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Romantic Visions of the Village: Tourism, Nationalism, Locality and the Politics of (Non-)Belonging in the Swiss Alps

Visiones románticas sobre el pueblo: turismo, nacionalismo, localidad y políticas de (no)pertenencia en los Alpes suizos

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Abstract

From the 18th century, Romantic authors came to the Alps to encounter what they described as the Sublime: a delightful form of "horror". The Alps became a shelter at the margins of civilization where rural, farming and authentic values were "still" shaping life, in comparison to the decaying life in the urban centres of Europe. Based on thirteen months of fieldwork in the touristic resort of Grindelwald in the Swiss Alps, in this paper, I propose to trace the historical development of the alpine village and its connection to Romantic sensibilities between past and present. I first trace the genealogical links between the alpine locale and Romantic imaginaries in processes of touristification and nation-state building. In a second part of the article, I turn back to the present to interrogate the experiences of village inhabitants. I show how Romantic visions of rooted belonging and cultural difference participate in feelings of cultural alienation and the reassertion of unequal politics of (non-)belonging differentiating between local, national and foreign dweller.

Keywords: Swiss Alps; Romanticism; globalization; tourism; nationalism; (non-)belonging

Resumen

A partir del siglo XVIII, los autores románticos llegaron a los Alpes para encontrarse con lo que describieron como lo Sublime: una deliciosa forma de "horror". Los Alpes se convirtieron en un refugio en los márgenes de la civilización donde los valores rurales, agrícolas y auténticos "todavía" marcaban la vida, en comparación con la vida decadente de los centros urbanos de Europa. Basándome en trece meses de trabajo de campo en la estación turística de Grindelwald en los Alpes Suizos, en este artículo propongo rastrear el desarrollo histórico del pueblo alpino y su conexión con las sensibilidades románticas entre el pasado y el presente. En primer lugar, trazo los vínculos genealógicos entre el escenario alpino y los imaginarios románticos en los procesos de turistificación y construcción del Estado-nación. En la segunda parte del artículo, vuelvo al presente para interrogar las experiencias de los habitantes de Grindelwald. Mi intención es mostrar cómo las visiones románticas de pertenencia arraigada y la diferencia cultural configuran sentimientos de alienación cultural y la reafirmación de políticas desiguales de (no)pertenencia que diferencian a los habitantes locales, nacionales y extranjeros.

Palabras clave: Alpes suizos; Romanticismo; globalización; turismo; (no)pertenencias

"We are not a town (*Stadt*) and we don't want to become one", says Christine[1] as we overlook the village of Grindelwald, located in the German-speaking Bernese Swiss Alps at the foot of the mythical Eiger mountain, 3,967 meters above sea level. Christine was upset about what I had just told her: an "outsider" (*Auswärtiger*) working in one of the village's sports shops I talked to the day before had described her native Grindelwald as a "town" (*Stadt*) [2], as he hinted at the number of people on the streets and the global connections that made the place. Such statements and what they implied, Christine contended, were dangerous. The local "farming values" that had made her village for centuries were under pressure due to "endless tourism development", "urbanization" and technological advancements, she said with a concerned look. Like many other of her so-called "native" or "*einheimisch"*[3] peers, she claimed that rural values and those who cherished them were on the verge of disappearing, in favor of the more urban, cosmopolitan lifestyles.

Christine's narrative of difference and fear towards the urbanized "lowlands" (*Unterland*) is reminiscent of much of what I heard during my thirteen months of fieldwork in the alpine village and touristic resort of Grindelwald. Even those who came from the city "made of concrete and high buildings" as Christine would say, explained that they visited Grindelwald to spend time in a "cute Swiss village". Here, the air was pure and different from what they had at home, tourists said. Other places that felt more "urban" (*städtisch*), were compared unfavorably to the Bernese village. For locals and tourists alike, Grindelwald was the place of comfortable feeling, a boundedness and rootedness which contrasted with the more or less menacing urban landscapes, which usually implied speed, anonymity and uprootedness. The city symbolized globalization, movement, progress and modernity, the village stood for rurality, tradition, stillness, backwardness or conservatism, a dichotomy that many authors have addressed (e.g. Stacul, 2003; Williams, 1973).

However, and in spite of what locals and tourists said about the place, one could only acknowledge that the reality the salesman Christine was so strongly disagreeing with described, had some truth. Grindelwald often did look and feel like a town, crossed by thousands of people in cars, buses, trains or helicopters. Its infrastructure was impressive, ranging from an airport-like cableway terminal to multiple trains literally passing through the mountain. A giant parking lot welcomed hundreds of tourist coaches per day, transporting visitors from all over the world who would then spread on the two sides of the valley to reach their hotels, rental flats, holiday houses, etc. From the foot of the Alps, one could reach Paris or Berlin almost directly. In the village center, people spoke an endless list of languages: German, English, Arabic, Mandarin, Dutch, ... Grindelwald had 4,000 permanent inhabitants but expanded to 25,000 during an ever-extending high-season which then lasted from December to September. The resort, with its annual record of 1,200,000 overnight stays in 2017, did better than most other comparable resorts in the Swiss Alps, before the Covid-19 outbreak.

[1] All names have been anonymized in this article, some identity markers have also been changed to guarantee my interlocutors' anonymity.
[2] There is no difference between the "city" and the "town" in the German language. I thus use both as synonyms.
[3] "Einheimische" is the substantive, "einheimisch" the adjective.

