen Tourismus in der Zeit der «Belle Epoque» unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Berner Oberlandes. Kulturgeschichtliche Regionalstudie*, Berne / Frankfurt am Main : Peter Lang, 1984, pp. 169-170 ; HUBER Paul, *Luzern wird Fremdenstadt. Veränderungen der städtischen Wirtschaftsstrukturen, 1850-1914*, Lucerne : Kommission Keller, 1986, pp. 213-214.

¹⁵ DUPONT Patricia, FREY Sabine, op. cit., pp. 69-70.

¹⁶ ALLEMANN Valentine, op. cit., pp. 51-56; it must be pointed out that in this study the information concerning the filiation of the different associations is inaccurate.

¹⁷ This was the Verein zur Förderung des Fremdenverkehrs am Vierwaldstättersee und Umgebung ; HUBER Paul, op. cit., pp. 205-207.

¹⁸ This was the Syndicat des intérêts de la Suisse romande et du Jura-Simplon ; DASEN Hans, op. cit., p. 39.

¹⁹ This was the Oberländischer Verkehrsverein ; DASEN Hans, op. cit., pp. 40-44.

sections, only one of which stemmed from Romandy (Geneva).²⁰ Despite the adherence of eighty other sections in the period up to 1918, representing some 30,000 members, this peak association was an actor with little influence on the organization of tourism. In 1900 its financial resources, which amounted to 3,575 Swiss francs, were seven times lower than those the regional organization of the Bernese Oberland had at its disposal.²¹ Deprived of a professional secretariat, the USSD displayed a certain political impotence, most of its measures ending in failure.

Improving the profitability of the hotel offer: the collective action of the hotelier societies

The main function of the hotelier societies was to improve their members' profitability by acting on the quality/cost relationship of their offer. The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the many kinds of leverage used to that effect by focussing on the action of the SSH between 1882 and 1914. The first means of promoting a quality hotel industry was the circulation of information. Through exhibitions and above all its newspaper, the SSH got involved in the spreading of knowledge useful for coping with competitors.²² In the field of hotel equipment, for example, the race towards technological innovation indulged in by the major establishments of the Belle Epoque was reported in the *Hotel-Revue*, thus facilitating the investment choices of its members. On a completely different plane, let us mention the description of thieves active in the deluxe hotels of the period. Comfort and security were improved in this way. The reputation of a hotel was also measured by the quality of its welcome and its service. As early as 1891, the general meeting of the SSH concerned itself with the professional training of personnel.²³ In October 1893 a hotel school was opened at Ouchy, near Lausanne. While the first course attracted 27 students, by 1914 there were 49, of whom 32 were foreigners.²⁴

Apart from the quality of the hotel offer, the SSH attempted to raise the productivity of establishments by encouraging the rationalization of their running.²⁵ Through the *Hotel-Revue* the society promoted the improvement of work and management methods: by way of example, the adoption of more high-performance accountancy tools was fostered. Another sort of leverage was the lowering of charges thanks to collective action. In connection with this, the example of risk management is particularly significant. Caused by the mechanization and technological improvement of establishments, the increase in accidents became a problem after the inception of the federal law of 1881 on civil responsibility. The right granted to clients involved in an accident to demand damages and benefits from hoteliers obliged the latter to sign extremely expensive insurance policies covering this risk. In 1893, 1900 and 1912 the SSH managed to sign collective policies with the Zurich and Winterthur insurance companies, the terms of which were highly advantageous to its members.²⁶ In 1907 another collective policy concerning water damage was signed with a company from Lyon: it enabled members to obtain a discount of 25% on the premium. From the same point of view of reducing operational costs, conventions fixing preferential tariffs were negotiated with music providers (the Société des auteurs, compositeurs et éditeurs in Paris; the Union suisse des

²⁰ RATHGEB Hans, *op. cit.*, pp. 29-30 ; DASEN Hans, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-51.

²¹ DASEN Hans, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

²² PFISTER Adolf, «Die Hotel-Revue, Organ und Spiegelbild der Verbandstätigkeit», in *75 ans. Anniversaire. Société suisse des hôteliers*, *op. cit.*, pp. 59-65.

²³ SCHWEIZER Oscar, «Notre école professionnelle – origines et développement», in *75 ans. Anniversaire. Société suisse des hôteliers*, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-43 ; GINDRAUX Philippe, *L'art et la manière. L'Ecole hôtelière de Lausanne*, Lausanne : Payot, 1993.

²⁴ SENN Henri-Georges, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

²⁵ SENN Henri-Georges, *op. cit.*, pp. 74-106 ; BARBERINI Emma, *L'Industrie Hôtelière et le Tourisme en Suisse de 1914 à 1925. Situation en 1914. La crise provoquée par la guerre et les remèdes qui y ont été apportés*, St-Maurice : Imprimerie de l'Oeuvre de St-Augustin, 1929, pp. 21-26.

²⁶ SENN Henri-Georges, *op. cit.*, pp. 93-98.

musiciens). More ephemeral measures attempted to rationalize the buying of advertising space and the supplying of goods.

Most of hotelier societies also took charge of the tasks devolving to the employers' associations, namely the management of labour relations and the fight against the charges resulting from employment regulations and social-security benefits.²⁷ Between 1891 and 1897 the SSH provided an important service to its members in organizing the labour market through an agency for employing the workforce. After 1897, when this service was taken over by Union-Helvetia, the main employees' union, the *Hotel-Revue* published a special page devoted to job offers and requests; its usefulness was noted on many occasions in reports on the society's activities. Moreover, the SSH tried to normalize contracts and proofs of employment by providing standard documents.

From the end of the 1870s on, hotelier societies were faced with the increasing intervention of the public authorities in labour relations. In Geneva, a law granting a weekly rest day was passed in 1904, the application of which hotel owners attempted to avoid.²⁸ At the national scale, hoteliers managed to escape the factory employment regulations established in 1877. But with the promulgation of the Federal Code of Obligations in 1911 the pressure increased: a collective labour contract was negotiated with a cartel of employees' associations, the implementation of which was postponed by the war. Although great tensions were generated by the issues of holidays and of tips, as well as the blacklist of undesirable employees drawn up by the SSH, the priority of both employers and employees was to avoid the strikes that proved to be catastrophic for the image of tourism. In Zurich labour and management even adopted compulsory arbitration for all potential disputes.²⁹

Last but not least, the profitability of the hotel business was augmented by a regulating of the market. Aimed at getting organized in order to make the most of the consumer, cartel agreements were not willingly disclosed. It is therefore difficult to locate the appearance of these practices in time and to assess their importance. Although a vague desire to restrict competition was expressed as far back as the founding of the first hotelier society in 1879,³⁰ the cartelization movement seems to have intensified only after 1905.³¹ The decisive impetus did not come from the cyclical crisis of the 1870s and 80s, therefore, but from the later exacerbation of competition that led to a tendential lowering of profit margins (graph 7). At the national level, the manoeuvring was directed by the SSH. Starting in 1896, the *Hôtels de la Suisse* guide published a list of minimum prices, the respecting of which was only controlled from 1910 onwards, however, when an organ was given the power to investigate and to take sanctions against the black sheep. In 1912 the minimum price was associated with normalized services. Although the effectiveness of the measures adopted by the SSH ought not to be overestimated, such measures created a framework favourable to regional price cartels. The first local attempts encountered problems of survival, however. To the regret of the president of the Geneva section, a secret agreement arrived at in April 1906 did not last long: "This convention, which answered a great need [...] has unfortunately only lasted a year [...] and this thanks to the lack of good will and the stubbornness of a few individuals, which proves that the nice word *solidarity* is really just an empty word in our association."³² Lucerne, on the other hand, provided an example of success. In 1906 the hoteliers there set up a cartel of obligatory prices, which they enforced through a system of control and retaliatory

²⁷ SENN Henri-Georges, *op. cit.*, pp. 82 et 111-122 ; DASEN Hans, *op. cit.*, pp. 86-87 ; FELIX Karl, *Preisabreden im schweizerischen Hotelgewerbe. Ein Beitrag zur Erforschung der Kartelle*, Lucerne : Buchdruckerei C. J. Bucher A.G., 1934, pp. 72-73.

