

How to Deal with Regional Tourism? Historical (and Interdisciplinary) Reflections

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Abstract: The paper advocates a regional perspective for a better understanding of tourism history and discusses historiographical concepts and tools of relevance for this understanding. It links the development of the tourism sector in history with regional transformation processes. The different ways in which tourism evolves in certain regional contexts can help to identify patterns and explain decisive phenomena like the sector's vulnerability. The investigation proceeds in three steps: The first explores the links between tourism, regional change and historiography on a more general level, the second discusses conceptual approaches to tourism and regional transformation based in economics and economic history, hereby dealing with cluster theories and path dependency in particular. The final chapter guides a methodological discussion taking stock of the experience provided by a research project on the Lake Geneva region.

Keywords: tourism, history, region, concepts, methodology

It is a commonplace today to say that tourism is a major economic sector. Many governments are committed to exploiting the growth potential of the tourism industry to a great extent. In most European countries and in the European Union as well, funding agencies have been created in order to promote policies and attract tourists (European Commission, 2014). Tourist development leads to economic development at a regional and national level under the condition that it complies with demands, be they environmental, cultural, patrimonial, political, etc.

From a historical perspective, it seems obvious that tourism has played an important role not only recently but since the nineteenth century, as already

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shown by several studies (see for example Maluquer de Motes, 2011; Noailles, 2009; Quériat, 2010). These studies, however, point at another face of the question. One of tourism's particularities is indeed its vulnerability to disturbances, whether they be economical, political, military, climatic or cultural. That makes tourism more precarious than any other service sector over the long term (Tissot, 2003).

However, the tools developed by economic history and other disciplines for understanding the economic importance and vulnerability of tourism are pretty scarce, especially on the regional scale, and are not well adapted to the sector's specificities. Focused on industrialization and the financial sectors, analysis frameworks and concepts do not necessarily fit tourism. Furthermore, to understand tourism as a leading sector of certain regions, it is necessary to highlight the conditions for its proper implementation: assertive state intervention, a new legal framework, active promoters' associations, highly organized marketing, solid infrastructure in terms of accommodation, interconnected transport, etc.

Consequently, as historians, we have to rethink the way tourism evolves in certain contexts, in order to see if it is appropriate to determine its specificity or non-specificity. Is it possible to imagine a new way of dealing with the regional dimension in tourism issues and of identifying new perspectives toward understanding how this dimension can sustain and boost tourism demand as well as economic development? How is the tension between vulnerability and resilience to be resolved on a short-term as well as on a long-term basis?

As a basis for this rethinking, our paper invites a discussion about the question of how to define the regionality of tourism destinations, which is a prerequisite for understanding regional transformation processes triggered by tourism in history. This investigation proceeds in three steps: The first explores the links between tourism, regional change and historiography on a more general level, tracing back the tradition of scientific understandings of tourism and regional change. The second discusses conceptual approaches to tourism and regional transformation based in economics and economic history, hereby dealing with cluster theories and questions of path dependency and vulnerability in particular. The final chapter will provide a basis for the conceptual debate, in a methodological discussion about a research project on the Lake Geneva region (Humair et al., 2014; Humair, 2011b).

1 Some Remarks about Dealing with Tourism and Regional Development in Historiography

What is a tourism region? The term is quite commonly used in different European languages (tourism region, *Tourismusregion*, *région touristique*, *regione turistica*), but not everyone who uses it or who attributes a certain destination to it could back up this attribution by a precise qualification. Scholarly contributions toward a more elaborate understanding of tourist regionality date back to the early twentieth century, however. For example, the doctoral thesis on tourism (*Fremdenverkehr*) in Tyrol by the geographer Karl Sputz, which he successfully defended at the University of Vienna in 1919, identified and evaluated factors defining the regionality of tourism destinations. While to a certain extent highlighting geographical features in a geodeterminist manner, he was also interested in a typology based on statistical data on accommodation, hereby anticipating social science perspectives of later tourism scholarship across the disciplines. In his typology of tourism destinations he first drew a debatable distinction, from the angle of recent research, between the categories of recreation areas (*Erholungsorte*), and tourism stations (*Touristenstationen*) (Sputz, 1919, p. 90). His rather complex calculation for the former counted a minimum of 50 visitors per year staying for at least two weeks each and those staying more than four weeks being on site for 1,500 days in sum, alternatively 100 persons per year staying at least two weeks each. A “tourism station” was defined by at least 500 visitors per year staying at least one to three days each. As an indicator for the impact of tourism on regional economies, Sputz suggests dividing the total duration of tourist visits by the number of permanent residents (Sputz, 1919, p. 75). Based on statistical data for the year 1910, Sputz suggests that while in Bohemia only 0.9 tourism days were recorded per permanent inhabitant, and 1.2 in Vorarlberg, the ratio in the province of Salzburg was 4.5 and in Tyrol 5.1. Similar indicators are still being applied in recent research. Werner Bätzing, a cultural geographer and renowned expert on the development of Alpine regions, uses accommodation capacity as an indicator for the importance of tourism in a region. Accordingly, in tourism destinations, i.e., settlements of high economic impact, there are more than 1.0 registered tourist beds per permanent inhabitant (Bätzing, 2015, p. 188). Bätzing uses this argument to qualify the economic impact of the tourism industry in the Alps, pointing out that only 8% of all Alpine communities match this rate.

But a quantifying approach is by far not the only way to trace regionality and regional change in tourism. The historiography of tourism also has devel-

oped or adopted perspectives based in cultural history (Berghoff & Korte, 2002; Koshar, 2002; Löfgren, 2002; Spode, 2009). Among the broad range of research topics are the production of tourism regions in tourism marketing and advertising (Vari, 2011; Syrjämaa, 2000), but also the tourism destination as a “complex landscape of invisible boundaries and silent hierarchies”, in which locals, tourists and migrant workers in the tourism industry negotiate the question “Who owns the summer?” (Löfgren, 2002, p. 142).

