

# Grasping and understanding the actors of a regional tourism system: the inputs of the Biolemans biographical database (Lake Geneva region, 1852-1914)

Cédric Humair & Jan Chiarelli

To cite this article: Cédric Humair & Jan Chiarelli (2023): Grasping and understanding the actors of a regional tourism system: the inputs of the Biolemans biographical database (Lake Geneva region, 1852-1914), Journal of Tourism History, DOI: [10.1080/1755182X.2023.2197440](https://doi.org/10.1080/1755182X.2023.2197440)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1755182X.2023.2197440>



© 2023 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 18 Apr 2023.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

# Grasping and understanding the actors of a regional tourism system: the inputs of the Biolemano biographical database (Lake Geneva region, 1852-1914)

Cédric Humair and Jan Chiarelli

Departement of History, Université de Lausanne, Lausanne, Switzerland

## ABSTRACT

This article highlights the contributions of a biographical database called 'Biolemano', which contains information on 1761 tourism players in the Franco-Swiss region of Lake Geneva between 1852 and 1914. The result of more than ten years of research conducted at the University of Lausanne (Switzerland), this digital tool offers innovative research perspectives in the history of tourism by making it possible to grasp the complexity of a regional tourism system in its entirety. The analysis focuses on the collective and individual actors of the three main components of the tourism offer, namely accommodation, transport and entertainment. It reveals the importance of protagonists who have remained in the shadows until now, such as bankers, traders, lawyers and engineers. Another objective is to initiate a more global reflection on the functioning of a regional tourism system by questioning the endogenous or exogenous dominance of the development model. In the end, the study allows us to understand some reasons for the success of regional tourism, which flourished in an impressive way during the Belle Epoque.

## ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 1 June 2022  
Accepted 27 March 2023

## KEYWORDS

Switzerland; nineteenth-century; regional tourism; tourism actors; biographical data base

## 1 Introduction

The Franco-Swiss area of the Lake Geneva region is one of the European regions where tourism activity was established on a large scale at an early stage and in the most intensive manner. The development of the four major centres of Geneva, Lausanne, Vevey-Montreux and Evian-les-Bains, which began in the eighteenth century, accelerated during the second half of the nineteenth century, before reaching its full flourishing during the Belle Epoque. This trajectory makes it an ideal case study for those who want to understand the ingredients necessary for a touristic success story in a specific region. From this point of view, historiography has emphasised the many geographical advantages that attracted tourists, mainly foreigners until the First World War. Situated on the Simplon route linking northern Europe to Italy, the region initially benefited from transit tourism, before exploiting its natural capital – lake, mountains, springs –

**CONTACT** Jan Chiarelli  jan.chiarelli@unil.ch

© 2023 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group  
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

to establish itself in the segments of romantic, health, sports, educational and holiday tourism.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, historians have not shed enough light on a second dimension of the success story, which is just as decisive, and which concerns the implementation of an attractive offer in the fields of mobility, accommodation and entertainment. The drivers of tourism development, the actors of the offer – hotel companies, transport companies, professional associations, development societies (the forerunners of the tourist offices) – have not been deeply and globally analysed so far. This is the ambition of this article.

International studies have developed different types of approach as regards the players of the touristic offer. The most classical are biography and prosopography, hoteliers occupying a prominent place in these categories.<sup>2</sup> The monograph devoted to a company, a branch of activity or an association with a touristic vocation is another fairly widespread genre.<sup>3</sup> In vogue since the 1980s, studies devoted to the development of local and regional tourism have also allowed significant progress in the understanding of the actors of the offer, without however addressing their global apprehension.<sup>4</sup> Most of them focus on a few individual or collective actors, according to the historical perspective adopted. Furthermore, the analysis of the collective actors studied is often incomplete, not examining their social composition and governance. It is also rare that the relations entertained by the different actors in a touristic space are discussed, transport, the hotel industry and entertainment being dealt with in a compartmentalised manner. A fourth approach is used, which focuses on the conflicts caused by the implementation of tourism in certain areas.<sup>5</sup> From this point of view, the analytical framework of the

<sup>1</sup>Mavis Coulson, *Southwards to Geneva. 200 Years of English Travellers* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1988); Michael Heafford, 'Between Grand Tour and Tourism: British travellers to Switzerland in a period of transition, 1814-1860', *The Journal of Transport History* 27, no. 1 (2006), 25–47; Revue historique vaudoise, special issue, *Histoire du tourisme en pays vaudois* 114 (2006); Françoise Breuilleaud-Sottas, *La prodigieuse ascension des eaux d'Evian (1790-1914)* (Lille: Atelier national de reproduction des thèses, 2003).

<sup>2</sup>Richard W. Butler and Roslyn A. Russell, *Giants of Tourism* (Wallingford: CAB International, 2010); Romano Cuonz and Christof Hirtler, *Hotelkönig – Franz Josef Bucher, Bergbahnpionier – Josef Durrer* (Kriens: Brunner Verlag, 2015); Marianne Fischbacher, *So ging man eben ins Hotel: Domleschger Hotelangestellte im Engadin der Zwischenkriegszeit* (Chur: Bündner Monatsblatt, 1991); Delphine Moraldo, *L'esprit de l'alpinisme. Une sociologie de l'excellence, du XIXe siècle au début du XXIe siècle* (Lyon: ENS Éditions, 2021).

<sup>3</sup>Piers Brendon, *Thomas Cook. 150 years of popular tourism*, (London: Secker & Warburg, 1991); Alexandre Tessier, *Le Grand Hôtel: l'invention du luxe hôtelier, 1862–1972* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2012); Marie-Suzanne Vergeade, 'Chemin de fer et tourisme: le cas exemplaire de la Compagnie du P.L.M. pendant l'entre-deux-guerres', *Revue d'histoire des chemins de fer*, no. 3 (1992), 259–73; Rafael Vallejo Pousada and Carlos Larrinaga, 'Travel agencies in Spain during the first third of the 20th century. A tourism business in the making', *Business History* 64, no. 1 (2020), 98–117; Entreprises et histoire, special issue, *Tourisme* 47, no. 2 (June 2007); Virginie Jourdain, 'L'hôtellerie bruxelloise 1880-1940. Acteurs, structures et logiques spatiales d'un secteur multiforme' (PhD diss., Université libre de Bruxelles and Université de Neuchâtel, 2011-2012), the thesis can be downloaded at: <https://doc.rero.ch/record/29555/files/00002262.pdf>; Gordon Pirie, 'Automobile organizations driving tourism in pre-independence Africa', *Journal of Tourism History* 5, no. 1 (2013), 73–91.

<sup>4</sup>John K. Walton, *The English Seaside Resort: A Social History, 1750–1914* (Leicester and New York: Leicester University Press & St Martin's Press, 1983); Paul Huber, *Luzern wird Fremdenstadt. Veränderungen der städtischen Wirtschaftsstruktur 1850–1914* (Luzern: Keller & Co, 1986); John V. N. Soane, *Fashionable Resort Regions: Their Evolution and Transformation with Particular Reference to Bournemouth, Nice, Los Angeles and Wiesbaden* (Wallingford: CAB International, 1993); Andrea Zanini, *Un secolo di turismo in Liguria. Dinamica, percorsi, attori* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2012); Carlos Larrinaga, *Balnearios guipuzcoanos, 1776-1901. Turismo de salud e inversion de capital en aguas minerales* (Donostia-San Sebastian: Real Sociedad Bascongada de los Amigos del País-Comisión de Gipuzkoa, 2014); Katharina Scharf, *Alpen zwischen Erschliessung und Naturschutz. Tourismus in Salzburg und Savoyen 1860–1914* (Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 2021); Steve Hagimont, *Pyrénées – Une histoire environnementale du tourisme (France-Espagne. XVIIIe-XXIe siècle)* (Ceyzérieu: Champ Vallon, 2022).

<sup>5</sup>Johan Vincent, *L'intrusion balnéaire. Les populations littorales bretonnes et vendéennes face au tourisme (1800-1945)* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2007); Bertrand Larique, 'Les sports d'hiver en France: un développement conflictuel. Histoire d'une innovation touristique (1890-1940)', *Flux* 63-64, no. 1 (2006), 7–19.

actor-network developed by the sociologists of science Bruno Latour and Michel Callon has not yet aroused much interest in the history of tourism. On the other hand, an interpretive model developed by Wolfgang König, inspired by the history of technology, has been used to understand the controversies between the promoters of touristic infrastructures and the defenders of nature and the landscape.<sup>6</sup> Finally, it should be noted that there is a great lack of theoretical and methodological reflections on the question of the actors of the touristic offer.<sup>7</sup>

The approach underpinning this contribution differs in several respects from what has been done to date, in terms of objectives, theoretical framework and method. It is the continuation of a project devoted to the tourism offer in the Lake Geneva region, which was launched in 2009 and whose synthesis was published in 2014.<sup>8</sup> Since then, the research has been pursued with the ambition of grasping the individual and collective players of regional tourism in their globality. The theoretical framework used is based on the concept of socio-technical system, which was first developed in the history of technology and adapted to the history of tourism by Laurent Tissot.<sup>9</sup> It consists of considering this service activity as a complex combination of actors and artefacts whose objective is to satisfy the needs of the clientele, particularly in the domains of mobility, accommodation and entertainment. For a tourism system to work, many dimensions have to be mastered: financing, legal procedures, technical modernisation, marketing, political support, etc. All this requires a wide range of skills as well as capital. Hoteliers, transport operators and entertainment providers must therefore be seen as essential cogs in the machinery, but in order to function, it also needs financiers, political intermediaries, lawyers, engineers and architects, as well as artists, journalists, publicists and printers. A tourism system is thus composed of a multiplicity of individual and collective actors who form complex social networks.

How can this nebula be grasped and understood? Among the methodological arsenal mobilised, the research team has given a prominent place to computing tools. The Biolemano biographical database was created in 2009 as part of the research project ‘Tourism system and technical culture in the Lake Geneva region: actors, social networks and synergies (1852-1914)’, funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation. Its name was inspired by the French denomination of the region under study, l’*“Arc lémanique”*. Between 2009 and 2012, the research team composed of Cédric Humair, Marc Gigase, Julie Lapointe Guigoz and Stefano Sulmoni developed a first version of the database which included 1325 people, of whom only 138 had been the subject of in-depth biographical research. Between 2014 and 2016, Biolemano entered a second phase of development. With the help of more limited logistical and financial resources provided by the

<sup>6</sup>Wolfgang König, ‘Railways on Swiss Mountains: a Demonstration of an Agency-Structure-Concept of Technological Development’, in *Technological Trajectories, Markets, Institutions. Industrialized Countries, 19th-20th Centuries*, eds. Laurent Tissot and Béatrice Veyrassat (Bern: Peter Lang, 2001), 103–16; Wolfgang König, *Bahnen und Berge. Verkehrstechnik, Tourismus und Naturschutz in den Schweizer Alpen 1870–1939* (Frankfurt; New York: Campus Verlag, 2000).

<sup>7</sup>The following contribution is an exception to our observation : Laurent Tissot, ‘Storia del turismo e storia economica: considerazioni metodologiche ed epistemologiche’, in *Turismo e sviluppo in area alpina. Secoli XVIII-XX*, eds. Andrea Leonardi and Hans Heiss (Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 2003), 23–41.

<sup>8</sup>Cédric Humair, Marc Gigase, Julie Lapointe Guigoz, Stefano Sulmoni, *Système touristique et culture technique dans l’Arc lémanique: analyse d’une success story et de ses effets sur l’économie régionale (1852-1914)* (Neuchâtel: Alphil, 2014).

<sup>9</sup>Laurent Tissot, ‘A travers les Alpes, le Montreux-Oberland Bernois ou la construction d’un système touristique, 1900-1970’, *Histoire des Alpes* 9 (2004), 227–44; Laurent Tissot, ‘Le tourisme en Suisse ou l’avènement d’un modèle d’excellence (19e-20e siècles)’, *Le Globe* 144 (2004), 103–21.

Faculty of Arts of the University of Lausanne, a second research team composed of Cédric Humair, Jan Chiarelli and Gilles Bourquin completed the first sample of 1325 people and included 436 new actors. Between 2016 and 2021, a third development phase was carried out by the authors of this article. On the one hand, data verification and cleaning work was performed. On the other hand, extensive digital work was needed to make Biolemano compatible with online use. In addition to the creation of drop-down menus and the improvement of search masks, it was necessary to collaborate with the University of Lausanne's computing centre in order to resolve purely technical issues related to the online version.

