Stay home today, travel tomorrow:
Scenarios for Swiss Travel & Tourism in post COVID-19 lockdown

Report
July 2020

Nazanin Rezaei Oghazi[1], Maryvelma Smith O'Neil

1. Introduction

The Citizen Think Tank "Stay home today, travel tomorrow: Scenarios for Swiss Travel & Tourism in post COVID-19 lockdown" forms part of the research entitled *A collaborative investigation on housing conditions and wellbeing in time of COVID-19 containment* which aims to analyse different aspects of the current situation such as Travel & Tourism and develop scenarios for the future. This project also aims to enable the collaboration between scientists and citizens and integrate different perspectives, experiences and knowledge to better understand and transform the given situation. From a collective perspective taking both scientists' and citizens' perspective into consideration, the project's objective is to enable mutual learning and co-producing coping strategies between citizen scientists and experts to tackle negative effects of Covid-19 related measures and to better prepare future potential crisis. To that end, two Citizen Think Tank session were designed on 27th of May (via ZOOM) and 10th of June (by using MIRO virtual whiteboard). This project was defined within an interdisciplinary and inter-institutional group, which consists of the researchers from EPFL, l'idiap (EPFL) and University of Lausanne (UNIL).

2. Problem Statement

In early spring 2020 and along with drastic fall in global travel and tourism rate due to COVID-19 pandemic, World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) published a clear statement "Stay home today. Travel tomorrow" (UNWTO 2020). According to the statement, tourism sector is committed to support all international actions to curb the virus outbreak such as travel restrictions and suspension of the flights. Consequently, these measures have made the tourism sector a hard-hit one financially: the global tourism arrival rate reduced 43.8% by the April 2020 (see Figure 1) which is the highest decline compared to previous crisis such as global economic crisis in 2009 (-4%) and SARS outbreak in 2003 (-0.4%). Based on UNWTO scenarios, the annual decline in international tourism arrival may reach to 60% and 80% depends on the traveling restriction and global reactions to the pandemic. These scenarios

---

[1] PhD candidate, Laboratory of Integrated Performance in Design (LIPID), ENAC, EPFL

warn that millions of people will be financially at risk and more important, the progressive trend of achieving sustainable development goals may be blocked.
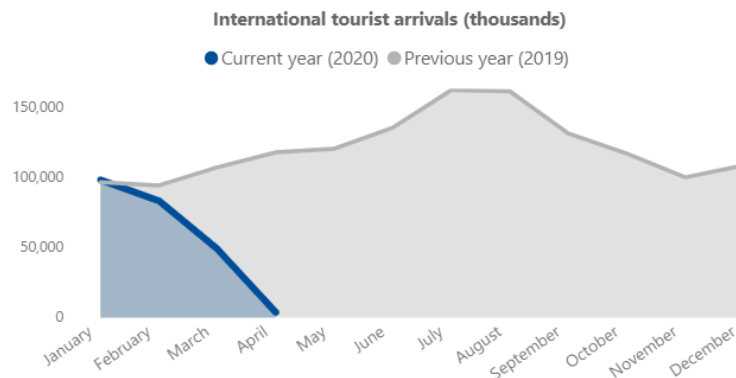

Figure 1. Comparison between international tourism arrival in 2019 and 2020 (UNWTO, 2020)

During the confinement, the monthly international tourism arrival has been reduced by 47% in Switzerland (see Figure 2). It caused by the Swiss council decision for traveling restrictions and border closure that limits the travel to the necessary ones such as 1st line jobs and essential shopping. This drastic reduction in tourism rate impacts different aspects of people's life such as mental, physical and social wellbeing, losing the clue of time, emergence of new thing-to-do activities at weekends, change in traveling patterns and manners, etc. Therefore, our Citizen Think Tank aimed to: 1) identify the effects of COVID-19 outbreak on people's everyday life regarding traveling; 2) collaborative development of scenarios for future of Swiss travel and tourism.

