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Notes on the Inventory Practice in the Canton of Valais: The Swiss Dams and the Heritage of the Italian Seasonal Workers

1 The Grande Dixence, built between 1953 and 1961 in Valais, Switzerland. Aerial photography. Estimations place up to 25'000 workers on the construction site of this dam

The motto of this issue is taken in a shortened form from the project at ETH Zurich «A Future for *whose* Past? The Heritage of Minorities, Fringe Groups and People without a Lobby» for the 50th Anniversary of the European Architectural Heritage Year.[1] This title carries room for interpretation. The subtitle «The Heritage of Minorities» suggests that the privileged lead is to question what the heritage of marginalized groups can be. The objective would be to assess what was missed in the ongoing

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project of producing a multifaceted corpus of heritage objects, which serves not only a cultural elite but also underrepresented groups and their past. The subtitle can however be understood differently. It offers the opportunity to question how object which are already listed relate to groups of people to which they have not been associated. Because it is inherently a relational concept, existing heritage sites or buildings can be used as representatives of so-called subaltern groups *as well*, but it is a matter of recognizing and narrating them as such.

The issue's title offers a resonance chamber to explore more precisely, following this latter thread, themes addressed in my recently completed dissertation «Shadow Territory and Secondary Infrastructures: The Hidden Landscapes of Temporary Labor at the Grande Dixence (1950–1965)».[2] There, I investigate the construction sites of the large dams of the canton of Valais, Switzerland, and the provision of labour necessary for those gigantic works. The question of this essay is thus: whose heritage are the large dams of the canton of Valais? More specifically: what is the place given to the workers employed for the construction of the dams in the inventories which identify them as national or regional monuments? This questioning stems from the observation that the contribution of the seasonal workers, hired in precarious and ethically questionable conditions on such construction sites is systematically underplayed. Yet their presence was unquestionably necessary for these constructions.

Switzerland, the Large Dams and the Saisonniers

Striving for energy autarchy, the Swiss Federal Office for Water launched a project in 1929 entitled «The Available Hydropower in Switzerland, Considered from the Standpoint of Storage Possibilities for Winter Power Generation.» Electricity consumption had grown constantly in the country since the beginning of the twentieth century: besides the needs of the federal railway system and the industry, electricity had become a common power source for households.[3] As the title of the studies explicitly state, the aim was to secure production for the winter months, a goal which led to prioritizing high-altitude, large accumulation plants – or in other words, large scale dams. The results of the study were communicated in six issues organized by watershed between 1932 and 1945.[4] Contained in the reports are the pre-projects for most of the dams in Switzerland built after World War II.

With this study, the Federal state coordinated the efforts of the nation's electricity supply companies by directing them towards the common project of constructing Switzerland's hydroelectric infrastructure. These studies gave the guidelines for a massive campaign of dam building in the Swiss Alps: over 100 *large* dams were built between 1945 and 1975, and among them, 23 exceeded 100 meters in height.[5] In the mountainous canton of Valais, the region targeted by the 6th issue of the study in 1945, three record-breaking dams were erected quasi-simultaneously. The Grande Dixence, 274 meters tall, built between 1950 and 1965, remained the tallest dam worldwide until 2013 (fig. 1). Mauvoisin, built one valley over to the west between 1950 and 1957, was the tallest arch-dam in Switzerland, culminating at 237 meters. Further east, Mattmark, built between 1960 and 1967, was the largest rockfill-dam in the country – though not the tallest.

This dam-building drive is illustrative of the larger logic of the very rapid economic growth in western European countries following World War II, a period stimulated by the reconstruction of industry and often referred to as the *Trente Glorieuses*. Switzerland, which did not have to lament the destruction and reconstruction of its

industrial apparatus, was even more affected by this development, as it benefitted from an interim export market.[6] The structure of the national labour market had however shifted dramatically. The Swiss workforce was moving away from agriculture and construction, tourism, and hospitality industries – jobs often perceived as low-level – towards better paid and less precarious positions in non-seasonal industry, and towards the tertiary sector. Immigration offered the only solution to compensate for that shift.[7] By 1945, Italy provided virtually the only possibility for the supply of labour. Switzerland relied on a strong a tradition of importing workforce from its transalpine neighbour, as it had done already for the construction of Alpine crossings such as the Gotthard and Simplon tunnel.

