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Organisation and professional development of mountain guides and leaders in tourist regions: the Swiss case compared with the French experience.

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Abstract

This contribution proposes a cross-border comparative approach of the professional dynamics of mountain guides and leaders in Switzerland and France. This sector (of outdoor sport guides and leaders) constitutes the main part of the market for outdoor sports tourism and represents an important key to understanding tourism and sports activities in mountainous regions and to confirming the structuring role of ski resorts in these areas. The paper deals specifically with the professions of mountain guides and mountain leaders and the approach is based on an historical, socio-spatial and political analysis.

The comparative and cross-border approach highlights the regularities and differences in the development of outdoor sports within two different countries. The method used combines both quantitative data, concerning the services of outdoor sport guides and instructors on offer and their geographical location, as well as qualitative data relating to the management and organisation policies of this sector.

Keywords: outdoor sports, tourism, mountain guides, mountain leaders, Swiss, France

Organisation and professional development of mountain guides and leaders in tourist regions: the Swiss case compared with the French experience.

Abstract

The aim of this article is to identify the specific ways in which the professions of mountain guide and leader are structured in Switzerland and their contribution to the development of outdoor sports as a tourist activity. Various approaches are used to compare the Swiss case with that of France. First, the question is considered from a socio-historical point of view relating to the manner in which these professions have evolved over time. Second, a geographical perspective is used with the aim of identifying the factors which explain their spatial distribution. Finally, a political approach is undertaken which considers the role of both public-sector policy and actions in the organisation of these professions.

The method used combines the analysis of both quantitative data concerning the number of sport guides and leaders and their geographical location, and qualitative data relating to the management and organisation policies of this sector. The comparative, cross-border approach highlights the similarities and differences in the development of outdoor sports between Switzerland and France. The results show a number of features specific to Switzerland, enabling a better understanding of the tourist, spatial and political organisation of these professions in this country.

Management implications

From the point of view of government bodies, this research shows that outdoor sports professions are now at the centre of local tourist activities in Swiss mountainous regions. In the context of planned tourist development in such areas, and in taking particular account of sustainable objectives, certain changes seem likely in the future. The regulatory framework could become a means to stabilize different types of activities related to tourist guides, including the planning of outdoor sports sites as is the case in France.

Viewed from the perspective of the associations that represent professional guides, the results of this research show that if they wish to represent Swiss mountain guides and leaders effectively, they need to concern themselves with the extent to which they are representative at a national level by overcoming the divisions between the country's different linguistic regions. This also necessitates making a population of professional guides, used to working on their own and unused to the need for lobbying, aware of the importance of acting collectively.

Introduction

The different branches of outdoor sports (e.g. mountaineering, hiking, climbing or ski touring), represent an important means of understanding the key role of tourist and sporting activities in mountainous regions. These activities, constitute the principal part of the outdoor sports market (Langenbach, 2012) compared with other activities such as the hiring or manufacture of sports equipment, or the organisation of tourist visits or sporting activities. This paper is focussed on mountainous regions and the particular socio-historical, spatial and regulatory characteristics of the professions of mountain guide and mountain leader in Switzerland; these are the only professions in this country which effectively structure this market in the field of outdoor sports. Other professions such as canoe instructor or rafting guide represent 'niche' markets and numerically are much less important. The aim of this article is to identify the specific ways in which the professions of mountain guide and leader are structured in Switzerland and their contribution to the development of outdoor sports as a tourist activity. It compares the Swiss case, which until now has not been studied in detail, with the example of France where numerous studies have already been undertaken. As such, it is possible to indicate the specific features of the structuring of the different professions of guide in outdoor sports in Switzerland. The main question addressed by this research is: what are the mechanisms in Switzerland, within a tourism context, that have contributed to the organisation of mountain guides and leaders, using France as a benchmark?

Literature review

The role of outdoor sports in mountain tourism

Sporting activities have undeniably played an important structuring role in the growth of tourism in mountainous areas. Since the first forms of tourist activity observed in these areas in the 19th century, outdoor sports (notably mountaineering) have contributed to the social and economic development of mountainous territories (Bourdeau & Rotillon, 1995). This trend continued with the expansion of winter sports (alpine skiing, nordic skiing and ski touring) as well as with the growth of summer-based sports such as mountain biking or trail running. It continues today with mega sporting events such as the world championships in downhill skiing, mountain biking or rock climbing. This observation applies particularly to Switzerland where historically outdoor sports have been a major factor in the development of tourist centres (Walter, 1991; Tissot, 2000) whereas in France these activities developed largely in rural areas (Mao, 2003) without having necessarily a tourist character. Currently, outdoor sports also play an important role in the orientation of tourist strategies in mountainous regions (Langenbach et al., 2017).

Outdoor sport tourism may be defined as a group of sporting activities carried out in a natural outdoor environment and undertaken in the context of a tourist trip (Celsi et al., 1993; Palmer, 2002; Buckley, 2006; Hallman et al., 2012). Thus, after several decades, following a process of the commercialisation of sporting products and services, outdoor sports have become standard consumption goods in which participants are prepared to invest financially (Corneloup & Bourdeau, 2004;

Margaryan & Fredman, 2017), demonstrating their integration into a 'consumer society' (Baudrillard, 1970). This was not the case initially when the principal motivating factor related to participating in a collective experience without any other commercial interest (Mao, 2003). Increasingly, outdoor sports give rise to other forms of expenditure which may be sports-related (for guides and instructors, for equipment and for entry fees) or tourist-related (accommodation, food and drink and transport, for example). As such, outdoor sports may be seen as tourist activities both in terms of the services consumed by tourists and of the trips they generate (Corneloup, 2005). Sports events, which have been studied in particular by a number of Anglo-Saxon researchers (Daniels et al., 2001; Chalip, 2004), illustrate this trend when they become tourist attractions. Thus, through tourism (Donald & Bergstrom, 1994; Archer, 1995; Decarnin, 1999; Hautbois et al., 2004; Manning, 2011), outdoor sports have contributed to the emergence of important challenges for territories which benefit from their location and development: challenges related to local management, economic impacts, the revitalisation of local development or the revival of an area's attractiveness for tourism. In relation to this last point, outdoor sports are one means of diversifying tourism in mountainous regions.