²⁸ DE SENARCLENS Jean et al. (eds), *op. cit.*, p. 109.

²⁹ SENN Henri-Georges, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

³⁰ DUPONT Patricia, FREY Sabine, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

³¹ FELIX Karl, *op. cit.*, pp. 69-77 ; GÖLDEN Hubert, *Strukturwandlungen des schweizerischen Fremdenverkehrs 1890-1935*, Zürich : H. Girsberg, 1939, pp. 308-319 ; STREIFF R. C., «Die Preisnormierung im Wandel der Zeit», in *75 ans. Anniversaire. Société suisse des hôteliers*, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-27 (here 22).

³² Report presented by president F. Weber to the general assembly of 28 January 1908, cited in DE SENARCLENS Jean et al. (eds), *op. cit.*, pp. 120-121.

measures applied to recalcitrant hoteliers.³³ In 1907 other cartels were born in Weggis and in Zurich, where a trust was put in charge of controlling the respecting of the clauses of the convention. In Montreux in 1909 the hoteliers renewed an earlier agreement: the minimum prices were fixed at 11 Swiss francs for luxury hotels and 5.50 frs for the lowest category.³⁴ Between 1910 and 1914 local rates were also established in Interlaken, Gstaad, Rheinfelden, Arosa and Berne. Meeting in Olten on 17 December 1908, eight hotelier societies could not come to an agreement on constituting a price cartel at a national scale. At the time the big hoteliers of Lucerne, Montreux, Interlaken, Basel and Zurich decided on adopting an informal agreement.³⁵

Improving the offer and the functioning of the tourist system: the action of the societies for development

The crisis in tourism of the 1870s and 80s did not only affect hotel interests. A veritable “leading sector” in the barely industrialized regions of Switzerland,³⁶ tourist activity involved numerous economic sectors in its cyclical slowdown. While the fall in investments mainly affected the banking world, the building sector and capital goods industries, the retraction of purchasing power imported by tourists hit transport, commerce, the luxury and souvenir industries as well as the agroalimentary industries. It is not surprising, therefore, to observe these economic circles joining together to promote tourism. A second impetus to the creation of societies for development was given by the structural evolution of the tourism sector. On the one hand, demand became more difficult to please and its satisfaction depended on the generalized improvement of the offer. And on the other, the industrialization of the offer resulted in the forming of a complex tourist system, the efficiency of which called for a minimum of coordination between the different economic and political actors.

The organizing of societies for development became widespread as early as 1880. Although not exhaustive, the list of their areas of intervention drawn up by the historian H. G. Senn lets us see the diverse nature of their collective action: “The programme the societies for development propose depends above all, then, on where they are. Generally speaking, they attempt to introduce people to distinctive features through advertising; they publish maps, guides, lists of information; they seek to improve internal traffic by controlling cabs and taxis; they address requests for directions so that the train service is more in keeping with the desires of the traveller, they improve general hygiene by constructing drains; they embellish the streets though the creating of pavements; they attempt to preserve the character of the place by resisting the degradation or demolition of historic monuments; through the building of footpaths they render the charming corners of the locality accessible; through woodland paths they create shady walks; through embankments they improve the sides of lakes or rivers; they play an active part in the organization of entertainment of all kinds, concerts, races, sports tournaments, regattas, illuminations, aviation week. So as not to make the list too long, let us just say that their domain includes everything that might encourage tourism.”³⁷ Apart from their activity in terms of communication, dealt with in the following chapter, the main aim of the societies for development was to improve the regional offer in four areas: mobility; the embellishment and sanitizing of urban space; the diversification of entertainment; and the welcome given to tourists.

³³ HUBER Paul, *op. cit.*, pp. 215-216.

³⁴ METTLER Jean-Louis, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

³⁵ FELIX Karl, *op. cit.*, pp. 69-72.

³⁶ HUMAIR Cédric, «The hotel industry and its importance in the technical and economic development of a region: the Lake Geneva case (1852-1914)», *Journal of Tourism History* (forthcoming); MEULI Richard, *Le tourisme grison et son rôle dans l'économie cantonale des Grisons*, Geneva : Imprimerie de la Tribune de Genève, 1940.

³⁷ SENN Henri-Georges, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

In the realm of mobility, the measures taken by the societies for development had many different aims.³⁸ The first was to improve international access to the resort. Negotiations with the railway companies were particularly concerned with improving the frequency of trains, the adopting of special tickets and fares, and improving the comfort of carriages and stations. Thus, at the end of the 1880s the Geneva society for development obtained the introduction of an evening train between Lausanne and Geneva and of night trains travelling to Geneva.³⁹ Following the appearance of air transport in dirigible balloons, that same society endeavoured to promote regular services between Geneva and Germany, as well as a Lyon-Geneva-Chamonix link, but without success.⁴⁰ At the national level the USSD had discussions with the Federal Transport Department to further the introduction of toilets in carriages and stations.⁴¹ The second aim was to improve mobility in and around the resort. Hence, an attempt was made to introduce public transport (omnibuses, trams, funicular railways) serving the strategic locations frequented by tourists (stations, hotels, excursion and entertainment spots). Steps were also taken to make the timetables of the different transport companies tally with one another. In order to avoid the abusive practices of corporations involved in the mobility of tourists—boatmen, coachmen, guides, porters—tariffs were controlled and norms of behaviour established, as the examples of Lugano and Geneva show.⁴²

The activities of the societies for development aimed at optimizing transport conditions operated according to different modalities. The coordination of interests could take place internally since transport companies were often represented within them. Between 1888 and 1920, 22.5% of the senior executives of Pro Lugano belonged to the founding committees and/or boards of the regional transport companies.⁴³ The second channel was negotiation with transport companies that had a strong interest in attracting as many tourists as possible to their network. Their cooperation was nevertheless subordinate to the question of profitability. After the buying of the five main private railway companies by the Swiss Confederation, voted through in 1898, the administration of the Chemins de fer fédéraux (CFF, Swiss Federal Railways) stepped up the consulting of its users in accordance with the idea of public service. In 1910 a national conference bringing together users and companies was founded;⁴⁴ the tourist organizations were represented at it.⁴⁵ Lastly, collaboration could also come about through the sectorial transport organizations, which thrived from the 1880s onwards.⁴⁶

The embellishment and sanitizing of urban space was a second area of activity of importance. In this domain, however, the ability to intervene of societies for development was quickly limited by the financial means available. To install certain infrastructures, they were therefore forced to act in unison with the authorities. In Geneva initiatives aimed at improving the look of the shores of the lake increased substantially. Apart from the laying out of embankments and promenades, in 1891 the society for development obtained the installing of

³⁸ A case study devoted to Pro Lugano analyzes this problem in its entirety; SULMONI Stefano, «Système de transport et développement touristique : le cas de la ville de Lugano et de ses alentours pendant la Belle Epoque (1880-1920)», in SCHIEDT Hans-Ulrich et al. (eds), *Verkehrsgeschichte - Histoire des transports*, Zurich : Chronos, 2010, pp. 435-447.