Biolemano can now be consulted online.<sup>10</sup> It contains information about 1761 people involved in the Lake Geneva tourism system between 1852 and 1914. For each of them, a five-page card provides information on family ties, training pathway, professional and political activities, sociability, etc. A first category of actors exerted their chief professional activity in a tourist enterprise (transport, hotel business, entertainment), most often occupying a prominent position. A second category of actors carried out a secondary activity in tourism, either by being a director of a transport or hotel company, or by sitting in the governing instances of a tourism-related society. The collective actors taken into account in the research cover a wide range: 75 hotel companies, 70 railway and lake navigation companies, 15 entertainment companies, 11 hotelier's associations and 10 development societies.<sup>11</sup>

The process of identifying the actors recorded in Biolemano required the mobilisation of a large corpus of sources. In addition to the available company archives and the annual reports of the boards of directors, sometimes published, documents produced by the regional courts – foundation acts of the companies – made it possible to complete the list of the directors of the tourist companies in position before 1883. After this date, which marked the establishment of a nationwide commercial register, the *Feuille officielle suisse du commerce* (Swiss Official Gazette of Commerce) allowed a more efficient search.<sup>12</sup> The identification of small hoteliers was more difficult and required the use of local and regional directories as well as the *Revue suisse des hôtels* (Swiss Hotel Review).<sup>13</sup> In a second phase, each identified actor was the subject of a search for information in biographical dictionaries, genealogical works and sites, obituaries published in the digitised press as well as the civil registers of the canton of Geneva, available online.<sup>14</sup> For well-known people, a number of family collections and biographical files compiled by archival institutions were also consulted. Finally, systematic recourse to the *Feuille officielle suisse du commerce* made it possible to reconstruct the professional career of many of the actors.

---

<sup>10</sup>The biographical database is available at <https://unil.ch/hist/Biolemano>; the version used in this article is that of 21 March 2022; note that the operators of the database, Cédric Humair and Jan Chiarelli, continue to develop its content; some methodological considerations concerning the database can be found in Cédric Humair, Martin Knoll and Laurent Tissot, 'How to deal with Regional Tourism? Historical (and Interdisciplinary) Reflections', *Zeitschrift für Tourismus-Wissenschaft* 9, no. 1 (2017), 5–31.

<sup>11</sup>Details of the collective actors considered throughout the analysis can be found in a pdf document available at <https://unil.ch/hist/Biolemano>.

<sup>12</sup>The *Feuille officielle suisse du commerce* is available at <https://www.e-periodica.ch>.

<sup>13</sup>The *Revue suisse des hôtels* is available at <https://www.e-periodica.ch>.

<sup>14</sup>The database Adhémar is available at <https://ge.ch/archives/effectuer-recherches/base-de-donnees>.

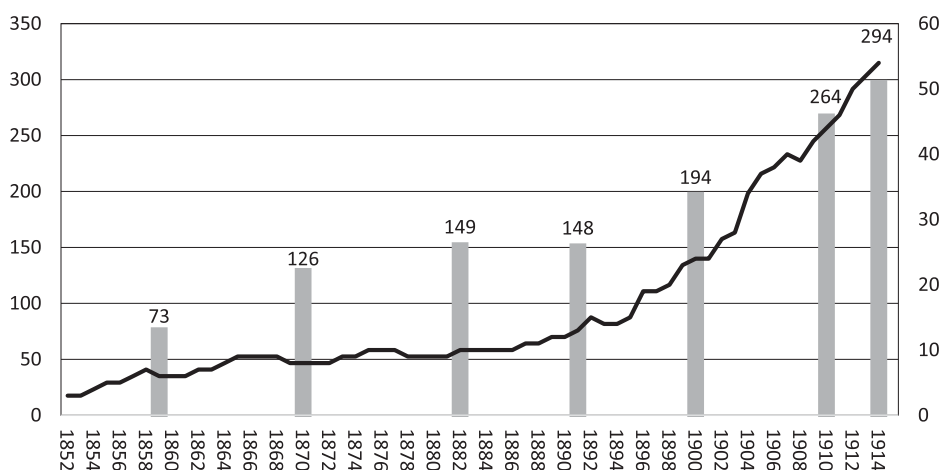
The objective of this contribution is to harness the analytical potential of Biolemanò with three heuristic aims. The first is to approach a regional tourism system as a whole in order to show its complexity and to underline the diversity of the actors involved. The second is to reveal the importance of certain categories of actors that have been neglected by research until now – bankers, merchants, industrialists, engineers, lawyers, etc. – by tracing their presence within the collective actors of tourism. The third is to initiate a consideration of the functioning of the tourism system by addressing the question of the character of the regional development model as endogenous or exogenous. The limits of the exercise must be underlined from the outset. A major problem is the absence of a diachronic dimension in the database, which agglomerates information collected over the entire period from 1852 to 1914. This tool therefore does not allow for the capture of changes in the configuration of the tourism system over time. As the density of the information collected is much higher from 1890 onwards, the picture that emerges from the analysis rather reflects the touristic offer and its actors in the Belle Epoque. A second problem is linked to the limits of the available resources, which forced us to make research choices. On the fringes of the tourism system of the time, certain collective actors such as travel agencies, road transport companies, educational institutes for young foreigners, medical enterprises and various providers of entertainment – sports clubs, museums, theatres – have not been the subject of in-depth research. Furthermore, the actors of the touristic offer located outside the four main regional centres – Geneva, Lausanne, Vevey-Montreux and Evian-les-Bains – were not systematically taken into account. Finally, we should point out the low presence of actors who are nevertheless essential to the functioning of the tourism system, namely the workers and employees working in the companies.

The part II of our article will be devoted to individual and collective actors in the accommodation sector. The focus will be on the social mobility of hoteliers and the socio-professional composition of the boards of hotel companies. The part III will focus on transport actors by highlighting the core role played by engineers and lawyers in their governance. The analysis of the directors of companies specialising in touristic mobility will reveal the synergies in action with hotel development. The part IV will be devoted to the main players in entertainment, namely development societies. It will highlight the diversity and the strong politicisation of the actors involved in their governance. The part V will look at the exogenous actors in order to measure their contribution in terms of professional skills, financing and corporate governance. Finally, the part VI will consider the research prospects opened up by the formidable analytical potential of Biolemanò.

## **II Hoteliers, hotel companies and hoteliers' associations: a socially heterogeneous and mobile, but well organised, cluster at the core of the touristic offer**

Accommodation actors have already received a fair amount of attention in international historiography. The case of Italy has been particularly well studied, combining biographical, sectoral and associative approaches.<sup>15</sup> As far as the Lake Geneva region is concerned,

<sup>15</sup>Andrea Zanini, 'Un pioniere dell'alta hôtellerie: Lorenzo Bertolini (1832-1905)', *Atti della Accademia Ligure di scienze e lettere* 8, no. 2 (2020), 253–72; Ewa Kawamura, 'Alberghi e albergatori svizzeri in Italia tra Ottocento e Novecento',



**Figure 1.** Number of hotels and hotel companies in the Lake Geneva region (1852-1914); left scale and columns: number of hotels in Geneva, Lausanne, Vevey-Montreux and Evian; right scale and curve: number of hotel companies.

several contributions also deal with these actors, although most of them are commemorative publications.<sup>16</sup>

The supply of accommodation in the Lake Geneva region evolved considerably during the second half of the nineteenth century, both in terms of quantity and quality.<sup>17</sup> Based on a statistical reconstruction carried out using local directories, Figure 1 shows the extent of hotel development in the four main touristic centres of the region. Between 1859 and 1914, the number of establishments in Geneva, Lausanne, Vevey-Montreux and Evian-les-Bains grew from 73 to 294, a fourfold increase. To this must be added the accommodation capacity scattered throughout the rest of the region, which corresponds to about 25% of these figures. In terms of quality, the inauguration of the Hôtel des Bergues in Geneva in 1834 initiated the era of grand hotels, which proliferated during the 1850s to 1880s. These luxury establishments coexisted with a wide variety of 2nd and 3rd category hotels as well as hotel-pensions, most of which were run by independent operators. From the 1880s onwards, the requirements of the clientele led to a very strong pressure for technical modernisation, which resulted in a rush for luxury and innovation.<sup>18</sup> In 1902, the first palace in the region was inaugurated in Caux, above Montreux. This evolution was closely linked to the multiplication of limited companies active in the hotel industry, which can

*Storia del turismo. Annale* 2003, no. 4 (2004), 11–21; *Storia del turismo. Annale, special issue, Le imprese*, no. 8 (2011); Marco Teodori and Andrea Zanini, 'Les organisations patronales dans le secteur touristique: le cas de l'industrie hôtelière italienne (1899-1946)', in *Genèse des organisations patronales en Europe (19e-20e siècles)*, eds. Danièle Fraboulet and Pierre Vernus (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2012), 279–89; Francesco Dal Negro, *Hotel des Alpes. Storia di alberghi ed albergatori dalla Savoia al Tirolo. Historische Gastlichkeit von Savoyen bis Tirol* (Baden: hier + jetzt, 2007).

<sup>16</sup>See for example Nadja Maillard, ed, *Beau-Rivage Palace. 150 Years of History* (Lausanne: Infolio, 2008).

<sup>17</sup>Roland Flückiger-Seiler, 'Le développement de la construction hôtelière sur l'arc lémanique', *Revue Historique du Mandement de Bex* 33 (2000), 3–14; Laurent Tissot, 'L'hôtellerie de luxe à Genève (1830-2000). De ses espaces à ses usages', *Entreprises et histoire* 46, no. 1 (April 2007), 17–34.

<sup>18</sup>Cédric Humair, 'Tourism and Technology Transfer: Beau-Rivage Palace and the Challenges of Technical Progress 1861-1914', in *Beau-Rivage Palace. 150 Years of History*, ed. Maillard, 82–100.

also be seen in [Figure 1](#). The capital required for the transformation of old establishments or the construction of new ones exceeded the capacities of individuals or families.<sup>19</sup> Between 1852 and 1914, the number of hotel companies rose from 3 to 54, an even more rapid increase than the number of hotels. While the region had one limited company for every 12 hotels in 1859, it had one for every 5 hotels in 1914. As a result, the number of hotel managers increased and the managing director made his appearance.

The Bioleman database includes two main categories of accommodation actors: those who carried out their professional activity in the hotel industry and those who were directors of a hotel company. Of the 443 people who practiced at least one hotel activity in the Lake Geneva region, 223 were in salaried employment, 84 were independent operators and 297 acquired the status of hotel owners.<sup>20</sup> Analysis of this sample reveals a high degree of social mobility.<sup>21</sup> In fact, 15% of the managers first worked as employees, 32% of the independent operators became hotel owners, as did 49% of the managers. Thus, at least 13 people went from being employees to managers and then to hotel owners. Bernard Bisinger was an emblematic example of this social mobility. After having been employed five times in St-Maurice, Basel, Zurich, Geneva and Lausanne, he became manager of the Hôtel de l'Avenue in Lausanne, then owner of the Hôtel Jura-Pension-Simplon, and finally managing director of the limited company that bought the hotel. We should also emphasise the role played by women in the Lake Geneva hotel industry.<sup>22</sup> Virtually absent from other professional spheres, 42 women, or 10% of the sample, were active in the sector. While they represented only 3% of managers, their proportion reached 10% among owners and even 15% among independent operators. In 1898, Pauline Barrière, a single woman aged 34, became co-owner of the Grand-Villa Pension with Cécile Martin, born Cheseaux. In 1905, the two partners left this facility to become co-owners of the Windsor Hotel-Pension. From 1907 onwards, Pauline Barrière also managed the Montana Hotel-Pension and became a director of several real estate companies in the 1920s. In 1932, her professional stature even enabled her to join the committee of the Société des hôteliers de Lausanne-Ouchy.

The second category of actors is made up of 443 people who held 575 directorships between 1852 and 1914 in 75 hotel companies in the Lake Geneva region.<sup>23</sup> [Figure 2](#) provides a quantitative measure of the role played by the different socio-professional spheres within the boards of directors.<sup>24</sup> The first observation is that hotel professionals occupied

<sup>19</sup>Julie Lapointe, 'Les sociétés anonymes à vocation hôtelière de l'Arc lémanique (1826-1914)', in *Le client de l'architecture. Du notable à la société immobilière : les mutations du maître de l'ouvrage en Suisse au XIXe siècle*, ed. Dave Lüthi (Lausanne: Études de Lettres, 2010), 211–20.

<sup>20</sup>The 223 salaried jobs were distributed as follows: 46 employees, 168 managers and 9 managing directors; in most cases, the independent operator formed a sole proprietorship for the purpose of running a rented establishment; however, it is possible that some operators listed in the database were in fact owners of the operated hotels.