Two different professions for accompanying tourists in mountainous regions

The two professions discussed in this article, namely that of mountain guide and that of mountain leader, are both concerned with accompanying tourists in mountainous regions. They are differentiated, however, by their clientele, the different types of terrain that are used and the techniques employed to advance in these terrains, as well as by their history and organisation. The prerogatives attributed to mountain guides vary as much as the different terrains where they work. For the persons holding these rights they are able to: 1. Lead and accompany people on mountain excursions or climbs on snowy, rocky, icy or mixed terrains for ski touring, and provide technical instruction; 2. Accompany people in canyons (both vertical and aquatic), where special equipment is required, and instruct them in appropriate techniques. In Switzerland such guides obtain a Federal Diploma of High Mountain Guide whereas in France this qualification is known as a State Diploma in Mountaineering and High Mountain Guide. Regarding the mountain leaders they have the role of explaining the mountainous environment and its different milieus. They are professionals whose main aim is to allow the discovery of the natural, human and heritage elements of mountainous areas and to manage the itinerary, the impacts of visitors, the group and their safety (Beedie, 2003). In France, leaders were originally restricted to working below 1500 metres (SNAM, 2006 & 2009), but this is no longer the case, and in both countries, they are not allowed to accompany people on difficult terrains necessitating the use of special equipment such as ice axes or ropes or other mountaineering techniques. In Switzerland this corresponds with the qualification of a Federal Diploma of Mountain Leader and in France with that of a State Diploma as a Leader for mid-altitude mountainous regions.

These two professions "have achieved cross-border recognition of their professional awards" (Cousquer & Beames, 2013) with the creation of international unions or associations (IFMGA, International Federation of Mountain Guides Associations and UILMA, Union of International Mountain Leaders Associations) which maintain professional standards and provide appropriate training and assessments (Black & Ham, 2005).

Methodology

First, a socio-historical approach is adopted which relates to the manner in which these professions and the related actors have organised themselves over time. Second, the question is viewed from a geographical perspective with the aim of identifying the factors which explain the spatial distribution of these professions in Switzerland, especially in tourist regions, compared with France. Finally, a political approach is adopted, with reference to both France and Switzerland, which considers the role of public-sector policy and public-sector actions in the organisation of these professions. The economic dimension, which in this instance is linked principally to the tourist demand for the services of a guide or leader in outdoor sports, is not dealt with directly in this article. Very few statistics which measure this demand exist in either country. However, the spatial distribution of guides will be analysed from an economic perspective to explain the different location patterns (urban, rural, mountainous).

Three reasons lie behind the choice of comparing the case of Switzerland with neighbouring France. First, the two countries have experienced a very considerable growth of tourism from the 19th century, with similar development processes in spite of the each country's particular characteristics (Clivaz & George-Marcelpoil, 2015). Second, strong cross-border, socio-economic links exist between the two countries which lead to important tourist flows. Finally, the French case has the advantage of being well documented, offering a point of comparison to put into perspective the results from Switzerland.

In responding to our research question, use is made of both quantitative and qualitative data. In both Switzerland and France, the quantitative data come from different sources. These sources are only partially comparable, partly because the two countries have dissimilar forms of territorial organisation and partly because outdoor sports professions have not developed in the same way on either side of the border. In France, in order to be able to exercise such a profession, for several decades it has been necessary to register with the appropriate public authorities. As a result, national authorities in France (Ministry of Sport and departmental administrative services) maintain an exhaustive register of outdoor sports professionals and their location, whereas in Switzerland this requirement has only existed since 2014 with the application of the Federal law on mountain guides and the organisers of other high- risk sporting activities. This register is controlled by the Federal Office of Sport (OFSP). Given the recent character of the Office, other sources of Swiss data are analysed relating to the members of the association of Swiss mountain leaders (Association Suisse des Accompagnateurs en Montagne – ASAM) and the Swiss association of mountain guides (Association Suisse de guides de montagne – ASGM). Conversely, in France the role of associations of guides and leaders for mountain sports is often limited both quantitatively and spatially (accounting for around 30% of working guides; Langenbach, 2012). As a result, quantitative data provided by the Ministry of Sport (2012) are used for France rather than the figures given by the professional associations for outdoor sports. These data are used to analyse the territorial distribution of the two professions in Switzerland and in France.

Qualitative data are employed to study management policies and the organisation of the professions. Use is made of different documents relating to the profession of

guide for outdoor sports in Switzerland (monographs, ordinances, regulations, laws) as well as to research reports, notably surveys of the members of mountain guides and leaders associations both in Switzerland and France. Additionally, four semi-structured interviews were carried out in Switzerland with the national presidents of the ASAM and the ASGM, the president of the French-speaking Swiss Mountain Guides Association (Association Romande des Guides de Montagne) and an ASAM board member in charge of planning and development. These persons were chosen due to the functions they perform, enabling them to provide legitimate and informed comments on the situation in Switzerland. Each interview took place locally during the summer of 2017 and lasted for approximately an hour. The following themes were discussed: the role of the association in organising the activity; the links with local authorities and institutions; the position adopted by the association in relation to local regulations; the role in the training of guides and leaders; participation in the definition or negotiation of local regulations; the role in the training of guides and leaders or in relation to the organisations undertaking this training; policies for developing the extent to which the association is represented at a national level. These interviews were also used to complement and improve the understanding of secondary data.