Environmental history has developed a growing interest in the socio-ecological dimension of tourism (Moranda, 2015), focusing for example on nature protection areas and national parks in their ambivalence between conservation concepts and regional tourism development (Gissibl, Höhler & Kupper, 2015). Technological commodification of nature for tourism purposes, as happens in ski resorts, is another topic investigated by environmental historians (Denning, 2014; Groß & Winiwarter, 2015). Not least, the angle assumed by environmental history also allows a reevaluation of the city–hinterland relationship under the auspices of the urbanite practices of mobility and leisure. The leading question then is whether “fair play” exists (and existed) between the metropolis and rural landscapes and communities-turned-tourist destinations (Klinge, 2006).

From proto-tourist travel forms, such as the early-modern Grand Tour, to recent long-distance flights, different modes of mobility have always been a core element of tourism. Respective infrastructure has connected starting points and destinations of travel, and has shaped its face. “Why”, historian Shelley Baranowski asks rhetorically, “if the desire to travel ‘elsewhere’ provides the most common motivation for tourism, should tourism history pay less attention to the means by which tourists travel to and from their destinations than to their ‘experiences’?” (Baranowski, 2007, p. 120). Infrastructure also brings the history of technology into play (König, 2000). And nearly all the mentioned aspects fit into the larger context of the new interdisciplinary studies of mobility (Urry, 2007; Sheller, 2011).

A growing number of publications advocate a combination of perspectives. This development suits a historiography of regions as has recently been promoted by the German historian Winfried Speitkamp. Historical analysis of regions, he argues, should proceed interdisciplinarily: It should apply a transnational perspective beyond mere comparison. It should be more interested in processes and dynamics than in structures and statics; and finally, it should study those processes of social negotiation, practices and actions which constitute spaces (Speitkamp, 2015, p. 85). Speitkamp’s plea promotes somewhat the opposite model to geo-determinist notions of region and regional identity and

advocates a dynamic and constructivist view, such as is conceptualized – to name but one example – by the Finnish cultural geographer Anssi Paasi. Paasi characterizes regions as “historically contingent social processes that become institutionalized as part of the wider regional transformation and which may ultimately de-institutionalize, in practice merge with other regional spaces or dissolve into smaller units” (Paasi, 2011, pp. 10–11). According to him, regions “are hence time- and space-specific in the sense that they have their beginning and end in the perpetual regional transformation. The institutionalization of each ‘concrete’ region is a manifestation of numerous institutional practices and discourses related to governance, politics, culture and economy that are constitutive of and constituted by the institutionalization of the region – this is a dialectical process”. This manifold process transgresses administrative borders, and today often is an integral part of “the global neo-liberal discursive landscape characterized by purported regional ‘competition’” (Paasi, 2011, p. 11).

The Finnish geographer Jaarko Saarinen, Paasi’s colleague at Oulu University, adopted Paasi’s constructivist notion of regionality for the definition and analysis of tourism regions (Saarinen, 2005). From this perspective “the development of tourism in certain spaces can be understood as a part of larger social and ideological processes producing both the ideas and physical characters of destinations and the practices taking place in tourism development and destinations” (Saarinen, 2005, p. 166). Accordingly, he advocates an understanding of the tourism destination that explicitly highlights the role of the historical dynamic (Saarinen, 2005, p. 165).

Two insights of importance for tourism history can be deduced from Paasi’s concept of a region and Saarinen’s concept of the tourist destination: First, any attempt to tell the story of tourism and regional change will fail without the awareness that our study regions are interwoven in complex supra-regional networks of communication, migration, flows of capital and material, and infrastructure. The necessity of a translocal perspective (Langthaler, 2013) is underscored when Peter Jordan indicates that most of the capital invested in coastal tourism in Croatia before 1918 did not come from the region but from the metropolises of the Habsburg empire, and most of the profits made their way back there (Jordan, 2014, pp. 161–162), and when he further points out that already at this time many specialists working in the tourism business did so by seasonally migrating across the Alps from one tourism destination of the Habsburg empire to another. Similarly, the European Recovery Program (‘Marshall Plan’) after World War II, channelling US investments also into the European tourism industry, thus establishing cooperation between different institutional actors across the Continent and communicating modern business and marketing prac-

tices, makes clear that a transnational approach (Zuelow, 2011, pp. 5–7) is necessary even when we write regional histories of tourism.

Second, the focus on historical dynamics, social construction and negotiation as laid out by authors such as Paasi and Saarinen is not meant to downplay the importance of material ‘reality.’ Human actors, their perceptions and practices, as well as different forms of material, capital, and infrastructure are interconnected in multiple ways and layers. One possible consequence is to adopt post-structuralist approaches like the ‘actor-network theory’ (van der Duim et al., 2012). Another is the approach quite recently advocated by the economic historian Christian Dirninger. In order to explain the present regional identities in the Salzkammergut, one of Austria’s most prominent tourism destinations, he suggests an in-depth analysis of economic discourses, which come from two temporal layers and their respective dominant economic practices: the early-modern salt-mining district and post-nineteenth-century tourism development (Dirninger, 2015).

Dirninger, an economic historian advocating a culturalist approach here, gives an idea of the conceptual toolbox necessary for a broad understanding of tourism and regional development in history. Realistically, in terms of research funding, organisation and communication, no project will integrate the full range of perspectives from social, economic and environmental history into cultural history and beyond. Nonetheless, disciplinarily organised projects with this breadth in mind and joint interdisciplinary projects are two important instruments to meet this agenda. Transformation processes in regional economies and their supra-regional contexts are core elements of the story to tell.

