

**Popularising vacationing and trade-union politics.
The railway men's holiday home. A Swiss case study, 1890–1930**

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Introduction

At the end of the 19th century, Switzerland had a highly developed tourist industry. Furthermore, the country as such had become a consumable product and a model that was to be copied all over the world¹. Consumers of this product almost exclusively were foreigners. Guests from the English upper and middle classes, combined with the rise of travel organisations like Thomas Cook, played a role in developing the infrastructure, but German and French visitors were equally important, at least in terms of arrivals². In contrast, Swiss guests rarely turned up in the home hotel-market. The statistic evidence is, of course, to be considered with care since it is based on hotels associated with the Swiss Federation of hoteliers (*Schweizerischer Hotelier-Verein*), an alliance of mostly big and luxurious enterprises. Therefore these data tend to overestimate the highly qualified tourism of wealthy foreigners whilst covering only part of the smaller hotels or boarding houses where we may expect domestic guests coming from a broader social range. There is indeed much evidence of a slowly growing practice of (annual) vacations among civil servants, clerks and a presumably restricted number of blue-collar workers in the last two decades of the 19th century. This goes along with a widespread articulation of a need for holidays, arguing with popularised knowledge in physiology and hygiene, mixed up with moral messages, and anchored in a traditional value system of popular and elite culture. Industrial entrepreneurs and mill inspectors as well as organised civil servants and some doctors became the protagonists promoting a need for vacationing and, hand in hand, confirming certain rules and boundaries of behaviour that was assumed new for most of the future holidaymakers. Still it has to be emphasised that vacationing for the Swiss remained on a restricted level, quite different e. g. from the early and powerful development in Britain³. There was no “Blackpool” in Switzerland, and one may suppose that the elite orientation of the home tourist market rather played a restricting than encouraging role for the popularising of vacationing.

This is the context of the following case study. It is concerned with the founding of a holiday home for Swiss railway men and their families in the 1890s as well as with the experiences made up until the end of the 1920s. In Switzerland this seems to have been the first attempt of a social group defined by occupation or more precisely, by its working place, to run a boarding house on its own. But not only this pioneer role is of interest. What makes the case stimulating, is both the social heterogeneity of this group, reaching from well-off white collar officials to common workers, and the emphasis railway men placed on presumably shared social conditions and a common identity related to the working place. The shared burden of labour was, at least at the turn of the century, an essential point in their arguing for the need of rest and recreation. As we shall see, the case of the Swiss railway men and their families is a sort of microcosm and offers insights into the middle and lower classes of Swiss society⁴.

“Construction of a need”, to comment on this expression, refers to the perspectives this paper attempts to pursue. Construction has become a fashionable term in German historiography since the so-called *cultural turn*, a label applied to a wide range of historical work based on an equal variety of cultural theories⁵. Construction, mostly accompanied by *cultural* or *social*, mainly seeks to underline that what we perceive as reality is not naturally given. It indicates reflection about the modalities and limits of our perceptions and understanding, and it is not to say, as unfortunately some adepts and critics

interpreted, that reality does not exist. Construction therefore will be used in the following as a term reflecting the negotiation of a certain behaviour – vacationing – as much as its practise, its meanings and its interpretation for a social group. Furthermore, negotiations of this kind are essentially seen as struggles, as negotiated constructions, where social groups are not simply instructed or indoctrinated from a hegemonic or dominant position of meaning (presented in the mass media or elsewhere), instead playing an active part in an ongoing process of consent-finding⁶. These are essentially cultural processes playing an important role in the finding of identities for a social group allowing it to be different from others. “Culture” in this sense “is not usefully regarded as a substance but is better regarded as a dimension of phenomena”, to use the words of Arjun Appadurai⁷. Apart from this, the popularisation of vacationing involves another dimension of culture: the traditional value system, dividing elite and popular culture, putting the first over the latter, proves to be a predominant orientation in the interpretation and evaluation of holiday practise.

