



LUND UNIVERSITY

# “Tourism Rules Everything Around Me”<sup>1</sup>

A Case Study on Alienation and Tourism in the Austrian Alps

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<sup>1</sup> Title is based loosely on the song C.R.E.A.M. by Wu Tang Clan

## Abstract

Tourism has become one of the largest and fastest growing industries of the global capitalist economy. In the case of Austria, it is responsible for nearly one sixth of the GDP. This development is connected to an incredible economic growth and structural changes in formerly remote mountain villages in the Austrian Alps. In this thesis, the impacts of the mass tourism developments on the local population of a popular tourist destination in the western part of Austria are critically assessed. More specifically, the effects of tourism on the ways of relating to oneself, the community and nature are examined by using an extended case method approach. The main argument builds around the hypothesis that mass tourism creates forms of alienation. Therefore, participant observation and qualitative interviews were used as research techniques and connected to the theories of 'alienation' by Marx and Rosa, which serve as a theoretical background. Among other conclusions, I find that mass tourism can create certain forms of alienation from tourism as a product, work, community, the self and time. Concerning the relationship with nature, it was surprising to find out that instead of being a sphere of alienation, it serves as a key point of identification and connection. This also applies to the relationship with place, which is strongly influenced by the emotional attachment to nature.

Keywords: Tourism, Alienation, Mountain Tourism, Acceleration, Extended Case Method, Human Ecology, Austrian Alps

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# 1 Introduction

I grew up in the village of Serfaus in the Austrian Alps, one of the biggest mountain tourism centers in Austria. Today it is full of hotels, restaurants, bars, and many thousands of tourists visit it every year. Yet only 200 years ago people were still dependent on subsistence farming. They lived on small scale farms where they had a few cows, sheep, pigs and chickens. During the short summers, potatoes, oats and barley were cultivated while cows, sheep and goats went to the mountain pastures. There, herders took care of them along with dairymaids and -men who were in charge of making cheese and butter. This was very cumbersome work due to the nature of the mountains. Population growth and the fact that there were limits to agricultural expansion because of the terrain sometimes led to very precarious living conditions (Klien & Tschuggmall 2000, 30). Despite the rich culture of manual skills to work the land many people lived on the subsistence level, not to mention the hard daily routine of working in the steep and periodically very cold environment. Families often had many children and if they could not all be fed, some were sent away to the Southern parts of Germany. There they had to work on bigger farms for board and lodging under often very severe conditions (ibid., 31). Moreover, it happened that the women had to manage the whole farm by themselves in summer because the men had gone to work as artisans all over Europe.

This way of life gradually started changing at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the first people visiting the Alps as what in German is called *Sommerfrischler*. The word can be translated as “those who look for the fresh summer” and it was mainly wealthy people from the cities that looked for relaxation in the beautiful scenery of the Alps. Apart from the good climate and nature it was also the exoticism of local population that made it a common trend to visit the mountains (Krauß 2013, 11-26). While locals and their way of life were either romanticized as the noble mountain people or stamped as dumb hillbillies, the strange visitors were often seen as completely crazy lunatics who climbed mountains for fun (ibid., 36-48).

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the number of tourists started to increase and people in Serfaus got an additional income to farming. Nevertheless, it took until the 1920s before tourism was noteworthy and it was only after the Second World War that it really took off in the small mountain village (Klien & Tschuggmall 2000, 445-464). Whereas early tourism occurred during summer, already at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the first tourists came to conquer the alpine mountains in winter and alpine skiing began to get popular. This new practice made it possible to enjoy nature in the most extreme and pure form. White, solitary landscapes and majestic peaks, became a new outlet for the romantic urge to enjoy mountains in all its facets. For many connoisseurs skiing was a way to escape the technologization of the typical alpine landscapes via the growing number of summer tourists and the hydroelectric industry (Denning 2014, 84). It gave mountain-lovers a possibility to enjoy and maintain a relationship with nature in her pre-industrialized form. What they probably didn't expect is that because of their admiration for the Alpine nature in its pure form they would also bring the end to the landscape as they had come to love it. I wonder what they would have said if somebody had showed them an image of Serfaus and its ski resort today. Considering that the alpine

landscape was something passive, set in stone that had to be enjoyed as it was, one can only guess that the image of today with its umpteen chair-lifts, gondolas and huge restaurants bursting with hordes of tourists would have horrified them. It is strangely ironic, that only through the development of infrastructure such as roads, lifts, etc. the mountains became accessible for those people that wanted to have them pristine and original.

I argue that the rise of tourism is a late arrival of industrialization because in relative terms, the rise of tourism in Serfaus is comparable in its revolutionary changes to the changes brought by industrialization to the faces of English cities.

In the year 1950 the village had around 7 000 total overnight stays; in the year 2001 it had over 800 000 and 2018 already more than a million (Klien & Tschuggmall 2000, TVB 2018). A simple trend applies to Austria in general where in the second half of the last century a significant winter tourist industry developed at a remarkable pace (Breiling & Charamza 1999, 4). In the year 1999, Serfaus entered a consortium with the neighbor village to create the Serfaus-Fiss-Ladis cable-car companies, and they reached net sales of over 22 million Euro. From 2000 to 2013 the consortium increased its revenue by 280% and generated over 60 million Euro in net sales. Most of that money was earned during the winter season and nearly all of it was retained and got reinvested, mostly in infrastructure such as the renewal of the local subway. This investment policy is going to continue to provide the visitors with all possible comforts and maintain the competitiveness of the village and the cable car company. Thus, a large share of the investment volume goes towards the upgrading of facilities for summer tourism (Zehrer 2016, 356).

In addition to this it is interesting look at the numbers of total ascents and descents of the mountain. In 1959 there were a little over 30 000 ascents, by 2007 there were already 300 times more (Fritz 2008). This substantial uptake in ascents and descents would not have been possible without building a huge network of lifts, gondolas, water pipelines, etc. In the village itself these investments spurred immense growth in hotels, restaurants, etc. So by now (2018) there are more than seven thousand commercial beds in Serfaus that mostly get book for the period of a week (TVB 2018).

Connecting this to a broader context shows us that these developments are nothing unique. Tourism is seen as one of the largest and fastest growing industries worldwide. It is also a major component of globalization (Fletcher 2011, 443). The travel and tourism industry accounts for for approximately 10.4 % of all global economic activity (Wttc 2019). In economic terms this amounts to a higher weight than agriculture, which is responsible for 6.1 % of the Gross Domestic Product (Rosselló-Nadal 2014, 334). Greenwood (1989, 171) even goes as far as calling it the “largest scale movement of goods, services, and people that humanity has perhaps ever seen”.

Thus, tourism accounts for a major share of the global capitalist economy, especially in Austria, where it amounts 15.9 % of the GDP (Katzenschlager 2019, 9). But there lies a difference in the structure of the global mainstream tourist industry and tourism in Serfaus. When mass tourism started it was based on large scale pre-packaged holiday offers and big enterprises (Fletcher

2011, 448). Mountain tourism in Austria, including Serfaus was and still is very much based on family enterprises. In my opinion it is partly still influenced by the peasant form of economic activity that Alexander Chayanov (1986 [org. 1923]) described, since it is not that long ago that people lived as subsistence farmers.

Nevertheless, the urge to grow that wasn't really part of the peasant economy definitely exists within mountain tourism, and as shown, the pace of growth in Serfaus is remarkable. Tourism is growing world-wide, resulting in fiercer competition. For a tourist destination like Serfaus those competitive pressures can be witnessed physically, e.g. in further expansions of the ski lift infrastructure, the construction of new trails and routes to experience nature, and a range of other leisure facilities. For the private accommodation providers and the gastronomy, it means an extension in size, facilities and service.

Consequently, this process of growth that brings in more natural and social resources to the system is a form of commodification which to some extent even happens to former traditions such as the festive termination of the alpine meadow culture. There the cows that were held in the mountains during summer get decorated with flowers and people celebrate a prosperous summer. Hence the 'sign value' besides labor, capital and natural resources is another essential part of the expansion of tourist industry.

As we see, through the constant drive for growth, commodification reaches into "every nook and cranny of modern life" (William 2010, 62). But what impact does commodification via system of market exchange of goods, services and experiences have on the environment and on people's culture? Buried here lies a deep conflict because Austrian mountains and its people don't just consist of resources or economic value. They inhere great ecosystems that are home for plants and animals and a complex local society. If the natural environment is just seen as a commodity there is no way of valuing ecological services and you cannot evaluate the negative external effects of the economic system on them (Stoll 2014). The same is also applicable to local society. If inhabitants and the whole community are reduced only to their economic value or utility, what does that do to the people and the community itself? That is a huge dilemma because especially mountain tourism depends greatly on the beauty of its cultural landscape and a strong, harmonious local community. However, this community might be at risk, if we look at the population forecast that was commissioned by the provincial government of Tirol. Researchers found that the population of Serfaus is likely to diminish drastically by the year 2030 (Landesstatistik Tirol 2016). People are already having less children, which gets further exacerbated by the trend of young people to move away. This can already be observed and will probably get worse. A fact that is made more disturbing as it is happening in spite of high prosperity and economic security.

Hence, I argue that a thorough scientific exploration of mass tourism's impact on the subject, the community and their relation to nature is necessary if we want to create a sustainable future for the environment and the community. To this end I want to contribute, especially because there has not been any research done on this topic in Serfaus.

## 1.1 Aim and Research Question

The specific aim of my thesis is to look at the implications of mass tourism in the village of Serfaus both at an individual and on a community level. Further, I want to look at people's relationship to what we call 'nature' or 'the natural environment' and how that relation is influenced by mass tourism. Throughout the whole work I want to concentrate on the concept of 'alienation' as a guiding principle. As we will see later, Marx (1959 [orig. 1932]; Marx & Quante 2018) states in his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* that the capitalist mode of production creates alienation from work, the products we create, society, nature and ourselves. Following him and Hartmut Rosa, who also elaborates the concept, I want to connect it to the tourist industry there. I believe this will be especially interesting because of how the tourist industry operates in Serfaus. The cable-car company as the main employer is owned by the municipality while the other companies are nearly all family enterprises and our most important product is our natural environment. This means the spheres of work, the product, society, the individual and nature are very much entangled.