2 ‘Industrial District’ and ‘Path Dependency’: Two Concepts of Economic History toward Understanding European Tourism and Regional Development

By way of illustration, we shall use two concepts and examine whether they are relevant to the history of tourism and regional change. The first is usually called ‘industrial district.’ It is also known as ‘cluster.’ While the recession was hitting the world, the economic achievements of the Third Italy in the 1970s raised new questions about the flexibility of productive systems. Citing the Marshallian concept of the industrial district, elaborated at the end of the nineteenth centu-

ry, studies emphasized the importance of the geographical concentration of activities. Whereas Marshall envisioned a region where the business structure consists of small locally owned firms making investments and production decisions locally (Marshall, 1922), other economists, such as Giacomo Becattini and Sebastiano Brusco, saw in the industrial district an alternative to large-scale economies and to Taylorism and Fordism as well (Becattini, 2004; Brusco, 1990). Industrial districts have a coherent location and a narrow specialisation profile within an appropriate formal or informal institutional framework, e.g., Prato for woollen fabrics, Sassuolo for ceramic tiles or Brenta for ladies' footwear. Many other productive sectors are supposed to be interested in this process, such as agricultural equipment, food processing, information technology, medical devices, metals and metalworking, printing and publishing, professional and financial services. Besides Central and Northeastern Italy, where clusters of small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) experienced strong economic growth, similar trends could be observed in other parts of the world (Zeitlin, 2008).

At this point, three interesting characteristics can be emphasized:

- Industrial districts are symbols of the profound industrial restructuring with smaller production units and geographical reorganisation that played a decisive role after World War II.
- Industrial districts are recognizable networks of small and medium-sized companies working in the same industrial branch and manufacturing final products for the international market, not for domestic consumption.
- Based on networks of SMEs, industrial districts are one of the vital ingredients for regional development, whatever may be its implementation and framework due to local specifics.

The notion of an 'industrial district' has sparked intense debate among economists and historians. For example, Jean-Claude Daumas has fiercely criticized the concept. According to him, history has not been able to play its part fully yet, because of the shift from concept to history, which raises a number of theoretical, methodological and empirical issues. Daumas particularly points out the limits of the Italian model, the important diversity of cases, the role of external economies, etc. (Daumas, 2007).

What is striking in these discussions is the fact that the role of tourism is seldom mentioned. Working on Rimini, Patrizia Battilani and Francesca Fauri assume, however, that the regional aspects forged specific attitudes in terms of coordination among the actors and the embeddedness of activities. In this sense, as they put it, "it would be impossible to understand the development of

Rimini and the success stories of thousands of small companies without taking into consideration the literature on the networks of small and middle-sized enterprises and on industrial districts.” (Battilani & Fauri, 2009, p. 44).

Ziène Mottiar and Theresa Ryan have also shown the core role of SMEs in tourism development. Choosing the case of Killarney in Ireland, they stress the relevance of industrial district theory to tourism. The three reasons they mention are:

- Firstly, because the study unit for tourism is most often a defined geographical area, concepts that take this type of regional approach are useful.
- Secondly, relations between tourism and firms are often quite complex and so the industrial district approach, which looks at a variety of different elements in this relationship, is beneficial. In particular, from a rural or resort-tourism perspective, the idea of a social or professional milieu is relevant as a way of analysing the complex relations that exist in these tourism areas.
- Thirdly, using this theory reasserts the importance of firms in the development of a region and thus contributes significantly to a debate which has omitted this vital element.

The authors emphasize that entrepreneurs and small firms played a crucial role at each stage in the development of Killarney. They also outline the fact that the interdependence between firms is critical, in the sense that larger hotels are reliant on the survival of small firms and need their co-operation in order, for example, to attempt to extend the season. These types of relationships create a common vision and goal. Rather than just concentrating on what is good for their own particular firm, owners and managers by necessity have to think about the implications on others and how they may respond to their actions, and therefore the implications on the area as a whole (Mottiar & Ryan, 2006).

The case of Majorca also shows how, from an historical point of view, this conceptual framework provides a good opportunity to understand the specificity of tourism in the question of regional development. Exploring the key period during which hotels and travel firms built up their relations of cooperation and competition, Joan Carles Cirer-Costa explains the subsequent dynamism of the island’s tourist trade and its remarkable expansion in the second half of the twentieth century.

Entrepreneurs were very well coordinated right from the beginning and throughout the construction of the service industry of Majorca. By 1935 the Majorcan tourist sector, as Cirer-Costa (2014, pp. 1255–1256) puts it, “had adopted the form of an industrial district specifically focused on tourism, characterised by a high level of productive specialisation, a complex network of relationships

between firms and the intense flow of information.” This diffuse and complex structure allowed the district to adapt rapidly to any change in demand or in the market conditions. If a hotel received tourists via a new foreign travel agency, for example, news of the result of this commercial innovation would quickly reach the other components of the district. In addition, according to Cirer-Costa, a high level of institutionalisation reinforced the Majorcan tourism cluster (Cirer-Costa, 2014).