The following case study allows a close look at such negotiations and interpretations, swaying between bourgeois and hegemonic cultural values, the tourist market of the time on one hand, and the claim to build up a self-defined and somehow different – but nevertheless representative and accepted – place of ones own in society and market. In the broader context of the history of leisure and tourism, this case study asks about the evolution of vacationing and especially the construction of a need for vacationing in the sense of an annual or regular break and its popularisation. It conceives vacationing essentially in the context of everyday-life whereas tourism is taken essentially as offering a mode of consumption. This is to introduce a difference between “holidaymaking/vacationing” and “tourism/travel” which is not quite familiar in the history of tourism. Indeed, it seems inevitable not to take holiday and tourism for one, in order to question the relation between the two. The wish to participate in the new behaviour of vacationing should not be assumed as given, we should rather ask what could have made vacationing a meaningful thing for people to do who didn’t practise this before nor felt a need to.

These processes of change were accompanied by the introduction and broadening of new knowledge in order to legitimate new forms of behaviour and to open up the way for the articulation of new needs. Articulating such “new” needs involves efforts of different actors. Among them we can perceive a certain type of expert in a mediators capacity: persons who participated and intervened in fields of knowledge and practice, of production and consumption. This group includes figures as widely apart as official factory inspectors, travel organisers and also trade-union functionaries. Actors like these in some way invented holidays by creating interpretations of a general idea, thus providing models to turn holidays into a meaningful thing for one self or for others. It was they who produced, as Corbin tells us, most documents historians of leisure history can find today. We therefore tend to overestimate “rational” recreation, but we also have the chance to read them as opinion-makers in a contested field. This is a further aspect of popularisation that will be illustrated in the following, discussing the means and aims of Swiss railway employees providing holiday accommodations for their likes.

The paradise for railway men

In spring 1895 the weekly periodical of the Swiss railway trade unions opened its columns to a member urgently calling for an appropriate place to stay for a recreation period, denoting this stay both a cure and a holiday. What should such a place look like, and why should it be impossible to find one on the already existing market, which was expanding rapidly at the period? The author pointed mainly to a certain disparity between the possibilities open to the upper classes and those accessible for the “middle classes, for lower white collar workers and the lot of hard pressed people in need of recreation”.⁸ Convenient places for the latter should be very simple locations without the “strange luxury as it has become fashionable”, lately driving even plain pensions to introduce “strange customs and traditions”. Those were not the places where people could truly live according to the “doctor’s universal recipe to ‘relax’ [*Ausspannen*] or to ‘refresh’ the ‘working machine’.” Therefore the persons in real need of

recreation were looking for a very modest place, the author argued, and outlined his vision as follows: “A simple block-house high in the Alps where the cows are at home and where the children frolic around with the cattle; a housemother, who knows her guests real needs and what is troubling them; simple home cooking [*Bürgerkost*] with bread and butter [*Schmalzwecken*], stewed fruit and potatoes [*Schnitz und Erdäpfel*], and for the little ones milk fresh from the cow, and all of this enriched with good humour that will come by itself [...]. This is the recipe of a cure as a considerable number of people would like it.”

This vision – at first sight – plays on a well-known critique of the development of the Swiss tourist industry. At the end of the 19th century it was common place to complain about the luxurious style of the famous bathing resorts, distracting from their real purpose as a place of health⁹. Furthermore we find an overtly hostile attitude towards the great number of visitors from abroad, which the hotelkeepers still regarded as the true and main basis of their business. Taken like this, our author complains about the standard of the Swiss tourist market and its catering to a socially high rank clientele. To support this argument, a moralistic view is introduced, contrasting the recreation need caused and legitimated by work against the behaviour of the leisure classes, motivated by the need for luxury. Ordinary places for ordinary people? Yes, but this might also be interpreted in a different way: The vision of the simple block house or farmer’s hut places itself into a very old longing for a simpler life, as e.g. Orvar Löfgren has insisted on recently¹⁰. The vision of the simple hut fits perfectly into the dream of this kind of Robinsonian life, it is an articulation within the cottage culture tradition. According to Löfgren this yearning for a simple and easy summer life goes back at least to the 17th century and was a truly elitist project. Essentially it consisted of the idea of “getting away from it all”, to stay in one place, together with one’s family or friends, a sort of cocooning and concentrating on the personal world rather than discover new horizons. Shortly, behaviour in the tradition of the “*villégiature*”, preferred by people who normally lived safely and comfortably in urban settings, therefore conceiving as a welcome change what might be regarded as a break from the constraints of civilisation.