Switzerland's stance towards foreign workers was however quite ambivalent. Their presence was necessary for the economic miracle of the *Trente Glorieuses*, but at the same time they were the target of xenophobic debates associated with fears of what has been called ‹overforeignization›.[8] In practical terms, Swiss politics had to walk a very fine line. Sufficient labour had to be allowed to enter the country while permanent immigration needed to remain the exception to guarantee the cultural *status quo*.[9] The A–permit, or seasonal working permit, was the cornerstone of this balancing act. This variation of circular migration became known as the ‹guest-worker› system.[10] It was supported by official bilateral agreements between Switzerland and Italy and relied on multiple interlocking factors. First, the Italian government pursued an active emigration policy to reduce unemployment in the country. The export of labour generated an inflow of resources into the country in the form of remittance, salaries, and traineeships. For the host country, seasonal permits offered a solution that facilitated recruitment of workers in periods of high economic growth. The system was also used as a buffer in periods of stagnation, as the contracts of seasonal workers' would simply not be renewed if they became redundant. This flexibility reduced the risk of burdening the social welfare of Swiss citizens, as unemployment was effectively exported back to their home country.[11]

The rights and duties of the saisonniers have been described by Delia Castelnuovo-Frigessi as *entirely negative*.[12] The workers were allowed to stay for a maximum of nine months in Switzerland, after which they had to head back to their home country for at least three months. During those nine months, they were not allowed to change employer. Their partners and children were not allowed to migrate to the country with them, and therefore, the system favoured unmarried workers. The saisonniers paid taxes for services from which they could not benefit, such as schools for their children or unemployment benefits – quite simply because their stay in the country was tied to their working contract. To summarize, and quoting Don Mitchell, the seasonal workers were «both indispensable as a class and completely expendable as individuals».[13] While they were necessary to the booming economy of Switzerland, they were the target of discrimination, xenophobia, and humiliations, as can be illustrated by the compulsory medical examination they had to undergo at the border upon entry in Switzerland, described by many as degrading.[14]

While scholarship both contemporary to these construction sites and more recent has highlighted the importance of seasonal workers to the Swiss industry, documentation about their presence on the construction sites of dams in Valais is still very scarce and circumstatial.[15] Italians represented 93.6 % of the workers on the Emosson dam construction site.[16] They were also the largest group hit by the Mattmark tragedy, where the fall of a glacier overhanging the construction site

2 Frank Gygli, Miners operating hand-held drills, c. 1956

caused the death of 88 workers, including 56 from that country.[17] It makes no doubt, that, though the construction of the network of the Grande Dixence is presented as a counterexample to this structural labour-procurement channel and as ‹Swiss Made›,[18] there too, seasonal workers represented an important proportion of the total workforce.[19]

Temporary settlements, comprised mostly of prefabricated barrack-huts, became the staple of these construction sites.[20] The remoteness, the economic pressure of completing the dam in time and the climate contributed to developing a culture of discipline within these villages, where each aspect of everyday life was regimented and accounted for. These were physically demanding jobs, dangerous both in and for themselves, such as tunnel digging, but also because of the surrounding environmental conditions and risks. Rockfall, avalanches, storms and extreme temperatures were not uncommon. Both workers stemming from the local valleys and seasonal workers lived in these settlements separated from their families, without privacy. Although their pay was comparatively good for Switzerland, the seasonal workers, unlike their Swiss colleagues, were in a state of constant precarity as there was no guarantee that their working contracts would be renewed for the following season.[21] The time spent on the construction sites of the large dams turned into an important element of finding one's identity, was considered as a rite of passage into adulthood, and for many, it was an object of pride (fig. 2).