Region	January	February	March	April	YTD (%)
⊟ **Europe**	5	2	-53	-98	-44
⊞ **Central/Eastern Europe**	1	-2	-46	-96	-40
⊞ **Northern Europe**	4	4	-51	-97	-40
⊞ **Southern/Medit. Europe**	5	1	-69	-100	-52
⊟ **Western Europe**	8	6	-40	-98	-38
Austria	11	13	-69	-99	-30
Belgium	7	6			7
Germany	2	1	-71		-25
Liechtenstein	18	27	-58		-6
Luxembourg	0	0	-56	-96	-43
Netherlands	5	4	-66		-23
Switzerland	9	-4	-73	-99	-47

Figure 2. Monthly changes (%) in international tourism arrival to Switzerland in January, February, march, April and Year to Date (YTD) (UNWTO, 2020)

3. Creating possible future

To acknowledge problems that inhabitants and decision makers perceive as the most pressing, and to consider regional specificities, scientists need to go beyond an interdisciplinary "science for society" paradigm, and move to a transdisciplinary mode of "science with society" (Scholz and Binder 2011). Therefore, the Citizen Science approach has been adopted in this study to bridge the peoples' experiences with experts' knowledge and

build up reliable scenarios, which are plausible to be implemented and committed to advance sustainable development goals. Accordingly, the team planned to conduct two Citizen Science Think tank session within two weeks.

Table 1 shows the structure of the study and the planned steps including Think Tank sessions and the work in between.

Table 1. Research steps

Steps	Goal	Discussion topics	Date	No. of participants	Tool
Think Tank session 1	• Extract the key impact variables affecting the future of Swiss travel and tourism	• Personal experience during COVID-19 lockdown regarding traveling • Outlook of traveling for post COVID-19	27.5.2020	5	Online session via ZOOM
Work in between	The goal of this step was to make scenarios based on discussions and the relationship between impact variables.				
Think tank session 2	• Identify the most probable and desirable scenarios • Receive feedback about the Think Tanks' workflow and participants' experience within this study	• No discussion as the Think Tank was in written form, however, participants were asked to share their comments about the scenarios	14.6.2020 to 22.6.2020	5	Offline session by using MIRO virtual whiteboard (The online session canceled due to low number of participants)

We aimed to develop a systematic understanding of the current situation of Swiss travel and tourism, its challenges and possible future development trajectories. Based on the Think Tanks outputs, we conducted a Formative Scenario Analysis (FSA) for the future of domestic travels in Switzerland to give form to the consistent and plausible scenarios (Scholz and Tietje 2002; Spoerri et al. 2009). We used FSA in 5 successive steps that are described in the following sections.

Step 1: Focus and goal definition

The focus and the goal of "Swiss Corona Citizen Science Research Team" was described at the beginning of the first Think Tank. To narrow down the scope of study and avoid prolonged sessions we focused on the domestic travels i.e. travels inside Switzerland for leisure purposes and aimed to build a contextualized understanding of the research object through citizens' point of view. The time horizon that has been chosen for the scenario construction is summer 2020 and therefore address the changes and requirements within a short-time development along with softening travel restrictions in Switzerland. To move up to the goal, the guiding question, which asked "How might COVID-19 impact the future of travel and tourism in Switzerland?" was outlined to keep the session focused on the topic.

Step 2: Collective discussions

After clarifying the system and goal of the project, participants were asked to introduce themselves to warm up the discussion and get to know each other. This step was followed up by a chain of questions correspondent to topic 1, which is "participants' personal experience during COVID-19 lockdown regarding traveling" and topic 2, which is

"participants' outlook of traveling for post COVID-19 lockdown" (see Table 2). The questions were designed in a way to enable us to find the key impact variables and the probable and plausible future states of them.

Table 2. Main topic of discussions and the relevant questions

Topic 1: participants' personal experience during COVID-19 lockdown regarding traveling
- How did lockdown affect your plans for weekends and holidays?
- The traveling rate has been drastically reduced since the lockdown started. Do you find it a positive or negative change? Why?
- Did you adopt new activities instead of travelling on weekends and during holidays? If yes, what type of activities?
- Do you think this change will be temporary or permanent?
- Do you prefer to travel inside your canton, neighbor cantons, across Switzerland or abroad? Why?
- Do you prefer to use your private car/bike or public transport e.g. bus and train? Please indicate your reasons.
- What kind of activities you planned to do there?
- Did you already book a camp or tour? If yes, where?
- Do you seek to avoid large crowds? If yes, which places are appropriate inside Switzerland?

Topic 2: participants' outlook of traveling for post COVID-19
- How can Swiss citizens help to relaunch local travel and tourism in Switzerland? e.g. use of public transport with hygiene considerations, frequent travels to short-distance destinations, support the local tourism market, etc.
- Are you feeling optimistic that travel & tourism after the COVID-19 crisis will be more sustainable? Why?

Discussions' result:
Collective discussions during the 2-hour Think Tank session with Citizen Scientists highlighted interesting facts about the confinement situation as follow:
- Losing the track of time was highlighted as one of the negative impacts of confinement;
- Some weekday and weekend activities have been blended together that makes weekends similar to the rest of the week;
- Participants tend to walk or cycle around the city as a pleasant activity that they keep doing during confinement as well;
- Participants explicitly indicated Swiss mountains and lakeside areas as the interesting destinations for spending weekends;
- Participants expressed clearly that they do use the public transport without panic of being affected by the virus;
- They do not care about avoiding large crowds while choosing a destination for traveling.