³⁹ BERNASCONI Pierre, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-12.

⁴⁰ BERNASCONI Pierre, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-29.

⁴¹ DASEN Hans, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-53.

⁴² DE SENARCLENS Jean et al. (eds), *op. cit.*, pp. 102-104 ; SULMONI Stefano, « Pro Lugano: une société au service de l'aménagement d'espaces de loisirs (1888-1919)», in GILOMEN Hans-Jörg et al. (eds), *Freizeit und Vergnügen vom 14. bis 20. Jahrhundert - Temps libre et loisirs du 14e au 20e siècle*, Zurich : Chronos, 2005, pp. 143-155 (here 152).

⁴³ SULMONI Stefano, 2010, *op. cit.*, p. 444.

⁴⁴ GOLDEN Hubert, *op. cit.*, p. 333.

⁴⁵ The SSH was represented by its president after 1912 ; Bibliothèque nationale, dossier V Schweiz 1521, «31^{ème} rapport de gestion du comité de la SSH comprenant la période du 1^{er} avril 1912 au 31 mars 1913».

⁴⁶ The Schweizerischer Eisenbahnverband (1887, stemming from the Verband Schweizerischer Eisenbahnen founded in 1863) ; the Verband schweizerischer Sekundärbahnen (1889, today the Union des transports publics), the Touring Club Suisse (1896) ; the Verband Schweizerischer Dampfschiffahrtsunternehmen (1898) ; the Automobile Club Suisse (1898) ; the Verband Schweizerischer Seilbahnen (1900).

the famous illuminated Jet d'Eau.⁴⁷ In 1901 a public art commission was created to preserve the city's heritage and its picturesque spots from the devastating effects of rapid urbanization. In 1906 this gave rise to the Société d'art public. In Lugano, which sought to make its mark as a health resort, the society for development set up a public health committee in 1889, partly staffed by doctors.⁴⁸ This committee lobbied for the cantonal health regulations to be respected and intervened to get rid of the foul smells that were inconveniencing the tourists. It elaborated infrastructure projects, which were submitted to the authorities. Even though a new system for supplying drinking water was put into service in 1894, the measures demanding the construction of a sewerage system only met with approval in 1915.

The introduction of different kinds of entertainment enabling the stay of visitors to pass off pleasantly was a third area of intervention developed in collaboration with the hotelier societies. At the end of the 19th century tourists were no longer content with the contemplation of landscapes or the benefits of the climate or the waters. They would only extend their stay if they had the chance to educate and amuse themselves. In order to respond to their expectations, tourist circles collaborated with existing cultural societies and sports clubs and helped create others. A meeting place for tourists, the kursaals and casinos provided concerts and other spectacles, with some of them also proposing gambling. Festivals, sports meetings (water-based games, car races, aviation meetings) and exhibitions completed the amusement offer. In Montreux, for instance, the fame of the resort was enhanced through the organization in 1897 of the Narcissus Festival.⁴⁹ To respond to the increasing demand for sports activities, numerous infrastructures were built there: toboggan and bobsleigh runs, skating rinks, golf, tennis, etc. In Geneva, too, the hotelier societies and the societies for development supported the creation of sports facilities on a grand scale;⁵⁰ the costs incurred by the Charmilles Stadium proved to be too great, however, leading to the winding up of the development company.

Lastly, the societies for development endeavoured to improve the reception and the provision of information of tourists by opening information bureaus, the forerunners of the tourist offices of today. Appearing during the second half of the 1880s in Zurich, Lausanne and Geneva, their daily opening and the professionalization of their services called for a considerable financial outlay. In 1887 a subscription was launched by the Lausanne society for development, which appealed to the generosity of business and banking circles, to the proprietors of hotels and boarding houses, and to transport companies in order to supplement the municipal subsidy of 1,000 Swiss francs.⁵¹ In Geneva the office had a second function, which was to register the complaints of tourists and to protect them against certain abuses; the improving of the image of the city abroad depended on the complete satisfaction of its visitors.⁵²

Selling Swiss tourism: a preoccupation shared by all actors

The success of an enterprise, resort or tourist region did not only depend on its natural assets and its capacity to propose an offer adapted to the requirement of the demand. With the industrialization of the sector, the actors within tourism were forced to develop a symbolic activity, the twin aim being to attract tourists to Switzerland and to convince the public authorities to support their activity. With the cyclical crisis and the intensification of competition, the preoccupation with constructing and disseminating a tourist image replete with positive values increased even more. According to the figures in an SSH survey, the

⁴⁷ BERNASCONI Pierre, *op. cit.*, pp. 14 et 27 ; MAYOR Jean-Claude, *Le Jet d'eau de Genève. Un centenaire qui a du panache*, Geneva: SIG et Tribune Editions, 1991.

⁴⁸ SULMONI Stefano, 2005, *op. cit.*, pp. 149-152.

⁴⁹ DUPONT Patricia, FREY Sabine, *op. cit.*, pp. 154-163.

⁵⁰ BERNASCONI Pierre, *op. cit.*, pp. 14-15 ; DE SENARCLENS Jean et al. (eds), *op. cit.*, pp. 95-101.

⁵¹ ALLEMANN Valentine, *op. cit.*, annexe 12.

⁵² ALLEMANN Valentine, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

advertising expenses agreed to in the hotel trade went from 1.4m to 5m Swiss francs between 1894 and 1912, namely a progression from 1.6 to 2.6% of the total expenses of the branch.⁵³ If we add the contributions of the societies for development and the transport companies, the sums spent on publicity were considerable.

It is not surprising, therefore, to note that the promotion of tourism played a crucial role in the organization of the actors within in. At the time of the creation of the first hotelier society in Montreux in 1879, the need to develop joint publicity was a major concern of theirs. In 1882 the wish to improve the image of the hotel profession by participating in the National Exposition in Zurich provided the impetus for the creating of the SSH. As for the promoters of the Geneva society for development, founded in 1885, they emphasized the need to restore the reputation of their city, tarnished by the rumours being spread abroad. At the turn of the 19th century the collective activity developed on the symbolic level increased exponentially by utilizing different distribution channels.

In entering the field of tourist promotion, the hotelier societies and the societies for development did not just use the classic vectors of publicity such as press campaigns and the distribution of brochures and posters, but developed new ones. The first of these was the publishing of specialized newspapers aimed at tourists, in which there figured information, a list of visitors staying at the hotels in the resort, and publicity inserts.⁵⁴ In Montreux in 1879 the print run of the *Journal et liste des étrangers* was 1,000. In 1898 it was sent to 586 addresses beyond the confines of the resort, including the greatest luxury hotels of the time, railway and shipping companies, travel agencies, kursaals, reading rooms and private clubs, the major newspapers, teachers, doctors and diplomats.⁵⁵ Albeit on a different plane, the SSH's *Hotel-Revue* also participated in the construction of the image of Swiss tourism. Its editors, who kept an eye on the comments published in the foreign press, refuted any piece of information that might tarnish the reputation of the Swiss tourist offer. On the other hand they published the accounts of foreign visitors singing the praises of Switzerland.⁵⁶

The second innovative form of promotion was the publication of local guides, the twin aim of which was to provide information and publicity. Less critical than the travel guides published abroad, they highlighted the region and its tourist offer. In Geneva the society for development received substantial support from the hotelier society, which enabled it to put out ten or so brochures in 1910.⁵⁷ Published by the SSH for the first time in 1896, the guide entitled *Les Hôtels de la Suisse* became an inescapable publicity vector printed in three languages.⁵⁸ By printing hotel prices it also endeavoured to fight against the abuses of invoicing that were harmful to Switzerland's reputation for probity.