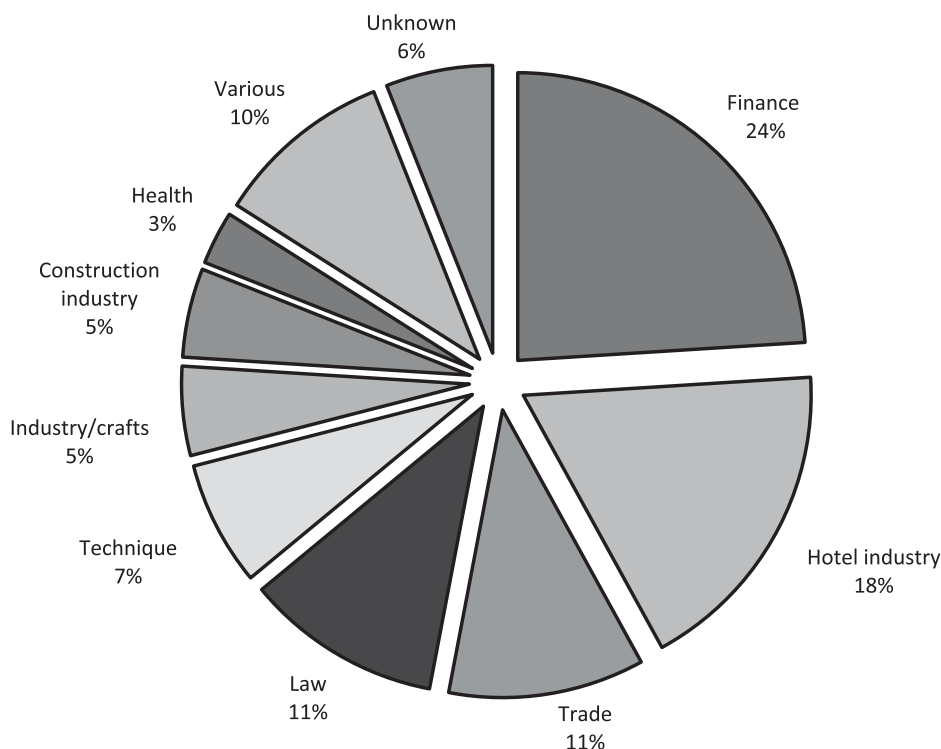
<sup>21</sup>As it has not always been possible to reconstruct the career paths of the actors in their entirety, it is likely that the various figures measuring social mobility are largely underestimated.

<sup>22</sup>Laurent Tissot, 'Hôtels, pensions, pensionnats et cliniques: fondements pour une histoire de l'industrie des étrangers à Lausanne, 1850-1920', in *Le passé du présent. Mélanges offerts à André Lasserre*, eds. Brigitte Studer and Laurent Tissot (Lausanne: Payot, 1999), 69–88.

<sup>23</sup>The list of 75 companies includes limited companies created with the aim of operating one or more hotels, real estate companies operating one or more hotels, such as the Société immobilière d'Ouchy, and spa companies operating one or more hotels, such as the Société anonyme des eaux minérales d'Évian. It does not include railway companies, as they played only a marginal role in the construction and management of hotels in the Lake Geneva region, which was not the case in other touristic regions.

<sup>24</sup>Only the socio-professional spheres exceeding 3% are displayed; the 'miscellaneous' category includes the spheres of administration 2%, education 2%, transport 2%, agriculture 2% and politics 1%, as well as the spheres of infrastructure,





**Figure 2.** Distribution by socio-professional activity of the directorships held in the 75 hotel companies in the Lake Geneva region (1852-1914) (sample: 443 persons holding 575 directorships).

only 18% of the 575 seats. On the other hand, the categories of actors most concerned by the financing of companies took the lion's share, with 24% for finance, 11% for trade and 5% for industry, totaling 40% of the seats. It is also worth noting the large share of categories of actors likely to provide useful skills to hotel companies, such as law with 11% (lawyers and notaries), technology with 7% (engineers and architects), construction with 5% (contractors) or health (doctors and pharmacists) with 3%. Finally, we can observe the low presence of transport professionals, who represented less than 2% of the mandates. If we consider the 70 board-presidents in the sample who held 79 chairmanships, the influence of funders was even stronger: finance (29%), commerce (8%) and industry (6%) together accounted for 43% of the mandates. There was also a strong concentration of power in the hands of lawyers and notaries, who occupied 20% of the presidencies. What was the involvement of the 443 hotel directors in the transport and entertainment sectors? It can be described as very significant, since 94 of them (21%) held 195 directorships in transport companies in the Lake Geneva region and 69 of them (16%) held governing positions in a development society. A certain density of personal links thus existed between the different types of actors of the touristic offer, which tended to facilitate their collaboration.

---

fine arts, diplomacy, media and religion, which all account for less than 1% of the mandates. The 'unknown' category is made up of administrators whose profession could not be identified, some of whom were annuitants or retirees.

Within the hotel industry itself, a certain cohesion was provided by the professional associations of hoteliers. Operating at different geographical levels, these associations endeavoured to organise the sector with a twofold aim: to improve the hotel offer and its profitability, on the one hand, and to gain political influence and orient the intervention of public authorities, on the other. In Switzerland, the emergence of these associations was linked to the difficulties caused by the Great Depression between 1875 and 1885.<sup>25</sup> Founded in 1882, the Société suisse des hôteliers was the umbrella organisation for the industry at a national level. Three decades later, it accounted for 45% of the hotel beds in Switzerland.<sup>26</sup> With this high level of unionisation, the society tried, with relative success, to regulate hotel rates in order to avoid ruinous competition. Until 1914, however, it was the local and regional associations that played a leading role in the cartellisation of the industry.

The research identified 11 professional associations of hoteliers active in the Lake Geneva region between 1852 and 1914. Already existing in Montreux and Geneva in 1879, they appeared later in Lausanne (1894), Vevey (1905) and Evian-les-Bains (1912). The analysis of these collective actors is made difficult by their high initial volatility – the Montreux association changed its organisation and name four times between 1879 and 1891 –, very limited access to their archives and the absence of annual reports. Biolemano nevertheless contains a sample of 74 people who held governing positions in a hoteliers' association between 1852 and 1914. The case of the Société des hôteliers de Montreux et environs, whose committee members have been exhaustively identified – 17 people between 1891 and 1914 – allows us to observe the strong domination of the big hoteliers on these professional organisations. Indeed, it is two leading figures in the industry, Antoine Monney (1891-1893) and Alexandre Emery (1893-1925), who held the presidency, while the fifteen other heads were nine hotel owners, four directors of large hotels, one independent operator and one editor in chief of the local newspaper. This same predominance was present in the committee of the Syndicat des hôteliers de Genève; of the 14 people identified, 7 were hotel owners, 5 were directors of large hotels and only 2 were independent operators.

The capacity of these societies to operate and their effectiveness depended to a large extent on the rate of unionisation of the hoteliers – members were owners, independent operators or directors. In Montreux, in 1903, the association had 117 members, of whom 72 were hoteliers in Montreux, 34 in the surrounding area and 11 were former hoteliers.<sup>27</sup> And according to hotel statistics reconstructed from local directories, there were 68 hotels in operation in Montreux at the same time, to which should be added a certain number of small pensions.<sup>28</sup> The rate of unionisation was therefore

<sup>25</sup>Cédric Humair, 'The Long Depression and its Impact on Swiss Tourism: from Manchester Liberalism to the Beginnings of "Organised Capitalism" (1873-1913)', in *Tourism and Crisis in Europe XIX – XXI centuries. Historical, National, Business History Perspectives*, ed. Margarita Dritsas (Athens: Kerkyra Publications-economia Publishing, 2014), 60–84.

<sup>26</sup>Cédric Humair and Mathieu Narindal, 'Les organisations patronales suisses de l'hôtellerie et la cartellisation du marché: des premières initiatives locales à l'instauration d'un système national en collaboration avec l'Etat (1879-1939)', in *Réguler l'économie. L'apport des organisations patronales. Europe, XIXe-XXe siècles*, eds. Danielle Fraboulet, Michel Margairaz and Pierre Vernus (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2016), 95–112.

<sup>27</sup>*Journal et liste des étrangers*, February 26, 1903, 3–5.

<sup>28</sup>This figure is validated by a book which lists 70 hotels in 1900: Jean-Louis Mettler, *Montreux: 100 ans d'hôtellerie* (Montreux: Corbaz SA, 1979), 25.

exceptionally high. It is also worth noting the desire to include hoteliers from the surrounding touristic regions for the sake of efficiency. They were even granted representation on the committee: while Eugène Michel operated in the neighbouring town of Vevey, Auguste Petter and Charles Genillard were hoteliers in Villars-sur-Ollon, a high-altitude resort in the Alps of the canton Vaud.

At the level of the Lake Geneva region, the organisation of the hotel industry cannot be quantified in a global and precise manner. However, the membership of the region's hoteliers in the Société suisse des hôteliers provides a valuable benchmark. Published since 1891, the *Revue suisse des hôtels* has allowed us to count 208 members among the 443 hoteliers in the sample, which represents a unionisation rate of 47%. In fact, the actual unionisation rate was significantly higher, as a significant number of hoteliers exclusively worked before 1891. In addition, a certain number of hoteliers probably joined local organisations without becoming members of the Société suisse des hôteliers. It can therefore be said that the hoteliers' associations organised the profession effectively, giving it a significant political weight when dealing with public authorities.

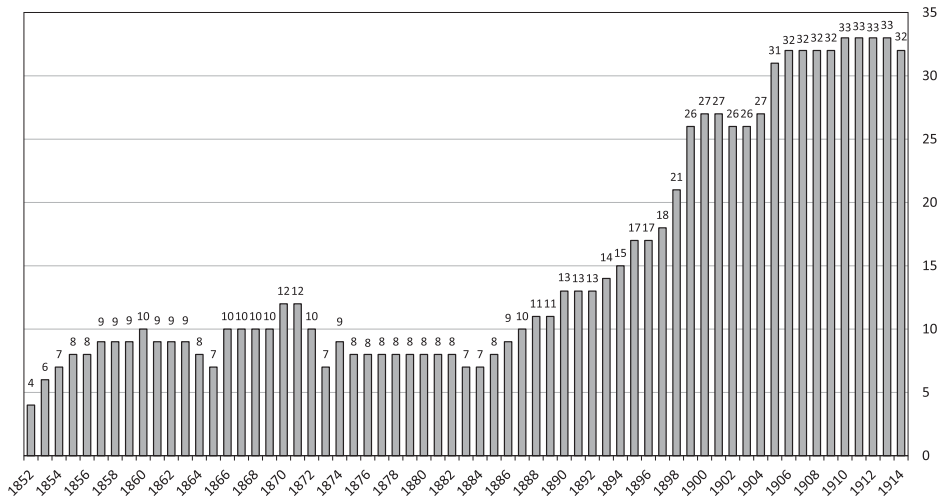
### III Railway and lake navigation companies: heavyweight capitalists in synergy with hotel development

The fundamental role played by the transport offer and its actors in the development of tourism has already been the focus of much attention in international historiography, generating numerous case studies and also theoretical reflections.<sup>29</sup> It is clear that the quality of this service did not only impact on the accessibility of the region and therefore on the intensity of the flow of tourists, but also on the efficiency of the local mobility necessary for the comfort of the stay and the quality of the entertainment offer. Another point is that innovative technologies exerted a strong fascination on customers, becoming tourist attractions and advertising arguments. In return, the development of tourism was stimulating the modernisation of infrastructures and vehicles allowing mobility.<sup>30</sup> In the case of the Lake Geneva region, this synergy between tourism and transport has been the focus of in-depth analysis.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup>John Armstrong and David M. Williams, 'The steamboat and popular tourism', *The Journal of Transport History* 26, no. 1 (2005), 61–77; John K. Walton, 'Railways & resort development in Victorian England: the case of Silloth', *Northern History* 15, no. 1 (1979), 191–209; Christophe Bouneau, 'La Compagnie des chemins de fer du Midi, acteur du développement régional du grand Sud-Ouest 1852-1938. Histoire ferroviaire et histoire économique', *Culture technique* 19 (1989), 159–69; Stefano Sulmoni, 'Système de transport et développement touristique. Le cas de la ville de Lugano et ses alentours pendant la Belle Epoque, 1880-1920', in *Histoire des transports*, eds. Hans-Ulrich Schiedt et al. (Zurich: Chronos Verlag, 2010), 435–47; Jean-Christophe Gay and Véronique Mondou, *Tourisme et transport. Deux siècles d'interactions* (Paris: Bréal, 2018); Laurent Tissot, 'Développement des transports et tourisme: quelles relations?', *Revue suisse d'histoire* 56, vol. 1 (2006), 31–7; Catherine Bertho Lavenir, 'Développement des transports et transformations du tourisme. Du bateau à vapeur à l'automobile: évolution d'un "système socio-technique" (XIXe-XXe siècles)', *Traverse. Revue d'histoire* 15, no. 1 (2008), 79–93.