However, several questions remain: Why was this coordination possible? Was it only due to close integration among the political, social and economic elites? Did they have the same social and political backgrounds? These questions are at the core of the concept specifically elaborated for the manufacturing sector but have certainly been insufficiently used as far as the tourism sector is concerned. It would be interesting indeed to point out how a region can interact with its social, cultural, political and economic components leading to the growth of tourism. The success of an industrial district cannot simply be restricted to the intensity of coordination among its different components. Other aspects must be taken into account: the decision-making process, market conditions and internal competitiveness. From this perspective, the contrasting example of Canton du Valais in Switzerland can be highlighted against what has just been seen with Majorca. Delphine Guex and Géraldine Sauthier point out the divergences of trajectories over the long term, taking into consideration the case studies of Zermatt and Finhaut and adding the case of Montreux in the Canton de Vaud: Explaining why one resort succeeds and another does not in the same regional context, they show the extent to which the local characteristics and the relations with external factors, whether political, social or economic, played a role at the start of tourism in the mid-nineteenth century as well as during the different phases of success and crisis experienced in the twentieth century (Guex, 2016; Sauthier, 2016).

The second concept we would now like to focus on is path dependency. Path-dependency theory was originally developed by economists, particularly Paul David, to explain technology adoption processes and evolution in industry. These theoretical ideas have had a strong influence on evolutionary economics. As David Puffert puts it, “[P]ath dependence is the dependence of economic outcomes on the path of previous outcomes, rather than simply on current conditions. In a path-dependent process, ‘history matters’ [...]. Thus, explanations of the outcomes of path-dependent processes require looking at history, rather than simply at current conditions of technology, preferences, and other factors that determine outcomes.” (Puffert, 2008). Paul David specifies three conditions which may work together to make processes of technological change path-

dependent: the technical interrelatedness of system components, the quasi irreversibility of investment (or, more generally, switching costs), and positive externalities or increasing returns to scale. These conditions lead agents to coordinate their choice (David, 1997).

Within the field of the history of technology, path dependence has been used as a tool for understanding processes of lock-in and changing technologies. Historical paths influence and limit the scope of actors involved in emerging technologies. Good examples can be found in the history of gas engines and railway gauges (Puffert, 2008). As was the case for the industrial district, the path-dependency theory has also been subject to serious criticism (Liebowitz & Margolis, 1995).

How can this theoretical framework be adapted to the study of tourism? A very interesting example can be found in the different ways the Swiss and Austrians conceived their tourism models. Before the outbreak of World War I, the Tyrolean Alps reproduced in microcosm the development in Switzerland, which was mainly based on a growing dominance of large-scale hotels and huge investments. This was accompanied by the provision of major infrastructure to complete the resorts' recreational functions. When the war broke out and halted the flow of foreign visitors, the financial losses sustained by the Swiss hotel industry plunged it into disaster. The situation was the same in Austria. In terms of reaction, however, both countries adopted opposite measures which were reaffirmed during the crisis of the 1930s (Tissot, 1998).

In Switzerland, the measures adopted were designed to support and revive the activities according to the same pattern as before. The disruptions suffered by the hotel industry were seen as economic accidents which had to be palliated as quickly as possible. The new legal framework was based on the fact that hotels must be financially supported by state subsidies, but this was still done by means of a very liberal approach. From this perspective, financial entities – as for example the Swiss Society for Hotel Credit – were created in order to help hotels in difficulties. Although the financial resources came from the state, the decisions were taken inside the circle of these professional associations (Narindal, 2014).

In Austria, government action was part of a wider movement that attempted to come to terms with the effects of tourism on rural and Alpine communities (Sandgruber, 2003). A legal and institutional framework was created; and tourism was promoted as a new resource that would back up agriculture within the overall development plan. This ambition led to the creation of a plurality of hotel types tailored to clienteles of various sorts. The example of Zillertal is most revealing in this respect. The multiplication of rooms-to-let in private homes

was encouraged alongside conventional hotels, because this ensured the participation of the local people. The project was revived at the end of World War II with the support of the Marshall Plan and the European Recovery Program (Bischhof, 1999).

These different choices had a huge impact on the way tourism developed in both countries during the second half of the twentieth century. The nature of the Austrian accommodations, in particular of the Tyrolean ones, was better suited to middle-income or even to modest customers. The Swiss resorts, even when equipped with dense and modern infrastructure, were at first severely handicapped in their effort to adapt, due to the choices already made in the course of the nineteenth century. In this respect, diversifying the offers by the Swiss hotel business implied readjusting a commercial policy that was socially tuned towards an up-market, which was difficult to expand. In both cases, a path-dependent approach is in a position to delineate more precisely the effects of prior decisions on subsequent tourist policies. Since 1920, the paths of Austrian and Swiss tourism began to diverge and the effects were soon clearly visible. Switzerland found itself in a situation of lock-in, due to decisions taken earlier concerning 'heavy calibre' accommodation.

To conclude, the need to reassert the specificity of tourism activity in the economic process must be reaffirmed, in particular its extreme vulnerability compared to other sectors. From this perspective, the fact that today it is considered as a main driving force in our contemporary economy raises important questions. It is crucial to move beyond this paradox, if we want to address these questions. Several economic inquiries have already concluded that there is no reason why a tourism area could not be conceived as an industrial district, in order to explain its success and its strengths. Furthermore, other studies have shown that some of the factors identified in the manufacturing sector in the Third Italy were also relevant to the discussion about the development of tourism. But, at the same time, as Paul David rightly said, "history matters"; and several studies have identified the impact of prior decisions on the way tourism trajectories evolved on a long-term basis. It is clear that both on this issue and the other, extensive research still needs to be done.