From the end of the 1880s, with the creation of information bureaus in the main tourist centres, the coordination and dissemination of publicity material became a lot more effective. In Montreux a consortium was created in 1893 of societies interested in tourism, its aim being to improve advertising impact.⁵⁹ At the international scale, though, the effectiveness of the promoting of tourism remained dependent on foreign tourist actors, which sometimes had a tendency to privilege Switzerland's competitors. The hoped-for opening of advertising agencies abroad came up against the costs of such an operation, which exceeded the financial

⁵³ SCHÄRLI Arthur, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

⁵⁴ HUBER Paul, *op. cit.*, pp. 205-207 ; ALLEMANN Valentine, *op. cit.*, pp. 70-72 ; PERRET Félix, «50 ans de journalisme touristique», in ASSOCIATION DES INTERETS DE LAUSANNE, *Lausanne – Ouchy 1893-1943*, jubilee issue, January 1943, pp. 35-43 ; DUPONT Patricia, FREY Sabine, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-73.

⁵⁵ METTLER Jean-Louis, *op. cit.*, pp. 95-101.

⁵⁶ PFISTER Adolf, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-59.

⁵⁷ The following publications were involved: *Huit jours à Genève* ; *Genève ville de séjour* ; *Au Pays de Genève* ; *Genève et le Mont-Blanc* ; *Plaquette-excursions* ; *Beautiful, intellectual, historical Geneva* ; *Guide de l'instruction publique à Genève* ; *Petit guide pratique* ; *Liste des commerçants et industriels de Genève* ; *Liste des hôtels, pensions, pensionnats et externats de Genève* ; BERNASCONI Pierre, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

⁵⁸ The first print run was of 150,000 copies in three languages: English 60,000 copies; German 50,000; French 40,000. NANTERMOD Pierre, «Le guide suisse des hôtels – un guide et un conseiller», in *75 ans. Anniversaire. Société suisse des hôteliers*, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-32 (here 30).

⁵⁹ DUPONT Patricia, FREY Sabine, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-75.

means of local societies. In the end it was the railway companies who paved the way.⁶⁰ In 1893, the Jura-Simplon Railway set up an agency in London, taken over in 1902 by the CFF, which introduced others in Paris (1903), Berlin (1908), New York (1908) and Cairo (1913). Somewhat late in the day, the SSH followed suit by opening an agency in Saint Petersburg (1910).

One last vector was indirect advertising. On several occasions the hoteliers of Montreux organized banquets for congresses of physicians, as an elegant means of convincing them to send their patients to undergo treatment in the region.⁶¹ The SSH's propaganda commission, which had an annual budget that varied from between 50,000 and 100,000 Swiss francs, financed the trip and the stay of foreign artists in Switzerland, the aim being to perpetuate the presence of Swiss landscapes in European cultural productions.⁶² It also gave support to lectures and slide shows abroad, as well as film footage that privileged Switzerland.

Exhibitions, be they regional, national or international, were yet another means of making the Swiss offer known. Participation in such events had another goal, however, which was to bring to light the socioeconomic importance of tourism.⁶³ Necessary to winning the support of the political authorities, the constructing of a statistical image was undertaken by the SSH on the occasion of the national exhibitions in Zurich (1883), Geneva (1896) and Berne (1914). In a context in which industrialization was king, it proved difficult to get the economic value of this services sector recognized. More especially as the statistical steps undertaken by local and national societies came up against the culture of secrecy of the hoteliers who for the most part refused to collaborate.

Notwithstanding the steps to do with organization and rationalization taken in the field of advertising, the effectiveness of the promotion of Swiss tourism continued to suffer from a certain dispersion. Necessary to Switzerland's international influence, the unifying of the offer at the national scale failed because of the divergences that plagued the SSH, the USSD and the CFF. Launched in 1911, under pressure from the steps taken by rival States, the creation of the Office national suisse du tourisme only succeeded in 1917, as the outcome of the huge crisis in tourism triggered by the war⁶⁴.

Getting the public authorities to improve the framework of tourism

While it is true that the Swiss public authorities did not intervene massively in the tourism sector prior to the First World War, they nevertheless played an important role in its success. At the municipal and cantonal level the authorities largely met the expectations of the hotelier societies and the societies for development, supporting them in different ways in their efforts to improve the competitiveness of tourist companies.

The first contribution of the public authorities was of a financial kind. In certain tourist towns their subsidies formed a substantial part of the receipts of the society for development.⁶⁵ Thus, in 1886 the canton and municipality of Geneva allotted 5,000 and 3,148 Swiss francs respectively; namely 33% of the budget. The total increased to 23,100 frs in 1913, 29% of the budget.⁶⁶ In Lausanne, the situation was completely different, since in 1897 the canton gave nothing and the municipality a mere 1,000 frs.⁶⁷ By way of compensation, the latter provided services in kind enabling the society for development to implement its

⁶⁰ GÖLDEN Hubert, *op. cit.*, pp. 42-46.

⁶¹ METTLER Jean-Louis, *op. cit.*, pp. 37 et 43.

⁶² SENN Henri-Georges, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

⁶³ KRAPF Kurt, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-9 ; SENN Henri-Georges, *op. cit.*, pp. 101-104.

⁶⁴ BARBERINI Emma, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-46 ; whereas France created an Office national du tourisme in 1910, Austria-Hungary set up a special section attached to the Ministry of Public Works.

⁶⁵ SENN Henri-Georges, *op. cit.*, p. 55 ; the author provides figures for Zurich, Berne, Lausanne, Geneva and Lucerne without specifying the date of validity.

⁶⁶ BERNASCONI Pierre, *op. cit.*, pp. 24 et 32.

⁶⁷ ALLEMANN Valentine, *op. cit.*, annexe 12.

projects; it supplied the land and the water needed for the construction of an artificial lake in Sauvabelin, for example.⁶⁸ Moreover, the public authorities provided more occasional financial backing in support of tourist projects. In Lausanne the society for development provided the impetus for the building of an electric tram network run by a private company. The operation was only possible, however, thanks to the massive investment of the municipality, which bought second rank shares for 400,000 Swiss francs, namely 42% of the share capital of Tramways Lausannois.⁶⁹ In Geneva the installing of the Jet d'Eau was paid for by the municipality. The operation was financed by a loan of 60,000 frs, the interest on which was deducted from the annual subsidy paid to the society for development.⁷⁰

The second contribution made by the public authorities was the building and running of the infrastructures necessary to the functioning of the tourist system. While Pro Lugano and its health committee were the instigators of the water and sewerage piping systems, their realization was taken care of by the municipality.⁷¹ Confronted with the inadequacies of the water, gas and electricity systems run by the private sector, hoteliers benefited at the turn of the 19th century from the municipalization of these services in many Swiss towns. Public services, which resulted in a reduction in charges and an improvement to the quality of the provisions made, increased their competitiveness. At the national scale, the Swiss Confederation and its state-owned companies were also the providers of services in relation to transport and communications (railways, the postal, telegraph and telephone services).