More specifically, I will look at how alienation manifests itself in people's thoughts, behavior, the way community is built and interacts, and how people deal with and relate to the natural environment. If mass tourism really creates alienation in whatever form, I want to unveil the causes that lead to it and find potential strategies to fight its roots as well as mitigate its effects.

In more general terms, I wish to contribute to the broader discussion on how tourism can be shaped in a more sustainable way both in terms of ecology and social cohesion. More practically speaking this is about the potential of creating a social environment that keeps people from moving away, how one can counteract a phenomenon such as tourism fatigue, a lack of successors for family enterprises or a rise in burnouts and depressions, etc., and also how one finds a way to coexist with the natural environment without seeing it merely as a resource that needs to get exploited.

I believe that the findings will not just be helpful on the micro scale of Serfaus but could be generalizable to a certain degree and applicable to a broader scale of tourism in the Alps and perhaps elsewhere.

In this thesis I will limit myself to the following questions:

1. How do individual locals and the broader community of Serfaus experience the ongoing mass tourism development?
2. How does Marx's & Rosa's concept of alienation manifest itself in people's experiences, thoughts and actions?
3. What are the causes of this alienation?
4. How can the industry be shaped in a more socially and ecologically sustainable way?

## 1.2 Structure of the Thesis

My thesis is structured as follows. First, I will concentrate on the framework and carve out the theoretical foundation of my research. I begin with a presentation of Marx's idea of 'alienation' which serves as an overarching theory for my work. It is succeeded by a section on Hartmut Rosa and his contemporary elaboration of 'alienation'. Rosa grounds alienation in the context of Western modernity and connects it to acceleration. With the conceptual framework in place, I will focus on the locality of Serfaus as example case of alienation. In chapter 3 the research methodology is introduced. Part of that is a summary of the extended case method and a description of my approach to it including my research techniques, namely interviewing and participant observation. The methodology part is completed by looking at possible limitations of the research and a short description of my mode of analysis. The fourth part is all about the findings I gained during my time in the field. After the presentation of my data I will evaluate them in the light of the conceptual framework previously introduced. I conclude by discussing my findings and answer the stated research questions.

## 2 Theoretical Framework

In this section I will elaborate the theoretical background. First, I will look at Karl Marx's idea of 'alienation' – a concept that precedes Marx and appears already in early theological writings from the 16. Century by Calvin and Luther (Xue et al. 2014). Secondly, I look at the work of Hartmut Rosa (2008, 2016, 2018a, 2018b) who is very much influenced by Marx and places the theory of 'alienation' in a contemporary context. At the end of this section I establish the connection between my case and the theoretical background.

Theory in my work serves as an overarching fundament. Its purpose is not to find confirmation but to challenge assertions and identify anomalies. As a result, I accommodate possible anomalies.

### 2.1 Marx and Alienation

When Karl Marx died in the year of 1883 in London, he left us with many highly influential writings that are an essential part of several disciplines of science and political movements all around the globe, up until today. This section is mostly based on his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (Marx 1959 [org. 1932]; Marx & Quante 2018) and his most famous work, *The Capital* (1969 [org. 1867]).

Marx argues that a capitalist economy leads to alienation of humankind. The reason for alienation is the social institution of private property of the means of production which makes human labor force a commodity. The private ownership of the means of production leads to a situation where a person who does not own the means of production just cannot use their labor force to manufacture or produce something. The working population must sell its labor

force on the market. Estranged, alienated labor is the direct consequence of this (Marx & Quante 2018, 85).

More precisely, in the process of objectification, which is the production by the worker or the momentum where human force/power flows into creating/producing something, lies the ultimate alienation. The working human is unable to self-determine the use of their labor force. The coercion of selling the one's own labor force comes with a loss of the product of labor. At the end of the work process, the final goods are owned by somebody else. The worker can only buy it with a wage that is earned through the barter of their own force. Hence the laborer becomes a slave to the product so that he receives work and as a consequence the means of his own subsistence. Only this makes it possible for him to exist as a worker and as a physical subject. "The height of this servitude is that it is only as a worker that he can maintain himself as a physical subject and that it is only as a physical subject that he is a worker" (Marx 1959 [org. 1932], 29). Additionally, in a capitalist economy that is forced to a mode of dynamic stabilization (Rosa 2016; Deutschmann 2014) the amount of objects/consumer goods is ever growing. This fact is, if we follow Marx, connected to an expansion of the realm of the powers that enslave humankind (Marx & Quante 2018, 84-85). With every new product on the market a new potential for mutual swindle and plundering is created. The human being gets always less human and ever more money is needed to take possession of the hostile entity. The more production increases, the more the capacity of the earned money decreases. Thus, in the end the only true desideratum that is created by the capitalist economy is money. Quantity becomes its only true quality, and everything is reduced to abstract form (ibid., 135).

Subsequently I will look at the realms of alienation and how it manifests in the life of humans.

### 2.1.1 Alienation from the Product of Work

The essence or the being of humankind for Marx is in activity, creating, and fabricating. In other words, a human being's true destiny lies in activity of producing. Within this activity the individuals put themselves or their being into the product. Their blood, sweat and tears as well as mental energy etc. form/create something. But as already addressed, Marx's model of objectification indicates that the product of human action becomes itself an independent and alien good in the capitalist production process. Even though it is created by a person, it belongs to somebody else. The producers become a commodity through selling their workforce. They are cut off from their own product and it is sold as a commodity on the market. Between the product and the producers, private property institutionalizes itself. Ultimately, the product gains the upper hand over the person creating it. The very own creation of us humans, that is also our being, becomes an estranged entity, an independent power. Hence self-realization through creation/work becomes the opposite, alienation of its outcome/product (ibid., 83-187).

### 2.1.2 Alienation from the Process of Work

If the worker gets alienated from the fruits of work, for Marx it follows that there is also going to be alienation/estrangement from the act of production, because ultimately the product is the outcome of a process or an activity. If the product of work mutates into something alien that executes power over the worker, it means the laborer must already be estranged during and hence from the producing activity. It is both, the activity of alienation and the alienation of activity. Here the tragedy manifests itself because it is “activity as suffering, strength as weakness, begetting as emasculating, the worker’s own physical and mental energy, his personal life – for what is life but activity? – as an activity which is turned against him, independent of him and not belonging to him” (Marx 1959 [org. 1932], 31). Instead of a realization of humanity’s being through work as the act of creating something, as a momentum of affirmation and well-being, it is negation and distress, not the purpose of life but simply a way to extend a life of suffering (Marx & Quante 2018, 92).

There are two aspects that for Karl Marx constitute alienation from activity (ibid., 87). First it is the feeling of being other-directed. The goal of the activity is predetermined by the production process and the necessity to survive. It is not possible for the working individuals to feel themselves while at work, only when not at work. They feel home only when not working and not when working. This leads to the second one, a profound feeling of unhappiness.

### 2.1.3 Alienation from the Self or the “species-being”

The connection between the first and second form of alienation is quite obvious. The third one, the alienation from what Marx (1959 [org. 1932]) calls the “species-being”, I translate to the more understandable term of alienation from the self. As we have already come to understand in the previous sections, the realization of the self, the true essence of life of our species, is the activity of creating, the productive life. Hence it is the free and conscious activity that makes up the character of us human beings. Capitalist society alienates us in two different ways from our species-being/ourselves. The essence of our existence as the producing activity (cooperative production and reproduction) confronts us as an alien and inscrutable market. It is not possible for us humans to recognize ourselves in this form of concretion. Yet we must be part of it to survive. To sum up, work is not the manifestation of ourselves/ our species-being, it is a mere tool to survive as an individual (Marx & Quante 2018, 92). Hence for Marx it turns “[man’s] species-being, both nature and his spiritual species-property, into a being alien to him, into a means of his individual existence. It estranges from man his own body, as well as external nature and his spiritual aspect, his human aspect” (Marx 1959 [org. 1932], 32). So, we are alienated from the product of our producing act, as well as from the act itself which leads to an alienation of what we truly are. As a result, we estrange us from ourselves.

#### 2.1.4 Alienation from Society (other individuals)

Estranging ourselves from the product, the act of producing and ourselves, leads us to a point where we additionally alienate ourselves from other human beings. Because we have an ability to act consciously, we can realize our own needs and desires. As collective beings we are also able to sense them with other people. In a capitalist economy that creates alienation, we can neither really satisfy ourselves nor others. We do not produce immediately for the satisfaction of the needs of others, it is just a means for our survival. Our relation to others becomes a means-ends relationship. Humans tend to not see the other individual as a direct member of our species, but as a competitor in the struggle to sell our labor power. In the acts of buying and selling the true collective character of humankind cannot be realized because the social institutions of private property, market society and wage labor do not allow real interpersonal relationships in the production activities. And those are part of the way to realize the human species-being (Marx & Quante 2018, 94).

#### 2.1.5 Alienation from Nature

An important part of the theory of alienation is humanity's relationship to nature. Marx here states:

The universality of man appears in practice precisely in the universality which makes all nature his inorganic body – both inasmuch as nature is (1) his direct means of life, and (2) the material, the object, and the instrument of his life activity. Nature is man's inorganic body – nature, that is, insofar as it is not itself human body. Man lives on nature – means that nature is his body, with which he must remain in continuous interchange if he is not to die. That man's physical and spiritual life is linked to nature means simply that nature is linked to itself, for man is a part of nature (Marx 1959 [org. 1932], 31).