3 The Analysis of a Tourism Region: A Methodological Discussion

After having focused on the historiographical and theoretical approaches above, the following section will consider the methodological dimension of regional tourism history in discussing several problems faced by scholars. Taking stock of the experiences of a research project dedicated to the Lake Geneva region – in French called *Arc lémanique*¹ –, one of the most important tourism regions in Europe during the nineteenth century (Humair et al., 2014; Humair, 2011b), the main target of this section is not to summarize the project's already published results, but to propose some new methodological tools contributing toward quantitative and comparative analyses, also regarding actors' networks. The focus will be on the construction of statistical series and biographical databases and on the results achieved by these methodological processes. These tools, manufactured during the project, have been shaped by the specificities of the local tourism – luxury tourism, high technical and capital intensity, endogenous development – and by the period concerned (1852–1914). Furthermore, the historical material used for developing these tools may well not exist or be more limited, or different in other regions. In spite of these limitations, the methodological processes presented here could be adapted to many cases, and used meaningfully in other regional studies.

3.1 Defining the Object of Analysis: Geography, Case Studies, Actors

On a national or local scale, tourism studies do not have many problems defining their analysis objects geographically. On a regional scale, however, the exercise is much more complicated. If there is a possibility to deny the complexity of the task by adopting political borders – in Switzerland *cantons*, in France *départements* or *régions*, in Germany *Länder*, in Italy *province* or *regioni* –, that way of going about it often distorts the touristic reality, which is also economic, social and cultural. Most of the time, a coherent tourist area does not tally with

¹ The research project, named “Tourist system and technical culture in the ‘Arc lémanique’: actors, social networks and synergies (1852–1914)” was supported by the Swiss National Science Foundation for three-and-a-half years and employed a team of three researchers; for more information, see <http://p3.snf.ch/Default.aspx?action=research> (accessed 2016/04/29).

political entities. Either it is smaller, or it is bigger, crossing provincial or national borders. The Lake Geneva region found coherence in a quite homogeneous tourist offering – centred on the lake and its mild climate, the proximity of high mountains and the transit to the Simplon Pass; however, it crosses three Swiss cantons (Vaud, Geneva, Valais) and Savoy, which was at first Sardinian, then (from 1860) French. It was possible to observe that the political framework strongly influenced the developmental pace of the different tourism poles of the region (Geneva, Lausanne, Vevey-Montreux, and Evian). Neglected by the Sardinian authorities, Evian was dampened by a deficit in transport facilities until 1882. What about ignoring the non-Swiss part of the Lake Geneva region in our research? It would have caused serious distortions in the analysis of the tourism offerings, in terms of concurrence and complementarity between the different tourism poles. For example, the weakness of spa tourism along the Swiss shore was a close consequence of Evian's specialisation in this offer. Geographically, a second important question arose: What distance away from the lakeside should be taken into account? Should a distant excursion site or accommodation structure be included in the analysis? This question had to be answered case by case. An important criterion was the existence of an efficient means of transport for making the connection. Another was the role of these peripheral tourist spots in the hotel and entertainment offers of the region. For example, the extraordinary touristic development of Montreux, which was much more dynamic than the Genevan one during the Belle Epoque, could not have been interpreted correctly without an analysis of the introduction of winter sports in the mountains near this resort.

Once the geographical area of the tourism region has been defined, other problems have to be solved, which are related to the relations between the whole and the parts. Most of the time, the region is too big to be fully analysed in every detail. To investigate each small village and reconstruct the total tourism offer would take too much time. Consequently, identifying the most important tourism poles is an essential methodological step. Furthermore, it is necessary not only to consider the region as a whole, which would be a theoretical and misleading unity, but also to underline the diversity of the offer and the differences between the trajectories of the tourism poles, related to their different characteristics. The choice of case studies must thus be done in such a way that not only the main part of the tourism activity be included, but also its complexity underlined (Zanini, 2012, pp. 7–13). In the case of the Lake Geneva region, we decided to limit the full investigation to the four main poles: Geneva, Lausanne, Vevey-Montreux and Evian. In doing so, it was possible to account for 80% of the accommodations on offer while showing strong differences in the

developmental trajectories of these poles during the analysed period (1852–1914).

The third step in defining the object is to decide what individual and collective actors are to be included in the analysis. For this, it can be very useful to consider tourism as a socio-technical system (Hughes, 1998; Tissot, 1998 and 2004; Humair et al., 2014, pp. 13–14). To be efficient and competitive in proposing the three basic services necessary for tourism (mobility, housing, entertainment), the tourism promoters have to coordinate a great number of other important actors (tourist agencies, advertising agents, capitalists, politicians, etc.). But things must also be mobilized (food, drinks, furniture, building materials, sports articles, etc.) and infrastructure built (transportation, energy and water utilities, communications, sporting and cultural equipment, etc.) if not already available. Competent traders, industrial companies, craftsmen, artists and so on need to be found. Practically, however, research cannot grasp all the actors necessary for a success story, and consequently the concept of a tourist system has to be adapted to each case, using two main criteria: the characteristics of the regional tourism being analysed and the questions being researched. Our case study centres on the role of the features on offer in a successful luxury tourism region. Thus we decided to focus on three main collective actors of the system: transport companies, hotel companies, hotelkeepers and tourism development societies. Considering that a high technical level is one of the most decisive criteria in the competition between regional tourism actors, we broadened our research to incorporate relations with technical actors (engineering companies, architects and engineers offices and societies, technical schools).