The public authorities also played a huge part, due to the legal framework they established in a multitude of fields influencing the quality and the cost of tourist services. The issue of taxation, for instance, was a major challenge for tourism. On the one hand, the cantons and communes tried to attract long-term foreign residents by offering them tax incentives. While Geneva exempted foreign individuals of private means from the wealth tax, which is highlighted in an advertising brochure put out by the local society for development,⁷² Lucerne introduced the practice of the tax agreement.⁷³ On the other hand, the hotelier societies fought tooth and nail to maintain the competitive advantage they vaunted in their publicity, namely a lower cost of living than in the major European cities. Following its founding in 1882, the SSH engaged in a fierce struggle against tariff protection and its effects on pushing up prices. A first petition was addressed to the Federal Chambers on 17 March 1883.⁷⁴ In 1902 the SSH participated in the referendum against the new customs tariff. Even though it failed to win the public vote, this measure permitted strong pressure to be put on the Department of Trade and tariff reductions to be obtained during the concluding of commercial treaties with Switzerland's neighbours.⁷⁵ As for the tourist taxes levied on foreigners, their ambiguous nature made them a more controversial issue. While Geneva's hoteliers were violently opposed to this tax burden, the hoteliers of Lucerne saw it as a convenient way of increasing their financial standing and their capacity for intervening.⁷⁶

Automobile tourism was another major challenge after 1900. To be sure, according to one estimate car drivers represented only 1% of the tourist clientele in 1912.⁷⁷ However, their rapid increase in numbers and their social status made them a much-courted clientele throughout Europe. As it was, the promoting of this new form of mobility—the standardization of traffic rules, the law on the civil liability of drivers, customs formalities for

⁶⁸ ALLEMANN Valentine, *op. cit.*, p. 57

⁶⁹ *Société des Tramways Lausannois. A l'occasion du cinquantième anniversaire de sa fondation 1895-1945*, n.p., n.d., pp. 14-22.

⁷⁰ *Mémorial des séances du Conseil municipal de Genève*, 10 and 20 April 1891.

⁷¹ SULMONI Stefano, 2005, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

⁷² BERNASCONI Pierre, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

⁷³ ECKERT August, *Die Entwicklung des modernen Reise- und Fremdenverkehrs im Gebiet des Vierwaldstättersees*, s.l. : Selbstverlag, 1932, p. 114.

⁷⁴ PFISTER Adolf, *op. cit.*, pp. 57-59.

⁷⁵ Bibliothèque nationale, V Schweiz 1521, «21^{ème} rapport de gestion du comité de la SSH comprenant la période du 1^{er} avril 1902 au 31 mars 1903».

⁷⁶ DE SENARCLENS Jean et al. (éds), *op. cit.*, p. 117 ; HUBER Paul, *op. cit.*, pp. 219-225.

⁷⁷ SCHÄRLI Arthur, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

foreigners, the opening of mountain passes to car traffic, the asphaltting and signposting of roads⁷⁸ — depended essentially on the public authorities. In collaboration with the Touring-Club Suisse and the Automobile-Club Suisse, the USSD and the SSH embarked on a whole range of measures with the competent authorities.⁷⁹ In 1894 their efforts resulted in the signing of a first inter-cantonal agreement standardizing traffic rules. A federal law would nevertheless have to wait until 1932.

The tourist organizations attempted to influence the legislative action of the public authorities in many other fields as well, including building regulations, health standards, the food business, the safety of technical facilities, and so on. We must also underline the first measures aimed at limiting competition, which would play a major part in tourist policy in the interwar period. In 1910 in the Canton of Lucerne, the hotelier society used the cantonal law on permits to sell alcohol to get the opening of new hotel establishments turned down. The canton's claim was nevertheless dismissed by the Federal Council, which condemned the practice in the name of the freedom of trade and industry enshrined in the federal constitution.⁸⁰

Following their creation, the hotelier societies and the societies for development functioned, then, as a pressure group that sought to influence the decisions taken by the public authorities. Their force of persuasion and their effectiveness was dependent on many different factors, the main ones being their degree of representativeness (the number of members) and their economic weight. Generally speaking, tourist organizations were influential among the municipal and cantonal authorities of the tourist regions, where they were well represented. In Lausanne the members of the society for development occupied 31 of the 100 seats on the City Council in 1888, then 50 in 1892 and even 60 in 1897.⁸¹ Probably related to the improvement of the tourist situation, a backward surge to 41 seats in 1899 and 35 in 1904 was seen. In Lucerne during the City Council's 1907-1911 term of office, a third of the seats were occupied by deputies practising an activity linked to tourism.⁸²

At the federal scale, the representation of tourism was much feebler and its interests subordinate to those of the main export industries. As a result, efforts were made by the SSH committee to gain in influence. With this in mind, the society's newspaper played an essential role: "In addition, our gazette has enabled us to get into contact with sister societies pursuing similar goals to ours; it has been the channel by which a lot of news concerning our industry has come to the notice of both press and public, thus contributing to drawing the attention of the authorities to us and to our work. Now, it's on this point that we insist. More than any other industry, we need to defend ourselves against prejudice and false interpretation and we have a lot to do to win the place that is rightfully ours."⁸³ In 1892 the SSH became a member of the Union suisse du commerce et de l'industrie, Switzerland's most powerful peak association. However, the SSH only had modest influence therein, since it had to wait until 1912 to win a seat within the Chambre suisse de commerce, the association's committee. The influence of tourist circles on the economic policy of the central State was therefore modest.

The advances and the limits of the organization of Swiss tourism

At the end of this contribution we have to admit that tourism reacted to the Long Depression in a similar way to other sectors of the Swiss economy by abandoning Manchester Liberalism in favour of organized capitalism. On the eve of the First World War a tissue of professional and inter-professional organizations was in place and structured at three scales, local, regional

⁷⁸ SENN Henri-Georges, *op. cit.*, pp. 42-52.

⁷⁹ DASEN Hans, *op. cit.*, pp. 53-54 ; RATHGEB Hans, *op. cit.*, p. 28 ; KRAPF Kurt, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

⁸⁰ HUBER Paul, *op. cit.*, pp. 217-219 ; FELIX Karl, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-54.

⁸¹ CHACHEREAU Nicolas, *Les sociétés de développement : acteurs centraux du tourisme lémanique*, Travail de master, Université de Lausanne, 2010 (unpublished), pp. 42-43.

⁸² HUBER Paul, *op. cit.*, p. 234.

⁸³ Central committee report to the general assembly of 14 March 1887, cited in PFISTER Adolf, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

and national. Some of them, like the SSH, reached significant rates of representativeness that gave them legitimacy in terms of the entrepreneurs in the branch as much with public opinion and the political authorities. The collective action undertaken by the hotelier societies and the societies for development touched on many different areas and was indisputably a factor in the success of Swiss tourism in a period in which it was confronted with ever-fiercer international competition.

That said, we ought not to exaggerate the effectiveness of the collective action of the tourist organizations. Before the major crisis undergone by Swiss tourism in the interwar period, which accelerated and intensified the establishing of an organized form of capitalism, the phenomenon had certain limits. Firstly, liberal individualism remained highly significant and professional solidarity asserted itself but slowly. This resulted, for example, in problems in enforcing the application of cartel measures aimed at restricting competition. Secondly, the action of tourist organizations was limited by the financial means provided by members and public authorities alike. The annual reports of the development societies in particular endlessly complain about insufficient financial resources. Thirdly, the collaboration between the different societies remained difficult. Cooperation often gave way to parochialism, to interregional competition, and to divergences of interest for the different actors of the tourist system. At the national scale, the SSH, the USSD and the CFF were notably incapable of getting together to conduct an effective publicity campaign. Fourthly, the intervention of the central State remained an extremely modest affair. Contrary to certain neighbouring States, a genuine tourist policy was not embarked upon prior to the war.