Results and discussion

Historical evolution and nature of working practices

The professions of tourist guide or leader started to develop in both Switzerland and France from the first half of the 19th century (around 1830 in both countries). Originally the only profession which existed was that of mountain guide- someone who was capable of ensuring the safety and improving the technique of clients at high altitudes. Initially guides were often local inhabitants who took advantage of the emerging demand from tourists and people enjoying outdoor recreation in high altitude mountainous regions (de Bellefon, 2003; Gamper, 2008; Hungerbühler, 2013). It was in 1860 that the first teaching courses for guides were provided in Switzerland (Gamper, 2008) and in 1936 in France (de Bellefon, 2003). In contrast, the profession of mountain leader only appeared in the 1970s. Based on the diploma for mountain guides, a similar diploma authorising guides to accompany hikers in mid-altitude mountainous areas was created in 2011 in Switzerland, although in the canton of Valais this diploma had been recognised since the 1990s. In France this diploma was created in 1976 (SNGM, 2016). The aim was to establish the profession of guide specific to mid-altitude regions (mountain leader) without imposing the requirements of a high- altitude guide who, in particular, has to have the technical skills to work in difficult terrains using ropes.

In Switzerland the professions of mountain guide and leader are generally organised under an umbrella structure, the ASGM, although in the year 2000 a similar organisation was set up for hiking only (ASAM). Initially the ASGM was opposed to the integration of mountain leaders into its midst, but it finally decided in 2008 to allow them to become members and created a specific training programme for this profession. The challenge for the ASGM was not to cut itself off from these new professions such as mountain leader or rock-climbing instructor which reflected a growing demand from clients. For the last 10 years, mountain leaders can be trained

by both the ASGM and the ASAM. The mountain leader can be a member of either of these associations which both represent them at a national level; the ASGM also intervenes on behalf of guides specialised in mountaineering and climbing. Basically the ASAM is differentiated by its strong focus on mountain leaders and the various issues which concern this profession (such as an awareness of the natural environment, better knowledge of the employment market and professional opportunities and an understanding of the diversity and complexity of the territories in which they work). In contrast, the ASGM integrates the mountain leaders within the field of mountain guides so as to offer a wider range of training possibilities. This policy still exists, as training to be a mountain guide continues to be the principal means by which to become both a guide and a leader in mountainous regions (Hungerbühler, 2013), despite the fact that a separate diploma for mountain leaders exists since 2011.

In France, the profession of mountain leader is no longer associated with mountaineering, both in terms of the training required and membership of associations. This separation was the result of a process which began in the 1970s and which recognised the specific socio-cultural and spatial characteristics (in particular, the different natural and working environments at lower altitudes) of accompanying hikers compared with mountaineers. It also resulted from a political process related to the decision by the delegated professional federation, la Fédération Française de la Montagne et de l'Escalade, to give specific recognition to this activity (Bourdeau, 1991). Consequently, the two professions of mountain guide and mountain leader are at present quite separate (since 1976) in terms of training programmes, related associations, prerogatives or socio-professional profiles. As part of its official functions, the State is responsible for the training of professional mountain guides and leaders (at the "Ecole Nationale de Ski et d'Alpinisme" and in the "Centres Régionaux d'Education Physique et Sportive"). Membership of a professional association, either the Syndicat National des Guides de Montagne (SNGM) or the Syndicat National des Accompagnateurs en Montagne (SNAM) occurs once the professional activity has commenced and is related to various personal objectives. In France it is not mandatory to belong to an association, but membership illustrates a willingness on the part of members to participate in the organisation of the profession and in related debates (Langenbach, 2012).

Several forms of employment status exist for guides who are defined as entrepreneurs by (Bouhaouala, 2008) : a) as a self-employed person who bills his clients occasionally or regularly for his services or b) an employee of a firm (including very small firms and micro-enterprises) specialising in outdoor sporting and leisure activities on a full or part- time basis or c) as the manager of a leisure-sports firm for which the person may or may not be a salaried employee depending on the firm's financial and legal situation.. The professional status of people and companies working in outdoor leisure sports is therefore particularly heterogeneous and illustrates the structural complexity in which jobs in this sector evolve. These differences are purely qualitative as the entrepreneurs all participate in their respective branches but with varying incomes and lengths of contract (for example, for just a season or for the whole year). The market for guides fluctuates considerably in relation to the creation, the closure or the changing locations of firms (Bouhaouala, 2008). The guides and their firms are often the same entities. Overall, they represent highly flexible structures capable of adapting themselves to the local demand for outdoor sports activities

(Cuvelier et al., 1994). In Switzerland, according to the most recent survey made by the ASGM (2004), 58% of mountain guides are self-employed, 28% are self-employed but are members of a 'company of guides', and 7% are employees (7% of the persons interviewed did not reply to this question). In France the situation is very similar, even if the percentage of self-employed guides is less than in Switzerland: 43% of mountain guides are self-employed, 33% are members of a 'company of guides', and 18% are self-employed but also members of a 'guide company' for which they work part-time and only 6% are employees (SNGM, 2016). Overall, rope-based sports (rock climbing, mountaineering, canyoning or caving) are outdoor sports in which a large number of self-employed professionals work both in Switzerland and in France (SNAPEC, 2010; ASGM, 2004; SNGM, 2016). As far as mountain leaders are concerned, no studies exist either in Switzerland or France concerning their work status.