<sup>30</sup>Stefano Sulmoni, 'Tourisme et innovation technique: l'exemple de la Compagnie générale de navigation sur le lac Léman (1873-1914)', in *Le tourisme suisse et son rayonnement international (XIXe – XXe siècles)*, eds. Cédric Humair and Laurent Tissot (Lausanne: Antipodes, 2011), 135–51; Marc Gigase, 'La première crémaillère électrique d'Europe au Salève: entre innovation technique et expansion touristique (1890-1914)', in *Le tourisme suisse et son rayonnement international*, eds. Humair and Tissot, 193–212.

<sup>31</sup>Marc Gigase, 'Le développement du rail et la construction du système touristique dans l'Arc lémanique (1852-1914)' (PhD diss., University of Lausanne, 2014); the PhD dissertation can be downloaded at this adress: [https://serval.unil.ch/resource/serval:BIB\\_D6BC13E72EB6.P001/REF](https://serval.unil.ch/resource/serval:BIB_D6BC13E72EB6.P001/REF).



**Figure 3.** Evolution of the number of railway and lake navigation companies in the Lake Geneva region (1852-1914).

In the course of the nineteenth century, the Lake Geneva transport system experienced a profound transformation. Initially, horse-drawn road transport provided by the public postal companies formed the backbone of the mobility system, supplemented by a nebula of small independent companies working on the roads and on the lake. The motorisation of transport radically transformed this service activity by requiring significant capital. This resulted in the creation of limited companies, the number of which is displayed in Figure 3. Introduced in 1823 on Lake Geneva, the steamboat played a key role in intra-regional mobility.<sup>32</sup> For a long time, three large companies shared the main part of the market, before merging in 1873 into the *Compagnie générale de navigation sur le lac Léman*. Launched in 1852, the construction of standard gauge railways was the prerogative of a few highly capitalised companies which merged in 1881 to form the *Compagnie des chemins de fer de la Suisse occidentale et du Simplon*. It was only after 1885 that the number of railway companies increased dramatically, with a corresponding upsurge in intra-regional traffic. The development of new traction techniques was the trigger for this railway fever. While the funicular and the rack railway enabled the mountains to be colonised by tourism, electric traction made it possible to build narrow-gauge railways on the roads, both in the towns and on the periphery of the region.<sup>33</sup> In 1914, the Lake Geneva region was home to 32 transport companies, 28 more than in 1852. The 31 railway companies operated some 480 kilometers of lines, a network that was exceptionally dense compared to other Swiss regions.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup>Marc Gigase, 'Navigation à vapeur et essor touristique au XIXe siècle dans l'arc lémanique', *Revue historique vaudoise* 114 (2006), 149–61.

<sup>33</sup>Laurent Tissot, 'La quête du haut. Les lignes ferroviaires touristiques dans le canton de Vaud jusqu'à la Seconde Guerre mondiale', *Revue historique vaudoise* 114 (2006), 95–112; David Asséo, 'Transports en commun et nouvelles technologies: le cas de Genève au 19<sup>e</sup> siècle', *Revue suisse d'histoire* 40, no. 2 (1990), 185–206.

<sup>34</sup>The mileage of the Lake Geneva network is taken from Gigase, 'Le développement du rail', 125.

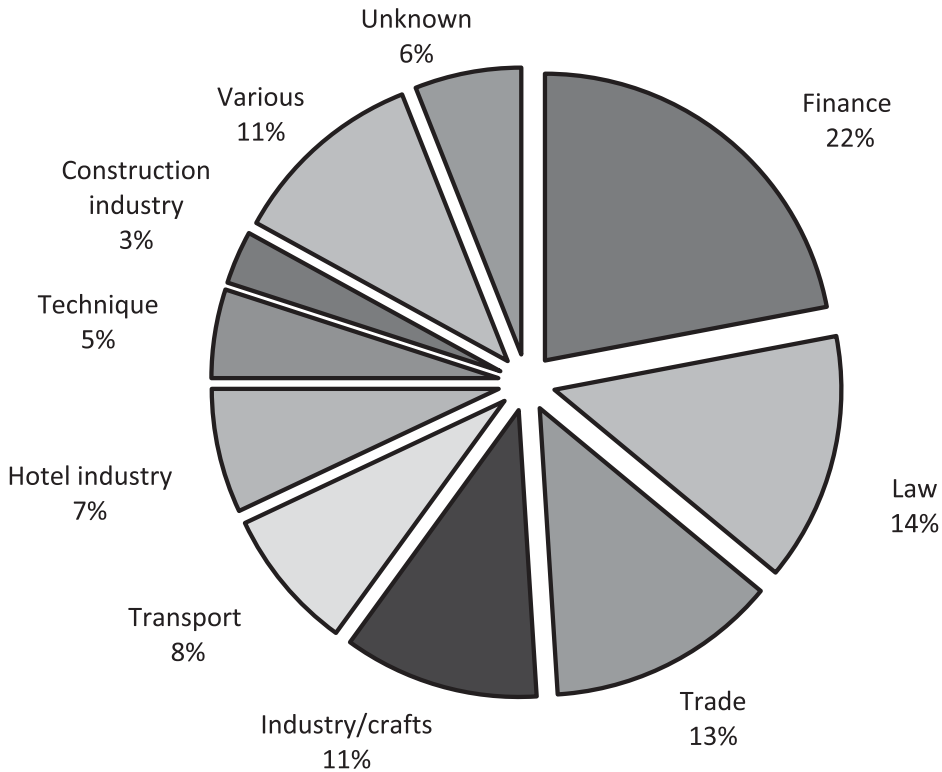
The Biolemano database takes into account the 75 railway and lake navigation companies operating in the Lake Geneva region during the period 1852-1914.<sup>35</sup> As in the case of hotel companies, two types of individual actors are considered. On the one hand, are those who exercised their main profession in the sector, and on the other hand those who were involved in the governance of the companies by being members of the board of directors. The first category is constituted by 171 people who worked in a transport company – employees, executives, managers – and by 9 independent transport operators. In order to better understand the governance of companies, a sample of 56 managers active in the Lake Geneva region during the period 1852–1914 has been analysed. The socio-professional composition of the sample reveals an overwhelming dominance of actors from the technical sphere, and more particularly of trained engineers. The latter, who number 32, represented 57% of the sample. Lawyers also played a very important role, occupying 14% of the managerial positions. It is worth noting here the strong involvement of company managers in the Swiss political system: 22 of them, i.e. 39% of the sample, held 58 political mandates, whether at municipal, cantonal or national level. This privileged relationship with the public authorities can be explained by the influence the latter exercised in various ways on the profitability of the companies: content of the concessions, public financial support, laws on expropriation and civil liability, etc. It should be noted that some of the managers were true political heavyweights. Twelve of them held at least three mandates, with Paul Cérésole holding the top spot with six mandates. This lawyer, who became the manager of the *Compagnie du chemin de fer du Simplon*, was involved in the legislative and executive branches of all three levels of Swiss politics.

Although the 75 companies taken into account in Biolemano were all involved in tourism by improving the mobility of travelers to and within the region, the majority of them may not be considered as having a primarily touristic vocation. Their creation indeed responded to much broader economic issues of a commercial, industrial and financial nature. Moreover, they only generated a modest proportion of their turnover from tourism. In order to refine the analysis, a selection of 33 tourism-oriented companies has therefore been made, including 17 navigation companies, 9 funiculars, 4 narrow-gauge railways and 3 rack railways. The sample of directors of these companies includes 256 people who held 313 mandates and 41 presidencies in the Lake Geneva region between 1852 and 1914. As in the case of the hotel industry, notables from finance (22%), commerce (13%) and industry (11%) were prominent with 46% of the seats and 41% of the presidencies (Figure 4). The categories of actors likely to provide useful skills to transport companies – law (14%), transport (8%), technique (5%), construction (3%) – were also well represented with 30%. Of particular note was the overrepresentation of lawyers and notaries at the head of companies, with 29% of chairmanships. This dominant position contrasts with the low representation of hoteliers, who occupied only 7% of directors' seats and 5% of presidencies.

A closer analysis of the sample, however, puts this observation into a different perspective by revealing strong synergies between tourism-oriented transport companies and hotel development. Of the nine people with at least three directorships in that kind of companies,

---

<sup>35</sup>These were 17 navigation companies, 57 railway companies – of which 15 were standard gauge, 30 narrow gauge, 9 funiculars and 3 rack railways – and 1 company operating a lift open to the public. In addition, Biolemano takes into account a few road transport companies, although this activity has not been systematically investigated.



**Figure 4.** Distribution by socio-professional activity of the directorships held in the 33 tourism-oriented transport companies of the Lake Geneva region (1852-1914) (sample: 256 persons holding 313 directorships).

seven also had interests in the hotel industry, either as hotel owners or as director of a big hotel company.<sup>36</sup> In several of these cases, investment strategies combining transport and hotels were evident. In this respect, the examples of Ami Chessex and Alexandre Emery are particularly instructive. Both hoteliers in Montreux, they played a key role in the development of a railway network in the heights of the town, by directing several mountain railways, before participating in the development of the hotel industry in the resorts of Caux and Les Avants. They successively chaired the Société immobilière de Caux, which built a palace and inaugurated it in 1902. From 1910, the latter also chaired the Société du Grand Hôtel des Avants. With the aim of stimulating winter sports and thus making the invested capital profitable, several directors of this company founded and managed the funicular between Les Avants and the Sonloup Pass.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup>They were the Montreux hoteliers Ami Chessex (6 mandates in tourism-oriented companies) and Alexandre Emery (4), the Lausanne bankers Alphonse Vallotton (3) and Charles Masson (3), the Lausanne industrialist Fernand de Loys de Chandieu (3) and the two Montreux wine merchants Georges Masson (4) and Louis Mayor-Vautier (3); the Lausanne lawyer Auguste Dupraz (4) and the Geneva engineer Eugène de Morsier (3), on the other hand, had no known interests in the hotel business.

<sup>37</sup>Nicolas Viredaz, *Le Centenaire du funiculaire Les Avants-Sonloup. Un chemin de fer pionnier suisse des sports d'hiver 1910-2010* (Montreux: Archives de Montreux, 2009).

#### IV The development societies: interprofessional alliances to serve entertainment and advertising

The importance of the entertainment offer in the functioning of a tourism system has not received much attention in the historiography of tourism development.<sup>38</sup> Certainly, some specific fields have been investigated in greater depth. This is particularly true of the relationship between sport and tourism.<sup>39</sup> However, there is a lack of global reflection that would allow us to grasp a field of very diversified social practices, which differ strongly from one touristic region to another and which involve a large variety of actors. The inputs of entertainment to the success of a region are nevertheless considerable. First of all, the tourist's choice of destination is often influenced by travel guides, which list the attractions and activities offered by each touristic site. Secondly, the quality of the stay and the satisfaction of the tourists depend on the enjoyment of experiences that provide knowledge, sensations and emotions. The challenge is not only to gain their loyalty and make them come back, but also to extend their stay. In the nineteenth century, many travelers adapted the time they spent in a place to the entertainment possibilities offered to them. Thirdly, more entertainment can help to extend the tourist season and thus improve the profitability of the accommodation and transport infrastructures. The introduction of winter sports in Switzerland at the end of the nineteenth century was a very significant example in this regard.

As with accommodation and transport, the range of entertainment on offer changed rapidly during the nineteenth century, adapting to the advent of the leisure society.<sup>40</sup> At first, tourists were satisfied with walks and excursions to contemplate nature and the vestiges of the past. The role of the touristic industry was limited to the construction of certain infrastructures, such as promenades, botanical gardens, quays and belvederes to enjoy the view of the lake and the Alps.<sup>41</sup> Soon, the contemplation of nature was complemented by cultural activities and mundane pleasures, which were offered by the grand hotels, local cultural societies and the casino, also called the foreigners' circle or kursaal.<sup>42</sup> This emblematic place of entertainment for tourists sometimes proposed gambling, which generated controversy.<sup>43</sup> Casinos appeared in Geneva and Lausanne in 1825,

<sup>38</sup>Andreas Bürgi, *Urwelten und Irrwege. Eine Geschichte des Luzerner Gletschergartens und der Gründerfamilie Amrein, 1873–2018* (Zürich: Chronos, 2018); Andreas Bürgi, *Eine touristische Bilderfabrik. Kommerz, Vergnügen und Belehrung am Luzerner Löwenplatz, 1850–1914* (Zürich: Chronos, 2016).