Unfortunately it rapidly turned out, that our author could not even convince his fellow trade unionists with his vision of a simple holiday life, which supposedly was the yearning of many people. Their vision of an appropriate holiday home focussed on a respectable middle-class guesthouse and a diet conforming to a “modern view”. By this they referred to the protein dogma introduced in the second half of the 19th century, that by the time had become widely popularised and had deeply altered eating habits. A “modern” menu, according to this, should mainly consist of meat and milk in sufficient and – as we shall see – even extravagant quantities. The proposed simple menu from this viewpoint did not look “modern” at all, but rather carried notions of poverty and the backwoods. “The modern human being leaving his own four walls wants a better life than at home”, critics argued¹¹. During the discussion within the pioneer group the dissociation from the leisure of the luxury class was turned into one from the restricted leisure facilities of the underprivileged and poor.

Moreover this simple diet was clearly associated with a newcomer amongst tourist regions, the Toggenburg, located in the northeast of Switzerland. Innkeepers and active tourist boards in this region had realised that their only chance in an already well developed tourist country with a rather high price level was to concentrate on the new vacationers: civil servants, officials, white collar workers. As a matter of fact, the price level of the Toggenburg was clearly below the average of middle-class pensions and hotels in the well-established regions¹². But our small group of railway white-collar workers had no sympathies for such a style, even when troubled very soon by serious economic difficulties¹³.

Instead, a strong point could be made that the meals and above all the quantity of the meat were essential to the realisation of the paradise. The remarkable model of a menu plan of 1904 schedules one-kilogram (sic!) of meat per person and day. This is an unbelievable quantity – about five times the average in a household of the workers elite – and, so I suggest, this is exactly what the initiators of this

project wanted to communicate: Here you will get more than you can ever eat. This is the land of milk and honey or paradise itself.

Food is an important marker of cultural and social definition and provides a symbolic system. In this case it seems to have helped to find a place in the actual tourist world. It clearly overrode the medical and hygienic arguments also expressed. There is of course no simple path leading from (supposedly) objective medical reasons – as e. g. the nervous syndrome, fatigue, the appreciation of fresh air, water and light – to a specific form of holiday as the fulfilment of such a need. The important thing is that a simple hut was not attractive for these newcomers on the tourist market and vacationing. Their dream of “getting away from it all” was a temporarily better life at a price everybody could afford. This drew with it, as we shall see, financial problems as well as delicate identity politics.

Let us now turn to a brief account of the realisation of the first holiday home for railway men. The opening article quoted above was followed by discussions within the author’s section of his trade union (VSEA), located at Lucerne. Apart from the menu plan the place itself, the house, its style and comfort became topics. The group, consisting of five white collar railway employees, finally decided to buy a suitable guesthouse in their neighbourhood, the region of lake Lucerne, a famous and traditional and still flourishing tourist area. The first idea to have a farmers house “high in the Alps” was consolidated into the project of a house with some surroundings, giving a father – so it was said – the opportunity to stroll around with his kids without any neighbours intervening.¹⁴ Doubtless a holiday home should represent a place of ones own, an “inside” place where one could hide from “the world” and the “outside”, a place that matched the idea of a protected garden or even paradise itself.

In 1896 an old guesthouse was found, shut down at the time, but combined with a nearby farmers house. In 1897 the whole place, called “Grubisbalm”, situated above Vitznau, half way to the top of the famous Rigi, was bought. The decision-makers did not bother about the fact, that the old guesthouse could impossibly be re-established. It seems they accepted even joyfully the need to build a totally new guesthouse. So, corresponding to the decisions on menus, the former “block house” turned into a respectable boarding house with 70 beds and a restaurant with up to 100 places. In 1898 the new holiday home, also referred to as “Kurhaus”, was opened for the public.

This in many respects turned out to be the most critical point of the project. Who among the railway staff would be a future vacationer? Would the railway man come alone, with his wife, with his children? Would they appreciate the high investments and above all would there be enough guests in order to be able to pay the considerable interest or even to reduce the immense debts? These were the urgent questions, and the answers were to show whether the need for a holiday claimed as serious need of the railway staff really existed, or more precisely: if the now existing holiday home was the offer that fitted the demand.