The Large Dams in the inventories of the Canton of Valais

Among the more than 20 dams built in Valais between 1945 and 1975, four of them have been listed as objects of national or regional importance: the Grande Dixence, and the dams of Mauvoisin, Mattmark and Emosson.[22] The appraisals written by the cantonal office of historic monuments or outsourced to independent researchers serve as guidelines as to which measures must be taken for the preservation of the heritage objects in question. The following section analyses the content of the appraisals of these four dams, all of which were updated after 2020 by the cantonal

service and authored by Dr. Philippe Mivelaz,[23] as part of a special inventory documenting the engineering works of the canton.

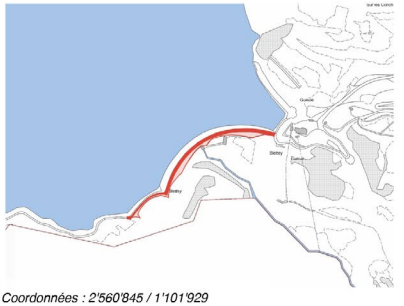
The appraisals consist of the following four elements (fig. 3): A first block contains basic information adapted to each case (category and title of the object, the address, initial and current functions, owner or project client, architects(s), year of construction). This is accompanied by an excerpt from the national map which highlights the precise location. The second part is titled «construction history» and covers the technical aspects of the building process, including data regarding the project planning and the actors involved. The third section, «description and justification», provides an an overview of the finished object followed by arguments as to why a building is or should be listed. A final section contains bibliographical references, as well as photographs from the construction site and the finished object. A grading is suggested based on the argumentation developed above. The prescriptions corresponding to the grading as well as supplementary photography are included on annex sheets. Grade 1 corresponds to a monument of national importance, and grade 2 to regional importance.[24] The appraisaly are very short, non-exhaustive documents with a very specific aim. They highlight selected aspects of built artefacts worthy of protection on a single A4 sheet.

I will examine here two aspects of the appraisals, with the aim of showing that they perpetuate, both in form and content, a lack of acknowledgement of the workers involved in the construction of those dams. Form-wise, the category «architect(s)» in the raw data section is a first indication of a focus towards a logic of attribution of the works to a single or limited group of men rather than one inclusive of all those who contributed to it. For instance, Alfred Stucky, professor, and former director of what would become the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne (EPFL), is cited both for his collaboration in the Mauvoisin and Grande Dixence dams. Other names include Niklaus Schnitter, Louis Favrat or André Livio, prominent figures in the history of dam-building in the country. The biggest hydroelectricity producers of that time are presented as driving forces in the development of these projects (Elektrowatt for Mauvoisin and Mattmark). The intention is certainly not to imply that they built the dams with their bare hands, but it is important to note that neither the construction company nor the the labourers are mentioned in the listings. The accident on the Mattmark construction site is the exception to this tendency. There, the text mentions: «Finally, the earth-dam is also a place of remembrance of the tragic accident of 1965.»[25] Although tempting, it would be wrong to comment that, for their contribution to be acknowledged, workers had to die on the construction site. Indeed, numerous workers lost their lives the Grande Dixence and Mauvoisin construction site, and are yet to be mentioned in the listings.[26]

On the inventory sheet of the Grande Dixence, one short sentence informs that: «The construction of the facility was a milestone of Switzerland's technical, social and cultural history, and contributed to the country's international reputation as a dam-builder.»[27] The text does not go into detail about what those social aspects might be – owing probably to the shortness of the space available for the development of the arguments. The extensive bibliography accompanying this listing would have been an opportunity to at least note the reliance on ‹guest-workers›. However, as noted in my dissertation, even within the scant body of literature which tackles the topic of the social changes accompanying the construction of the dam, the focus remains exclusively on the local inhabitants.[28]