As human beings we are part of nature and at the same time we are dependent on it. First of all, we live *in* it. Second, we live *from* it. It provides us with the material for the act of producing and with the means for our physical subsistence. Without it we are unable to survive, nor can we create. For Marx (ibid.), work or the act of producing is a process between humans and nature whereby humanity's metabolism with nature is mediated. Through working in and with the external world of nature it is changed and by that humans also change themselves. In a world where capitalist economy is the overarching structure of all these relationships alienation is as much a part of our encounter with ourselves and others as it is with nature.

For John Bellamy Foster (1999), alienation from nature manifests for example in the emerging of a rift in the metabolic interaction between humanity and the external world. In the production and reproduction of humanity in capitalism lies to a certain point also the destruction of our livelihood.

Hartmut Rosa, whose writings form the basis of the next section, also engages with alienation of nature but uses a different starting point for his critiques.

## 2.2 Hartmut Rosa on Acceleration and Alienation

Hartmut Rosa is a German sociologist and political scientist. His work has been regarded a contemporary approach to critical theory in the tradition of the Frankfurt School. His book *Acceleration and Alienation: Towards a Critical Theory of Late-Modern Temporality* (2018a) is an attempt to understand the social experiences of people in what Wallerstein (2004) calls the “core of the capitalist world system”. It will serve as the basis of section 2.2. I am convinced that it is a sophisticated attempt to understand modern life and hence will be helpful to understand experience of people who take part in this research. I argue that Rosa’s theory is a contemporary elaboration of Marx’s thought of alienation, but as such it sometimes differs from the original ideas of Marx.

The main difference between Marx and Rosa in this respect is the normative basis of their critics. While Marx’s perspective emanates from the assumption that there is a universal human nature or essence, a true being, Rosa does not think so. For him the basis of normative critics must always lie in the actual experiences of social agents. The concept of ‘alienation’ can therefore only be used if it arises from the real feelings, experiences, attitudes and actions of human beings. Hereby, a starting-point for the examination is the conception of the “good life” and how it manifests itself in social practices (Rosa 2018a, 7).

### 2.2.1 Acceleration

Rosa approaches the analysis of social structure and quality of life by looking at temporal structures that govern our life. He argues that temporal structures connect the micro and the macro level because our own actions are regulated by systemic time imperatives. In modern society we are free, but at the same time we are caged under the law of a temporal regime. According to Rosa (ibid., 9), the time structure of modernity is dominated by a process of acceleration, that is totalitarian in its form and keeps agents from living what they believe to be the good life.

There are three manifestations of acceleration. First there is a *technical* acceleration, which can be defined as the intentional increase in pace of transport, communication and production processes (ibid., 20). Acceleration in this sphere has enormous impacts on the life of people and it especially changes the perception of space and time.

The second important sphere of acceleration is *social change*, the acceleration of society itself. Today every nook and every cranny of society is somehow affected by acceleration, be it fashion, lifestyles, relationships, consumerism, classes, language, habits, etc. For Hartmut Rosa (ibid., 23) this leads to something he calls “*Gegenwartsschrumpfung*” which stands for a contraction of the present that is a result of the cultural and social rates of innovation. This means that social acceleration leads to a situation where our experiences and expectations are only valid for a very short period of time and we have to be careful to not miss connection with the present (ibid., 24).

The previously mentioned spheres lead to a third kind of acceleration, that of *our pace of life*. We are facing an unbelievable and widespread shortage of time. Who doesn't know the feeling of not having enough time to do everything that is important to us or on our to-do list, in modern society we can observe a drastic increase in actions and experience per time episode. People perceive time as a very scarce resource and feel stressed, nervous and under pressure. This leads to a coping mechanism where people try to do things faster to be able to fit in more actions per time period and also do more things at the same time (ibid., 26). The reason for this cannot be found in the technical acceleration itself, because it just gives us the possibility to do things within a shorter time but that does not necessarily lead to acceleration of the pace of life. Actually, we should have more time to our disposal but instead time gets ever scarcer (ibid., 30). A fact that was already discussed by Marshall Sahlins (1972) in the chapter on the original affluent society in his book "Stone Age Economics".

### 2.2.2 Motors of Acceleration

Rosa (2018a, 34) argues that in our modern society there is a deep connection between growth and acceleration. There exist several driving forces behind the different forms of acceleration. The social driving force is made up of the fundamental principles and laws of profit that govern capitalist economy. Work time is an essential factor of production and if we save time it is a way to save costs. That leads to an advantage on the market. The principals of credit and interest rates that force investors to make ever faster profits and keep capital circulating are another factor. The logical development is an always increasing rate of production and consumption.

In a nutshell, technical and social acceleration are a direct product of the competitive capitalist market economy. And the principle of competition is not just the dominating mode of allocation in the economic sphere. It governs nearly all other spheres of life as well. Rosa (ibid., 36) goes as far as calling it the "basic principle of modernity" (my transl.). At the micro level this leads to a constant rat race between individuals, not just about jobs and success but also social relations.

Within the competition the main criterion is performance or output. In the end, performance is nothing more than work per time unit. This means that if I accelerate my workflow and performance I can gain time which translates into a competitive advantage. This leads to a system where the whole purpose of life is not living a self-determined life anymore but the simple maintenance of competitiveness that is bound to a forever increasing energy input and acceleration (ibid., 38).

However, we are not just victims of acceleration. We are also rooted in the way we think about the purpose of life today. A widely shared idea on the meaning for our existence would be to simply live the good life. And the good life is about the "number and depth of experiences made in life" (ibid., 39, my transl.). Today the focus does not lie on the after-life anymore. It is about the realization of as many options as possible. Enjoying one's time on earth to the fullest is the

coping mechanism to deal with the loss of eternal life as promised by some religions. There is a catch though, our world will always have way more possibilities than we could ever realize in one lifetime. The logical consequence is to live faster in order to realize more options. Hence acceleration of pace of life is also an answer to our finitude (ibid., 40).

In the end all this creates a kind of feedback loop where technical acceleration leads to a change of social practices. That change leads to an acceleration of social change which in turn gives birth to a contraction of the present. That contraction then leads to an acceleration in the pace of life that drives technical acceleration and so forth. Today acceleration drives itself.

The outcome of all of this for us individuals is that it fundamentally changes and shapes our way of being in the world, without even realizing our ways to connect to the world are completely altered, how we deal with fellow human beings and society as a whole, how we are situated in space and time, and what our relationship with other objects and nature looks like. Rosa (ibid., 89) argues, that totalitarian rule of social acceleration creates an atmosphere of anxiety, because as human beings we are constantly worried about losing our position in society if we can't adjust to the pace of society. And the true tragedy is that time is seen as something apolitical, something natural. Hence, if we are unable to deal with the pace of society we individualize it and make it our own fault.

### 2.2.3 Critics of temporality

There are various layers to critique. Out of a more functionalist worldview the first thing that we have to mention is our relationship with nature. Social acceleration often has a devastating effect on our way to deal with nature and its resources. It constantly ignores the time frame nature has. One example would be climate change. To look at it with a temporal lens shows that we emit greenhouse gases in a pace and amount that completely overburdens the planet's atmosphere.

But not only the planet, also our bodies and our minds struggle with many processes of acceleration. Today burnout and depression rates are higher than ever (ibid., 100).

Another sphere that is under serious threat is democracy or democratic decision-making. Societies in the industrialized core accelerate in the spheres of economy, science and technology while becoming more and more diverse. If we want to pay attention to this development, it calls for a more intense, participative way to negotiate important questions in society. It is simple, a heterogeneous society that undergoes constant rapid change needs a lot of time for processes of inclusion, decision making, etc. However, we don't have more time for democracy but less. Possible consequences include the desynchronization between people, politics and economics might already be tangible (ibid., 99-120).

### 2.2.4 Alienation

The most important sphere of critics for Rosa is the individual/community layer. He argues (2018a, 115), that acceleration and competition once might have been seen as a means to gain self-determination. Today though, exactly those forces threaten our ability to choose and live a good life within a community of autonomous subjects. Everything is subordinated to competitiveness. Acceleration and competition thus create a situation where the purpose of life is self-determination, while we are in fact completely heteronomous. Following Rosa, this momentum leads to alienation. He argues that alienation can be seen as a state where we practice a life that we chose on our own, but at the same time we don't really want that life. We doubt the practices and goals, but somehow we have to act in its accordance anyway (ibid., 120). An example would be our interaction with nature. Even though we know that certain practices harm nature we continue doing them, a fact that can lead to alienation of self as well as from nature.

Since Rosa bases his concept of alienation on Marx, he also uses the five spheres that Marx elaborated but adds space and time. Alienation, according to Rosa, is strongly connected to our "*Selbst-Welt-Verhältnis*", our self-world-relation (ibid., 123). This alienation could then be interpreted as a structural dysfunction between our self and the world.

Alienation from space has several aspects. For example, space somehow gets increasingly insignificant. In modernity, people tend to move and travel to an extent that has never before been the case. Furthermore, our to-do lists have never been that long. In order to get to know a place and make it our home we have to build up a resonant relationship. We need to invest time and effort to engage with a space so that we feel a kind of connection, a connection that also gives us safety and intimacy. Social acceleration can create a situation where we simply don't have the time and the energy to engage with a place and it becomes silent. It doesn't tell us a story; it doesn't touch us or affect us. In the end, we alienate ourselves from our very own spatial and material environment (ibid., 123-125).

The objective world that is part of our world can be split up in the things we produce and the things we consume or use. As human beings, we do have somewhat intimate relationships with objects. Often the things that surround us in our daily life or we work with somehow also constitute our identity to a certain degree. For example, I use my skateboard at least six hours a week and it definitely is a part of my identity. Now Rosa argues, that the forever increasing replacement rates of things alter our relationship with them. We cannot incorporate them in our life story anymore and they stay cold and alien (ibid., 125-128).