So far, I have presented the holiday pioneers and new guesthouse-keepers as an isolated group. This, of course, was not quite so, but reflects the status of the group, pushing the holiday home: Although members of the largest employee association (VSEA) existing by then, organising mainly white collar occupations, only few of these joined the initiating Lucerne section. In the end the project was not supported by the VSEA. Regarding the railway companies, it seems a support had not been asked for. Anyhow, the Gotthard-railway Company as employer of the initiating Lucerne section was known as a socially minded company and there may have been some secret hopes. But there was definitely no financial aid to start the project. Finally, a new founded small co-operative realised the holiday home, obviously convinced by its future and hoping for the support of the railway trade-unions and associations to come once the holiday home would be open and prove its necessity.

For gentlemen only?

But this hope failed. In 1902 the serious economic situation could no longer be ignored. For the first time the annual record acknowledged that the level of the daily rate per person was below effective

costs for food and beverages. Furthermore, so the record says, this was not to be seen as mistake in calculation but as an expression of conscious politics. The daily rates for members of the railway staff were fixed according to what was thought “reasonable”, not according to real costs. The difference should have been covered by the profit of the restaurant, where trade union sections holding their annual meeting and the like were expected. “Grubisbalm” tried to be a respectable pension with prices below the level of comparable guesthouses. But even with reduced prices only a small percentage of the railway men could afford the expenses for a stay. The daily rate, food and beverages included, was fixed at 4.50 Swiss francs. That was slightly below prices in similar pensions and hotels¹⁵, but still it was three times more than what had been called a reasonable price according to the vision of a simple blockhouse holiday.

In 1904 the image created, of a quiet and harmonic paradise, shattered suddenly. Now it turned out that the house had been run at yearly losses since 1901, and was indebted to a degree endangering the whole enterprise¹⁶. Moreover, the management’s strategy to overcome the situation by taking in more so-called private guests at higher prices, produced accusations the railway holiday home was changing into a “Gentleman’s house” (German: “*Herrenhaus*”). The management, on the other hand, reproached the railway colleagues for having abandoned them. This refers also to the small number of excursionists – trade-union sections, singing associations and the like – who had been expected to make their annual outings to Grubisbalm, helping to balance the calculation. Ironically enough, the holiday-home counted also on blue-collar colleagues to subsidize the holiday of their betters whose chances of a stay were small.

There can be no doubt about the fact that the very first attempt for a holiday home of the railway men somehow was a flop. But how can we understand the harsh and inflexible viewpoints brought forward in the ensuing debate? The management insisted that its interpretation of holidays was justified. This version was based normatively by connecting “true” recreation with temporary social advancement. The text of a promotion booklet illustrates this by evoking the figure of the brave railway man, doing his job on a train and when looking up to the resorts of the rich silently thinking “oh, if ever I could afford it too...” And then the text turns into fiction, telling a dream-story how the poor railway man found himself in a paradise-like place with a guesthouse awaiting him – of course the holiday home of the railway men. This story of a dream realised had formed the self-representation of the holiday home. One might say that the effort to make the dream come true – that is to convince the colleagues of such a perspective – had been very strong. But in 1904 it became ultimately clear that first the poor railway man could not afford the earthly paradise, and secondly, that he may have had other dreams. The aim of temporary social advancement lost its glamour when turning into a feeling of estrangement. This is exactly what the notion “gentleman’s house” meant. The holiday home management of course considered this reproach highly unjust.

Who then actually could afford to stay in the new home? We do not have much detailed information on this. For 1904 though the annual record gives some hints, probably not by chance because the colleagues will have been interested in the question in those days. We have data concerning the number of guests, occupation and sex or status in the family. The most surprising result is probably that of the 230 to 250 guests a year more than 50 percent were women¹⁷. Not the so-called fatigued railway man was the most common guest but his wife. Secondly, in contrast to expectations, there were only few children (around 10 a year). Less surprising is the structure of occupations and therefore by status and income. 60 to 70 percent were high-ranking officials (white collar) or their wives. Guests with an occupation outside an office, on the trains or in the workshops – far more numerous than white-collar workers – rarely turned up. The hierarchy of the work place seemed to influence guest statistics in even more subtle terms. Most of the non-office workers present belonged to the category of the engine drivers and train personnel, or, to put this more precisely, the female relatives (wife, widow) of these categories. Lower ranking personnel, for example switchmen (*Weichenwärter*), workers on the line (*Bahnarbeiter*), workshop [mechanics] personnel (*Werkstattarbeiter*), or shunters (*Rangierpersonal*)

represented only about 10 percent of the railway guests. If we compare these data with information indicating the average duration of a stay the impression of a holiday home for well-off officials becomes even sharper. In 1902 and 1903 the shortest stay was 10 days, and only very few guests practised this. The majority (50 to 60 %) stayed 15 days. The other 30 to 40 percent had a stay from 18 to 20 days.¹⁸ This can lead to the hypothesis, that most guests came to Grubisbalm to have an ordinary summer-break, which is supported by the fact that the home used to be best frequented in July and August. The other guests most likely were elderly persons or persons with low income who did not come for a holiday in the proper sense but for recovering after illness, often with subsidiary means.