Step 3: Constructing possible futures
To build reliable scenarios we used different scenario technique, particularly, extracting the key impact variables. The audio file of the first Think Tank was transcribed and the main factors of discussions were elicited. As shown in

Table 3, 10 impact variables have been identified and their possible and plausible future states were indicated according to the participants conversations and current trends stemmed from literature review. This list does not mean to be exhaustive and taking confounding factors (e.g. climate change) into consideration, however, is essential to build the basic scenarios aligned with the current situation and future statement.

Table 3. Impact factors of our study with description of their respective possible future states

Key impact variables	Characteristic developments-future states
Weekend activities	1) Mainly home-based activities 2) Mainly city-based activities 3) Off-city activities
Traveling habits	1) Similar to before COVID-19 2) Overall fewer travelling demands 3) Overall more travelling demands
Travel restriction regulations	1) Very restricting regulations 2) Moderate restricting regulations 3) Softened to no restricting regulation
Spread pace of COVID-19	1) Very fast: 2nd peak on August 2) Moderate: 2nd peak on October 3) No 2nd peak
Distance of holidays destinations from citizens' place of residence	1) Intra-regional 2) Neighbor countries 3) International (excluding neighbor countries)
Type of destination	1) Untouched nature e.g. mountains 2) Cities' attractions 3) Off-city touristic attractions
Capacity of public transport	1) Similar to before COVID-19 2) More capacity 3) Less capacity
Frequency of using private mobility	1) Similar to before COVID-19 2) More automobility 3) Less automobility
Citizens' contribution to relaunch "local" travel and tourism	1) High 2) Moderate 3) Low
Public awareness level regarding the need to transform their habits towards sustainable travel & tourism	1) High 2) Moderate 3) Low

Possible scenarios

Theoretically, the total number of possible scenarios is 59,049, however, many of them are not compatible with or possible in the real context. The next step was to select up to four scenarios that has to be chosen based on four criteria: idealism, realism, probability, and backward development. Table 4 shows four proposed scenarios, which addressed rapid development towards sustainable travel and tourism, slow development towards sustainable travel and tourism, return to pre-COVID19, and backward development.

Table 4. The structure of four scenarios

Title	Description
Scenario I: *Rapid development towards sustainable Travel & Tourism*	- The travelling restriction regulations are softened quickly because of the very low pace of spreading COVID-19 - Current home-based activities on weekends are replaced by city-based activities - People use bus, bicycle and walking as a mean of movement inside cities thanks to the appropriate climatic conditions and few precipitations in July and August - Public and private sectors encourage people to do cultural activities e.g. by giving promotion on cinema tickets, theatre, restaurant, etc.

- Government encourages citizens to use public transport by increasing the capacity of travels and reducing the price of them
- Government invests more on transportation infrastructures in order to maximize the access to the intra-regional natural attractions e.g. mountains
- Government supports local tourism-related jobs by short- and mid-term financial aid to speed up the recovery plans
- Citizens adapt their travelling patterns to the local, frequent travels that means more travelling demand compared to pre-COVID19, however, mainly inside Switzerland
- Hoteling sector are able to give service to higher number of travelers as the length of their stay is shorter

Scenario II:
Slow development towards sustainable Travel & Tourism

- The travelling restriction regulations are softened slowly because the spreading COVID-19 is going down constantly with a low pace
- People's plan for weekend is a mix of home-based and city-based activities
- There is a tendency to public transport, bicycle and walking for moving inside and outside the cities and the private automobility rate is slightly lower than pre-COVID19
- Cultural activities e.g. cinemas and museums are reopening gradually, however, people still tend to avoid crowds specially for indoor spaces
- Government increases the capacity of public transport slightly and encourages people to use them by offering special prices for intra-regional travels
- Government partially increases the transportation infrastructure's budget to improve accessibility of the natural attractions
- Government supports local tourism-related jobs by short-term financial aid to be able to re-launch gradually the recovery plans
- Citizens tend to travel inside Switzerland, however, since flights are going back to normal travelling abroad is desirable for many citizens. Therefore, travelling demand is overall higher than pre-COVID19
- Hoteling sector slightly increases their capacity and offers special prices