Despite the limits noted above, the existing historiography tends to show that Switzerland acted as a pioneer in the field of tourist organization. As far as hotelier societies are concerned, the first of these was born in 1869 in Cologne as the *Hotelbesitzer Verein*,⁸⁴ followed by the *Chambre syndicale des hôtels et des maisons meublées de Paris* (1871).⁸⁵ Some historians, however, consider the SSH, created in 1882, to be the first professional organization on a national scale. Founded in 1899, the *Società Italiana degli Albergatori* reverted to the Swiss organizational model.⁸⁶ According to the information to hand, the equivalent of the Swiss societies for development only appeared later on in France, Italy and Spain.⁸⁷ In France, the promoters of the first tourist information offices clearly based themselves on the Swiss model.⁸⁸ A more advanced comparative analysis extended to other tourist spaces would nevertheless be necessary in order to confirm or invalidate the roles of precursor and model played by Switzerland at the European scale. Indeed, the case of the Tyrol seems to show that the organization of tourism also begins during the 1870s.⁸⁹ A comparative approach would also enable us to better understand the causes of the precocious and intensive organization of Swiss tourism: was it due to the precocious development of the Swiss tourist offer, to the greater intensity of the tourist crisis of the 1870s and 80s in Switzerland, or to the example set by the other sectors of the Swiss economy, which organized themselves at the national scale as early as the end of the 1870s? For the moment these questions remain unanswered.

⁸⁴ *60 années Union Internationale Hôtelière = 60 Jahre Internationaler Hotelbesitzerverein 1869-1929. Jubiläums-Ausgabe*, Köln : Druck M. Dumont Schauberg, 1929 ; some Swiss hoteliers were members of this society in the 1870s ; the latter revealed its international ambitions when it became the *Union Internationale de propriétaires d'hôtels* in 1882, then the *Union Internationale Hôtelière* in 1906.

⁸⁵ LESUR Jean-Marc, *Les hôtels de Paris. De l'auberge au palace, XIXe-XXe siècles*, Neuchâtel : Alphil, 2005, pp. 110-112.

⁸⁶ I thank Andrea Zanini for this information.

⁸⁷ In 1889 in France (Grenoble) and in the 1890s in Italy and Spain; LARIQUE Bertrand, *L'économie du tourisme en France des années 1890 à la veille de la Seconde guerre mondiale. Organisation et développement d'un secteur socio-économique*, Thèse de doctorat d'histoire, Université Bordeaux III, 2006, tableau p. 128 ; BATTILANI Patrizia, STRANGIO Donatella (a cura di), *Il turismo et le città tra XVIII e XXI secolo. Italia e Spagna a confronto*, Milan : Franco Angeli, 2008.

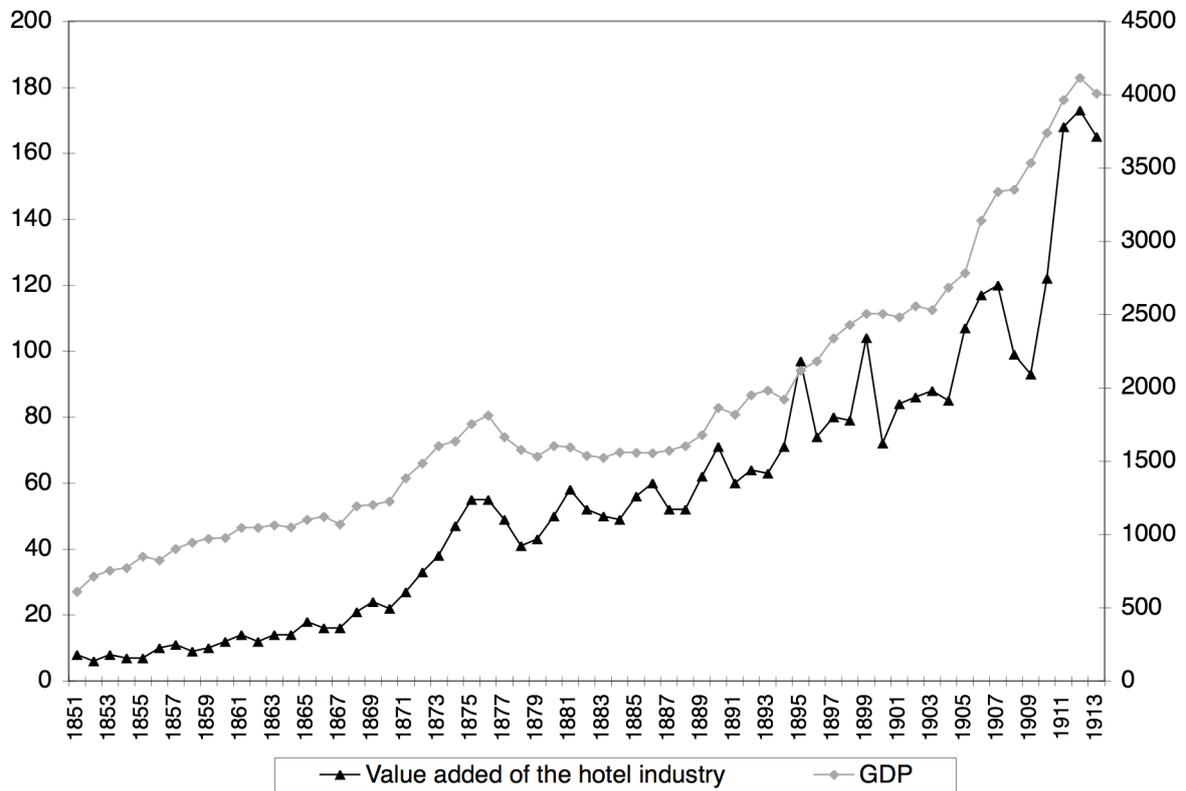
⁸⁸ LARIQUE Bertrand, *op. cit.*, pp. 122-127.

⁸⁹ BONOLDI Andrea, «Organizzazioni e sviluppo turistico : l'esperienza tirolese (1870-1914)», in LEONARDI Andrea, HEISS Hans, *Turismo e sviluppo in area alpina. Secoli XVIII-XX*. Atti del Seminario permanente sulla Storia dell'economia e dell'imprenditorialità nelle Alpi in età moderna e contemporanea, Innsbruck : Studien Verlag, 2003, pp. 385-411 (here 407); the number of societies went from 3 in 1870 to 40 in 1890, then 178 in 1910 and 218 in 1913 ; the first regional associations appeared at the end of the 1880s.

Graph 1

Evolution of the value added of the Swiss hotel industry (left-hand scale in millions of Swiss francs) and of the Swiss GDP (right-hand scale in millions of Swiss francs)