3.2 Capturing and Analysing the Social Networks of Tourism Actors

The success of a tourism region highly depends on its capability to mobilize the different skills and goods necessary for an efficient tourist system and to adapt itself continually and quickly to new concurrent configurations. Depending on the region and the period, the needs are very different, and so also the actors involved. In our case study, the question of how bankers (investments), technicians (technical skills), doctors (medical know-how) and politicians (infrastructure) are integrated in the tourism sector was very relevant for understanding why the region was successful over the long term. However, capturing these relations is a difficult methodological challenge. The use of databases is an

efficient means to meet it. (Humair et al., 2014, pp. 51–53)² In the Lake Geneva case, it was possible to compile a first database from commercial registers, business directories and annual reports of companies and societies, containing information about the main collective actors: transport companies (72), hotel companies (51), hotelkeepers and tourism development societies (29). Then, one data sheet was created in another database (1,325 individual actors) for each individual actor involved in these collective enterprises and completed with biographical information collected from different sources of information. Thus it was possible to demonstrate that very strong ties were entertained by tourist collective actors with bankers – they occupied 27% of the seats on the boards of hotel companies and 21% on the boards of tourist transport companies, as well as 11% of the seats on the committees in tourism development societies – likewise with architects and engineers (11%, 16% and 14%, resp.) and politicians (6% of the 1,325 actors holding office professionally and 18% not professionally). Another interesting result was the composition of the boards of hotel companies: only 19% of the seats were occupied by hotelkeepers, but 27% by financiers, 14% by lawyers, 9% by traders and 4% by doctors.

The databases offered answers to other interesting research questions as well. As some historians have pointed out, the ways and effects of tourism development are different, depending on whether the actors and resources are endogenous or exogenous (Battilani, 2003; Humair et al., 2014, pp. 374–376). If tourist actors are from the region, or if they have strong relations with the local economic fabric, the probability that they will mobilize resources inside is greater, and so the spin-off effects on agriculture, industry, banking, commerce and other services are greater, too. Furthermore, in crisis situations, the will-power and capacities to find solutions toward continuing the tourist activities are generally stronger. In the Lake Geneva region, it was possible to reveal a large proportion of endogenous investors. Among the 139 financiers identified in the sample of 1,325 individual actors, only 6% were Swiss established outside of the region and 14% were strangers, mostly Parisians present on the boards of big railway companies. Private bankers from Vevey and Lausanne were strongly involved and benefitted highly from tourism development. The databases also gave some information about the relations between the different poles of the tourist region. It was possible to identify the participation of individual actors in tourist companies of other poles and to highlight two main axes of collaboration between Geneva and Evian, respectively Lausanne and Montreux. However, the degree of integration in that tourism region stayed quite weak until the end of

² For another use of a database in regional tourism history, see Battilani & Fauri, 2009.

the nineteenth century. Finally, the databases gave an interesting overview of the implication of regional actors in tourism development on other Swiss regions (Chablais, Valais, Oberland). Capital, skills and know-how were also exported, mostly in France (Chamonix, Riviera, Paris), but also in Italy, Spain and other countries.

3.3 Quantitative Approaches: Inputs and Difficulties

Quantitative approaches are essential for understanding a tourism region. They are needed to apprehend the diachronic evolution of demand and supply, to measure the degree of the tourism activity, and last but not least, to understand the spin-off effects of tourism on other regional activities. However, researchers who want to use the statistical dimension face several methodological difficulties (Walton, 2014; Crabeck, 2013). Furthermore, very slight interest in tourism has developed among economic historians (Cavalcanti, 2003), with the consequence that methodological considerations on quantitative approaches have been scarce (Tissot, 2003) along with relevant case studies (Vecchiarelli, 2003).

The main methodological problem of an economic approach is how to capture the real importance of the sector in a quantitative way. Firstly, tourism is a service industry straddling several economic branches (transport, accommodation, catering, and entertainment). In each branch, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to isolate the share of jobs and added value attributable to tourism. Secondly, a large part of tourist activity does not appear in the statistics; several working modalities are not seized. This is particularly true of the nineteenth century, because seasonal work and occupational pluralism were very current. Thirdly, statistics on tourism appeared late and were underdeveloped. In the case of Switzerland, national statistics ignored that economic sector until 1934. The situation was not much better at the regional level. It was rare that official statistics gave information about tourism before the twentieth century. Furthermore, statistics at our disposal are difficult to use: They rarely suit the geographical definition adopted by researchers. Fourthly, the collection methods often changed, which further complicates any analysis over the long term. All these problems resulted in a systematic underestimation of tourism effects, which is now well documented for the Swiss case (Püntener, 1994; Humair, 2011a, pp. 44–54). Thus researchers working on tourism regions are often confronted by a difficult choice: either to neglect the quantitative dimension or to reconstruct statistics using primary sources. Why should they proceed with this long and arduous task? What are the inputs provided by statistical approaches? For the Lake Geneva case, a reconstruction of the statistics brought results of

high heuristic value. The visualization of an evolution on a graph permitted the confirmation of some research hypothesis, the highlighting of a new problematic issue and the questioning of historiographical myths. Obviously, this process of reconstruction had to overcome several difficulties. For example, counting the hotels was complicated by very heterogeneous categories in our sources (travel guides, commercial directories), which furthermore changed during the period. Sometimes, we had very limited samples for building indices. Consequently, it was necessary to be conscious of the relative accuracy rate of the reconstructed series.

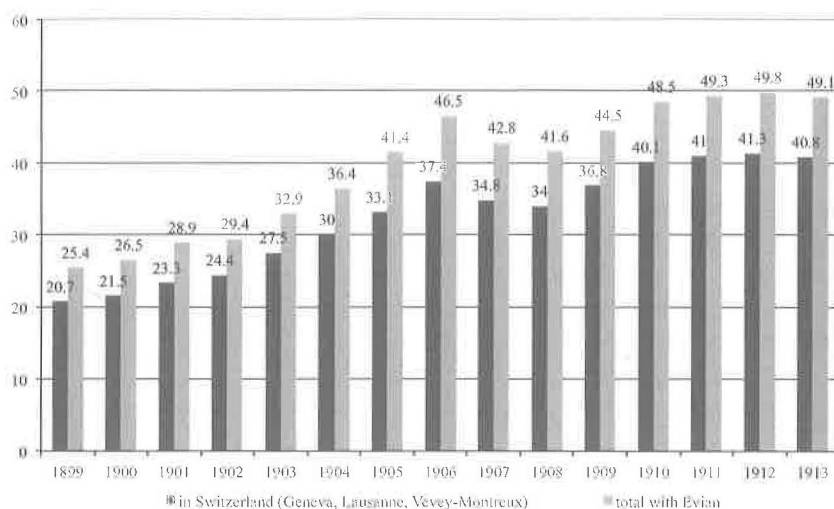


Fig. 1: Purchasing power imported by tourists in Geneva, Lausanne, Vevey-Montreux and Evian (millions of Swiss francs), source: Humair et al., 2014, p. 343.