Alienation towards our own action can also be described as not feeling at home within our own actions (ibid., 129). As the previous aspects of alienation, this one is also connected to the logic of competition and acceleration. While to-do lists are ever growing and time for the essential things in life seems to diminish, we are caught up in the so-called "*Rhetorik des Müssens*" (ibid., 133), something I would translate as the "rhetoric of having to do things". As already mentioned above, it stands for the diffuse feeling of doing something out of free will but at the same time we don't really want to do it. Additionally, we don't have the time and hence the mindset anymore, to be completely absorbed by the act of doing something. To really engage with work,

for example, we have to be completely in the action. Something that is made harder through time pressure and short-term gratification. Hence we lose connection with our doing.

In a context where the members of society have to always be open for the new and up to date, there is a tendency to additionally alienate ourselves from time itself. Here, Rosa elaborates on Walter Benjamin, who differentiates between “*Erlebnis*” and “*Erfahrung*”. Both words are translated as experience in English but we can distinguish them as follows: “*Erlebnisse*” are something merely episodic, whereas “*Erfahrungen*” are something more profound that form our identity and change who we are. Walter Benjamin (Benjamin 2015 [org. 1974], 186) argues that modern life gets ever richer in “*Erlebnissen*” and ever poorer in “*Erfahrungen*”. As with objects and actions, we fail to incorporate our lived time as our own time and it stays alien.

There is no way that with all forms of alienation already mentioned, we do not also alienate ourselves from our self and the social environment. First, through the incredible amount of social contacts we have every day we reach a form of satiety. For many people the amount and the diversity of contacts rise to a point where it simply gets unrealistic to step into a relation of mutual responsiveness. That mutual responsive social relation Rosa also calls “resonant relationship” (Rosa 2018a, 142; my transl.). Second, if we are alienated from objects, society, other people, actions, nature, etc., a feeling of deep self-alienation is inevitable, simply because our feeling of self and our identity arises from the actions, experiences, and relationships that make up our life. Keeping this in mind, alienation from ourselves and alienation towards the world are part of the same problem. After all it is the decline of a resonant relationship between the self and the world (Rosa 2018b).

### 2.3 Mass Tourism in Serfaus and Alienation

Theory is an essential building block of my research method, the extended case method. Subsequently, I draw out the reason why I chose the works of Marx and Rosa as the theory for my research.

As already mentioned in the introduction, before the strong rise of tourism, most inhabitants were living off/from subsistence farming. Even if they already participated in the capitalist economy, many aspects of life were still organized in a form of peasant economy (Chayanov 1986 [org. 1923]). This has changed through the incredible pace of tourist development. Though, most hotels and guesthouses are still run by families, tourism brought radical changes in the inhabitant’s social and economic lifeworlds. I would argue that the tourism industry is the manifestation of the modern capitalist economy in Serfaus. Through it, commodification of life and nature spreads.

My hypothesis is that hence tourism creates alienation. It shapes how people relate to themselves, each other, nature, etc. I argue that through rapid development as well as because of the rural character it might be more visible than in for example big metropolis. I further

assert, that alienation as described by Marx and Rosa can be helpful to analyze certain, behaviors, feelings, etc.

## 2.4 Alienation in Practice

Marx as well as Rosa talk a lot about how alienation emerges and in what spheres it manifests itself. Although there is no clear definition of how alienation actually really manifests in the life of people. As it is a philosophical concept, it is hard to give a definite explanation but for a better understanding of the reader, I am going to outline it briefly.

I argue that the feeling of heteronomy and the results of it are products of the pressure created by competition and performance pressure. They create feelings such as anxiety, stress and disconnectedness. When thoroughly working through and comparing both, Rosa's and Marx's thoughts, both talk about these feelings in their own language. When Marx talks about alienated work, he also talks about "activity as suffering, strength as weakness, begetting as emasculating" (Marx 1959 [org. 1932], 31). For him alienated labor also means that instead of work as the affirmation of being, it is the negation of it. Through the product taking power over the process, humans feel other-directed. For Marx this is closely connected to a feeling of profound unhappiness. This goes also well with Rosa for whom the principles of competition govern nearly all spheres of life. For him the feeling of heteronomy is an indirect product of this fact. A metaphor used by both writers (Marx & Quante 2018, 87; Rosa 2018a, 129) is the feeling of being at home or not being at home in one's own doing/actions/surrounding. Alienation makes us not feel at home within what we do and as Rosa also states, in the world we live in. Important here is the fact that people have a personal idea on what the good life is for them but they do not follow it. Rosa (2018a, 120; my transl.) describes this as "a condition in which subjects follow goals or carry out practices that were not forced on them by other actors or external factors – they definitely have other possible courses of action -, but they don't really want or support those actions." People act out of their free will and at the same time against their real will.

To summarize this, feelings of unhappiness, sadness, frustration, anxiety, stress, and other-directness can but don't have to be the results of alienation. The feeling of disconnectedness, not feeling home within our doing or our world or a profound disruption of our self-world relation is the precondition for those feelings. To draw out the opposite may also help to follow the argument. For Rosa (2018a, 148) the antithesis would be a resonant, reciprocal relationship between ourselves and the world, may it be our doing, the objective world, society or nature. A profound feeling of connectedness with our lifeworld, ourselves and what we do that results in the overall feeling of what in German is described as "*Heimat*", a term that is used for home but in a sense that home is connected to affection to people, nature, traditions, etc.

In the next section, I will elaborate on how theory is going to be applied to my research. I will explain what methodology I use and present my research techniques.

### 3 Research Methodology

In the section that follows I will give an introduction to my approach to methodology. I start with the model of science that I have been following, namely reflexive science. Subsequently, I present the extended case method as well as the research techniques that were applied. After presenting possible limitations to my research I will explain my mode of analysis.

#### 3.1 Reflexive Science

Reflexive science is the model of science that provides an overall architecture to produce science (Buroway 1998, 4). It is a set of principles that guides my research. Reflexive science differs widely from a positivist model of science but does not reject positive science altogether. Rather, as Buroway (*ibid.*, 10) states, it is an alternative to the positive approach. Positive science follows the principle that the world around us can and must be interpreted as separate and is not comparable with the people that research in and on it. As a researcher committed to the positivist model one has to distance oneself from the object of study.

Contrary to that, reflexive science is a “craft mode of knowledge production” that builds up on engagement with social actors and their lifeworlds (*ibid.*, 28). Here, theory is the foundation of interaction and guides the dialogue which is the “unifying principle” of the reflexive model (*ibid.*, 16). Such a dialogue manifests itself in three spheres: between the observer and the participant, dialogue between local processes and extra local processes and dialogue of theory with itself (Waldham & Warren 2014, 10). Hence, there is no doubt for Buroway (1998, 13) that context serves as an important starting point but is not the endpoint.

According to Buroway (*ibid.*, 30) reflexive science does not give any final truths but “realizes itself with the elimination of power effects, with the emancipation of the lifeworld. Even as the utopian point may be receding, the extended case method measures the distance to be traveled.”

#### 3.2 The Extended Case Method

For reflexive science the extended case method is what survey research is for positive science. If reflexive science is the legitimizing principle, the extended case method is the situated practice (*ibid.*, 16).

To apply it, Waldham and Warren (2014, 11-15) sum up three steps. First, find a good case or good theory that you want to work with. Here it is not important which comes first but it is crucial that the case possibly confirms and at the same time challenges the chosen theory. The theory should also provide us with new angles of vision (Buroway 1998, 12). Second, the researcher must investigate the daily lives of people as well as their lifeworlds (collect data)

and find anomalies between the case and the theory. As researchers, we do not fear but actually want our presumptions to be challenged. Only when our observations differ from our theory, we can deepen our understanding of the case and elaborate on the theory. It is impossible to observe everything but through profound engagement with the case we are provided with an insight. In order to not be completely overwhelmed by impressions, theory guides our path through the field. Third, the researcher has to rebuild theory to accommodate anomalies and potentially embed it within the context of the case. All the findings of our research process are somewhat connected to the theory we use. After documenting the life and lifeworlds of people, we move on to the critical interpretive analytical process. We ask how and why things happen and then look whether our theory fits or not. In the end, the “ultimate goal” of the extended case method is to reconstruct existing theory, which gives us the possibility to both understand and explain (Waldham & Warren 2014, 14). Additionally, we must also investigate the reasons for possible differences between case and theory and try to explain why it might be so.

I argue that one big strength of the extended case method is the connection between the micro and the macro level. Very complex social or economic questions can be explored through their manifestation on the individual and the community level. Through the use of theory, we can find out how a case is influenced by structures. For Waldham and Warren (ibid., 8), it is a “hybrid method”, because it recognizes the micro level as well as external structures. This might as well lead to a situation where we are able to reveal the internal and external contradictions that people face and connect to them to a broader context (ibid., 7).

The techniques that I use to implement the extended case method are what the following section focuses on.

### 3.2.1 Research Techniques

In the extended case method, the researcher can draw on several different sources of data. One can possibly use participant observation, interviews or archival research to illuminate the ways that people and communities experience their lifeworlds (ibid., 6). I chose to work with interviews and participant observation. Subsequently, I will give an insight into how I applied both techniques.

#### 3.2.1.1 *Semi-Structured Interviews*

As a first technique, I conducted in-depth interviews which were semi-structured. I used an interview guide that was informed by my chosen theories but only followed it loosely. In total, I was able to carry out eight individual interviews and one group interview/focus group with three teenagers. As with the common interviews, the group interview was built up around the interview guide and I run the interview as a kind of moderator (Bryman 2012, 501). I had the

feeling that the focus group setting made the participants feel more comfortable, since all three were good friends. All of the interviews lasted between 45 and 85 minutes. They were conducted either at the participant's home or my house. All participants were informed about the purpose of the research and were asked to give their informed written consent after letting them know that everything will be anonymized. During the interviews it is important that the informants feel comfortable about telling their own stories and narratives (Buroway 1998, 13), which is why I informed them very carefully about informed consent and privacy. It was also made clear that they could take back their consent any time and have a look at the final version of the used transcripts before handing it in.