INVENTAIRE DU PATRIMOINE BATI 152-301-000-000	Finhaut	Commune 152	Fiche 301

Catégorie	Artisanat - Industrie
Objet	**Barrage d'Emosson**
Adresse	Emosson
Localité	Finhaut
Cadastre n°	16
Folio n°	1
Zone(s)	-
Fonction initiale	Barrage
Fonction actuelle	Barrage
Maître d'ouvrage	Electricité Emosson SA
Architecte(s)	Motor-Colombus Ingénieurs-Conseils, Baden,Niklaus J. Schnitter, Directeur-adjoint,Henri Gicot, conseiller,Pr. Gerold Schnitter, conseiller
Année de constr.	1967 - 1975
Période	XXe siècle



Coordonnées : 2'560'845 / 1'101'929

Historique

Les aménagements hydroélectriques du haut de la vallée du Trient et des de ses affluents commencent avec la construction du complexe Barberine-Vernayaz pour l'électrification des lignes des chemins de fer fédéraux (CFF) de l'Ouest de la Suisse. Le barrage de Barberine datant de 1924-1925, dont l'eau alimentait les usines de Barberine au Châtelard (alt. 1'127 m.), puis de Vernayaz (alt. 457 m). Le barrage du Vieux Emosson construit entre 1952 et 1956 sur le Nant de la Dranse, un affluent de la Barberine, vient compléter les aménagements. Le barrage de Barberine a été noyé en 1974-1975 après la construction du barrage voûte d'Emosson. Le barrage du Vieux-Emosson servait à l'origine de stockage des eaux excédentaires qui étaient ensuite libérées vers la retenue de Barberine sans être turbinées sur ce premier tronçon. Avec la construction, dès 2008, de l'aménagement de pompage-turbinage de Nant de Dranse, il change de régime en passant d'une exploitation annuelle à une exploitation hebdomadaire (sa mise en exploitation n'a été effectuée que le 1er juillet 2022). Lors de l'agrandissement de l'aménagement dans les années 1950, les apports en eaux provenant à la fois de Suisse et de France, la société Électricité d'Émosson S. A. (ESA) partenaire avec siège à Martigny fut créée. Elle regroupait des capitaux pour moitié d'Électricité de France (EDF), le reste se partageait à parts égales par Motor Colombus SA d'entreprise électriques à Baden, qui mena les premières études, et Aar et Tessin S.A. d'électricité (ATEL) à Olten. Un accord fut conclu alors avec les CFF leur garantissant un avoir énergétique forfaitaire et un volume d'accumulation librement utilisable.
Le 23 août 1963, deux conventions furent signées entre la France et la Suisse. La première portait sur l'utilisation des eaux de part et d'autre de la frontière ; la deuxième sur la rectification de la frontière entre les deux états, de sorte que le futur barrage soit érigé entièrement en territoire suisse et la centrale de partie supérieure (Châtelard - Vallorcine) en France. Les travaux du barrage débutèrent le 15 juillet 1967 et il fut mis en service le 1er juillet 1975.
Le projet et la direction des travaux fut confié à Motor-Colombus Ingénieurs-Conseils à Baden. Niklaus J. Schnitter, Directeur-adjoint chez Motor-Colombus est l'auteur des principales publications sur l'ouvrage. Le Dr. Henri Gicot et le Pr. Gerold Schnitter furent conseillers. Giovanni Lombardi fut l'expert désigné par le autorités fédérales. Les travaux ont été réalisé par un consortium d'entreprises suisses et françaises. Depuis la fusion d'Atel et d'EOS en 2008, ESA est une société à part égale entre EDF et ALPIQ.

Photo août 2011 fournie par ALPIQ SA.

Description / Justification

Barrage voûte à double courbure d'une hauteur de 180 mètres et de 555 mètres de longueur à son couronnement. Il se situe dans le vallon d'Emosson à une altitude de 1930 mètres. Il a une capacité de 225 millions de m3. La superficie du bassin d'accumulation est de 208 km2. De forme elliptique, le barrage ne s'appuie pas directement sur les flancs du vallon mais sur un verrou rocheux. Il est prolongé sur rive droite par un mur en aile de type poids et par l'évacuateur de crues. On y accède soit par la route soit par un funiculaire qui longe la conduite forcée.
Avec le choix d'un mur voûté et par la prise en compte des conditions topographiques et géotechniques, le barrage s'inscrit remarquablement dans un site spectaculaire avec sa courbure elliptique bien visible sur le parement aval. Deuxième après la Grande Dixence par sa capacité de retenue, il figure parmi les plus grands barrages de Suisse. Il est équipé d'instruments de mesure à l'intérieur et à l'extérieur du mur qui permettent de surveiller son comportement en temps réel. Par sa conception statique, l'intégration des données géotechniques et ses instruments de contrôle, il constitue une avancée dans la construction des barrages voûtes.