The “gentleman’s house” may also have referred to the dominance of officials who were not only better paid, but could get the necessary time for a break, not by law, but by the well established tradition of asking for it, pointing to health reasons. Two weeks was what white-collar workers could – according to an already old tradition – ask for. This implicated not necessarily being ill. During those years the motives to seek a renewal of strength (*Krafterneuerung*) or to prevent illness were ever more widely recognised and gave way to a certain normalising of the summer break. The usual increase of travel in summertime became, especially for the railway staff, a symbol of a holiday-world divided: Never did it become more obvious that some had to work for the pleasure of others. Whilst the holiday home for railway men was being planned a short text in the trade-union press made the point saying: “Holidays! – It is a unknown word for workers and especially for those in the railways, for only illness will free from work duty [...]”¹⁹ Illness and recovering on one side, fatigue and an annual summer-break as quintessential for the new invention of a holiday on the other side – this is what the “collar line” of relaxing practice amounted to. When our author, quoted in the beginning, wrote that everybody asking for a break would surely get it, this is to be read as a declaration of the expected public. But our author would not have agreed with this interpretation. He would have explained that a holiday home was the first step to achieve a right of vacation for all railway men because it would assure directors, that a holiday would be spent in a “proper” way. The use of time according to sanitary principles to our author not only was more important than the reduction of working hours, but also associated itself to the working of progress. This amounts to yet another expression of the need of a holiday, expressed as critique of actual leisure activities. In its presentation the project rejected not only upper class leisure, but also that of fellow-workers, especially their habits of smoking, travelling around to visit friends, wandering from pub to pub, which made them return to work in a bad mood²⁰.

It is important to note that the holiday home for railway men was initiated before any rights of paid vacation were achieved or even requested²¹. The persons acting as mediators, or self-made recreation experts, were white collar workers presenting the quest for a holiday home to the railway men as a social group, and at the same time propagating a need of holidays that was not familiar to most of them. This need was socially defined, based on the ideal of a temporarily better life, symbolised by the plenitude of food – essentially meat. Likewise the idea of a hidden place, a protected garden, a paradise, that was essentially a place to stay, was central to the idea. Our recreation experts linked this to the long tradition of the *villegiature*, and at the same time to some current elements of physiological thinking about energy and its restitution and the wide spread syndromes of fatigue and nervous disease. Expressions like the “fatigued railway man” (*der ermattete Eisenbahner*) occur in legitimising texts and illustrate the way of translation. The place to stay, the consumption aspiration of a respectable boarding house, certain rules of everyday behaviour in vacation were a middle class dream as Orvar Löfgren has demonstrated. It was hostile to other holiday or recreation habits such as the more mobility orientated style the so-called newcomers preferred. Turned this way the paradise for the railway man changes its meaning: The idea of living better temporarily begins to look like an educational program. It disqualified the usual leisure activities as unhealthy or unreasonable, e.g. speaking derogatorily of “sliding around on the train” (*auf der Eisenbahn herumrutschen*), whereas a stay in a guesthouse represented rational and true recreation. Furthermore the elevated price level caused by the strongly defended menu style and interest to be paid (caused by the cost of a new building) could not seriously

lead to a holiday home for all – as the initiators explicitly claimed. On the contrary, it rather perpetuated than erased the “collar line” in holiday life.

A first-class-hotel – for everybody?