One of the main achievements of the project was an evaluation of the role of tourism development in the growth of the region by a reconstruction of two indicators: the purchasing power imported by tourists and the hotel sector's investments (Humair et al., 2014, pp. 341–357). In 1913, the consumption by tourists in the three main centres of Geneva, Lausanne and Vevey-Montreux amounted to more than 40 million Swiss francs (figure 1).³ What did this mean?

³ Methodological procedure: the first step was to calculate the number of nights spent in the region (Humair et al., 2014, pp. 19–20); the second step was to multiply this figure by the mon-

Whereas the population of the three cities then totalled 148,000 inhabitants, the money spent by tourists was equivalent to the annual salary of 18,315 typographers. Thus, it was possible to prove that the consumption power injected into the regional economy was huge, even if a part of it was re-exported for supplies to the region and for advertising. It was also possible to assess the investments in the hotel industry. Figure 2 shows the evolution of the capital stock in the four main touristic poles of the region.⁴ Between 1900 and 1913, on average, around 7.6 million Swiss francs were invested every year throughout the region. What did this mean? Correlated with the national GDP, this amount is nowadays equivalent to 1.6 billion Swiss francs. This sum does not take into account the investments in tourist transportation, entertainment, infrastructure or urbanistic works.

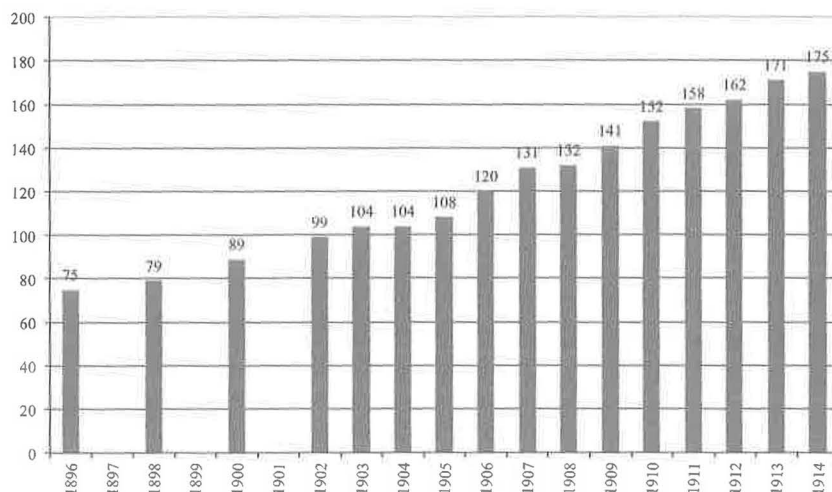


Fig. 2: Capital stock invested in the hotel sector in Geneva, Lausanne, Vevey-Montreux and Evian (millions of Swiss francs), source: Humair et al., 2014, p. 356.

ey spent per day per tourist. In 1912, a tourist spent around 21 Swiss francs per day (62% on hotels, 4% on transportation, 29% on shopping and entertainment and 5% on tips). (Gölden, 1939, p. 226)

4 Methodological procedure: the first step was to reconstruct the hotel fabric from primary sources. (Humair et al., 2014, pp. 24–28) The second step was to calculate the average number of beds per hotel. This was possible on the basis of a guide book (*Les Hôtels de la Suisse*) which presented a large number of hotels in the region. The number of beds was then multiplied by a per-bed investment calculated by the Swiss society of hoteliers. (Zentralbureau 1915, tableau 20)

3.4 Comparative Approaches

In analysing regional evolutions and problems, researchers are systematically confronted with an important question: What proportion of these processes are specificities of the case study investigated or results of larger evolutions? For example, how does one know if tourism-sector crises were also effective in other tourism regions and if so, how intensely? The mobilization of comparative approaches is required to provide answers with some accuracy to this kind of question.

The first and most classical way to proceed is by the ‘warm approach’. On the basis of other case studies, it is possible to define one or more points of comparison and thereby to better understand the specificities of the investigated area. This way of working has obvious limitations: Rarely have research questions of a project been investigated by other scholars working on comparable tourism regions. One way to manage this problem is to provoke comparisons by organizing a conference on a limited set of problematics. In the case of the Lake Geneva region, an international conference permitted interesting comparisons to be obtained along three main axes: tourism and socio-economic impacts – especially about relations between tourism and industry –; tourism and technical modernization; tourism and socio-cultural impacts (Gigase et al., 2014).