Scenario III:
Return to Pre-COVID19

- The travelling restriction regulations are eliminated and spread of COVID-19 drastically decreases
- Citizens' activities for weekends return to the pre-COVID19 pattern and no considerable change in weekend things-to-do is found
- The proportion of using public transport, private automobility and bicycling is the same as pre-COVID19
- The city-based cultural activities remain as pre-COVID19 and neither promotions nor extra tendency is observable
- Capacity and cost of travels remain steady
- Government does not have any plan for increasing investments on public transport
- There is no financial aid supporting the local tourism-related jobs that has been beaten during COVID19 lockdown
- Citizens' travelling demand and pattern remain as pre-COVID19
- Hoteling sector restart their services with the same trend as pre-COVID19

Scenario IV:
Backward development

- The travelling restriction regulations are eliminated and spread of COVID-19 drastically decreases
- Weekend travels are carried out mainly by private automobiles
- The activities of cultural sector drastically reduced because of the considerable fall in level of people attendance in cultural activities
- Public transport capacity is not very well exploited and the prices are increasing
- Government reduces the investments on public transport
- Many of natural attractions and infrastructures such as ski resorts are abandoned
- Neither government nor citizens support the local tourism-related jobs
- Citizens tend to travel abroad and spend their money and time somewhere outside Switzerland

-   Hotel owners increases the price of their services and do not have pans for survival

Step 4: Scenario selection and interpretation phase

The next step was to present the selected scenarios to the participants in the second Think Tank. Due to low number of registered persons, an offline session was implemented. To do that, we presented our scenarios graphically and shared it on MIRO, which is a virtual platform, where one can view the board, edit data and add comment. Figure 3, Figure 4, Figure 5 and Figure 6 illustrate the proposed scenarios on our MIRO virtual whiteboard and indicate the aforementioned scenarios by using a simple narrative, which is easy to imagine and interpret (see section 4). The participants were thus asked to leave their comments about each scenario and finally vote to their preferable and more probable scenarios. The results are expanded in section 5.

Step 5: Consolidation of results with participants

The last step was to share the results with Citizen Scientists and ask them to approve or edit them, if needed, and agree upon authorship.

4. Scenarios

Based on the participants' inputs in the first Think Tanks session and analysing the key impact variables four scenarios have been proposed. In this stage we transformed the structured scenarios to the easy-to-imagine narratives. The following sections represent the four narratives for the proposed scenarios.

Scenario 1: Travel today!

Today is Saturday August 10, 2020 and I'm so excited to re-visit Lauterbrunnen in Bern canton with my friends after a long time. It's my first weekend travel outside my canton "Fribourg" after COVID-19 crisis. We planned to take the train from Fribourg city to Thun and then cycle from there to Lauterbrunnen. There's a new-built cable car in the area that brings tourists smoothly to a high platform, where one can look at beautiful Jungfrau. I found this idea really great as many tourists such as elderly people and kids might not be able to hike. I could never travel at this price before April 2020, because the public transport, cable car, hotels and museum offer special prices since the end of Corona lockdown. For lunch we planned to eat Röschti in a local restaurant and of course, we will buy some cheese from a small shop near our hotel (see Figure 3).

Scenario 1: Travel today!

Today is Saturday August 10, 2020 and I'm so excited to re-visit Lauterbrunnen in Bern canton with my friends after a long time. It's my first weekend travel outside my canton "Fribourg" after COVID-19 crisis. We planned to take the train from Fribourg city to Thun and then cycle from there to Lauterbrunnen. There's a new-built cable car in the area that brings tourists smoothly to a high platform, where one can look at beautiful Jungfrau. I found this idea really great as many tourists such as elderly people and kids might not be able to hike. I could never travel at this price before April 2020, because the public transport, cable car, hotels and museum offer special prices since the end of Corona lockdown. For lunch we planned to eat Röschti in a local restaurant and of course, we will buy some cheese from a small shop near our hotel.

Figure 3. The presentation of Scenario 1 on the MIRO virtual whiteboard
(Source of image in left: https://www.sbb.ch/en/timetable/travel-advice/bicycles/take-your-bike-with-you.html and right: https://digitourist.wordpress.com/2018/01/03/the-valley-of-72-waterfalls-inspired-a-youthful-jrr-tolkien-to-imagine-the-landscape-of-his-fictional-middle-earth-switzerland/)

Scenario 2: A plan for "a slow discovery in Switzerland"!