Some characteristics of the situation at the turn of the century can also be found in the later history of the co-operative for holiday homes. First, in relation to the number of railway employees the available places were very restricted. Secondly, the national railway company (amalgamating since 1902 almost all important private companies) supported the holiday homes only occasionally and far from a substantial degree, - they preferred to perform as money lenders at official conditions. Third, the co-operative did not alter the principle of its conception of vacationing as a temporarily better life. As a consequence severe financial problems and the difficulties of access to the homes for a considerable part of the members accompany the holiday homes up to the end of the 1920ies. On the other hand, there is also a story of success: After the debacle of 1903/1904 the co-operative received growing support from the various railway employees and workers associations and was finally integrated step by step into the central railway trade union, created as an amalgamation of several branches in 1919. Already in 1912 a second home was bought, this time in the Mediterranean climate of the Ticino, and later enlarged to a medium-sized hotel (100 beds). It immediately attracted the public and would become the epitome of an attractive holiday-home – it is run by the trade union up to today.

But exactly with the success of Brenscino, as the new house was called, problems came again: The costly re-building took place in the inflation period after the First World War, devouring great sums, - including a fund raised for future subsidies for poorer colleagues' holidays. The new hotel consequently became a comparatively luxurious place, burdened by debt and with a price level workers could not afford. This was all the more striking since in 1920 a holiday with pay was established which for the first time guaranteed a right of paid holidays for everybody. Its duration was at least 7 days and it went up to 28 days depending on years of service and individual age. This was a remarkable improvement, especially for the low ranging and manual-working employees. The opening of the expanded holiday-home in 1922 was accompanied by legitimising efforts of the trade-union functionaries arguing against rumours depicting the new house a luxurious hotel. The invitation to visit the place and let oneself be convinced was followed by more and more guests as the statistics show. Unfortunately they don't tell us who came. Considering the elevated price level of about 8 Swiss francs per day, we can't go wrong in assuming that higher wage groups were overrepresented. A hotel run in the style of a middle class boarding-house seems to have been a very convenient offer for many railway employees and for them it will have represented a “familiar” kind of place. But obviously, this interpretation of vacationing did not fit the expectations of all members. The often conjured consent regarding this, rather than being broadly shared remained an aim of trade-union politics. This is illustrated by interventions of blue-collar workers within the railway trade union during the late 1920ies aimed at the foundation of a so-called “workers holiday home”. The idea never had a chance. Ever since the central trade union had taken over the homes they had become a major symbol of unity and solidarity – two virtues of high value for a trade union centralising itself only recently. The will to establish a common identity for members strongly divided by hierarchy and occupation came first. The holiday home became – tied up with the tradition of the Robinsonian place, where one could get away from it all – a symbol of a place “away from social ranking, class and hierarchies”. This was the preferred reading of the trade union leaders. The project of a “workers holiday home” came up to a highly critical questioning of such politics. Against this background, there is some irony in the fact that the debts of the Ticino home finally were discharged by the fund raised to cover strike expenses. After the renounce of the right to strike in 1927²² the great sums – accumulated as a symbol of strength and solidarity – were no more to be held liquid but could or even had to be invested in a profitable way.

Conclusion

The foundation of the holiday home in 1898 by some white-collar railway workers later on, especially since the Second World War, was regarded as the pioneer step in the national history of so-called social tourism (*Sozialtourismus*). The term is uncommon in English, for historical reasons I suppose. It refers to any kind of support – mostly financial – to let people who actually could not afford it have a holiday. The image of social tourism is, depending on one's viewpoint, progressive and a valuable alternative to the market or, quite contrarily, characterised by a moralistic and somehow petty bourgeois narrowness. The reading of the railway men's and women's holiday homes suggested here, allows some answers concerning this.