<sup>39</sup>Mike Huggins, 'Sport, tourism and history: current historiography and future prospects', *Journal of Tourism History* 5, no. 2 (2013), 107–30; Enterprises et histoire, special issue, *Sport et tourisme* 93, no. 4 (December 2018); Pierre-Olaf Schut, 'Sport as a Major Player in the Development of Tourism: The History of Mountaineering in the Pelvoux Massif, France, from 1861 to 1914', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 30, no. 12 (2013), 1329–50; Gerardo Rebanal Martínez, 'Golf, enterprise, and tourism in Belle Époque Europe c. 1900-1914', *Journal of Tourism History* 11, no. 2 (2019), 124–43; Cordula Seger, 'Wintersport im Grand Hotel: Strategien einer Inszenierung. Das Oberengadin zwischen 1886-1914', in *Pour une histoire des sports d'hiver*, eds. Thomas Busset and Marco Marcacci (Neuchâtel: Editions CIES, 2006), 35–68; Grégory Quin, 'The hotelier, the politician and the skier. On the founding moment of alpine skiing in St. Moritz', *Sport in History* 41, no. 1 (March 2021), 1–22.

<sup>40</sup>Hugh Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution 1780–1880* (London: Croom Helm, 1980); Alain Corbin, ed, *L'avènement des loisirs 1850–1960* (Paris: Aubier, 1995); Hans-Jörg Gilomen, Beatrice Schumacher and Laurent Tissot, eds, *Temps libre et loisirs du 14<sup>e</sup> au 20<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Zurich: Chronos Verlag, 2005).

<sup>41</sup>Leila El-Wakil, 'La construction d'un site. La rade de Genève comme paysage', in *Utilité et Plaisir. Parcs et jardins historiques de Suisse*, eds. Brigitt Sigel, Catherine Weber and Katharina Medici-Mall (Gollion: Infolio, 2006), 275–85.

<sup>42</sup>The cultural offer in Lausanne during the 1860s is described in Olivier Pavillon, 'Un exemple d'hébergement touristique à Lausanne au milieu du XIXe siècle. La pension Chevallier', *Revue historique vaudoise* 114 (2006), 57–65.

<sup>43</sup>Mathieu Narindal, 'Des établissements de jeu sur l'Arc lémanique? Un équilibre difficile entre intérêts touristiques et résistances morales (1884-1914)', in *Le tourisme suisse et son rayonnement international*, eds. Humair and Tissot, 52–73.

and were renovated under the impetus of limited companies created in 1856 and 1868 respectively; kursaals were established later in Evian (1874), Montreux (1881), Geneva (1884) and Lausanne (1901). During the second half of the nineteenth century, clients also became fond of a wellness-type offer which was rooted in a much older tradition of thermalism; the touristic stay was often complemented by body treatments and physical activities.<sup>44</sup> A source of intense sensations, summer sports, and later winter sports, became a very prized form of entertainment for tourists during the last two decades of the century. Their practice required the construction and maintenance of sometimes very expensive infrastructures, such as golf courses and bobsleigh runs. Finally, we should mention the intensification of entertainment in the form of 'events'. These manifestations – festivals, exhibitions, major cultural and sporting shows – also had an advertising function by making the region known in the media. Geneva made its mark in this field by organising the National Exhibition in 1896 and the World Track Cycling Championships in 1906.<sup>45</sup>

A wide spectrum of actors were involved in the setting up of a competitive entertainment offer. They could range from the individual to the short-term organising committee, from the professional association, the cultural society and the sports club to the capitalist company active in the entertainment industry. Within this constellation, four types of tourism actors can be identified. Interested in the economic effects of entertainment, hotel and transport companies played an important role, especially in the development of sports facilities. In the heights of Montreux, for example, the Société immobilière de Caux (Caux-Palace) and the Compagnie du chemin de fer de Glion aux Rochers de Naye worked closely together to develop sledging, bobsleighbing and skiing.<sup>46</sup> The professional associations of hoteliers were also involved in various ways. In Geneva, the syndicate took part in the organisation of events such as the international air meetings that took place in 1910 and 1912.<sup>47</sup> In addition, the tourism actors steered or contributed to the creation of a third type of player: the organisations specialised in entertainment. Biolermano has identified 15 such actors, 11 of which were societies dedicated to the operation of casinos and kursaals. In Montreux, the interest in entertainment took an original form with the creation, in 1896, of the Société des divertissements de Montreux et environs.<sup>48</sup> The latter promoted, managed and coordinated the various activities proposed to tourists.

However, it was the development societies that were the main drivers for the improvement of the entertainment offer. Like the hoteliers' associations, these organisations were founded as a response to the touristic crisis of the years 1875–1885, brought on by the Great Depression of those years. Their interprofessional structure made it possible to federate and co-ordinate the various actors interested in tourism development, in order to

<sup>44</sup>Piergiuseppe Esposito, "'Health & pleasure". Le tourisme médico-sanitaire dans l'Arc lémanique et le Chablais vaudois: de la consommation de soins à l'innovation de produit (1850-1914)' (PhD. diss., University of Lausanne, 2017).

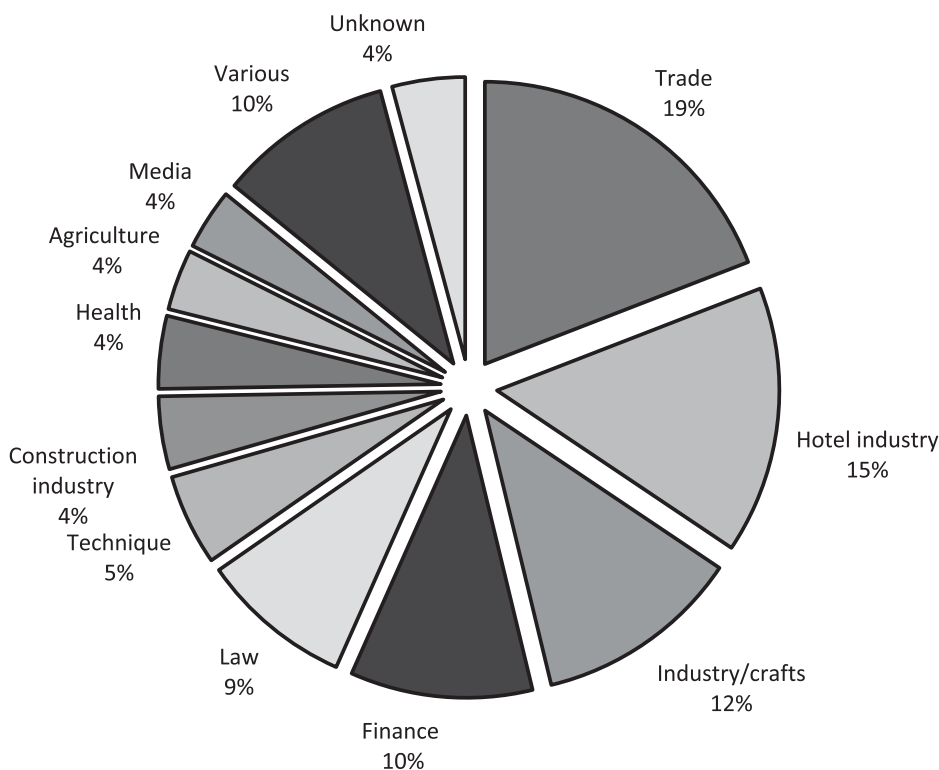
<sup>45</sup>Pierre Bernasconi, *Cent ans au service de Genève. Office du tourisme de Genève* (Genève: Office du tourisme, 1985), 14–5 and 29–45.

<sup>46</sup>Cédric Humair and Marc Gigase, 'Trajectoires touristiques et innovation: la région de l'Arc lémanique face à la crise des années 1880 (1880-1914)', in *Stations en tension*, eds. Vincent Vlès and Christophe Bouneau (Bruxelles: PIE Peter Lang S.A., 2016), 83–97.

<sup>47</sup>Jean de Senarclens et al., *L'hôtellerie genevoise* (Genève: Société des hôteliers de Genève, 1993), 100–1.

<sup>48</sup>Fabien Favre and Philippe Vonnard, 'Un tourisme sportif ? Le rôle des hôteliers dans l'apparition des sports dans la région de Montreux (1880-1914)', *Revue historique vaudoise* 123 (2015), 219–33.





**Figure 5.** Distribution by socio-professional activity of the committee members of the five main development societies in the Lake Geneva region (1852-1914) (sample: 287 persons).

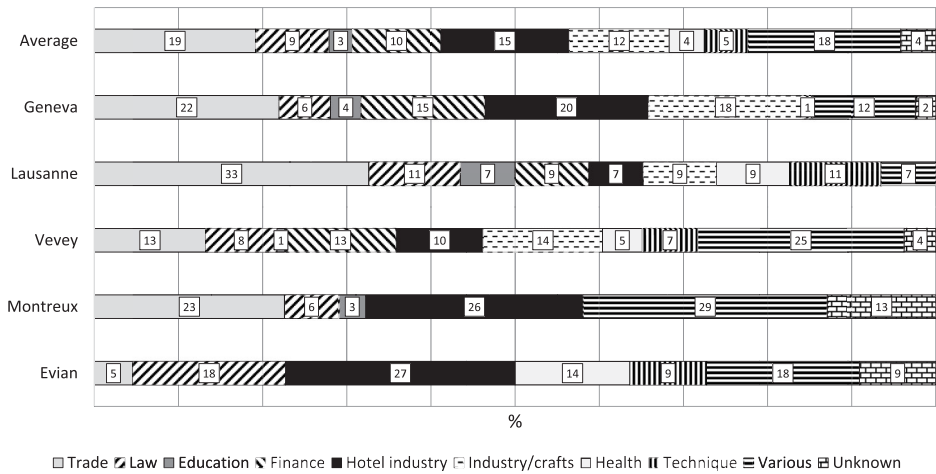
carry out more effective actions in different fields.<sup>49</sup> They also operated as a lobbying group towards local and regional public authorities. In addition to the spreading of collective publicity and the setting up of information offices, these ancestors of the tourism offices contributed to expanding the range of entertainment on offer, frequently acting as a catalysing force. In 1899, for example, the Association des intérêts de Genève piloted the foundation of the Société du parc des sports, which built the infrastructure necessary for the city's sporting reputation – a golf course, three football fields, two tennis courts and a horse racing track.<sup>50</sup>

Biolemano has considered 10 development societies founded between 1880 and 1910 in the Lake Geneva region. The members of the committees of the five most important societies represent a sample of 287 people, 34 of whom were presidents.<sup>51</sup> Figure 5 shows that the professional distribution in the governing instances was relatively similar to that of the boards of directors of transport and hotel companies. Finance,

<sup>49</sup>See for example Stefano Sulmoni, 'Pro Lugano: une société au service de l'aménagement d'espaces de loisirs', in *Temps libre et loisirs du 14e au 20e siècle*, eds. Gilomen et al., 143–55.

<sup>50</sup>Association des intérêts de Genève, *Rapport du comité de l'Association* (Genève: Association des intérêts de Genève, 1898), 12.

<sup>51</sup>These were the Société d'utilité publique et d'embellissement de Montreux (1869), which became the Société d'utilité publique de Montreux (1877), the Société pour le développement de Vevey et ses environs (1880), the Société pour le développement de Lausanne (1885), the Association des Intérêts du Commerce et de l'Industrie à Genève (1885), which became the Association des Intérêts de Genève (1889), and the Syndicat d'initiative d'Évian (1901).