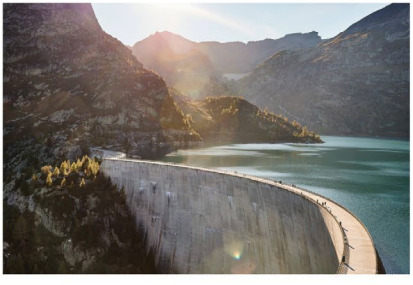


Photo septembre 2021 fournie par ALPIQ SA.

Documents

N. SCHNITTER, T. SCHNEIDER, « Geomatische Untersuchungen für die Staumauer Emosson", in SBZ, Nr. 24, 12. Juni 1969, pp. 465-472. Jean-Louis MOTTIER, "L'aménagement hydro-électrique franco-suisse d'Emosson" in: BTSR, n° 18, 1970, pp. 249-266. Harald LINK, "Bassins d'accumulation des Alpes", Cours d'eau et énergie, 1970, n° 9, pp. 246-358. Robert WELLER, " Das französisch-schweizerische Speicherkraftwerk Emosson. Projekt und aufortschritt bis August 1971", Nicolò BIERT, " Eine untergletscher Wasserfassung, Speicherkraftwerk Emosson", in Cours d'eau et énergie, 1971, n° 8, pp. 291-299. N. J. SCHNITTER, "Le barrage-voûte d'Emosson" in: BTSR, n° 4, 1975, pp. 47-56 ; L'architecture du 20e siècle en Valais 1920-1975, Infolio, Gollion, 2014, pp. 206 et 224. https://emosson.ch/histoire ; http://www.swissdams.ch/Default_F.asp.

Degré de classement proposé

1	2	3	4+	4	5	6	7	0	...

Dernière modification: 30.10.2023

2

2 : Monument d'importance cantonale (régionale); beauté et qualité architecturale remarquable; objet représentatif d'une époque, d'un style ou d'un mouvement artistique ou artisanal de portée régionale; la valeur de l'objet peut être renforcée par la qualité de son intégration au site ou comme composante essentielle d'un tissu bâti.

04.09.2020 - SIP/DIB

3 Appraisal of the Emosson Dam, Finhaut, 2020

Second, the technical progress epitomized by the sheer size of the dams is what is pushed forward as arguments for the listing of all four dams as monuments, a *savoir-faire* that they tie to emblematic figures of the development of hydropower in Switzerland. In the case of Grande Dixence, its importance for Switzerland's energy supply is also noted. Mattmark is considered relevant since it is a rare example of earth dams in the Alps, and one of the tallest ones. Emosson is described as «one of Switzerland's largest dams», and the Grande Dixence simply as the tallest worldwide. The record-breaking dimensions are tied, in the argumentation, with the novelty of the applied technologies. For Emosson, the appraisal reads: «With its static design, integration of geotechnical data and control instruments, it represents a breakthrough in arch dam construction.»[29] Mauvoisin, likewise: «Compared with the Grande Dixence gravity dam (285 m), the vaulted shape of the structure meant considerable savings in materials (estimated at the time at 50 %). The construction of the dam provided an opportunity to introduce new excavation and concrete processing techniques. It marks a milestone in European reservoir construction.»[30]

The second important rhetorical cluster is the integration of these very large technical objects into their alpine setting, often underscoring a perfect symbiosis. Mattmark, for instance, is praised for its embedding in the landscape by using moraine material. It is noted, for the Grande Dixence, that the monumentality of the dam is what inscribes it so well in the spectacular site. The arguments for the listing of the Emosson dam is the most explicit. One reads that «with the choice of a vaulted wall, and by taking into account topographical and geotechnical conditions, the dam fits remarkably well into a spectacular site.»[31] These justifications, I argue, go beyond the creation of what David Nye has called the «technological sublime».[32] While Nye describes the possibility of technical objects evoking the sublime for themselves – and he makes the point for instance with the electrical lighting of urban settings – the large dams of Valais are used as flagships for the successful integration of modern technology with the natural environment.