The story of the railway men's and women's holiday home represents more than the story of just another boarding houses. The suggested reading highlights how trade union functionaries defined their place in the flux of tourism, how they understood "vacationing" or "holiday-making" – and how they wanted it to be understood by their colleagues. Their reaction towards existing models of vacationing and the interpretation of a model of their own was complex. On one hand their orientation followed the main stream: As purchasers in the tourism market they chose in 1895 a place close to lake Lucerne, by then a region more and more preferred by the new middle class public. One decade later they opted for a second place in the Ticino, until then much less renowned and developed, but with the growing appreciation of sunshine a coming region. Very similar to contemporaries they built the need for a holiday on physiological and hygienist arguments. This lost its importance with an increasing practise in vacationing in the 1920ies. First, because basic arguments were no longer needed, secondly, because the essential questions concerning style and social level were solved. In the 1920ies questions about a shared identity and the holiday home as ideal place outside class differences and hierarchies dividing railway employees in everyday working life dominated inner trade union politics. This matches the other element in the arguing for a place of their own, a protected garden, inspiring the interpretation of vacationing. It was present in 1895 when the argument was pushed that there were no sufficient facilities to pass a holiday, mixed up with a moralistic tone. Later the holiday enterprise claimed to provide good quality at cheap prices and finally to be a place with an informal atmosphere where people felt close to each other, a symbol of classless unity. So, to keep up with the tourist market and its fashion *and* to claim for difference and self-definition (of vacationing) is not necessarily a contradiction. It just illustrates the cultural dimension in adopting behaviour or a consumer practise. Therefore, it would be mistaken to take the need for a self-ruled holiday home for the pretended alternative to the reactions and offers of the tourist industry. In terms of economic and social history it was rather the opposite, namely part of an expanding market and above all a factor in forming a consumer attitude to holidays. Its essential elements were the already mentioned ones: First a temporarily better life and therefore social lift, secondly the experience of wealth and abundance, third the experience of a class transcending unity and/or identity. In this sense tourism was a welcome means for trade unions. It could open up a new world for their members and at the same time create and strengthen consumer attitudes as a means to gain social participation that in "real" life could not be achieved easily.

But as we have seen, the dominant interpretation of vacationing offered by self-called experts and generally the elite had found consent only within parts of the trade union. Never ending discussions about prices and accessibility of the "own" holiday-homes for everybody have left their traces, telling about a steady struggle. Its motivation was mainly cultural for in the end it was a struggle for a real "own" place, – a place therefore where "getting away from it all" should at least not lead directly into the midst of the superiors. There is, of course, more than one attitude to tourism and consumerism. But as we know the consumer attitudes of the lower classes or the mass were rejected for a long time as unreasonable, unhealthy and the like. The Swiss railway trade union was no exception from this. Instead, its search for respectability and orientation on middle class values, together with the – quite

contradictory – phantom of holidays as a classless experience left no room for cultural variety. Apart from the powerful influence of the national tourism policy, this might very well help to explain why trade unionists failed in the long run successfully to offer models of vacationing for the mass of their own members. In Switzerland, this was left to others.

¹ See Laurent TISSOT, *Naissance d'une industrie touristique. Les Anglais et la Suisse au XIXe siècle*, Lausanne, 2000. The historical knowledge about Switzerland as a tourist destination is in sharp contrast to its economic and social importance. Still helpful is Paul P. BERNARD, *Rush to the Alps. The evolution of vacation in Switzerland*, New York, 1978. For ethnographic insights see Thomas ANTONIETTI, e.g. his latest publication: *Bauern, Bergführer, Hoteliers. Fremdenverkehr und Bauernkultur. Zermatt und Aletsch 1850–1950*, Baden, 2000. For an economic evaluation of the net product of the Swiss tourist industry in the 19th century see Peter PÜNTENER:, „Der Beitrag des Fremdenverkehrs zur Entwicklung der Schweizer Wirtschaft (1850-1913)“ in Andreas ERNST et al. (ed.), *Kontinuität und Krise. Festschrift für Hansjörg Siegenthaler*, Zürich, 1994, 51-60.

² From 1896 to 1900 the average arrivals in percents were: from Switzerland 20.6, Germany 31.8, Britain 15.5, France 11.4; from 1901 to 1910 the corresponding data is: Switzerland 19.4, Germany 26.4, Britain 14.6, France 12.4. Own calculations based on data provided by Historische Statistik der Schweiz, p. 741.

³ See John K. WALTON, *The British Seaside. Holidays and Resorts in the Twentieth Century*, Manchester, 2000.

⁴ This paper is based on my Ph. D.: Beatrice SCHUMACHER: *Ferien. Untersuchungen zu Genealogie, Interpretation und Popularisierung eines Bedürfnisses, Schweiz 1890–1950*, Ph.D. thesis, Basel, 1999; to be published under the title: *Ferien. Schweiz 1890-1950*, Wien (Böhlau), 2001.

⁵ For a discussion see Daniel UTE, “Clio unter Kulturschock. Zu den aktuellen Debatten in der Geschichtswissenschaft” in *Geschichte Wissenschaft Unterricht* 48 (1997), pp. 195-218, 259-278.

⁶ I refer to the adoption of Gramsci in the cultural studies. For a discussion see Christina LUTTER/Markus REISENLEITNER, *Cultural Studies. Eine Einführung*, Wien, 1998, 80-82.