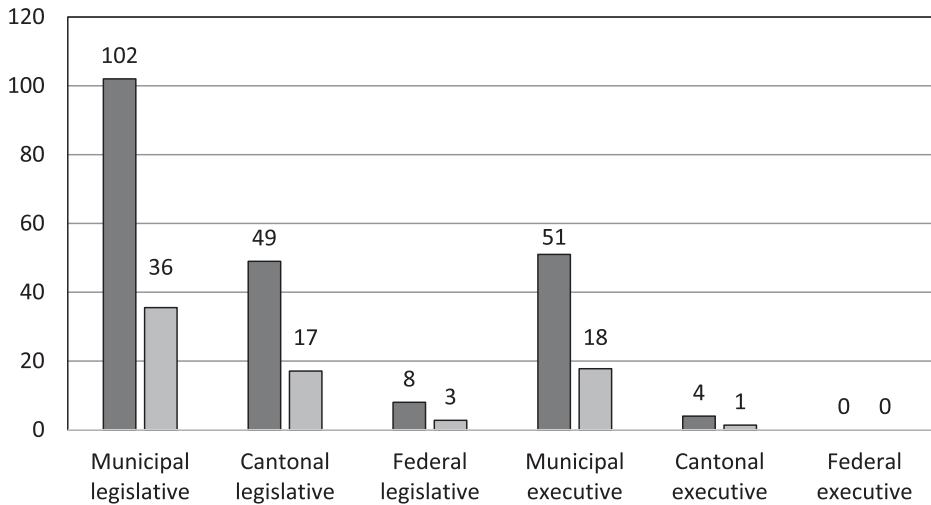


**Figure 6.** Distribution (in %) by socio-professional activity of the committee members of the five main development societies of the Lake Geneva region (1880-1914) (sample: 287 persons).

trade and industry represented the biggest proportion of committee members (41%) and chairpersons (50%). However, it was traders, not financiers, who held the leadership of these societies, with 19% of the sample and 35% of the presidents. While hoteliers were well represented – 15% of the sample and 12% of the presidents – transport professionals were almost absent, which confirms the limited interest that the large railway companies manifested in tourism. Finally, we should point to the great socio-professional diversity of the sample. Although located on the fringes of the tourism system, several spheres of activity were well represented: technique 5%, health 4%, construction 4%, education 3%, agriculture 3%, media 3%. This integration confirms the key role of the development societies in the aggregation and the coordination of the various actors interested in tourism.

However, the composition of the governing instances was very different in the five societies, which can be explained by the specific characteristics of the tourism offer and the socio-economic fabric of each centre (Figure 6). Thus, the representation of hoteliers varied greatly, their presence being strongest in Montreux (26%) and Evian (27%), where tourism dominated the economic activity. On the other hand, financiers and industrialists were absent there, whereas they were well represented in the cities of Lausanne (9%/9%), Vevey (13%/14%) and Geneva (15%/18%), where the economic fabric was more diversified. From this point of view, the Société pour le développement de Lausanne presented several specificities. First of all, commerce strongly dominated the committee, occupying 33% of the mandates and three presidencies between 1885 and 1914.<sup>52</sup> Secondly, people active in the health sector were over-represented (9%). With a high profile in international medical tourism, Lausanne was called the medical Mecca during the Belle Epoque. A member of the society’s committee, Edouard de Cérenville, chief physician at Cantonal Hospital of Vaud (today’s CHUV), was involved in the

<sup>52</sup>The presidents were Emile Gautschy, optician (1894-1899), Charles Pflüger, owner of the Bazar vaudois (1900-1901) and Auguste Amann, pharmaceutical merchant (1902-1907).



**Figure 7.** Political mandates held by committee members of the five largest development societies (sample: 287 persons holding 214 political mandates); left-hand column: number of people holding this type of mandate; right-hand column: share of the sample holding this type of mandate (in %).

development of Lausanne's hotel industry.<sup>53</sup> A true entrepreneur in the field of medical tourism, he contributed to the creation of the climatic resort of Leysin and to the development of spa activities in Bex. Finally, the society was characterised by the strong presence of representatives from the education sector (7%), as Lausanne was home to numerous schools and boarding schools attracting young foreigners.

As the development societies operated as tourism battering rams for the public authorities, it is interesting to analyse the level of politicisation of their leaders. In this respect, it is necessary to underline that the Swiss political system of the time functioned very largely on the principle of the militia. This means that most of the political positions were held by citizens who also had a professional activity. The leaders of the development societies could therefore exercise mandates in the legislative assemblies at the three municipal, cantonal and national levels, as well as in the municipal executives – only the mandates in the governments of the Confederation (federal councillor) and the cantons (state councillor) were professionalised.

Thus, 129 of the 287 members of committees (45%) were engaged in at least one political mandate. As **Figure 7** shows, they held 214 functions, mainly in municipal and cantonal legislatures and municipal executives. In reality, the representation of development societies in political bodies was even more important, as the mandates held by their members must be taken into account. In Lausanne, in 1888, members of the development society occupied 31 of the 100 seats in the municipal legislature, then 50 in 1892 and even 60 in 1897.<sup>54</sup> They then had a majority. The influence of the development societies also depended on the number of their members, who represented an interesting electorate for the political

<sup>53</sup>He owned 50 shares of 250 Swiss francs in the Société immobilière d'Ouchy (Beau-Rivage Palace), of which his brother Henri was a director; 12,500 Swiss francs in 1878 correspond to approximately 665,000 Swiss francs today; calculation made with the salary index of the Swistoval platform: <http://www.swistoval.ch/content/einzelwerte.de.html>.

<sup>54</sup>Nicolas Chachereau, 'Les sociétés de développement: acteurs centraux du tourisme lémanique' (master's seminar, Université de Lausanne, 2010), 42–3.

leaders. In this respect, the Association des intérêts de Genève was the largest in Switzerland with more than 2000 members in 1914.<sup>55</sup> However, if we relate the number of members to the population, Montreux was far ahead with 6.5% of the inhabitants in 1900, followed by Vevey (2.8%), Geneva (2.2%) and Lausanne (1.4%). The quality of the relations cultivated with the political system made it possible for the development societies to obtain significant financial support from the public authorities, which amounted to up to 30% of the budget in Geneva. It also facilitated many successes in improving the tourism offer. In Lausanne, for example, the municipality supported massively the construction of quays and electric tramways, the latter allowing, among other things, the development of sports activities on the outskirts of the city. More generally, the success story of tourism in the Lake Geneva region was greatly assisted by the osmosis between the tourism actors and the political milieu. The case of Montreux was a good example.<sup>56</sup>

## V The functioning of the Lake Geneva tourism system: an endogenous type of development

Biolemano not only allows us to grasp and analyse the different individual and collective tourism actors, but also to consider their relationships and to understand certain aspects of the functioning of the tourism system. We will limit ourselves here to examining the question of the endogenous or exogenous character of the development of regional tourism, by analysing the contributions of external actors in terms of governance, investment and professional skills. It should be remembered that endogenous development tends to amplify the spillover effects of tourism on a regional economy and to improve the sector's capacity to adapt in the event of a crisis.<sup>57</sup>

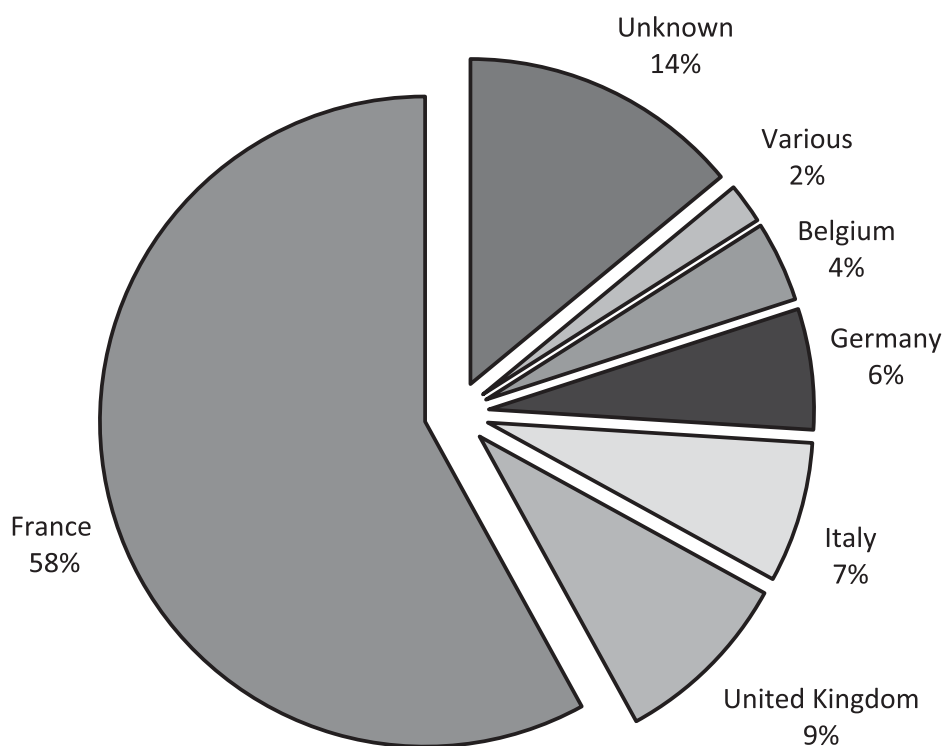
The first dimension addressed is that of the origin of the key actors in Lake Geneva tourism. Are they natives of the region, do they come to live there, or do they live outside the region? The analysis focuses on actors who held five or more mandates as directors of tourism companies or members of committees of development societies.<sup>58</sup> The sample includes 28 people who held 189 mandates in the Lake Geneva region – 97 in the transport sector, 74 in the hotel industry and 18 in development societies – an average of 6.8 mandates per person. In addition, 15 of them held at least one mandate in the three categories of collective tourism actors, bringing coherence to the functioning of the system. With regard to their professional activity, we can find again the dominance of the spheres of finance (21%), commerce (14%) and industry (7%), representing 42% of the sample, as well as the strong presence of law (21%) and the hotel industry (18%). By narrowing the focus further, it is possible to identify 7 individuals who each held 8 or more mandates. These were 3 hoteliers, 2 bankers, 1 wine

<sup>55</sup>Humair et al., *Système touristique et culture technique*, 72–4.

<sup>56</sup>Géraldine Sauthier, *Pouvoir local et tourisme. Jeux politiques à Finhaut, Montreux et Zermatt de 1850 à nos jours* (Neuchâtel: Editions Alphil-Presses universitaires suisses, 2016).

<sup>57</sup>Patrizia Battilani, 'Una lettura storica dei modelli di sviluppo turistico', in *Turismo e sviluppo in area alpina*, eds. Leonardi and Heiss, 101–24.

<sup>58</sup>The disadvantage of this purely quantitative definition is that it excludes some very important figures in the development of tourism; these are mainly key players who were active in the 1850s to 1880s, when the number of limited companies was still low and there were no development societies: the examples of Louis-Henri Dufour, Edouard Dapples and Alfred André are the most significant; Humair et al., *Système touristique et culture technique*, 163–78.



**Figure 8.** Origin of directors of tourism companies in the Lake Geneva region (hotels and transport) established outside Switzerland (sample: 101 persons holding 134 directorships).

merchant and 1 lawyer.<sup>59</sup> At the heart of the regional tourism system, these ‘super-promoters’ also exported their activity outside the Lake Geneva region; they held 18 directorships in hotel companies outside the region. With regard to the endogenous or exogenous nature of the sample, it is very clear that it was the local notables who played a predominant role in the dynamism of regional tourism. None of the 28 key actors was domiciled outside the Lake Geneva region and only four came to live there in the course of their lives, two of whom were natives from neighbouring regions in the canton of Vaud. The other two, who acquired Swiss nationality, were hoteliers from Stuttgart and Bolzano.

The second dimension to be taken into account is the role played by exogenous actors in the governance and financing of tourism companies in the region. The analysis is based on a sample of 259 directors of transport and hotel companies who did not work in the Lake Geneva region. The first category consists of 139 exogenous directors established in Switzerland, representing nearly 8% of Bioleman’s actors. Despite their large number, they only played a marginal role in the tourism system. On the one hand, they occupied only 187 seats as directors, i.e. an average of 1.3 mandates per person. On the other hand, their mandates mainly concerned railway companies

<sup>59</sup>They were the Montreux hoteliers Alexandre Emery (13), Ami Chessex (11) and François Spickner (9), the Lausanne bankers Marc Morel-Marcel (8) and Charles Schmidhauser (8), the Montreux wine merchant Georges Masson (8) and the Vevey lawyer Emile Gaudard (11).

without a specific touristic vocation. A first group, mainly including financiers and politicians from neighbouring cantons (Berne, Fribourg, Neuchâtel and Valais), was involved in the management of the standard gauge railway companies operating in the Lake Geneva region (70% of the mandates). Their strong presence was due to the long process of merging the railway companies in Western Switzerland. A second group of directors was involved in narrow-gauge railways linking the Lake Geneva region with neighbouring areas (Aubonne, Echallens, Bernese Oberland). These were notables who wanted to connect their place of living to the railway network, most of whom had no interest in Lake Geneva tourism. In the end, the role of the 139 exogenous directors established in Switzerland was limited to 9 seats on the boards of directors of hotel companies and 14 seats on the boards of directors of tourism-oriented transport companies.