Guides and leaders for outdoor sports work in different systems, whether this is within a club, an informal association or in relation to a private commercial transaction (Mao, 2003). For the individual or group client, the service provided by the guide or the leader is designed to offer a means by which to participate in activities which, from a sporting or technical perspective, are perceived as being complex. Based on the model of mountain guides (de Bellefon, 2003), this service allows the client to progress in safety and to be guided in the discovery of an otherwise inaccessible natural environment. In France, it is estimated that guides for hiking or for climbing employed by clubs or for school groups are of only marginal importance, accounting for only 20-30% of the market (Langenbach, 2012; Mao, 2003); in contrast, the majority of activity in a year relates to strictly commercial transactions where the clients are tourists. In Switzerland this pattern is even more accentuated since the Swiss Federal Office of Sport has set up a special programme (J+S) offering a relevant diploma and financial assistance for guides to supervise clubs and school groups. As a result, guides (for the two sports studied here) work almost entirely with a paying public (ASGM, 2004). Finally, both in Switzerland and France, tourists are the main clients of mountain guides, representing around 95% of the total (ASGM, 2004; SNGM, 2016).

Mountaineering and hiking clearly have a pleasurable and challenging character and they also correspond with a form of tourism through their capacity to generate trips and stays within mountainous regions (Weiler & Black, 2015). It is for this reason that mountain guides and leaders are at the centre of the economic system of outdoor sport tourism (Langenbach, 2012). In this context, the creation of a structured profession of mountain guides occurred in Switzerland before it did in France, favoured by the earlier development of professional training programmes; this also led in Switzerland to the earlier emergence and growth of economic activities based around mountaineering. However, the mountain guide profession became more diversified in France (from the 1970s) before this took place in Switzerland (in the years after 2000), essentially through the growth in the number of mountain leaders. This reflected the fact that in mountainous regions local tourist and sports activities were no longer only structured around mountaineering but also around hiking both at lower altitudes and in rural areas.

Location of professionals working in outdoor sports

In relation to the services they provide, the location of professional guides in outdoor sports can be used as an indicator to identify spatial relationships, and therefore interactions, particularly within the tourist economy or with local populations. (Langenbach, 2012).

The location of mountain guides and mountain leaders in Switzerland

Between the two data sources (OFSPPO and associations), there is little difference in the number of mountain guides (around 10%) but for the mountain leaders there can be a difference of two to one. In Switzerland, associations/unions representing outdoor sports professionals are therefore a major force, with the number of members being in fact greater than the number of persons officially authorised to work in this sector according to the OFSPPO register; this is particularly the case for mountain leaders. The associations explain this difference due to the number of 'passive' members who pay their subscription but no longer work or work only on a limited scale (mountain guides or mountain leaders who declare an annual income of less than 2300 Swiss francs are not required to register with the OFSPPO). Using data from the OFSPPO, the spatial distribution of mountain guides, illustrated in Figure 1, shows a strong concentration in the alpine cantons of Valais, Berne and Grisons. Urban cantons, lacking mountainous relief, such as Zurich, Argovie and Geneva, also have a certain number of guides. As stated in the interviews, this latter trend is explained in part by guides preferring to live in urban areas, allied to the fact that by locating near major centres of population they are also close to potential clients. In the case of Geneva, guides notably sell their services to relatively wealthy clients working in professions such as banking or in international organisations. They also benefit from the fact that Geneva is easily accessible for foreign clients (by car, train or plane) and that it is close to the Alps, to Chamonix and, in particular, to Mont-Blanc. Generally, guides are highly mobile, using especially airports of large cities; as such they can be recruited through travel agencies or specialised offices (which work on behalf of several guides) or through their own firm located in city centres by urban clients who are themselves also mobile (Beedie, 2003).

As indicated previously, mountain guides work almost exclusively for the tourist market (Beedie, 2003; ASGM, 2004; SNGM, 2016). Thus, alpine cantons are the historical locations for this profession and it is in these territories that guides grouped together in regional associations from the beginning of the 20th century (Gamper, 2008). However, the Italian-speaking canton of Tessin, which is also largely mountainous, does not correspond with this model because there are fewer unionised professionals than in the rest of the Alps. This last characteristic relates to a cultural and social factor as the regional association of guides is more recent and smaller in size than elsewhere (Gamper, 2008; Hungerbühler, 2013). In addition, the number of guides who are authorised to practice in the Tessin is smaller than that of the members of the ASGM. This difference, as already demonstrated, is due essentially to the presence of non-active members who belong by habit or to support the association or union but no longer work for payment and therefore do not request an authorisation. This situation also exists in the cantons of Vaud, Fribourg, Zurich and Argovie. In contrast, in the cantons of Valais or Berne there are more authorised guides than guides who are members of the ASGM; this may be explained principally by the large number of foreign guides who are allowed officially to work locally in Switzerland. Finally, the strong concentration of guides in the Valais, at Berne and in the Grisons highlights the existence over several decades of an organised supply of guides through local and private associative structures (offices or companies of guides, cantonal associations of mountain guides).