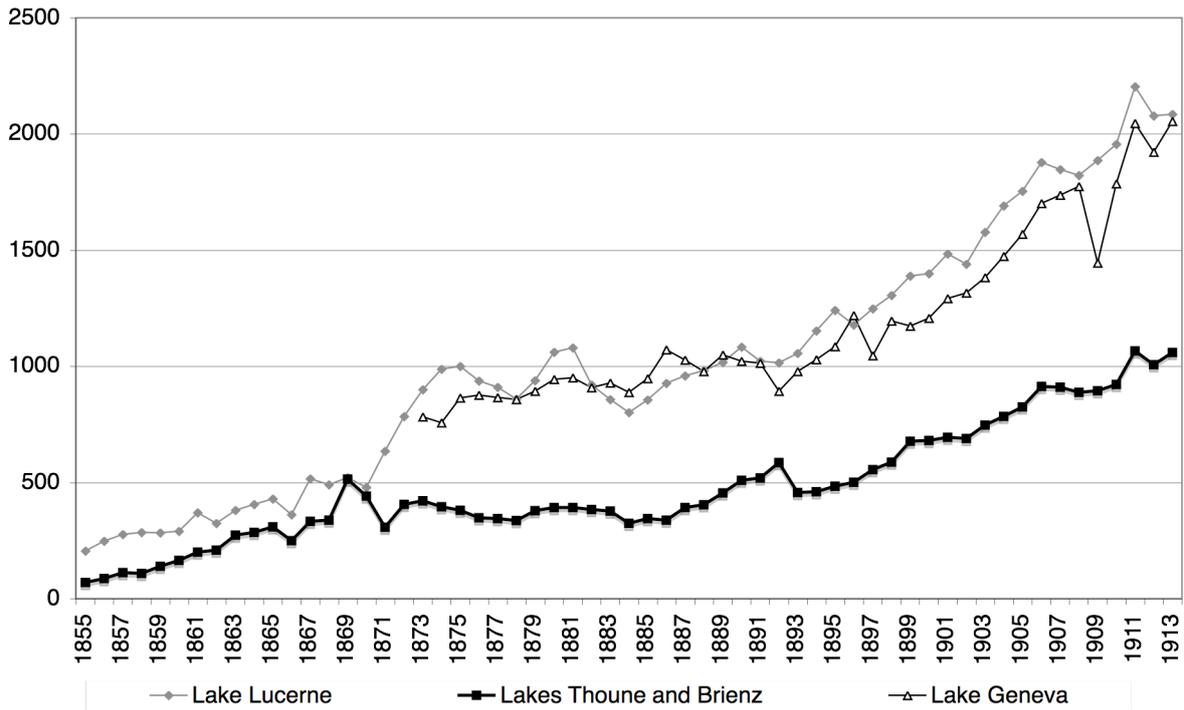
Source : RITZMANN-BLICKENSTORFER Heiner (dir.), *Statistique historique de la Suisse*, Zurich : Chronos, 1996, pp. 740 and 866.



Graph 2

Receipts of the shipping companies of the three main tourist regions in thousands of Swiss francs: Lake Lucerne (central Switzerland), Lakes Thun and Brienz (Bernese Oberland), Lake Geneva (the Lake Geneva region)

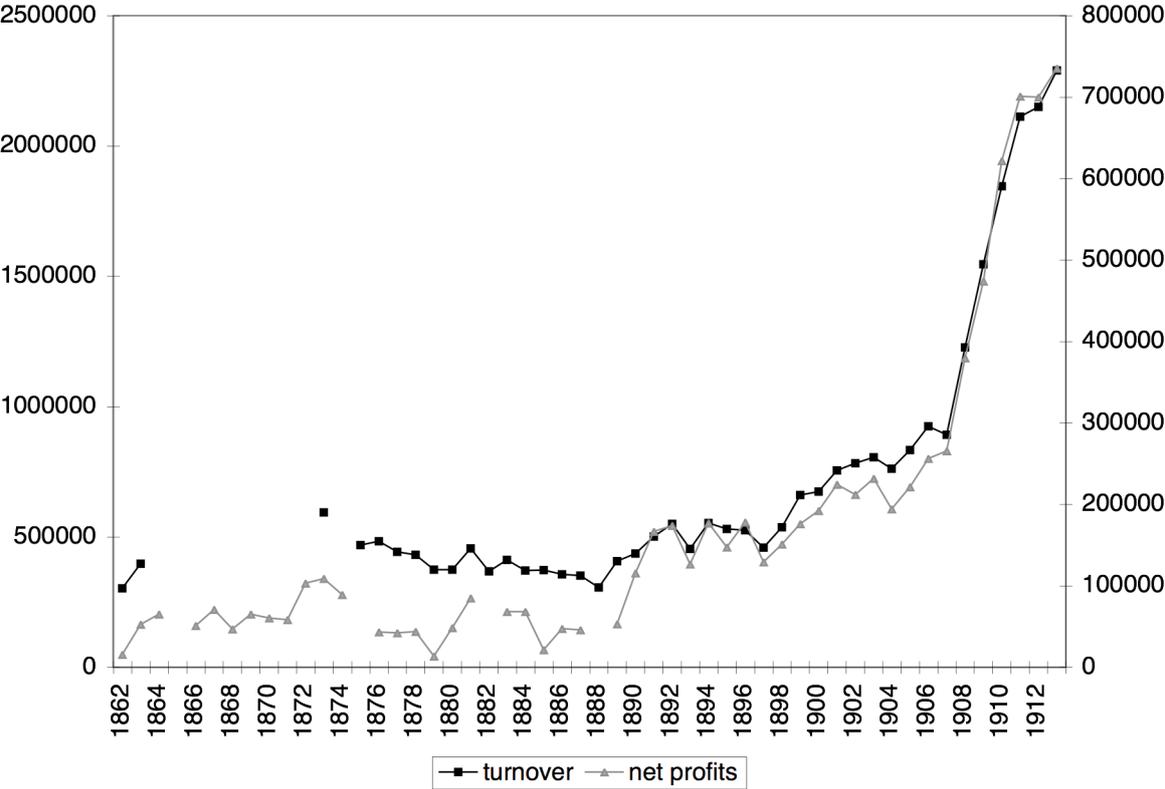
Source : RITZMANN-BLICKENSTORFER Heiner (dir.), *Statistique historique de la Suisse*, Zurich : Chronos, 1996, pp. 766.



Graph 3

Turnover of the Hôtel Beau-Rivage in Ouchy, near Lausanne (left-hand scale in Swiss francs) and net profits (right-hand scale in Swiss francs)

Source : Hôtel Beau-Rivage archives, annual balance sheets and reports to the meeting of shareholders



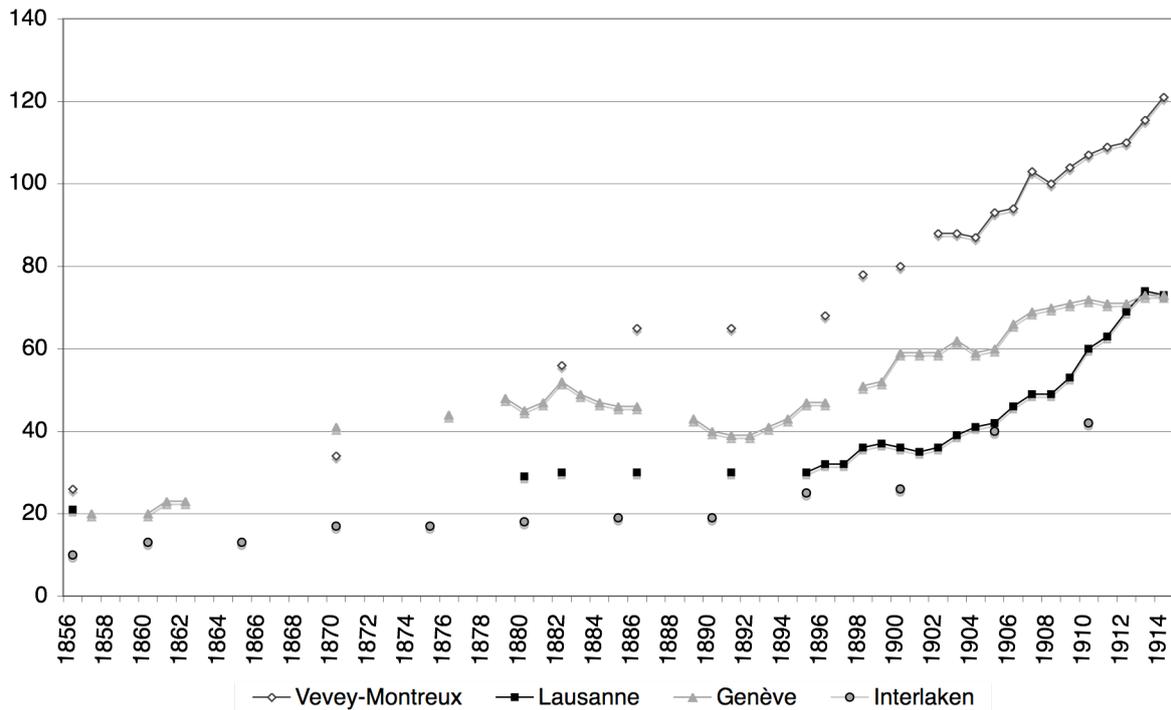
Graph 4

Evolution of the number of hotels in the tourist towns of Vevey-Montreux, Lausanne, Geneva and Interlaken

Sources :

Interlaken : EGGER Victor, *Strukturwandlungen in der Schweizer-Hotellerie*, Berne : Buchdruckerei Dr. Gustav Grunau, 1935, p. 29.