A second category is made up of 101 exogenous directors established in other European countries, representing 6% of Bioleman's actors. As shown in Figure 8, most of them were French (58%) and lived in Paris or in the areas bordering the Lake Geneva region (Haute-Savoie, Pays de Gex, Jura français). The other most represented nationalities were British (9%), Italian (7%), German (6%) and Belgian (4%).<sup>60</sup> In terms of socio-professional categories, financiers were by far the most numerous (36%), followed by transport professionals (10%) and industrialists (10%). On the whole, the investment of these players in the Lake Geneva touristic companies was not very intensive; they held only 134 seats on the boards of directors, i.e. an average of 1.3 mandate per person. Their activity was also concentrated in railway companies without a strong touristic vocation, and in particular in those that managed the standard gauge network (56% of mandates). Between 1852 and 1902, when the Chemins de fer fédéraux came into operation, English and French investors played a crucial role in the governance and financing of the largest private Swiss companies.<sup>61</sup> The same was true of the Lake Geneva region, where two groups of Parisian financiers, who wanted to control a highly strategic network in the centre of Europe, competed: Crédit Mobilier, headed by the brothers Émile and Isaac Pereire, and Réunion Financière, led by James de Rothschild.<sup>62</sup> It is therefore not surprising to find 19 Paris-based financiers and 5 London-based financiers in this category of exogenous directors. A second group was involved in the governance of some local railway companies (17% of mandates). The exogenous influence was only significant in the companies that managed the tramway network in Geneva, in which English, Belgian and French investors held 14 seats. Finally, a third group was active in hotel companies (27% of mandates). Of the 36 directorships held, 28 were in three Evian hotel companies.<sup>63</sup> This exogenous influence began in 1881, when a group of Parisian financiers supplanted the Geneva investors at the head of

<sup>60</sup>The nationality of the actors, based on the geopolitical map of 2022, does not always correspond to the nationality of the time, which is also mentioned in Bioleman.

<sup>61</sup>Marcel Blanchard, 'Financiers français et chemins de fer suisses sous le Second Empire', *Revue d'Economie Politique* 51 (1937), 1591–606; Jean Bouvier, 'La "grande crise" des compagnies ferroviaires suisses. Les groupes bancaires et la lutte pour le trafic transalpin (1875-1882)', in *Histoire économique et histoire sociale: recherches sur le capitalisme contemporain*, ed. Jean Bouvier (Genève: Droz, 1968), 193–217; Gérard Benz, 'Un aspect du financement des chemins de fer en Suisse par le capital étranger', *Revue suisse d'histoire* 37, no. 2 (1987), 169–85.

<sup>62</sup>Marc Gigase, 'L'Ouest-Suisse: expansion d'un réseau ferroviaire entre rivalités cantonales, intervention étatique et bataille financière internationale (1852-1872)', *Revue historique vaudoise* 115 (2007), 281–96; Ernst Halperin, *Der Westbahnkonflikt (1855-1857)* (Wald: Hess, 1943).

<sup>63</sup>Société anonyme des Eaux Minérales d'Evian (17 mandates); Société des Hôtels (6 mandates); Société de l'Ermitage (5 mandates).

the Société anonyme des eaux minérales d'Evian, a thermal company which steered the hotel development of the touristic centre.<sup>64</sup>

Let us mention two other categories of exogenous actors that were less important numerically. It concerned 10 directors born in or native from the Lake Geneva region, who moved abroad. Among them were five private bankers operating in Paris and Lyon. With 14 mandates in standard gauge railway companies, this group made a modest contribution to the rail connection of the Lake Geneva region. Finally, 9 directors occupying 11 seats were exogenous actors who had come to settle in the Lake Geneva region without exercising any professional activity there. Annuitants or retirees, they played only a marginal role in the tourism system.

As far as the raising of capital and the governance of companies were concerned, the development of Lake Geneva tourism was clearly an endogenous model. In fact, the 259 exogenous actors held only 8% of the directorships in tourism-oriented transport companies and 9% of the directorships in the hotel companies. For the three Swiss centres of Geneva, Lausanne and Vevey-Montreux, this presence was even more limited. Exogenous players held only 9 directorships in tourism-oriented transport companies<sup>65</sup>, including 4 in the Compagnie du Chemin de fer de Lausanne à Ouchy et des Eaux de Bret, which put into service the first funicular railway in Switzerland. This pharaonic urban planning project, completed in 1877, required the financial support of bankers of Basel.<sup>66</sup> In the hotel industry, exogenous players occupied only 24 directors' seats in 14 companies. External influence was significant only in two Geneva companies.<sup>67</sup> On the other hand, it appears that the governance of the major companies managing the standard gauge regional rail network largely escaped the influence of Lake Geneva players, with 222 of the 374 directorships listed, i.e. 59%, being held by exogenous actors.

The third dimension to be taken into account is the contribution of external professional skills resulting from the circulation of individual actors. Clearly, regional tourism benefited from the temporary or permanent establishment of exogeneous professionals. However, it is difficult to establish in what proportions, as the data concerning the jobs held before and after the activity carried out in the Lake Geneva region are still very incomplete. Therefore, a quantitative analysis of the movement of people remains imprecise and underestimates certain mobilities to a large extent. Despite these difficulties, it is essential to address the domains of hospitality and engineering, where the import of skills was significant.

An analysis of the 443 people who worked in the Lake Geneva hotel industry reveals a very high level of professional mobility on a regional, national and international scale. On the one hand, hoteliers native to the Lake Geneva region left the area, either temporarily or permanently, in order to get training or to manage a hotel. On the other hand, a

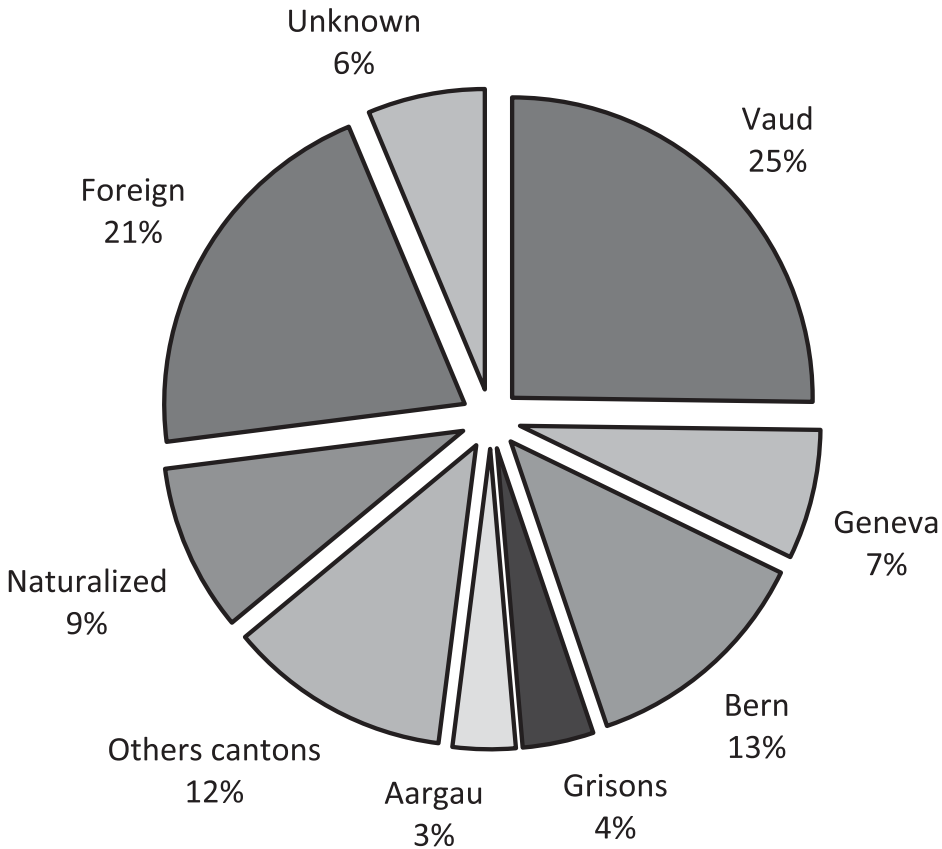
---

<sup>64</sup>The main promoters were three Parisian financiers: Edouard Hentsch, Alfred André and Gustave Girod; Breuillaud-Sottas, *La prodigieuse ascension des eaux d'Evian*, 168–177.

<sup>65</sup>The following tourism-oriented companies operating on French territory were not included: Société anonyme du tramway funiculaire de Rives à Thonon-les-Bains (2 mandates); Société anonyme des chemins de fer du Salève (4 mandates) et Compagnie du chemin de fer Nyon-Saint-Cergue-Morez (9 mandates).

<sup>66</sup>Cédric Humair, 'Ville, tourisme et transport: la Compagnie du chemin de fer Lausanne-Ouchy (1869-1914)', *Entreprises et Histoire* 47, no. 2 (June 2007), 11–25.

<sup>67</sup>These were the Société de l'Hôtel National de Genève, which was financed by the Banque fédérale suisse based in Bern (3 exogenous directors) and the Société nouvelle des Bergues, which was founded in 1914 by a group of financiers from Nice (4 exogenous directors).



**Figure 9.** Origin of hoteliers working in the Lake Geneva region between 1852 and 1914 (sample: 443 persons).

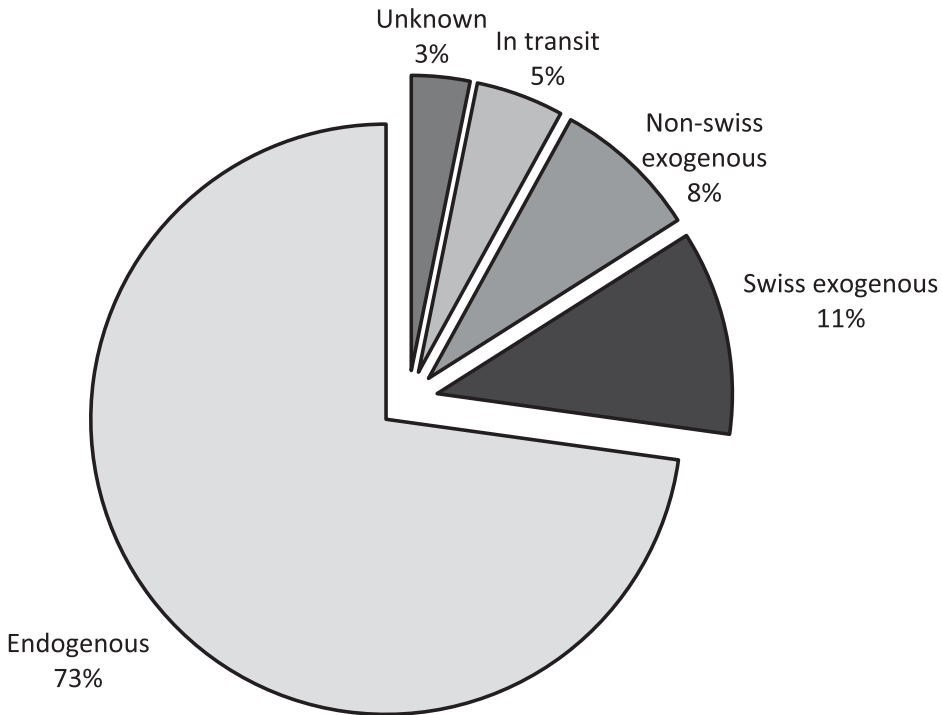
certain number of hoteliers successively exercised their activity in several touristic centres of the region. And lastly, exogenous hoteliers came to practice their profession temporarily or permanently in the Lake Geneva region.<sup>68</sup> Biolemans allows us to identify 179 hoteliers in the sample who worked in at least two different centres, of whom 43 in three centres, 6 in four centres and 2 in five centres.<sup>69</sup> The trajectory of Ernest Lenz is an emblematic example of this professional mobility. Born in 1874 in Emmendingen, Baden-Württemberg (Germany), he was successively employed at the *Hôtel des Bains* in Yverdon, at the *Grand-Hôtel de Territet* near Montreux, then in two hotels in Germany. He subsequently became director of the *Hôtel Beau-Rivage* in Geneva, while managing the *Hôtel des Anglais* in Monte-Carlo during the winter season. In 1912, he became the owner of the *Hôtel du Parc* in Ouchy near Lausanne and at the same time took over the management of the *Hôtel du Château* in Ouchy.