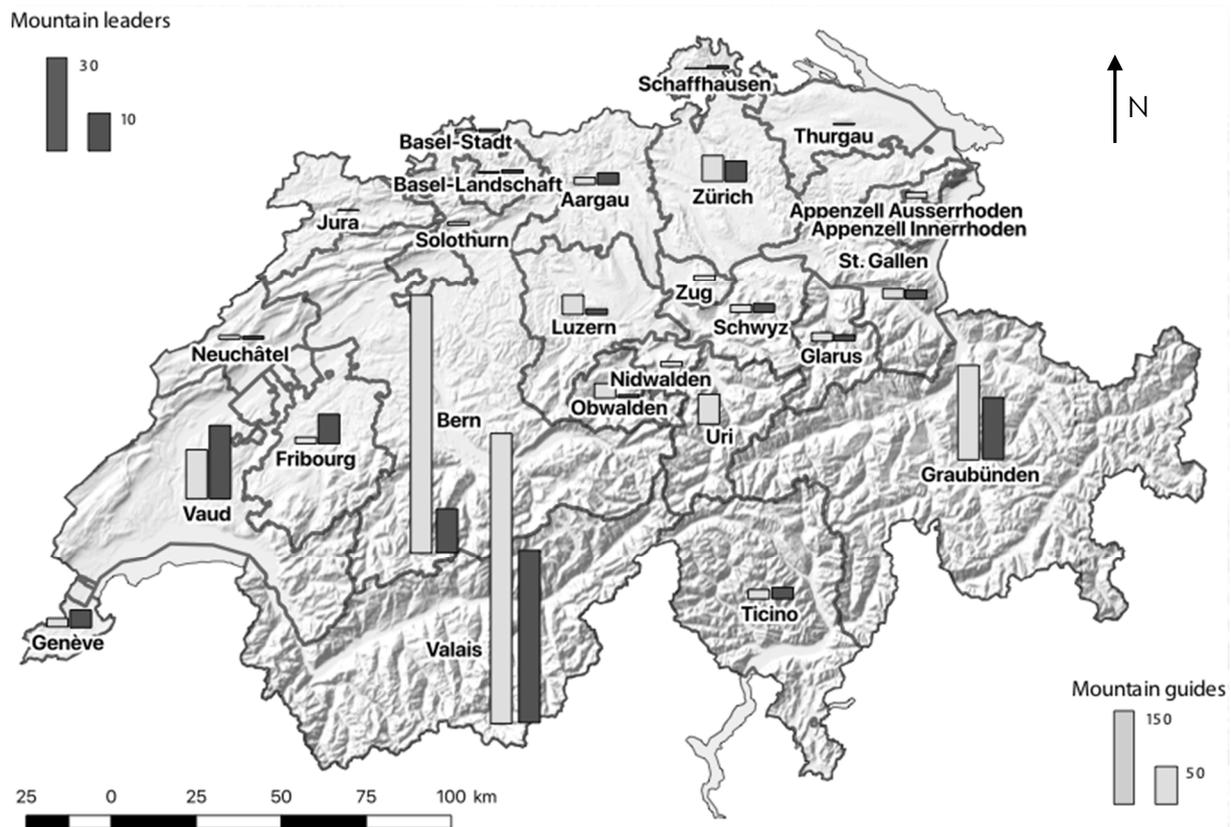


Figure 1: The location of mountain guides and mountain leaders in Switzerland, OFSPO registered, 2017

In the case of mountain leaders, an over-representation of professionals in mountainous regions is also evident. However, there are exceptions to this general trend, notably in the canton of Tessin where there are relatively few mountain leaders. This again probably underlines the importance of cultural factors, linked to the canton's language, as well as to local and political influences which illustrate both the low level of membership of the association and the weak collective organisation of this activity. The leaders are also limited in number in the eastern part of Switzerland despite it being a relatively densely populated and mountainous region. Here the explanation relates to the fact that the ASAM has only existed since the 2000s, that it was originally created in the western French speaking part of Switzerland and that the willingness of the association to establish itself in other parts of the country only dates from around 2010. The language barrier, related to the fact that the main language of the ASAM is French, also seems to be a factor in the German-speaking cantons in the north and east of the country. In the vast majority of cantons, the number of unionised mountain leaders is double that of the mountain guides having an OFSPO authorisation, a situation explained again by the particularly important number of non-active members. This confirms the fact that the job of mountain leader often supplements another principal professional activity having either a seasonal or annual character.

Finally, it is possible to identify certain similarities in the geographical distribution of mountain guides and mountain leaders in Switzerland: a strong presence in mountainous territories as well as close to certain urban centres (Berne, Zurich,

Geneva, Lausanne) and, in contrast, a weak representation in the German-speaking cantons. These professionals are also located in relation to the tourist economy and its principal centres of activity in mountain resorts as well as with respect to groups of highly mobile clients who are found in urban areas. The location close to or indeed at the centre of mountain resorts and the tourist economy confirms the fact that outdoor sports are tourist products and that the professional guides are entrepreneurs integrated into the system of tourism production.

The location of mountain guides and mountain leaders in France

In France the spatial distribution of mountain guides is quite different from that of mountain leaders (Figure 2). Overall, there are far more mountain leaders than mountain guides in the majority of French departments. First, mountain guides are particularly present in the mountainous department of Haute-Savoie, in which is situated notably the Mont Blanc massif, and to a lesser degree in the similar departments of Savoie, Isère and Hautes-Alpes. However, in contrast to Switzerland, mountain guides are not found in urban departments such as the Rhône. Second, with respect to mountain leaders, they are widely located in mountainous departments, again with a peak in Haute-Savoie. They also have a strong presence in other departments, especially in rural areas such as the Ardèche and the Drôme. However, the importance of their location throughout the Alps and also generally in the Massif Central demonstrates the tourist character of the services proposed by mountain leaders in France.