I used what Bryman (cf. 2012, 416) calls a purposive sampling approach. For this reason, I made a stakeholder map of the village and tried to reach out to members of all stakeholder groups that I considered to be important for my research. The results of this process are the above-mentioned interviews.

Afterward, I transcribed all the interviews but due to time restrictions, I transcribed only the parts that I felt were important for my topic. This resulted in more than sixty thousand words of material.

In the paragraphs that follow I will briefly introduce my interviewees because it is necessary to be familiar with their specific context to better understand their statements and the meanings behind it.

#### 3.2.1.1.1 Interviewees

In order to guarantee anonymity, I changed the names of all participants. I also decided to not use the exact ages, since they could easily lead to the real names of people.

##### 3.2.1.1.1.1 Alois

Alois is in his twenties and did not grow up in Serfaus. He moved there from another mountain village and works for the local cable-car company. His passion is farming and he wants to be more active in that. At the moment he does the farming additionally to working full-time. In the future, he wants to concentrate on farming and run a little bed & breakfast since only farming is not sufficient for making a living.

##### 3.2.1.1.1.2 Andrea

Andrea grew up in a village close to Serfaus. She moved to the village recently with her boyfriend because both of them work in the village and have a lot of friends there. She studied social work and currently works with young people in the village. She is in her twenties and

before that she has also been working in tourism for some time. Her parents have also worked in the tourist industry for many years.

#### 3.2.1.1.1.3 Emma

Emma is in her late twenties and grew up in Germany. She finished secondary school and completed tertiary education in tourist enterprises. Currently, she is undertaking a distance education. Emma is married to a local and they have kids together. Her husband is also working in tourism and together they run a farm. She is a very active member of the community and local politics.

#### 3.2.1.1.1.4 Florian

Florian grew up in Serfaus and went to primary school here. Afterwards he went to secondary school in another town and studied tourism and management at different Universities. He moved away for some time but then came back a few years ago to settle down in Serfaus with his wife. He has worked in tourism ever since he finished University but is more in the strategic sphere and not in direct operations.

#### 3.2.1.1.1.5 Johanna

Johanna is in her fifties and her main profession is being a teacher. Apart from that, she runs a bed and breakfast. She grew up in another part of Tirol and came to Serfaus many years ago. Johanna has a farm background and is married to a local who has also been working within Tourism for many years. She commutes to a nearby village, where she works in the school. She also worked in Serfaus for a long time and I would consider her an active member of the community.

#### 3.2.1.1.1.6 Larissa

Larissa was part of the group interview. She is an adolescent and goes to secondary school in a town not that far from Serfaus and commutes every day. She cannot imagine working in tourism if the development goes on as it does at the moment. Her parents own and work in a tourist enterprise. She is active in the local youth parliament.

#### 3.2.1.1.1.7 Martin

He is a teenager and was also part of the group interview I conducted at my place. He is going to secondary school in another town at the moment and just comes home for weekends and holidays. His parents do not own a hotel or rent out rooms. Though both work or worked in connection with tourism. Martin is active in the local youth parliament as well and wants to study. He cannot see himself working with tourism.

#### 3.2.1.1.1.8 Oskar

Oskar is in his thirties and grew up in Serfaus. He studied cuisine, traveled for quite some time and worked as a chef in many different places. He has worked in the hotel of his parents for some time. The plan is to take over the business in the future. He is married, has a child and his wife also works in the family business.

#### 3.2.1.1.1.9 Pepi

Pepi is in his early seventies. His passion and vocation is farming and he was also a ski instructor for many years. He is married and since he retired he helps his wife with their bed and breakfast. The farm is already transferred to a successor but Pepi is still actively working and helping as much as he can. He doesn't teach skiing anymore even though he really enjoyed it.

#### 3.2.1.1.1.10 Zora

Rosa, another teenager that participated in the group interview, goes to school in another valley 400 kilometers away from Serfaus. Like Martin, she stays there during the week and only comes home for weekends and holidays. Her parents own a tourist business that they run together. She wants to travel the world and not work in tourism.

### 3.2.1.2 *Participant Observation*

I grew up in Serfaus during the 1990s and spent many years in that village. My parents own a successful Bed & Breakfast and nearly all of my friends and family members that still live there work in the tourist sector. Personally, I worked many years for the local cable car company and the ski school. Hence, unconsciously I have been in the field for many years. Since I decided to conduct this research, I consciously did two trips to my former home village. First I spent the two months of December (2018) and January (2019) there and then I did a second trip in March for two weeks. Being part of the community I had no problems at all to access the field. I would consider myself what Bryman (2012, 442) calls an "overt full member". I have full membership

to the community since I grew up there and I participated intensively in social life. I also didn't make any secret about me doing research on tourism and the community.

Concerning the danger of going native, that Bryman (*ibid.*, 445) describes in his book on social research methods, I argue that it was actually more of an advantage to be native. I know the village and the area around it, the local dialect, the traditions, etc. Most importantly, I know a lot of the inhabitants and I consider myself a respected member of the community. The main risk I identified for myself is the problem of "home blindness". I have to acknowledge that being so close to a case comes with difficulties, especially the dangers of over-interpreting certain topics while ignoring others. Here, the extended case method and its emphasis on guiding theory were good support. Theory supported me in reflecting on my position and keeping a scientific angle while still being a part of the community. Also, the fact that I studied Human Ecology gave me a healthy distance to different topics and problems.

During my first stay, I occasionally wrote down and recorded notes and elaborated them whenever I had time. During my second stay, I wrote an extensive research diary that could be seen as my full field notes. It was made up from memory as well as jotted notes that were made during the day (*ibid.*, 447-452).

### 3.3 Limitations

Following Waldham and Warren (2014, 15-17) there are "hazards for the unwary" when using the extended case method. During my research, I have tried to constantly keep them in mind and reflect upon them. First, there is the danger of predetermining what is important and noteworthy. Through actively trying to find anomalies in the theory this can be obviated to a certain extent. Second, there is a risk of "overstating the significance of theoretical findings". Here the rigidity of the findings depends upon the quality of the link between theory and practice. Third, there exists the pitfall of "overestimating collaborative and dialogic nature of the research process". This is why it is of great importance to include the participants in the research process. Another reason is that the extended case method creates its own power effects (Buroway 1998, 22-24). The effect of domination might manifest itself in the behavior as a participant and as an observer. The effect of silencing can be minimized if we actively look out for repressed and new voices. Objectification as the hypostatizing of social or macro forces as external and natural has to be kept in mind all the time. Finally, normalization as the omnipresent danger of fitting a complex situation into a theory must be taken into account (Buroway 1998, 22).

### 3.4 Analysis

I analyzed my material following Kvale's (2007) work on analyzing focused on meaning and Madison's (2005) work on critical ethnography. Additionally, Buroway's writings on the

extended case method as well as Bryman's (2012) section on narrative analysis guided me along the way. After I developed several main themes out of my theoretical fundament, I used them as lenses to code the given material. Also during the process, new themes developed. This procedure helped me to connect my theoretical framework with my research. The coding was especially helpful because I engaged very thoroughly with the material. It made it easier to gain a deeper understanding of the thoughts, statements and actions of people.

All along this process, I tried to actively reflect on my position and allow multiple readings and interpretations. Through the interpretation and coding of my gathered material and the connection to theory, I was able to extract eight main themes. In the next chapter, I will present those themes as the product of my analytical process.

## 4 Findings

In this chapter, I present the findings of my research that are a product of the analysis of my interviews and the notes of the participant observation. I ordered them in the following themes: work, the product, growth, time, society/community, space or locality, the self, and nature. Seven of the themes emerged already through the engagement with the theory of alienation by Rosa and Marx. As stated above, I used them as categories to code my material. During the process, growth evolved as another overall category.

In the section that follows I will present the actual narratives and observations connected to alienation encountered during my research; they will be ordered by themes. Later this section I work out the connection with theory, explain the detected anomalies between real life and theory and sequentially embed theory within my research context.

### 4.1 Themes/Categories

The next sub-sections are ordered by the overall themes and contain the narratives of people as well as observations from my part. It is important to state, that all themes are very much interwoven and often overlap and influence one another.

#### 4.1.1 Work and the Action – Fulfillment or Burden?

“But it is like that, we are participating in a rat race and you are a hunted, hunted by your work. I can fully underscore that. It is like that and I cannot tell you how long this will go well”, an interviewee stated. Work within tourism in Serfaus seems to be a field where people struggle with a lot of stress and pressure at their workplace. Here it is important to say that this counts

for employees as well as for leading positions. Emma, for example, believes that all people are at their limit.

During an informal conversation I had with an inhabitant of the village, that person expressed strong sadness about the fact that there are times when people are so stressed that they don't even greet each other anymore on the streets.

Even if most of the interviewees stated that they were thankful for tourism because it provided them with a job and economic resources, stress and pressure were topics that they all touched upon. Florian explained that he really loved his job, yet is not a "frontier fighter" but more in the operational business which seems to make a difference. Oskar says, that "all people suffer from too much work and stress". He connects this to the problem of finding employees. In their business, they are confronted with a lack of skilled workers. Additionally, there is pressure on prices, which makes it hard to hire more people. This, he says, creates pressure on him and the rest of the workers and can lead to illness and stress.

In the same vein, Pepi says that nowadays it is too stressful at work and so hard to find employees that parents have to work so much that they don't even have time for their children.

Regarding this topic, Zora adds that "in general you sense that there are not enough workers in tourism. Because you feel the stress everywhere when you work. You can't say that you make your work conscientiously, you have to put the pedal to the metal everywhere. It is not quality that you embrace."

Johanna makes it clear that she understands young people who come home during weekends, see their parents having immense stress because of the workload and hence don't want to take over the family enterprise. Parents don't have time for their children or themselves, and children don't want this life for themselves.