⁷ Arjun APPADURAI, *Modernity at large. Cultural dimensions of globalization*, University of Minnesota Press, 1996. p. 13.

⁸ See Article „Gründung eines Ferienheims für Eisenbahner“ in *Schweizerische Eisenbahn-Zeitung*, 1895, n° 18, (3.5.1895), p. 78. The author Heinrich BÄCHTOLD-KOCH (1856-1903) was a well-placed official working in the archives of the Gotthard railway and a very active member of the professional organisation of the railway employees (VSEA). He formerly used to play an active and innovating role in the Swiss association of white-collar workers (*Schweizerischer Kaufmännischer Verein*), ending this after a severe disappointment that lead him to intensify his work with the railway colleagues. Here, the initiative for a holiday home was his first and most important project.

⁹ To quote a guide book: “*Das Luxusleben in den Bädern wird gegenwärtig in der Schweiz von dem eigentlichen Zwecke der Kurorte, grosse offene Heilanstalten zu bilden, bei weitem überboten*”, Theodor GSELL-FELS, *Die Bäder und klimatischen Kurorte der Schweiz*, Zürich 1892, p. XVII.

¹⁰ Orvar LÖFGREN, *On holiday. A history of vacationing*, Univ. of California Press, 1999, pp. 109–111.

¹¹ See *Schweizerische Eisenbahnzeitung*, 1897, n° 19, 80.

¹² See Werner TRAPP, "Die Geburt einer "Kurlandschaft" in *Das Obere Toggenburg 1860-1914*, Ms. 2001, to be published in: *Geschichte des Kantons St.Gallen*, vol. 3, St. Gallen, 2003.

¹³ See the explicit expression of distance from the diet in the Toggenburg hotels in *Jahresbericht Genossenschaft Ferienheim Schweizerische Eisenbahner pro 1901/02*, p. 6 (this annual report was completed only in October 1903).

¹⁴ See the presentation of the project in the trade-unions press: *Schweizer Eisenbahn-Zeitung*, 1897, n° 18-20, here: n° 19, p. 71.

¹⁵ For comparison e.g. the Pension „*Ottolenbad*“, with also 70 beds but much better accommodations (baths, salons, billiard, electric illumination, doctor, etc.) cost from Sfr. 3.50 (low season) up to Sfr. 4.– (high season). See Theodor GSELL-FELS, *op. cit.*, 1902, advertisements, p. 19. Most comparable hotels offered, according to the indications in Theodor GSELL-FELS, pensions between Sfr .5 and 7.

¹⁶ This change is also related to a new leadership. In 1902 the founder Bächtold-Koch about whom it was said that he wanted to avoid any conflict, died and his successor, Ernst Wüthrich, teacher and later head of the „*Verkehrsschule St.Gallen*“, changed politics.

¹⁷ The exact data for guests belonging to the railways is: In 1903: 231 guests in total, 127 female, 94 male, 10 children; in 1904: 254 guests in total, 115 female, 128 male, 11 children. In both years the so-called private guests came up to 48% (1903: 183, 1904: 232) See *Jahresbericht der Genossenschaft Ferienheim schweizerischer Eisenbahner*, 1904, p. 5.

¹⁸ Own calculations from data concerning the pay of tourist taxes, in *Jahrbuch der Genossenschaft Ferienheim schweizerischer Eisenbahner*, 1902, p. 4, and 1903, p. 5.

¹⁹ Quoted in *Schweizerische Eisenbahn-Zeitung* 1896, p. 130.

²⁰ See report of the „*Studienkommission*“ in *Schweizerische Eisenbahn-Zeitung*, 1897, p. 80.

²¹ A holiday with pay was fixed for the first time in 1902 in the new „*Arbeitszeitgesetz*“. Employees were assured an annual holiday of 8 days after an occupation of 9 years or after the age of 33. The duration increased every 3 years by one day. Up to the 9th years of service an employee had the right to take 8 (of total 52) reposing days at once. This regulation did not cover those in the workshops, being subject to the Federal factory law.

²² The right to strike was cancelled in the new legislation regulating working conditions of the staff in national enterprises (*Bundespersonalgesetz*) adopted in 1927. Trade unions agreed to the dominant opinion, regarding strike and national duty incompatible.