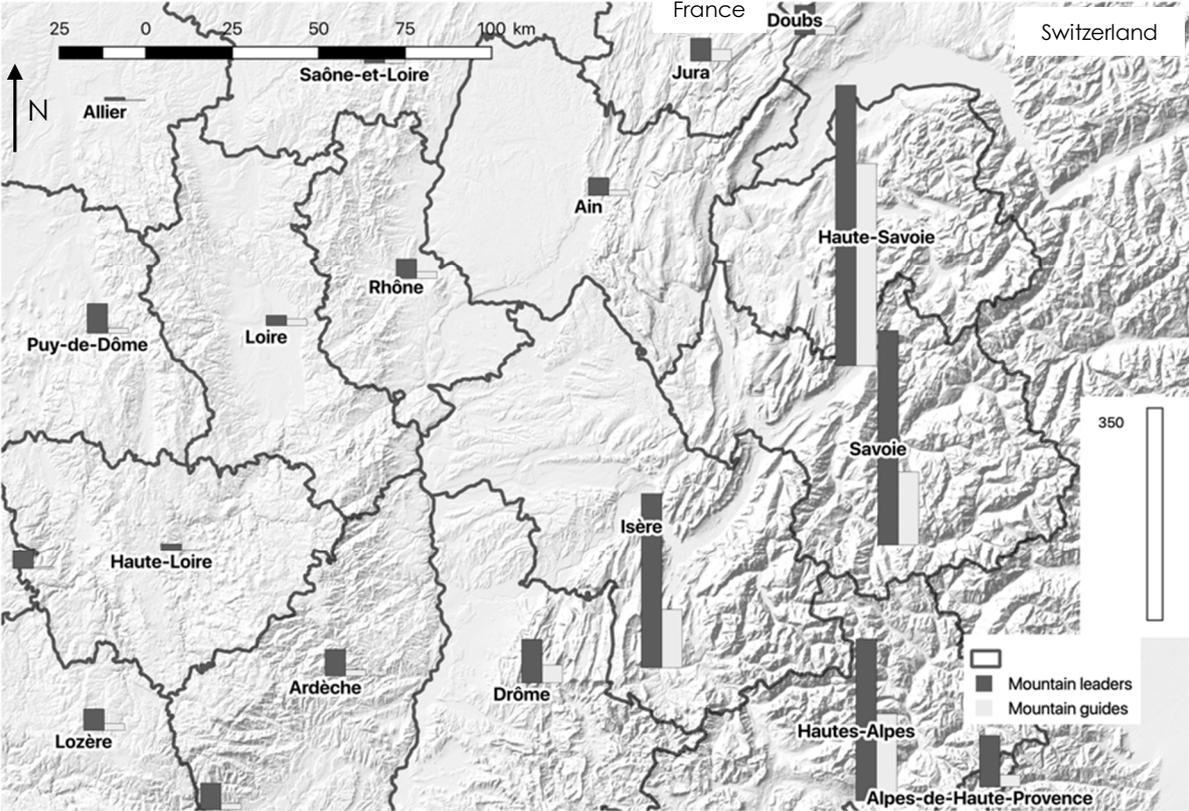


Figure 2: The location of mountain leaders and mountain guides in the French alpine departments bordering Switzerland in 2012

Comparing the location of mountain guides in Switzerland and neighbouring French regions leads to the following conclusion. Whereas in Switzerland guides are widely present in mountainous territories, linked to a typical mountain, tourist economy centred particularly on winter sports resorts, in France they appear limited only to high- mountain regions and mountaineering. This difference between the two countries may be explained by the fact that large urban centres are closer to the mountainous regions in Switzerland than in France and that it is therefore easier for Swiss guides to reach the areas where they work from these towns. In terms of the services provided by mountain guides, working patterns are similar in the two countries: 26% in mountaineering (summer), 35% in ski touring, ski mountaineering or heliskiing (only authorised in Switzerland); 14% in climbing and the remaining 25% represented by very marginal activities (1-5% in each case) such as construction work requiring acrobatic skills or ropes, ice climbing, rescue work or company outings (ASGM, 2004; SNGM, 2016). As for the comparison of the spatial distributions of mountain leaders between the two countries, it emphasises the role that this profession has played in the development of various outdoor sports and tourism. This is evident in terms of the services leaders provide (ranging, for example, from hiking, including trail-running, to the use of snowshoes), the types of territory which are concerned (not only mountainous areas, historically centred on mountain resorts, but also rural and peripheral urban regions) and indeed the professional employment opportunities. The training courses for mountain guide offer a wide range of potential jobs or professional career paths.

A further major difference exists between Switzerland and France. On the French side of the border, there are more mountain leaders than mountain guides whereas on the Swiss side the opposite situation exists. This may be explained by the youthfulness of the profession of mountain leader in Switzerland and by the way in which it is structured. In reality, the relations between Swiss mountain guides and winter sports resorts have developed within the spatial, commercial and political context of the resort (Bridel et al., 1980; Berwert et al., 2007; Crédit Suisse, 2011) whereas in the case of French guides, these links exist not only in the resorts but also with the surrounding rural territories (Mao, 2003). As a result, one of the first differences concerns the commercial characteristics of this activity in Switzerland (Lundeberg et al., 2014; Deale, 2016), notably in terms of its integration into local tourist systems (Hautbois et al., 2004; Weed & Bull, 2009) or its relationship with public-sector policy: historically in Switzerland outdoor sports have been far less structured and controlled than in France (Clivaz & Langenbach, 2017).

Public policies for outdoor sports

The development of outdoor sports has been regulated by various legal provisions, whether for reasons related to safety and environmental impacts or to stimulating the economy. This public-sector regulation affects outdoor sports that are not related to tourism but the tourist character of many of these activities has often increased the necessity for public intervention due to the large number of participants in tourist areas. Such intense use has implications for environmental damage, the risks of accidents which can harm the image of a tourist destination or for the maximisation of tourism benefits for 'peripheral' territories. The history of concerted, collective management is relatively short with regards to mountain leaders but longer for

mountain guides. It illustrates the processes which are at work (the setting up of management bodies, adoption of environmental regulations, and control of commercial activities) in the emergence of these forms of recreation and their related markets.