Tourism means hard labor for Emma and work times are not family friendly. You cannot choose the times you want to work because since tourism is a service industry, many times are predetermined.

As Alois puts it, many young people are not interested in working in tourism or taking over the family business exactly because of that:

I believe it is hard work. Because during season, summer and winter, you get up at five, prepare breakfast. They have to be there for tourists all around the clock, until eleven at night. Always ready for service. No free days and if you are eventually off, you just want to lie down and do nothing. Rarely happens that you do something with the family. I believe this is the reason. And children feel it (...) So they say: No, that life is not attractive for me.

And for Emma sees it as natural that the young people who come from a tourist background don't want to participate in it. If you see, "how your parents wreck themselves three-quarter of the years", your motivation to be a part of this is pretty low.

Zora explains that you hardly encounter normal work hours in tourism. As a waiter, you work a lot also with respect to the money you get. Larissa, Zora's friend, looks at it in a similar way. For her, it is dissuasive if she goes to a restaurant and sees the stress of the workers there.

Alois adds that nobody wants to work at a hotel or restaurant kitchens anymore. Nobody is interested in working twelve hours a day for 7 days a week. He cannot see any fun in doing this.

Hereto Oskar asks himself why he has to be a slave and work twelve or thirteen hours. He has no time for his family and himself. And if he, who is in a manager position, already feels like that, how do people in lower positions feel? On the other hand, he says, his boss works every day the whole winter season: “Understandable, if he gets loud and is in a bad mood” (Oskar).

I want to end this section with the words of Oskar:

You go to work at half past eight in the morning. And sometimes I come home half past ten at night. Maybe I see my wife at lunch. But you get crazy. Yesterday I put a lemon on a steak. That is the human being. You cannot work like a machine, building work pieces 24 hours a day.

After presenting the theme of work I now go over to the product. This category is strongly interwoven with work and action, a connection that is similar to the theoretical background.

#### 4.1.2 The Product or Tourism is Running Everything?

For this section, it is important to give a brief definition of the product in the case of Serfaus. As the analyzed material and my observations show, the main product of Serfaus is tourism. The essence of tourism is service, as Florian puts it. It cannot be stored and this has a strong impact on time. Concerning service in tourism, the behavior of workers is a crucial factor. In a way, the smile that people have to put on every day when interacting with guests is part of the product. Another aspect is nature or the surrounding natural environment, especially the mountains. Florian goes even as far as calling it the “most important component” of a tourism product. Even though nature will be a topic on its own, it is important to stress the connection to tourism as a product.

Florian argues:

[A]bove all we really have mass tourism. I need to be honest there, we have a critical mass, otherwise it doesn't work in the dimension we reached. It is a machinery that has nothing to do with flower tourism.

As another interviewee states, there is a “*massification, excessive use and overexploitation of nature.*”

Oskar expresses his concern about the fact that everything is “auctioned off”. Additionally, people have to think constantly about something new because tourists always want something new.

This also manifests itself in the building of new and ever bigger houses and businesses, something which Alois is very concerned about. He also mentions that people are only occupied with tourism. The head is constantly circling around it and there is no time for the beautiful things in life. And it seems to get always worse, which in the long term cannot be good for the mental wellbeing.

For Pepi, tourism occupies the locals so much that they don't have time for the community anymore.

The reason for this, according to Emma, lies in the fact that tourism predetermines working hours. This statement also fits well with Florian's opinion that tourism is service and that makes the time a problem.

As for the young people, Emma estimates, they are disillusioned because "everything here is about tourism." Further, "I think here everything is always about the tourist. But people forget that we are native here and people come here voluntary." Martin mentions that some of the young people feel a little disadvantaged in comparison to tourists.

As for the young people I interviewed they all three stated that they probably don't want to work within tourism. Larissa felt like tourists get more unsatisfied each season. They always look for entertainment and everything always has to be perfect. This can be very stressful for locals working with them because they have to be there on command. Martin adds that there is also stress because locals do not want a bad reputation with tourists and fear bad reviews on the internet. This goes also well with what I experienced when meeting an old friend at her restaurant. Because she got a bad review from a tourist that was not justified at all, she was in a very bad emotional condition. I have also seen this with other people and I argue that after putting so much effort in the product, such bad reviews can really throw off the course.

Andrea believes that a lot of people actually like to give a service and sell a good product, give advice or teach people. But the number of people got so huge that she thinks that for many employees it is really hard to have a proper interaction with the customers.

To end this section, I want to quote Martin, who analyses the motivation of young people to work in tourism and says that, "[w]e are already not that much interested in tourism, and the younger generations that come after us are even less interested".

Many of the statements and observations above are somewhat connected to the next section, unlimited growth.

#### 4.1.3 Growth - Blessing or Plague?

This category manifested itself during the analysis of the material. It would maybe also fit within the realms of work, the product or place but I decided to separate it due to the number of statements and observations connected specifically to growth.

Martin is very thankful for tourism because it makes it possible to actually live in such a beautiful environment but he also thinks that "it gets a bit too extreme. Because hotels are rebuilt every year and get bigger and bigger. Much nature is lost and also Serfaus as a village is decaying a little".

For Johanna, it is a big problem is that the village doesn't come to rest anymore. People cannot recover: "*You always have to build and the development has to go on*". Everything has grown

very fast, especially summer tourism, and if it doesn't stop, "if building continues, more cable cars, more connections, pillars and pillars, nature will suffer". And, according to Andrea:

Much community is lost, because everybody is so caught up in his own life, the own house, you always have to rebuild, you always have to expand, always make progress and become bigger, and all that in a pace that you nearly cannot follow it anymore

The teenager Zora also worries that the natural balance is in danger because of the force to grow. Likewise, Alois is convinced that "*nature talks with us, we must not spoil nature, we have to leave her some space*". And it is not just nature but also society, because the more tourists come, the more people are stressed, and the less time they have for themselves and others.

According to Alois, it is the need to stay competitive that is responsible:

The one who has the nicer house will have the tourists. That is clear, the tourist looks for the nicest one. And then naturally, I must also get bigger and nicer and then they will come to my place. And that is the problem. It escalates on its own.

Along with that, Florian, who is the tourism specialist, makes it clear that if "one goes up, you have to follow". But even if there would be a potential for more quantitative growth, "we reached the zenith", because by now quantitative growth is not beneficial for adding value and quality anymore.

A suitable statement from Emma here is:

[I]n my opinion, the tendency goes in a wrong direction because there is less emphasis on quality and more on quantity. And that is a form of tourism that all people say they don't want it but all push it forward anyway by building even more beds.

In line with that, all interviewees and many of the people I interacted with during my participant observation were strongly arguing for a stop of construction. Actually that it is the most uttered wish for the future.

As already mentioned above, Florian believes we reached the zenith. His vision is a healthy bed-proportion that is still sustainable for us because "we must not shoot out all our natural resources come hell or high water." Oskar thinks similarly and believes we have arrived on the peak and we cannot grow quantitatively anymore. So does Alois who states that "[by] no means should the village grow more. No more Hotels!" The wish of Andrea is that there is less or even no more building: "For the love of the village, for the love to yourself, for the love of everybody." In the eyes of the farmer Pepi, it has to be enough now, because "the more you want, the more exhausting it gets and you will need much more strength." And Johanna wishes that Serfaus doesn't grow anymore, it should remain a village. In line with that, Emma would like a building stop because otherwise people will be more overworked and we won't be able to hold quality. For Martin the stop of growth or even further, degrowth, could even alter the way that especially young people relate to tourism:

I really believe, if we would stop this [development] now, that it doesn't get more, and bigger and better; or maybe that it even goes back a little, that maybe interest [of young people] would grow again

One very important aspect of growth and also work is time. In the section that follows, time and the pace of life are presented from the view of participants.

#### 4.1.4 Time and Pace – A Life under Pressure

For Pepi, in the past, life in the village was cozier and not as hectic as it is today. Tourists stayed for a longer period and didn't mind a rainy day. Today everything is going faster and the tourists have less time, he says. They want to experience everything in a short period of time and are often very stressed. This also leads to the fact that local inhabitants don't have time anymore.

The farmer Emma mentions that tourism somehow provides the village with a forced time structure that is very fast. And Florian goes along when he explains:

So we are in a rat race. This is how it is. Look, it is getting faster. The faster we run, the faster the wheel turns. (...) And I have to be honest, the pace is getting too hard to cope with sometimes, even for me.

As an example he mentions that he had mentioned already in December that he wanted to go and have a beer with a very good friend, but when I interviewed him (mid-March) they had not found any time for it.

Concerning work, Alois points out that often he feels like he always has to work more in less time. And that takes away the joy of working. Additionally, not just at work but also in other aspects of life, local inhabitants feel stressed and under time pressure. Andrea goes as far as to say that, basically, you sense there is not enough time for anything you do.

And it goes on with Johanne who opines that the pace of life, "goes way too fast." For her, the development goes as rapidly that many people are not able to keep up with it anymore, especially older inhabitants.

Oskar would actually like to work in tourism but because he has to work that much, there is not enough free time. Hence he has no time for his family and for himself and loses his joy when being productive.

Not enough time for family and community is a common concern of all interviewees. Alois, for example, believes that a lot of young people do not want to enter tourism or take over the family business because they see their parents having no time for them. For him, the family suffers from the time structure that is pushed forward by tourism. Andrea, who works with young people, can see that many parents do not have enough time for their children and in general people do not have time for the community. Also, Johanna sees that parents don't have enough time for their kids. Kids then are equipped with the same handling of time and give it on. Connected to that Johanna mentions that to her it seems kids nowadays have less patience.

Emma says, "[t]he problem is one lacks the simplest thing on earth, time". She believes this is what makes young people so unhappy about tourism. You can have all the material things in the world but if there is no time that you can spend with your family, all those material things are worth nothing for you.