Two conclusions can be drawn from this analysis. First, the authors of the listings choose to inscribe the dams into the lineage of the great engineers and achievements of the country, and by doing this contribute to reinforcing a canonical national history. Rather than acknowledging the production of an infrastructure as the result of a painstaking labour involving thousands of contributors, the listing remains in a logic of single authorship. This logic is even hard-coded into the layout of the inventory sheet, as exemplified by the category of «architect» used in the introduction data of the listing. The dams become the hallmark of Swiss *know-how,* denigrating with this gesture the contribution of workers, both local and foreign.

Second, the authors have chosen, in the limited text available, to reproduce a mythologised representation of the Alpine landscapes, by positing that the construction of the dams signified a successful coming together of nature and technology, resulting in new ‹improved› alpine landscapes. It is with the ideologies imbued in the alps, rather than in the means mobilised for this «Conquest of Nature»,[33] as David Blackbourn has called it, that the authors of the appraisals engage. This is perhaps because, as Oliver Zimmer contends, the Alps are the single most important element of the national unity and identity, and that tying the dams to the country's most recognized symbol somehow gives a justification for an otherwise extremely violent landscape transformation.[34]

Conclusion

I would like to argue that, if the contribution of the saisonniers was to be included more systematically, it would require more than only a revision of the texts of the appraisals. Not only their structure should be re-worked, but itt would also require an expansion of the objects awarded a status of protection. Through the medium of the listings and appraisals, the cantonal authority for historic preservation has the responsibility of creating and managing the repository of the national identity. Prior to the actual text descriptions, an important selection process takes place to determine which objects should be awarded a protection status in the first place. The large dams are probably among the more spectacular tokens of the contribution of the seasonal workers in Valais, but by no means are they the only material witness of this important social phenomenon of transnational labour exchange patterns.

As an opening, I would like to suggest two objects which, provided that the protection of the heritage of the saisonniers is considered as part of the mandate of the cantonal office for historical monuments, could serve as examples. The first is the Grenzsanität in Brig, the building through which the saisonniers entered Switzerland, and in which they were submitted to humiliating physical examinations. A second and less gloomy one is an effigy of Barbara, patron saint of the minors which can be found in the tunnels of the adduction network of the Grande Dixence (fig. 4). Such examples of self-determination are testimony to the agency which the saisonniers had in their fate, and that the landscape bears traces other than the dams from which their labor has been alienated.

4 Author unknown, Effigy of Saint Barbara, date unknown, Tunnels in the region of Arolla

Acknowledgments

My thanks go to Silke Langenberg, Regine Hess and Orkun Kasap for giving me the opportunity to share this short excerpt of my dissertation in the kritische berichte – and in particular to Regine and Orkun for the feedback and thorough editing. My thanks also extend to Patrick Giromini and Michaël Chappuis, from the Office of Historical Monument, Service Immobilier et Patrimoine, Etat du Valais, for giving me access to the cantonal listings and for their insight on the cataloguing process of the canton.

Notes

1 Denkmalschutzjahr 2025: A Future for *whose* Past? The Heritage of Minorities, Fringe Groups and People without a Lobby, headed by Silke Langenberg and Regine Hess, Construction Heritage and Preservation, ETH Zurich.

2 Rune Frandsen: Shadow Territory and Secondary Infrastructures: The Hidden Landscapes of Temporary Labor at the Grande Dixence (1950–1965), doctoral Thesis, ETH Zurich 2023 (not published).