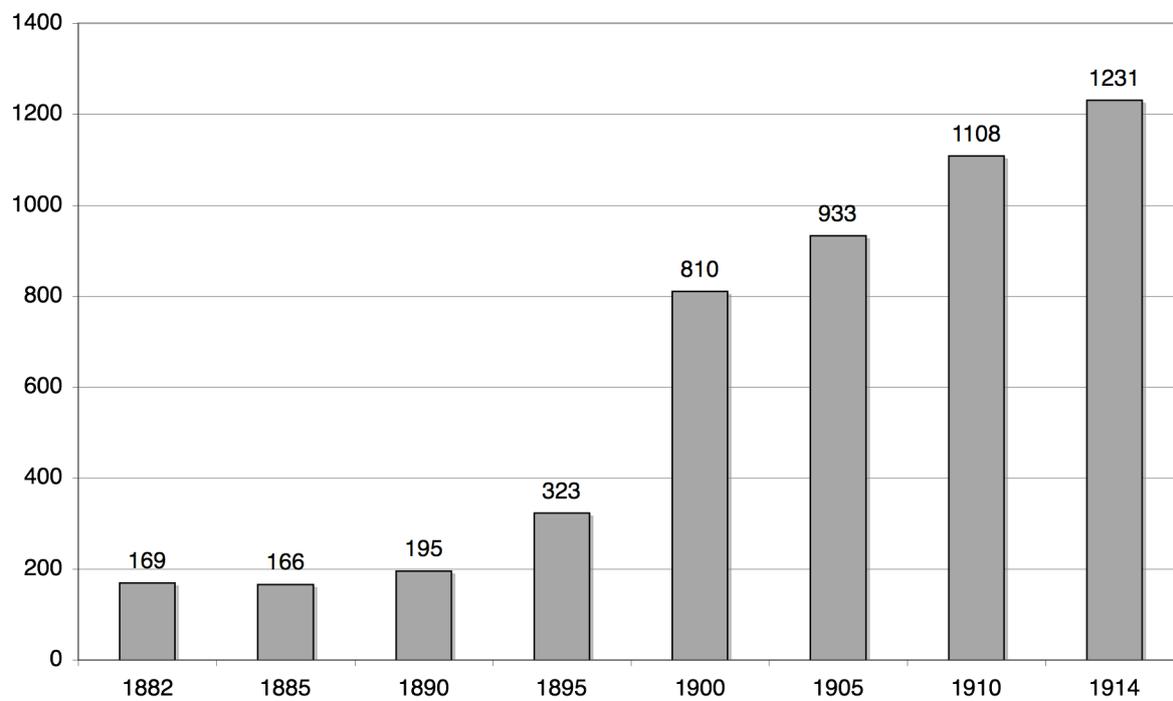
Vevey-Montreux, Lausanne, Geneva : statistics database of the research project «Système touristique et culture technique dans l'Arc lémanique : acteurs, réseaux sociaux et synergies 1852-1914»



Graph 5

Evolution of the number of members of the Société suisse des hôteliers

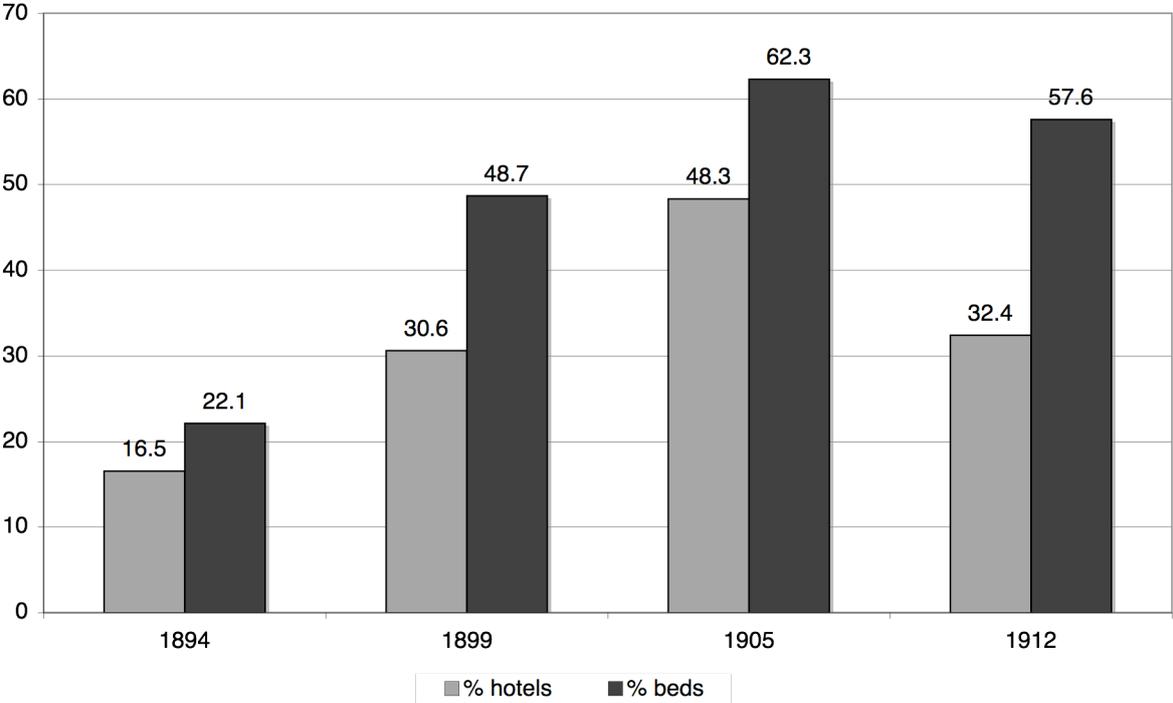
Source : SENN Henri-Georges, *La Suisse et le tourisme*, Lausanne : Payot, 1918, p. 80.



Graph 6

Evolution of the rate of representativeness of members of the Société suisse des hôteliers in percentages of the total number of hotels and beds in Switzerland

Source : SENN Henri-Georges, *La Suisse et le tourisme*, Lausanne : Payot, 1918, p. 80.



Graph 7

Average of the dividends paid by Swiss hotels quoted on the stock exchange in percentages of the share value.

Source : statistics database of the research project «Système touristique et culture technique dans l'Arc lémanique : acteurs, réseaux sociaux et synergies 1852-1914».

Methodological comment: the number of hotels taken into account varies strongly over the course of time; the reliability of the sample is limited up to 1894 (1-6 hotels), and rapidly improves up to 1913 (41 hotels).