Another way to proceed is called the ‘cold approach’. Existing statistical series sometimes allow the development of interesting comparative approaches. But most of the time, researchers do not find appropriate figures and then have to reconstruct series. Thus, it was possible to understand some specificities of the Geneva Lake region from producing and comparing series with other tourism regions in Switzerland. An index called “tourist mobility” was established for analysing convergence and divergence of the overall economic trends, based on the number of passengers of companies most sensitive to the economic situation of tourism in each region.⁵ An interesting discovery was the importance of tunnel building at Gothard (1882) and Simplon (1906), two Alpine railway tunnels, which created strong divergences between the economic situations in Swiss tourism regions. While the first attracted tourist traffic in the centre of

⁵ Methodological procedure: the choice of the most significant transport companies was made on the basis of an analysis of the ratio: tourists/total passengers of railway companies (Senn, 1918, pp. 158–174). Most of the statistical series concerning the selected companies (Humair et al., 2014, pp. 19, 23) were found in a railway statistics yearbook (*Statistique des chemins de fer suisses 1874–1915*) and completed with annual reports issued by those companies.

Switzerland, the second put the Geneva Lake region along the shortest route between London and Milan (Humair et al., 2014, pp. 19–24).

Two other statistical series were built to compare the profitability of hotel companies quoted at the stock exchange.⁶ The first, based on dividend distributions, highlighted that between 1890 and 1913, on average, the yield for invested capital was more than 6%: much more than the 4% from state bonds and around two points over the average dividends of hotel companies in other Swiss regions. This higher profitability was confirmed by the second indicator created, that is to say, the stock quotation index (100 = emission value); on average, the companies in the Lake Geneva region were quoted between 120 and 160 during the same period, and other Swiss companies between 90 and 120 (Humair et al., 2014, pp. 359–364). Thus, from the comparative approach there arose a new research question – how to explain these regional differences? Perhaps an incentive for a new research project...

4 Conclusion

Nineteenth- and twentieth-century tourism has played a decisive role in the development of many European regions. Particularly where tourism has become a leading sector in regional economies, it triggered social, cultural and environmental change in many ways. This fact implies a variety of questions: Have the ties binding regions and tourism together been dangerous or precarious, or have they rather been beneficial and modernizing? In what ways did earlier decisions determine later developmental processes? What about the vulnerability of a sector highly interrelated with economic cycles, political crisis, military conflicts and cultural change? What were the spin-off effects of the tourism industry for regional economies beyond tourism – and how does one draw the line in-between? How did tourism help to establish, enforce or weaken the functional integration of regions into supra-regional networks of communication, infrastructure, migration, and the flows of capital and material? – These questions delineate a highly relevant research topic and lead to an obvious need for a historical long-term perspective in tourism research.

⁶ Methodological procedure: the information concerning dividends and stock exchange quotations were found in company annual reports and different publications on the stock exchanges of Lausanne and Geneva. (Humair et al., 2014, p. 360)

Among the scholarly disciplines, however, historians seem to have been more hesitant than, for example, geographers in acknowledging the relevance of tourism as a research topic and the importance of an elaborate understanding of the respective regional transformation processes. Nonetheless, recent discussions in tourism history can take stock of some hundred years of research in the humanities and social sciences dealing with the field or derive valuable concepts applicable to tourism from the work in other fields. Evaluating the different approaches developed so far, one may criticize that some of them do not adequately take into account the complexity of tourism in its multiple spatial, economic, social, political, cultural and environmental dimensions. More often the dynamic character of the relations between tourism and regional developments – not to forget the dynamic character of regions in general – remain blurry, as do questions of the vulnerability and resilience of the tourism economy. A conventional ‘internal’, regional-history perspective runs the risk of not coming to terms with the multiple links between investigated regions and the world outside.

All the points raised prove the necessity to reflect on an appropriate conceptual basis and about an analytical toolbox for historical research on tourism and regional change. First and foremost, there is the need for a definition of tourism regions that includes several criteria – quantitative and qualitative, geographical, but also political, social and cultural criteria – and that integrates a diachronic dimension. This is by no means mere scholarly sophistry. It is a precondition for the ability to delimit the study object and to identify individual and institutional actors in their respective social networks. Nor is it a simple task, as, for example, the question of how to deal with political borderlines dividing up a tourism destination, as in the Lake Geneva region, proves.

This article highlights the relevance of approaches based in economics and economic history. The notion of tourism regions as economic clusters, based on concepts like the Marshallian industrial district, helps to identify and understand the interaction between different actors (persons, institutions, companies of different size and legal status), their co-ordination, communication, and competition (internal and external). It also helps to grasp regional decision-making processes. Path dependency, a second concept based in economics, highlights the long-term legacy of past decisions (introduction of technologies, investments, etc.) for later individual and collective actors under changing framing conditions. Two differently structured accommodation economies – in Switzerland with its dominant large-scale high-standard hotel business, and in Austria with its socially broader, more heterogeneous accommodation industry,

both originating from the nineteenth century – served as an example in this paper.

The last section reflects on the research of a regional case study exploring the nineteenth and early-twentieth-century success story of the Lake Geneva region. The findings of this research project are published elsewhere in detail. For our present paper it has been of interest to take stock of the team's practical experience. The practical work of the project could thus be considered on a meta level, shedding light on the application of certain analytical tools; on the definition of the study object; on the choice to be made about which historical actors to research and which to exclude; and finally, on the analysis of their social networks. Quantifying approaches, while being problematic in terms of the availability of suitable historical records, have proven to have considerable explanatory power and to be highly productive. The same is true of comparative approaches, which are indispensable for an understanding of the peculiarities and similarities in regional developments.

As we hope may have been proven in this discussion of both theoretical concepts and the practical methodology, tourism and regional change in history, as a highly complex research topic, requires a multi-faceted research perspective. Within disciplinarily organised research projects, this broad understanding should be a guiding principle for each scholar active in the field. Within the context of interdisciplinarily organised research, this makes obvious the necessity and potential of cooperation within interdisciplinary teams – even though optimizing the relationship between interdisciplinary research in practice and conventional funding schemes still remains a long journey.

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