It's August 2020 and travelling restriction regulations are getting softer gradually and it's a perfect time to plan for a tour around Switzerland. I'd like to spend one weekend in one lakeside within the coming months: a tandem tour with my partner around Murtensee, Bielersee and lac de Neuchâtel for this weekend, visiting Olympique museum and a long walk along Lake Geneva for next month, a lunch in cruise on the Zurichsee for August, and I'd rather to stay September in Fribourg and watch a movie in cinema (of course while keeping social distance!) and chill along lac de pérolles, which is located within walking distance from my flat. Sounds amazing! To reach Lausanne and Zurich I take train and for the rest I'd rather to cycle, however, roads are getting busy slowly and people tend to use their cars again. I know that 3 intra-regional travels within 3 months will be costly, however, it won't affect me because it's a long-term discovery plan (see Figure 4).

Scenario 3: Back to pre-COVID19 life ...

Today, 27th of August 2020, it was expressed in the news that travelling restriction regulations are eliminated and spread of COVID-19 drastically decreases. It's definitely the best news I've received since April! I was thinking that what have been changed during lockdown. Surprisingly, nothing has changed regarding Swiss travel and tourism because I can see that:

• Citizens' activities for weekends return to the pre-COVID19 pattern

• The proportion of using public transport, private automobility and bicycling is the same as pre-COVID19

• The city-based cultural activities remain as pre-COVID19 and neither promotions nor extra tendency is observable

• Citizens' travelling demand and pattern remain as pre-COVID19 (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. The presentation of Scenario 3 on the MIRO virtual whiteboard
(Source of image in left: https://bit.ly/3j7pOlf and right: https://traveltriangle.com/blog/festivals-in-switzerland/)

Scenario 4: I'd rather to drive to France!

Today is 15th of August 2020 and my family and I are going to travel to south of France by our car. It's almost 600 km from Fribourg to Marseille and takes around 6 hours to get there. There is a very nice resort along the sea, where we can rest and chill for one week. Unfortunately, many of lakeside infrastructures have abandoned in Switzerland and the hotel owners couldn't survive due to the drastic fall in tourism rate. Many of local shops just closed because no one except locals was there to purchase from them. However, travelling restriction regulations are completely eliminated and borders are open again which means it's a perfect time to travel abroad after a long lockdown. Despite many seats are empty in trains, I personally prefer to travel by my own car and enjoy the natural beauties of the roads. Besides, it costs less for four of us to travel by car, I think.

Figure 6. The presentation of Scenario 4 on the MIRO virtual whiteboard
(Source of image: https://www.completefrance.com/travel/12-tips-for-driving-in-france-1-4650180)

5. Assessment Results

This section presents the result of the participants votes to their most probable and preferable scenarios. Accordingly, "Scenario 1: Travel today!", which represent the idealistic scenario was the most preferable scenarios by 3 votes compared to Scenario 2 by 2 votes. Feedback from participants indicated that short discovery during weekends with special offers is desirable for them, while in this summer there would be probably a mix of all 4 scenarios. They also highlighted that despite government investment on public transport has been introduced as an influential factor in scenario preparation, it does not affect the regional travels for leisure.

Regarding the probability of scenarios, there seem to be a consensus on "Scenario 3: Back to pre-COVID19", which is the realistic scenario among our proposed plans. Based on the participants comments, as soon as the traveling situation returns to normal, people will find themselves in scenario 3 along with the rebound of international travels. Indeed, scenario 3 will happen in short-term starting with reopening plans, however, it is desirable that scenario 3 transforms to scenario 1 or 2 in the later stages.

6. Conclusion

This study indicated that the most preferable scenario for future of Swiss travel and tourism is a quick step towards sustainable traveling inside Switzerland. It can be also concluded that after lockdown people will probably come back to their pre-COVID 19 travelling habits.

The collaboration in the Citzen Think Tank regarding everyday life experiences during confinement enriched the knowledge database of current situation. Besides, participants' feedback on the workflow and experience of participating in a citizen science research highlighted that the Think Tank session and the per se was interesting and the discussions were rich, introspective and diverse. Participants suggested that larger panels may bring up interesting debates.

References

Scholz, Roland W., and Claudia R. Binder. 2011. *Environmental Literacy in Science and Society: From Knowledge to Decisions*. Cambridge University Press.

Scholz, Roland W., and Olaf Tietje. 2002. *Embedded Case Study Methods: Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Knowledge*. Sage.

Spoerri, Andy, Daniel J. Lang, Claudia R. Binder, and Roland W. Scholz. 2009. "Expert-Based Scenarios for Strategic Waste and Resource Management Planning—C&D Waste Recycling in the Canton of Zurich, Switzerland." *Resources, Conservation and Recycling* 53 (10): 592–600.

UNWTO. 2020. "International Tourism and COVID-19." World Tourism Organization. https://www.unwto.org/international-tourism-and-covid-19.