Emma's statement already gives a good introduction to the next paragraph, which is about society and community.

#### 4.1.5 Society, Community, and Family – A Time Problem

As the beginning of the following section shows, sometimes it was hard to decide if a statement was more part of a time narrative or a social narrative. Another sign for the deep nexus between the categories.

Andrea worries that locals get together less in order to embrace the important things in life, such as being healthy, having each other, etc. And for Pepi it seems that tourism occupies the community so much that people have less connection to each other.

As an example, Johanna tells us about her experiences when shopping for groceries. Usually an opportunity to talk with each other, during the season, community members seem to be on the run and don't even have time for that. Funnily, Andrea mentions grocery shopping as well and observes people do not have time for a chat even then.

Regarding the family and children, Pepi assumes during the season it might be difficult to give children the attention they deserve. Johanna observes something similar and worries that older people lose connection to the community while parents lack time for their kids. She thinks, often time is replaced by material goods. Also Andrea comes to that conclusion when she states that "during the upbringing, a lot is replaced by material stuff. (...) some values are not given to them."

As for the teenagers, Martin says:

[M]aybe kids do not get as much love as in [somewhere else] where the parents are there. (...) and if now, in Serfaus, they get, so to speak, a good phone, and this and that, so [the lack of time] gets compensated with money. Maybe this has effects on the mental wellbeing of kids and for this reason, they think: I don't want to live like that.

Larissa notices that a lot of people get annoyed very fast because they have already dealt with so many people and situations that they are not that patient anymore.

The meaning of tourism, as Florian sees it, is connected to the latter statement because for him it is about making people happy. It is the possibility to make people having a good time. Now like Emma describes it, she has very little patience when talking to guests because it is always about the same things and there are so many.

In the past, there was more connection with tourists because they stayed for a longer time and many you knew personally. Today there is so many now that there is not enough time (Pepi).

"You subordinate a lot under work and maybe that is not fully right", Florian says and continues: "Intensive friendships, the interaction you should maybe look for sometimes, that surely comes off badly. I do believe that". The same goes for Emma who finds it is hard to maintain social relationships because there is not enough time. Similar thoughts come from Alois who reckons that the more tourists that arrive, the more stress there is and the less time one has for "one another, for people, for the neighbors and for friendships."

As for the future, Johanna says:

[W]e have to be careful, because if it continues to go on like that, then one lives one's life and works and time for oneself, for nature and the surrounding remains zero.

Since the surroundings are mentioned in the last statement, it is a good switch over to the next category, the place.

#### 4.1.6 The Place – Home or Foreign Land?

This category is mainly about the perception and connection of/to Serfaus as the locality of my research.

The topic of a building stop has already been a big part of the paragraph on growth and also plays a significant role in the perception of the place. Nearly all of my interviewees as well as other people that I had informal conversations with are very critical towards the building of more hotels and staff houses. If there has to be any more building, it should be for personal use only and not to create more tourist beds, Alois says.

For Johanna, Serfaus is a place that is so beautifully embedded in the scenery. In between mountains, forests and the valley. But we have to be careful she argues, because if we continue building huge hotels, at one point one is not going to feel comfortable anymore. In her opinion, we must conserve the view of the place. It should stay a village and there should be room for a cow and the smell of farming. It is also important to keep some green spaces in the village, to have room for flowers and gardens.

Pepi takes the same view when he talks about how lucky we are to live on this plateau. Maybe the village was cozier in the past but we still have an amazing view with mountains in front of us. We can look down to the valley and have no transit traffic: “[T]hat is life quality”.

And for Andrea, Serfaus means essentially one thing, the luxury of nature. Many people come not just to visit but also to live, because they love the nature around it and that for her is an enrichment, also for the native population.

Before I end with the category of nature, in the next section there will be an elaboration of the self.

#### 4.1.7 The Self or the Home Inside

Many of my interviewees bring up the topic of the self in connection with a lack of time. Also, while observing the local culture and its way of dealing with work, I could sense a very strong work ethic that sometimes leads to unhappiness and suffering.

Oskar mentions that not having time for the family and oneself is a “Brainfuck”. For him the season was simply too much. He mentions that he likes to reflect upon himself and on what he is doing but he has simply no time for that at the moment.

Andrea goes in a similar direction when she says people already reached the limit of what can be seen as healthy because performance pressure is so high. Additionally, the pace “blinds one from the things that are really important for oneself. Just to pause, take time for oneself, reflect on one’s life. I believe much of the occupation with oneself is lost.” She says that some locals sometimes even get a guilty conscience when they go skiing.

According to Emma, some people in the village are on their last legs because of stress. Alois explains this through the fact that if life only revolves around tourism and one is under constant pressure to be there, that must lead to mental stress. Concerning himself, he feels that this pressure of always being friendly and smiling can also be very exhausting.

Martin who is very interested in psychology assumes that the constant pressure of competition might lead to those burnouts that seem to spread.

“[Hence] we have to take good care to still have some time for ourselves”, Johanna states. And Alois feels that “eventually one must say, it is enough now! You shouldn’t do more because health, that is something you have to take care of. One does not live forever and during the time one has, one has to have a good time and be happy!”

That leads to the last statement about the self that in turn leads to the next section, nature. “When I need time for myself”, Florian says, “I just go outside and walk in nature, and the world already looks better” (Florian).

#### 4.1.8 Nature – The Last Stronghold

Nature has been an extremely important topic for all my interview participants. In my daily interactions I could sense a connection, but the results of the interviews were still surprising.

To continue with Florian, he makes it clear that for him nature means “personal freedom. (...) [T]oday I can say, there is nothing more beautiful than going to [the forest] in the morning. Then I am there and for me that are very special moments of joy (...).” And additionally, nature is also of high importance for his personal mental development. It is during those moments that he is truly one with himself. Also the social aspect of being in nature, to experience it with the family, satisfies him a lot. And in the end those moments of joy and satisfaction in nature also make it easier to cope with the “not so funny aspects of tourism.”

Andrea observes that the aspect that people are most connected with in Serfaus is nature. For her we are extremely lucky to be around the mountains, the lakes and the forests. It is “pure luxury” and it helps people greatly to relax. For many it is also the last retreat. Especially for teenagers, but also for many other people, nature is the reason why they still like to be in Serfaus and identify with it (Andrea).

The statement of Zora confirms this when she says:

[I]t seems to me that especially for locals [nature] is a great factor why they like to be home. Because it is truly beautiful here.

It is incomparable to live in the mountains for her. Nature seems to be home.

And for Johanna nature “is the most precious good we have”, in spite of tourism. She states, that “we have to be careful (...) and preserve it.” Pepi adds to this that nature is the place of tranquility, which is why there has to be enough at one point. Florian is also concerned with this, when he talks about the ongoing overexploitation of nature. He worries that “we have to be very careful, not to overuse it”. Emma and Johanna feel this as well. For them it has to be enough now and one has to stop building new lifts and gondolas because nature suffers from it.

Alois adds that one has to be very careful in the future to not abuse nature. “[W]e have to leave her some space”, he says.

Some of the interviewees also raised concerns about climate change and spoke about the village’s obligation towards actions against climate change as well as fear about possible negative impacts on local nature.

For Emma it is clear that “we do not need more (...). Maintain what we have and nature will thank us.”

## 4.2 Discussion – Theory and Practice

In this section I connect the product of my analysis, the narratives of people and my observations, with the theoretical background provided by Rosa and Marx. I want to stress similarities as well as anomalies between theory and practice and hence embed the theory of alienation within the context of Serfaus. Additionally, I want to link my findings to a broader scientific discussion in the field of study of human ecology.

When Marx talks about the very basic reason for alienation he refers to the private property of means of production which forces the workers to sell their own force to survive as subjects and be able to buy the means for their very own existence. In short, in order to survive, one becomes a slave to the product (Marx & Quante 2018, 84-85). If we look at Serfaus, the situation is a bit different because most of the businesses are family owned and therefore many local people own their means of production or work for those family businesses. But even if many people own their means of productions, they are still slaves to their product or in other words, slaves to the invisible market forces. As I see it, people in Serfaus feel to a certain extent enslaved by their main product, tourism. The rule of the product is sensible in all different categories and in many but not in all cases it leads to alienation. Also, Rosa’s approach that lays more emphasizes on acceleration as an alienating force goes well with my data. The deep connection Rosa identifies between growth and acceleration is also taking place in Serfaus, and the social driving force behind acceleration -namely the fundamental principles and laws of profit that govern capitalist society - lead us back to the dictatorship of the product (Rosa 2018a, 29-40).

Some individuals in Serfaus feel, to a certain degree, that tourism is ruling their lives. As the narratives of people and my observations show, there is a certain feeling that life is almost only about tourism nowadays. This creates an alienation towards the product of tourism, because people feel that they are not in power anymore but tourism is, and the whole lives seem to revolve around it. They don't feel connected in a positive sense. This is also confirmed by the narratives of the young people that I interviewed and other interviewees who talked about the connection of the young population to tourism. Many do not want a future in tourism and don't want to take over the family businesses because their perception of the good life is not compatible with tourism.

As mentioned above, the rule of the product and the resulting acceleration and heteronomy create a clearly noticeable alienation from work. Some people feel as if they are part of a rat race that they cannot leave and they suffer from too much stress at work. The pressure of competition and time pressure constitute a momentum that does not allow to really be in a vibrant relationship with the process of work. Here I want to state that the idea of work as the essence of man did clearly not show itself in the research process. Yet Rosa's approach of the perception of the good life as a point of departure for analyzing alienation was of great help. In terms of work this means that people definitely see work as something they want to do well, and they want to feel joy while being in the action (Rosa 2018a, 7). If there is too much stress and no time to recover, work becomes suffering.