3 François Walter, Jean Steinauer and Lorenzo Planzi: Paysages sous tension, Électricité et politique en Suisse Occidentale, Fribourg 2015.

4 Département fédéral des postes et de chemins de fer: Les Forces Hydrauliques Disponibles de La Suisse Considérées Au Point de Vue Des Possibilités d'accumulation Pour La Production d'énergie d'hiver. Première Partie: Considérations Générales et Possibilités d'accumulation Dans Le Bassin de l'Aar, Communication Du Service Des Eaux, vol. 25, Bern 1932. Département fédéral des postes et de chemins de fer, Les Forces Hydrauliques Disponibles de La Suisse Considérées Au Point de Vue Des Possibilités d'accumulation Pour La Production d'énergie d'hiver. Sixième Partie: Possibilités d'accumulation Dans Le Bassin Du Rhône, Communication Du Service Des Eaux, vol. 30, Bern 1945.

5 Swissdams: Liste des barrages suisses (liste non exhaustive), https://www.swissdams.ch/fr/les-barrages/liste-des-barrages-suisses, accessed 1 May 2023. This is in addition to the thirty-three large dams built before that year.

6 For Mauro Cerutti, the Korean War of 1950–1953 extends this possibility for exports beyond the immediate Post-War years. Mauro Cerutti: La Politique Migratoire de La Suisse 1945–1970, in: Hans Mahnig (ed.): Histoire de La Politique de Migration, d'asile et d'intégration en Suisse depuis 1948, Zurich 2005, p. 89–134. See also Jean-Philippe Widmer, Le Rôle de La Main-d'oeuvre Étrangère dans l'évolution du marché suisse du travail, Neuchâtel 1978.

7 Frank Caestecker and Eric Vanhaute: Zuwanderung von Arbeitskräften in die Industriestaaten Westeuropas, in: Jochen Oltmer, Axel Kreienbrink, and Carlos Sanz Diaz (eds.): Das ‹Gastarbeiter›-System: Arbeitsmigration und ihre Folgen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und Westeuropa, Munich 2012, pp. 29–52. France, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Great Britain could mitigate their needs by drawing on their former colonies: see André Holenstein/Patrick Kury/Kristina Schulz, Schweizer Migrationsgeschichte. Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart, Baden 2018.

8 Marc Vuilleumier: Switzerland, in: Klaus Bade et al. (eds.): The Encyclopedia of European Migration and Minorities, Cambridge 2012.

9 See Barbara Lüthi and Damir Skenderovic (eds.): Switzerland and Migration, Cham 2019. See also Damir Skenderovic: Constructing Boundaries in a Multicultural Nation: The Discourse of ‹Overforeignization› in Switzerland, In: Rainer Ohliger et al. (eds.): European Encounters: Migrants, Migration and European Societies since 1945, London 2003, pp. 186–209. Marc Gigase and Yan Schubert, Éditorial, in: Ibid: Les saisonniers·ères en Suisse. Travail, migration, xénophobie et solidarité, Traverse, Zeitschrift für Geschichte, vol. 3, 2022, p. 18.

10 For the use of quotation marks to qualify the use of the expression ‹guest-worker›, see Stefan Nowotny: Überlegungen zur Geschichte der ‹Gastarbeit›, in: Boris Buden and Lina Dokuzović (eds.): They'll Never Walk Alone. The Life and Afterlife of Gastarbeiters, Vienna 2018.

11 On January 1, 1934, Switzerland enforced the federal law on the entry and stay of foreigners. It classified foreign workers according to different permits: A (seasonal), B (annual), and C (established). The law was voted in March 26, 1931, and accepted by 62.2 % of Switzerland, though it was rejected by the people of Valais. This shows a shift from population and foreigner control from a cantonal to a federal level. See Gérald et Silvia Arlettaz : Le Valais et la nationalisation du Valais, 1895–1945, in: Groupe Valaisan des sciences humaines (ed.): Le Valais et Les Étrangers XIX^{e}–XX^{e}. Vol. V., Sion 1992, p. 96. Kathleen Newland: Circular Migration and Human Development, Human Development Research Paper nr. 42, 2009. The first agreement of 1948 was adjusted in 1964 to facilitate access from A- to B-permits for foreigners. See Hans Mahnig and Etienne Piguet: Die