What was the extent of the import of skills? At least 25 exogenous hoteliers spent some years in the Lake Geneva region before pursuing their career elsewhere, most of them

<sup>68</sup>A hotelier is considered to be an outsider if he or she was not native to the Lake Geneva region and was not born there.

<sup>69</sup>Biolemans carries out a geographical tracing of professional activities according to 8 geographical poles defined in the document entitled '2-convention de saisie', which is available at the following address: <https://unil.ch/hist/Biolemans>.





**Figure 10.** Origin of engineers working in the Lake Geneva region between 1852 and 1914 (sample: 125 persons).

holding a managerial position in a big hotel of the region. Biolemans also makes it possible to identify a sample of 49 exogenous hoteliers who worked outside the Lake Geneva region before settling permanently in the region.<sup>70</sup> There are therefore 74 proven cases that brought their skills to the region, i.e. 17% of the sample. However, this approach underestimates very likely the import of exogenous skills, as an analysis of the origin of hoteliers may suggest. Figure 9 shows that endogenous hoteliers, native of the cantons of Vaud and Geneva, represented only 32% of the sample, i.e. the same proportion as hoteliers originating from other Swiss cantons.<sup>71</sup> As for the 132 hoteliers who were not of Swiss origin, they constituted 30% of the sample; at least 40 of them acquired Swiss nationality, thus demonstrating their desire to settle down over the long term. Despite the language obstacle, hoteliers of German origin represented the largest group (58%), followed by the French (26%). The regions of Baden-Württemberg (32%) and Alsace (7%), which formed the border with Switzerland, were the main breeding grounds for the Lake Geneva hotel industry.

Despite the very approximate nature of these quantitative approaches, it is clear that the Lake Geneva tourism system largely benefited from exogenous hotel skills.

<sup>70</sup>It is not impossible that some of them left the Lake Geneva region without the research being able to establish this.

<sup>71</sup>A limited number of hoteliers originating from the canton of Vaud were citizens of communes outside the Lake Geneva region and should therefore be considered as exogenous. This bias is probably more than compensated for by hoteliers from other Swiss cantons who were born in the Lake Geneva region and should therefore be considered as endogenous. It should also be noted that the number of hoteliers originating from the French part of the Lake Geneva region, who should be considered as endogenous, was negligible.

A more qualitative study, focusing on the region's major hotel families, would only confirm this assertion.<sup>72</sup> Let us merely mention the Armleder, Spahlinger, Haake and Mayer families in Geneva, all of German origin, as well as the Riedel, Alblas and Comte families in Vevey and Montreux, of German, Dutch and French origin. In Lausanne, the Ritter were natives of the canton of Bern, the Kamm from Glarus and the Müller from Aargau; in Evian, several hotel owners were of German origin. Furthermore, Biolemano does not allow us to capture appropriately the flows of unskilled employees, which were nevertheless necessary to the smooth running of the hotels. In this respect, it should be noted that the need for exogenous labour probably decreased after 1893, when the first hotel school in the world opened in Lausanne.<sup>73</sup>

Exogenous actors also played a certain role in the field of technical skills, which were not only indispensable in transport, but also in the hotel industry, civil engineering and the operation of water, energy and communication networks. Analysis of a sample of 125 engineers who worked in the Lake Geneva region between 1852 and 1914 reveals a high proportion of endogenous actors, which amounts to 73% (Figure 10).<sup>74</sup> This can be explained to a large extent by the creation of a private engineering school in Lausanne in 1853, where at least 62 of the engineers in the sample obtained their degree. Because of the prestige of this institution, its recruitment area extended far beyond the Lake Geneva region, attracting talents useful to the region. The recourse to exogenous engineers was, nevertheless, significant (24% of the sample). Fourteen Swiss engineers came to settle permanently in the region, most of them trained in the *École polytechnique fédérale de Zurich*, which was inaugurated in 1855. In addition, 10 foreign engineers, 9 of whom were of French nationality, were active in the region, mainly in transport companies. This presence was linked to the role played by French capitalists in the governance of regional railway companies. Finally, 6 engineers – 3 Swiss and 3 French – were working temporarily in the region.

## VI Conclusion: results and research perspectives

The analysis of the touristic offer in the Lake Geneva region has made it possible to highlight the multiplicity and heterogeneity of the actors involved in the smooth running of a tourism system. In particular, it has revealed the role played by certain categories of actors – bankers, merchants, engineers, lawyers, doctors – previously neglected by historiography, making explicit their presence within the collective actors of tourism. They provided different types of skills, capital and social networks that were useful for the proper functioning of companies. They also ensured their anchoring in the local and regional terrain. Furthermore, the multipositionality of some of these actors, who were not only active in hotel, transport and entertainment companies, but also in the tourism sociability and the political

<sup>72</sup>Revue vaudoise de généalogie et d'histoire des familles, special issue, *Les familles hôtelières et le tourisme dans le canton de Vaud* 31 (2018).

<sup>73</sup>Philippe Gindraux, *L'art et la manière. L'École hôtelière de Lausanne. 100 ans d'excellence* (Lausanne: Payot, 1993).

<sup>74</sup>An engineer is considered to be endogenous if he or she originated from the Lake Geneva region, if he or she was born there or if he or she was trained at the Lausanne school of engineering, which was founded in 1853 and took on different names before becoming the *École polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne*, which is still in operation today.

sphere, brought coherence to the whole tourism system. From this point of view, their intense collaboration with the touristic milieu within the interprofessional development societies was highly emblematic. In return, these players benefited in various ways from their involvement in tourism. For some, it was a way of investing surplus capital; for others, such as contractors, architects, engineers and lawyers, it was a question of obtaining mandates that enabled them to stimulate their main professional activity; as for traders and doctors, they benefited from the purchasing power of rich foreign tourists.

The analysis has also demonstrated the endogenous character of the tourism development model. It is true that the construction of the standard gauge railway network, an important component of the tourism system, benefited from a considerable influx of foreign capital and technical skills until it was taken over by the Confederation at the beginning of the twentieth century. In addition, the development of the hotel industry benefited from a significant contribution of skills from other regions; particularly, the network of lower-category hotels could not have reached such dimensions without the influx of Bernese and German innkeepers. That said, it appears that almost all of the large hotel and transport companies with a touristic vocation were set up by regional promoters. The latter provided the bulk of the capital and reserved for themselves the governance and profits of the companies. This dominant position enabled them to make the regional economic fabric benefit from the growth of tourism and to establish a virtuous synergy with the other sectors of activity. Thus, the contribution provides a better understanding of the leading sector role played by tourism in regional economic development, a characteristic that had already been highlighted.<sup>75</sup>

Finally, this actor-based approach has allowed for a better understanding of some key elements of the region's touristic success story. The first is the massive involvement of financiers from the region. As a recently published study confirmed, private bankers from Lausanne, Geneva and Vevey provided the bulk of the capital needed to build the infrastructure, thus making considerable profits.<sup>76</sup> The second element is the interest shown by local notables in the development of tourism, particularly from commerce and industry. In addition to their contribution in capital, these actors increased the political weight of the sector, which is the third element to be underlined. Taking advantage of the militia political system, the tourism actors became involved in the political institutions and maintained privileged relations with the local and regional public authorities.

Let us conclude this contribution by proposing some epistemological considerations. Digital humanities have been much talked about in recent years and these approaches mobilising computer resources have gained importance within the historical community. The history of tourism was no exception. Published in January 2018 in the *Journal of Tourism History*, the collective article entitled 'Digital humanities

---

<sup>75</sup>Cédric Humair, '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* 3, no. 3 (2011), 237–65.

<sup>76</sup>Cédric Humair and Jan Chiarelli, 'Le rôle des banquiers privés dans le développement touristique de la région franco-suisse de l'Arc lémanique (1852-1914). Approches quantitatives et qualitatives à partir de la base de données biographiques Biolemanno', in *Turismo 4.0. Storia, digitalizzazione, territorio*, eds. Giovanni Gregorini and Riccardo Semeraro (Milano: Vita et Pensiero, 2021), 3–27.

and tourism history' contributed to the reflection in drawing up a landscape of the approaches undertaken in the field, limited however to the Anglo-Saxon linguistic space.<sup>77</sup> Indeed, the new approaches have also spread to other European historiographical fields. But to what extent and for what results? After the 'linguistic turn' and the 'spatial turn', should we speak of a 'digital turn'? Despite recent reflections, these questions still remain without definitive answers. Moreover, the heuristic value of computational methods remains highly controversial within the historian's community.<sup>78</sup>

Biolemano provides a concrete example of the analytical added value that a digital tool can bring to the history of tourism. Built to answer research questions and fed with historical information from classical sources, this biographical database has made it possible to grasp the actors of a regional tourism system in an innovative and global way, and thus to reveal the complexity of the functioning of this economic sector. In spite of the methodological limitations mentioned in the introduction, in spite of the enormous amount of work required to develop it, in spite of the heterogeneity of the sources available in each touristic region, Biolemano may serve as a model for the analysis of other tourism systems. It therefore opens up the perspective of comparative approaches applied to the development models of other touristic regions and their actors.

Even if Biolemano was conceived with the aim of answering quite specific questions, its research potential now opens the way to new issues concerning the Lake Geneva region. Indeed, its online availability will allow other historians to appropriate its enormous research potential and to use it to explore new horizons. The first would be to analyse the key figures in the tourism system and their networks. The identification of the main family 'clusters' would make it possible to reconstruct the core of each touristic centre.<sup>79</sup> A second type of approach would be to make a prosopography of certain categories of actors. In addition to the financiers of the system, who have already been studied, engineers, architects, notaries, lawyers, doctors and politicians could be analysed in order to better understand their contribution to the tourism success story. A third possible approach would be to analyse the collective actors of the tourism system. Biolemano makes it easy to select all the individual actors involved in one way or another in a company. Thus, 67 entries refer to the *Compagnie générale de navigation sur le lac Léman*, 41 the *Société immobilière d'Ouchy (Beau-Rivage Palace)* and 63 the *Association des intérêts de Genève*. Beyond the monograph, this material could be used to construct a history of the Lake Geneva transport network, the regional hotel industry or the world of tourism associations.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

---

<sup>77</sup>Carrie Anderson, Giovanna Ceserani, Christopher Donaldson, Ian N. Gregory, Melanie Hall, Adam T. Rosenbaum, and Joanna E. Taylor, 'Digital humanities and tourism history', *Journal of Tourism History* 9, no 2–3 (2017), 246–69.

<sup>78</sup>An international workshop entitled 'Computer and quantitative methods in tourism history' was held on 25 November 2021 at the University of Lausanne to address these questions. A special issue of the French review *Mondes du tourisme* will publicise the results of the meeting.

<sup>79</sup>The Haake (6 records), Duval (5) and Pictet (3) families in Geneva, Mercier (6) and Marcel (3) in Lausanne, Chessex (8), Vautier (7), Emery (4) and Mayor (3) in Montreux, as well as Cuénod (5) in Vevey would certainly be good cases to study.

## Notes on contributor

**Cédric Humair** is senior lecturer of contemporary history at the University of Lausanne and at Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale of Lausanne. His main fields of research are Swiss economic and political history, tourism and transport history and social history of technology. He was the director of a research program named «Tourist system and technical culture in the Lake Geneva region : actors, networks and synergies (1852-1914).» His main publications concerning tourism history are focused on hotel industry, tourism associations and regional tourism development : «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*, 2011/3, pp. 237-265; Humair Cédric et al. (ed), *Le tourisme comme facteur de transformations économiques, techniques et sociales (19e – 20e siècles) /Tourism as a factor of economic, technical and social transformations (19th-20th centuries)*, Neuchâtel : Alphil, 2014; Humair Cédric et al., *Système touristique et culture technique dans l'Arc lémanique : analyse d'une success story et de ses effets sur l'économie régionale (1852-1914)*, Neuchâtel : Alphil, 2014; Humair Cédric et al., 'How to deal with Regional Tourism? Historical (and Interdisciplinary) Reflections', *Zeitschrift für Tourismus-Wissenschaft*, 9/1, 2017, pp. 5-31. cedric.humair@unil.ch

**Jan Chiarelli** is a graduate assistant at the University of Lausanne. His main field of study is 19th century Swiss monetary history. He is completing a doctoral thesis on the birth of the Swiss franc in 1850. His work also focuses on private bankers and their role in the development of tourism. Since 2015, he has been actively involved in the research and development of the "Biolemanò" database. jan.chiarelli@unil.ch