Strongly connected to the ruling of the product is the sphere of growth. All interviewees and many people I had informal conversations with were very unhappy about constant growth of the village, the buildings, the ski resort, etc. I argue that parts of the community feel alienated towards and from this development because they do not want it but have to do it anyway to stay competitive. Instead of living a self-determined life, it is about the maintenance of competitiveness in the form of growth. Subjects know, that more growth means more stress and less time for the self and society. As I see it, many statements by the interviewees can be connected to criticism towards contemporary economic structures coming from a 'degrowth' perspective that is also frequently referred to in contemporary human/political ecology (e. g., D'Alesia et al. 2014; Gorz 1983; Trainer 2015; etc.). The tragedy here is that people are very aware of the development and its negative effects but they cannot get away from it.

Alienation in the sphere of time manifests itself very much in the feeling of a forced time structure. For many, the pace of life is very fast or already too fast and it seems to get even faster. First, subjects feel as if they have no power over the pace of life; they cannot find the breaks, so to speak. Second, there is alienation of time because one cannot really decide how one's own life time is spent. It appears to be an alien force that reigns over one's time needs.

Concerning society and community, people are exposed to alienation because the perpetuation of competitiveness or the ruling of the product governs their relationship to others and the community as a whole. The lack of time and the pace of life make inhabitants lose connection to one another and it is the competition with each other that creates distance between people. I argue that forms of 'commoning' can have a positive impact on the coexistence of people because they take away the pressure on the singular subject and distribute it more equally and

also defuse competition within the village. 'Commoning' here can be understood as a model of governance and resource management that makes a shared management of specific resources possible. 'Commons' cannot just be understood as collective resources but must be seen as a social process of shared responsibility of things/resources that a community owns and manages in common. The principles of commoning do not build on economic growth. Instead, commoning helps to replace the social imperative of 'having more' through 'communal wellbeing' (D'Alesia et al. 2014, 75-78).

When Rosa talks about alienation from space, he means a deep distortion of the relationship between us and the world around us (Rosa 2018a, 123-125). Even though I could sense a sort of tendency towards this through the communication of unhappiness and strong concerns about the ongoing building (physical growth) situation, I do not see that alienation is the prevailing mode of the relationship between locals and the *place* of Serfaus. Here I see the first big anomaly between the theory and my case. I argue that this is to a high extent owed to the fact that 'place' (Serfaus) is very much equated to 'nature'.

My data suggests that alienation of self has many layers. One aspect is time, and it is fed by the lack of time for oneself and self-reflection. Then I also sense a strong performance pressure that creates stress and exhaustion. Finally, I see that people have perceptions of the good life but they do not practice it. There is a rupture in the coherence of one's thoughts and one's practice. Feelings of self-alienation are inevitable and manifest themselves by different degrees in the life of the people of Serfaus. These findings go well with Rosa's approach on self-alienation described in the section on my theoretical background. Since for Marx (1959 [orig. 1932], 32) the alienation of the self is connected to the "men's species being" it does not fit so well here. This does not necessarily mean that I encountered another anomaly between Marx's theory and my case. I suggest that the reason for the difference between Marx's and Rosa's explanation is simply the historical context.

The most surprising part of my findings is the relationship between the people of Serfaus and nature around them. Both Marx and Rosa argue somewhat that the capitalist mode of production creates alienation from nature. For Marx nature is human's body. Both physically and mentally the life of humanity is entangled with nature and in the end it is nature that is connected to nature because what are we but nature. So alienated labor is not just alienating us from the product, ourselves etc. but also essentially, from nature (Marx & Quante 2018, 90). And Rosa explains that by knowing one harms nature through living a certain lifestyle but still continuing doing it, one alienates oneself from one's action and nature (Rosa 2018a, 122). Also if we do not have time to build up a resonant vibrant relationship with it, nature becomes regarded as something cold and alien. But when we look at the relationship between locals in Serfaus with their surrounding nature, when it comes to a sense of connection, I encountered the contrary to alienation. All of my interviewees strongly identify themselves with nature and feel as a part of it. Also, as mentioned before, many specifically see nature as their home or what in German is called *Heimat*. People emphasize a strong connection to nature and for some it even seems as their treatment or medicine against alienation and its effects is to be actively in nature. There is a high level of consciousness that as a community we have to be very careful

in our treatment of nature. I also sense a high potential in uniting people and motivating them to get active under the banner of defending nature. Something that can be very beneficial for human wellbeing as well because as Pepe Mujica puts it (2019):

Development cannot go against happiness. It has to work in favor of human happiness, of love on Earth, human relationships, caring for children, having friends, having our basic needs covered. Precisely because this is the most precious treasure we have; happiness. When we fight for the environment, we must remember that the essential element of the environment is called human happiness.

I argue that the theories of alienation developed by Marx and elaborated by Rosa are an appropriate tool to analyze and understand certain feelings, behaviors and developments concerning the individual, the community and nature in Serfaus. In all spheres other than place and nature, I encountered different levels of alienation. Yet I want to stress here that, in my opinion, alienation is never total and all-encompassing. There are different degrees of alienation and some people suffer more from it than others but it is not something measurable.

Regarding the anomaly of place, I argue that even though people are partly alienated from community, they still feel a certain connection to Serfaus as a place. One reason for this, as I see it, lies in their deep connection to nature, the other big anomaly. To explain, why people feel this strong connection would be a subject for further research. Nevertheless, I have two assumptions to make. First, the fact that people feel so strongly connected to nature and even see it as their remedy for alienation reminded me of an aphorism by Christian Morgenstern (2004, 38) that could be part of an explanation:

Nature is the great reposefulness poised against our mobility. That is why humankind will love her more and more as it becomes ever more subtle and mobile. Nature gives it the basic contours, broad perspectives, and at the same time the image of a lofty placidity in the midst of all unremitting evolution (my transl.).

Secondly, because in Serfaus the spheres of the product, work, self and place are so entangled with nature, I see certain analogies to the description of the relationship between peasants and nature made by Erich Mühsam (Mühsam and Kuhn 2011[org. 1933]):

Naturally, there exists an intimate intellectual-spiritual connection of man with the earth, but only where labor and life grow directly out of the soil. Only the peasant still has this inner contact with the land, which makes it into a piece of him, as he feels himself to be a component of the ground cultivated by him.

Finally, it is important to state that my data suggests a certain level of alienation within the community of Serfaus but it is not generalizable to all individuals. As mentioned before, alienation is never total and there are resistant islands where people do not just feel resonant, vibrant relationships between them and their surrounding but also with themselves. This makes me conclude that there exist levers to counteract alienation. This will be among the topics in the last chapter, the conclusion.

## 5 Conclusion

In the final conclusion, I will first give a brief summary of this thesis. Following that I am going to concentrate on the research questions stated at the beginning of this work and other questions that arose during the process.

After introducing the village of Serfaus as my case in the introduction, I went over to outline the aim of this work. This was followed by the presentation of the questions that were guiding my research. The concepts of alienation by Marx and Rosa are the base of my theoretical background. In my research they were particularly important because my methodology, the extended case method, builds up on the combination of theory and practice. After illustrating my approach on methodology, I went on to present my findings. Here, I chose to present the encountered spheres with its linked narratives and observations and then point out the similarities and anomalies between theory and my case.

As the findings show, the mass tourism development in Serfaus creates certain forms of alienation that are visible and sensible in people's thoughts, behavior and the way the community interacts. Alienation manifests in feelings of disconnectedness, suffering, estrangement, other-directedness and time pressure.

As for the causes of alienation, I identify the fundamental principles and laws of capitalist market society based on competition and commodification as the main driving forces. This is, for example, noticeable in the seemingly unavoidable pressure to grow, that creates strong unease for individuals and the community as one can see in the findings. One of the manifestations of the system of dynamic stabilization is acceleration, which creates time pressure and fierce competition, and this in turn creates distance between people.

However, resulting alienation is never the only modus of relating to the world and oneself, neither is it inevitable. This is most visible in the way that my interviewees relate to nature and place. I argue that it is here where one must start the search for strategies to counteract already existing forms of alienation and find alternatives to a system that creates alienation in the first place.

As my findings suggest, nature is home and medicine to people, and it is of high importance to keep it that way. People need a place to rest and "recharge their batteries", so to speak, as well as something to identify with. Therefore, I argue that my research strongly indicates the preservation of the remaining natural environment and the creation of protected areas as a form of "no-tourism-zones" as first steps towards more quality of life. Also the need for a "building stop" for tourist infrastructure such as lifts, gondolas, etc., but also hotels, mentioned by all my interviewees, seems inevitable. In order for people to gain a more resonant relationship with themselves, their families, the community, work and tourism as their product, I argue that it might not even be done with a building stop but thoughts have to be put towards a form of degrowth.

As the interviews and my observations show, in the future there might be more businesses with a lack of successors as well as young people that do not want to take all of the pressure of running a business on their own shoulders. This might open up new possibilities for 'commoning' or 'making commons', as I argue in the discussion. Commoning, which is also one

of many solutions within a degrowth framework, could solve the problem of young people who do not inherit or own property and hence cannot afford to live in Serfaus. Further, it might be a way to prevent more building by including people in existing cooperatives. This could be a departure point for further research.

An important question here that cannot be left out is the competitiveness of the global tourism market. I argue that consciousness from consumers/tourists towards more sustainable tourism, both in terms of social and ecological impacts, is on the rise. At the same time my research shows a strong connection of locals to their natural habitat and concerns about natural degradation, climate change, etc. in Serfaus. These facts can be used to argue for actions towards a sustainable transformation and at the same time advertise the destination on the market as a pioneer of social and ecological sustainability in the mountain tourism sector.

I want to end this thesis by articulating that my research didn't just made me encounter alienation but also equipped me with strong hope towards a transition that embraces the wellbeing of nature, individuals and community. If a common aim can be reached and it is based on the collective goal of the common good and shared responsibility instead of limitless growth and competition among each other, then a door could be opened towards a living situation with less stress, more time for the community, the self, etc., as well as a more harmonic relationship with the natural environment.

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