The regulatory framework in Switzerland

In order to regulate certain outdoor sports activities in Switzerland, a Federal law was passed concerning trails and hiking paths which became operative on the 1st January 1987. This law attributed the responsibility for the upkeep of a co-ordinated and coherent network of footpaths to the different cantons. This network offers a privileged infrastructure for tourism, notably in the summer, with the aim of increasing the number of walkers. Such an infrastructure is also an advantage for mountain leaders and it is useful as well for mountain guides to gain access to their working terrains.

Public intervention in the tourist sector in Switzerland is characterised by the principle of 'double subsidiarity'. Consistent with this idea, the public sector only intervenes if the private sector cannot manage the situation; the federal level only intervenes if the question cannot be resolved at the level of the canton and the canton only if the problem cannot be treated by the commune (Tobler, 1981). Thus, over a long period the Swiss authorities have been reticent to intervene to regulate the emergence and development of outdoor sports, preferring to leave this to the canton or to actors in the private sector (associations or commercial activities). It is only recently, following a serious canyoning accident in 1999 leading to the death of 21 people (most of whom were Australian or New Zealand tourists), that the question of the necessity to regulate (or not) sporting activities with a high level of risk became part of the political agenda at a national level. Following this accident, a long parliamentary process began which lasted for a decade and opposed those supporters of State intervention with those who favoured the auto-regulation of the sector. The Swiss government figured amongst this latter group; it did not see the need for national regulation on this subject given legislation already existing at the level of the canton and the efficient system of auto-regulation which it considered was in place for this branch of activity. On this point, the Swiss government proposed soliciting the 'Safety in Adventures' foundation which offers a possibility of certification for service providers of activities involving risk. Finally, however, in December 2010, a majority of parliamentary members, against the advice of the government, voted a Federal Law concerning "Mountain guides and the organisers of other activities involving risk". This law became effective on 1st January, 2014. It set out a list of professions affected by this legislation including mountain guides and mountain leaders. At the same time, it established the obligation for professionals to obtain an official authorisation to carry out their profession as well as to have civil liability insurance adapted to the nature and extent of the risks. The authorisation is only granted if the person requesting it has the appropriate training and it has to be renewed periodically. The law also envisions the possibility for cantons to limit access to certain zones for reasons linked to the protection of the environment and water resources. However, the application of this measure has caused tensions because, for certain mountain guides and mountain leaders, it sometimes implies the impossibility to use their customary terrains. Nevertheless, no sooner had this law been enacted, than it was challenged on two occasions by the Swiss government. In

2015 and 2016, in the context of economy measures aimed to cut government expenditure, it proposed quite simply to repeal the law so as to economise the 150,000 Swiss francs that the application of this law cost each year. Following an outcry from professionals of this branch and the main cantons concerned, a majority of the members of parliament refused to support the proposals of the Swiss government and decided to maintain the law.

The regulatory framework in France

In the years since 2000, France has possessed the means by which to ensure the local management of outdoor sports. This results in part from the recognition that outdoor sports have strong environmental and economic impacts on the territories where they are located and are the cause of conflicts relating to the use of these areas; this might concern, for example, who is responsible in case of an accident (the landowner or the person engaged in the activity?) or conflicts between several different user groups within an area (Mermet & Moquay, 2002). The original 'Departmental plan for walking and hiking routes' (Plan Départemental des Itinéraires de Promenade et de Randonnée – PDIPR) which only took into account walkers and hikers, has been replaced by the 'Departmental plan for spaces, sites and itineraries related to outdoor sports (Plan Départemental des Espaces, Sites et Itinéraires des sports de nature – PDESI), associated with a Departmental Commission (Commission Départementale des Espaces, Sites et Itinéraires des sports de nature – CDESI) (Vitte, 1998; De Witte, 2001). The aim is to create the conditions to enable widespread consultation on the development of outdoor physical and sporting activities (Mao & Reymbaut, 2005). The CDESI are required to organise this consultation to accompany the development of outdoor sports within the areas in which they are located. In addition, these departmental commissions must take into account the particular territorial characteristics of each area or site: the issues are identified by the plurality of actors comprising the CDESI. A territorial assessment of outdoor sports is a pre-requisite to the setting up of this Commission. The challenge is to accompany as closely as possible the legitimate aspirations of people undertaking outdoor sports as these sports develop, taking into account at the same time the fundamental notion of the sustainable development of territories. This regulatory framework has led to the emergence of 'consultation spaces' (both formal and informal) between the different actors of sport tourism (Wipf, 2012).

Since 2000 only certain French Departments have positioned themselves in relation to the creation of a CDESI. Thus, if in some cases a CDESI now exists and functions regularly and efficiently, in other instances its creation has only simply been voted. These differences are explained in part by the markedly different political and historical contexts of French Departments in the field of territorial planning and the development of tourism and sport; they are explained as well by the local social complexities of relations between public and semi-public bodies and the various stakeholders involved in outdoor sports (Wipf, 2012; Langenbach, 2012). Among the members of the CDESI, only a minority have links with outdoor sports, notably the unions representing hirers of equipment or guides and leaders. The great majority of members, such as delegated federations, local authorities, or government services, have only a marginal link with the economic and tourist aspects of outdoor sports. Nevertheless, the CDESI remains the principal means by which territories manage

outdoor sports and it is through this commission that a local authority can anticipate and then control the effects of this economic activity on its territory.