Immigrationspolitik der Schweiz von 1948 bis 1998. Entwicklung und Auswirkungen, in: Rosita Fibbi (ed.): Migration und die Schweiz. Ergebnisse des Nationalen Forschungsprogramms ‹Migration und Interkulturelle Beziehungen›, Zurich 2003, p. 72. Holenstein et al. 2018, p. 310 (as Note 7). It also effectively limited civil discontent in Italy at that time.

12 Delia Castelnuovo-Frigessi: La condition immigrée. Les ouvriers italiens en Suisse, Lausanne 1978, p. 30.

13 Don Mitchell: The Lie of the Land, Minneapolis 1996.

14 Cynthia Santiago: Le Service Sanitaire de Frontière. Le cas de Brigue (1948–1973), in: Annales Valaisannes. Bulletin Trimestriel de La Société d'histoire Du Valais Romand 155, 2018, p. 155–203.

15 Myriam Evéquoz-Dayen: Le Valais et les étrangers depuis 1945, in: Groupe Valaisan des sciences humaines (ed.): Le Valais et Les Étrangers XIX^{e}–XX^{e}. Vol. V, Sion 1992, p. 163 and 192.

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17 Toni Ricciardi/Rémi Baudouï/Sandro Cattacin: Mattmark, 30 août 1965. La catastrophe, Zurich 2015.

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19 See Ibid.

20 For the use of the notion of barrack-hut, see Robert Jan van Pelt: Labour Service Barrack-Huts in Germany and the United States, 1933–45, in: Zeitgeschichte 4, no. 45, 2018, p. 507–39.

21 Frandsen 2023 (as note 2).

22 Canton du Valais, SBMA (eds.): Révision Inventaire PBC 2021. Liste cantonale Canton du VS (etat 1.1.2023).

23 The four listings are: Gemeinde Saas-Almagell, Inventarblatt 050-1-000-000, Staudamm Mattmark, State: 19.07.2023. Commune d'Hérémence, Inventaire du patrimoine bâti 115-1-000-000, Barrage de la Grande Dixence, State: 5.07.2023. Commune de Val de Bagnes (Bagnes), Inventaire du patrimoine bâti 143-5-000-000, Barrage de Mauvoisin, State: 04.09.2020. Commune de Finhaut, Inventaire du patrimoine bâti 152-301-000-000, Barrage d'Emosson, State: 04.09.2020.

24 For the objects studied here, graded 1 or 2, the principles are the same: «Conservation-restoration of the ensemble: maintenance of substance, interior and exterior appearance, equipment and environment. Partial conversion permitted for justified and compatible modern fixtures and fittings. Demolition not permitted. Inventary subject to authorization by the federal and cantonal heritage protection authorities.» Canton du Valais, DMTE, SBMA (ed.): Patrimoine bâti, Inventaire, Classement, Mise sous protection, guide à l'intention des communes, Sion 2017. All translations by the author.

25 Gemeinde Saas-Almagell 2023 (as note 23).

26 The unverifiable hypothesis here is that, more than the accident itself, its echo in press contemporary to the building site pushed towards including this mention.

27 Commune d'Hérémence 2023 (as note 23).

28 See Frandsen 2023 (as note 2).

29 Commune de Val de Bagnes 2023 (as note 23).

30 Commune de Finhaut 2020 (as note 23).

31 Ibid.

32 David E. Nye: American Technological Sublime. Cambridge (MA) 1996.

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2 Frank Gygli, Grande Dixence, Lausanne 1956, p. 42

3 Inventaire principal du bâti valaisan. Commune de Finhaut, Barrage d'Emosson, fiche 152-301-000-000, 2020

4 Edgar Hagen, Les Années Des Titans, Maximage Zürich, Switzerland 2001