In France, therefore, the national and local regulatory framework is now stabilised, notably due to the CDEIs with which outdoor sports' professionals are associated. However, this has not prevented difficulties in setting up these bodies in certain departments. In Switzerland the situation is different to the extent that the national regulatory framework is more recent and subject to recurrent attempts to modify it, as demonstrated by the two recent attempts of the Swiss government to rescind the law. The organisation of outdoor sports in Switzerland and the important role played by associations (ASAM, ASGM) are linked to the country's federal character, its culture and a history of greater liberalism than in France. This shows that outdoor sports professionals are aware that they are moulding an important local branch of activity in mountainous regions which brings together a range of closely related pursuits and professional actors, notably in matters of security and commodification.

The results presented in this article are also characterised by certain limits. First, it was not possible to use statistics for exactly the same time periods in Switzerland and in France. Second, the territorial units (cantons in Switzerland¹ and departments and regions in France²) have different sizes, complicating comparisons between the two countries. Finally, the sample used for the interviews is relatively limited due to the difficulty in finding people willing to be interviewed and to the high turnover of managers within the organisations which were relevant to the study.

Conclusion

The aim throughout this article has been to study the processes which in Switzerland, in a tourism context, have contributed to the organisation of the professions of mountain guide and leader and to compare this with the situation in France. It has been shown that in the case of Switzerland a number of particular socio-historic, spatial and regulatory characteristics enable a better understanding of the tourist, territorial and political organisation of these professions. First, there is a different pattern of historical development in Switzerland and France. If, on both sides of the frontier, these professions emerged at roughly the same time, a period of modernisation followed during which the two countries did not evolve at the same rhythm; in France professional diplomas, as well as bodies representing mountain guides, as well as related regulatory measures, were all established earlier. The professions of mountain guide and mountain leader have only recently become separate entities in Switzerland whereas in France this situation has existed for nearly four decades. The socio-historic process, therefore, has resulted in a contrasted pattern of development. In Switzerland this activity is characterised by the omnipresence of the mountain guide both in relation to local tourist and sporting products and in terms of professional job opportunities in outdoor sports. The profession of mountain leader has only recently developed and as yet it does not generally provide year-round employment at a local level. By contrast, in France there exists a richer series of training courses, leading to a multiplication of professional outlets as well as to a wider range of tourist products (mountaineering, hiking, snow rackets and trail running, for example) and their integration into local tourist and sporting products.

Subsequently, the spatial distribution of the different professions shows that for Switzerland a strong correlation exists between the location of mountain guides and mountain resorts as well as, to a lesser degree, urban centres. In the case of mountain leaders, their distribution underlines the youthfulness of this profession as well as the secondary status of this activity. In contrast, the location of these professionals in France clearly illustrates their link with tourism, with a distribution organised around either elitist forms of tourism, associated with mountaineering and high-mountain regions, or based on mountain leaders in areas of diffuse or concentrated rural tourism. Thus, the market for mountain leaders appears relatively well developed and widely spread in France (whether it be in rural, mountainous or urban territories), whereas its development in Switzerland is still characterised by many areas where the number of mountain leaders is still limited. In contrast, mountain guides have a more uniform distribution throughout Switzerland (both close to the sources of demand, in urban or mountainous zones and close to areas where guides undertake their activities); in France the greater distances between major urban centres and the main high mountain regions means that possibilities to develop further the profession in relation to demand from urban clients still exist.

In terms of the regulatory framework, it has been shown that two factors characterise Switzerland – the strength of a liberal ideology and the importance of federalism. The first of these factors favours the self-regulation of the outdoor sports sector rather than the intervention of public authorities, whereas the result of the second is a desire to maintain a maximum level of decision-making in the communes and cantons. These two characteristics explain why for a long time no national regulation was introduced to oversee outdoor sports. It is only recently that this resistance to government intervention has been removed following different accidents leading to the death of foreign tourists who were taking part in outdoor sports, undermining the image of Switzerland as a safe country for tourism. These particularities stand out even more if the country is compared with a centralised state such as France where the different branches of outdoor sports have been organised at a national level for a long time. Furthermore, it has been shown that in Switzerland the associations representing outdoor sports professionals (ASGM and ASAM) were built originally on the basis of a federation of cantonal associations to create a platform for exchanges between professionals and to ensure a uniform standard of training. In contrast, in France these professional associations have tended to act as unions, playing an active role in different management bodies both locally (notably the CDESI) as well as nationally (particularly in relation to training requirements and standards).

For the future, if the ASGM and the ASAM wish to represent Swiss mountain guides and leaders effectively, they need to concern themselves with the extent to which they are representative at a national level by overcoming the divisions between the country's different linguistic regions. Their representativeness also necessitates making a population of professionals, used to working on their own and unused to the need for lobbying, aware of the importance of acting collectively. In this context, for example, it is essential to work together to demonstrate a high level of quality and homogeneity, both at a regional and national level, of the services provided by Swiss guides. Originally self-organised and then regulated and overseen by public-sector policies in the period after the year 2000, outdoor sports professions are now at the centre of local tourist activities in Swiss mountainous regions. On this basis, and in the context of a planned, sustainable tourist development in these territories, certain changes seem likely in the future. The regulatory framework could become a means

to stabilize different types of activities related to tourist guides, including the planning of outdoor sports sites as is the case in France.

Finally, regarding further research perspectives, it would be interesting to follow up this research by case studies of different Swiss tourist regions to enable a more accurate understanding of the way in which mountain guides and leaders have developed the services they provide for tourists. This would also make it possible to study the types of relationship (co-operation, indifference, conflict) that exist with other private-sector service providers as well as with government authorities in the process of integration into the local tourist system. It would be equally interesting to widen the comparison to other mountainous regions, and in particular within alpine countries, which share with Switzerland and France a long tradition of accompanying tourists in such areas.

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