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How then could inhabitants like Christine reassert ideals of locality, "rootedness" (*Verwurzelung*) and farming values in an economy based on frenetic, transnational mobility? To explore this question and what it takes to "produce" locality (Appadurai, 1996) in the globalized Alps, in this paper, I trace the genealogy of a particular space, the Swiss (German-speaking) Alps, and its connection with a particular sensibility: Romanticism. I first show how the latter informs visions that might seem contradictory, such as tourism development and (Swiss) nationalist imaginaries. Secondly, I argue that Romanticism is not only essential to understand the developments of Grindelwald, the Alps or Switzerland, but that it also enables us to understand the experience and visions of locals on their village, its history but also its present. I claim that a Romantic sensibility is at the heart of existential fears of alienation of local dwellers, preoccupied with the preservation of their environmental and cultural heritage. I conclude by showing how Romanticism, as an ideology based on pluralism, also informs exclusionary "politics of belonging" (Yuval-Davis, 2006) in a globalized resort like Grindelwald.

The Alpine Village, Romantic Longings and Vertical Globalization

Dozens of tourists from France, India, Germany, Korea, Israel and China stand in line to take a picture in a crowded touristic "hotspot". At an elevation of more than 3,000 meters, the air is hard to breathe and the wind freezing. Yet, the travelers patiently wait for their turn in the everlasting snow to then grab the corners of a Swiss flag that they deploy in front of their chests while someone takes a picture. Many will upload the photograph on social media and feed the giant cloud of pictures taken on this very spot.

Despite its very contemporary character, this scene draws on a long history, stretching back to the Romantics' rediscovery of the alpine environment. After centuries of neglect and avoidance (Mathieu & Boscani Leoni, 2005), the Alps increasingly attracted intellectuals and artists like Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Albrecht von Haller or Felix Mendelssohn from the end of the 18th century. When exposed to the sight of rugged mountain ridges and cliffs, they described the experience of the "Sublime", a form of "delightful horror"[4]. Located at the "margins" of civilization, the alpine valleys epitomized a certain idea of purity for the Romantics who denounced the industrialization processes they witnessed in their native lowlands (Stone, 2014). Thanks to the wide circulation of Romantic works of art –music, poems, paintings– the Alps became the object of nostalgic yearnings for the Western world (Starobinski, 1966).

More specifically, Romantic authors such as the German thinker Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1808) put forward particular sensibilities. For historian and philosopher Isaiah Berlin, who analyzed Herder's work, these sensibilities consisted in (1) "populism", "the belief in the value of belonging to a group or a culture"; (2) "expressionism" which shapes the yearning for "inner truths and ideals"; and (3) "pluralism" as the belief in the "multiplicity […] and incommensurability of the values of different cultures and societies" (1976, p. 153, cited in Holmes, 2000, p. 6).

[4] https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-classicreadings/chapter/edmund-burke-on-the-sublime/ [Accessed on the 27/04/2022].

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Importantly, Romantic sensibilities stood in radical opposition to values of universalism, rationality and individualism which shaped modernity and the Enlightenment (Hausheer, 2013, p. xlvii). The Alps were associated with these sensibilities as they were "spared" from modern developments, thus blessed with healing difference and places where the modern phenomenon of alienation could be combatted (Lems, 2016). Over time, however, and in the Alps especially, such Romantic sentiments were captured by a new and flourishing industry: tourism[5]. The latter promised guests experiences close to those depicted by Romantic artists in books, paintings and diaries, which became central in a modern quest for the "extraordinary" and "authenticity", and continues to be mobilized in tourism imaginaries (MacCannell, 2013; Urry & Larsen, 2011).

In Switzerland, the Romantic endeavors contributed to the glorification of the alpine environment and its dwellers, the *Bergleute* (Debarbieux, 2018; Schär, 2015). Romantics depicted mountain inhabitants as poor alpine "peasants and shepherds" (*Bauern und Hirten*), who epitomized Swissness and embodied features associated with their native environment. The peasants and shepherds were celebrated as morally superior, European "noble savages" as opposed to the "bad savages" inhabiting the far-away Tropics (Schär, 2012, 2015). This positive representation of the peasants and shepherds[6] accompanied the advent of tourism in alpine Switzerland, construed as an attractive "cradle of European civilization" (de Capitani, 2010).

While the Romantics came from bourgeois, urban and European society, their works contributed to the democratization of Alpine tourism. In Grindelwald, like in many places in the Alps, tourists on Thomas Cook's famous organized tours flocked to the valley from the end of the 19th century. They were accompanied by European alpinists, sick people seeking pure air, aristocrats, artists and later followed by skiers, holiday home owners and group tourists, all attracted by the "exceptional" environment of the place (Debarbieux et al., 2008). While the visitors' motivations have varied and travel to Europe remains a privileged activity for those who possess freedom of movement, Grindelwald's mountains have been promising travelers exceptional experiences for the past two centuries.

A key element of the touristification following the Romantic reappraisal of the Alps was the development of transport infrastructure, with the expansion of roads and railway systems as early as the 19th century (Tissot, 2006). Parallel to the increasing numbers of tourists brought by train, cars and/or planes, the so-called "hospitality industry" developed, with the construction of hotels and restaurants where services were commodified for tourists away from the comfort of their homes (Flückiger-Seiler, 2019). After centuries of activities centered around farming, Grindelwald's economy, like many alpine villages, became dominated by the so-called *Fremdenverkehr* – literally the "business of foreigners", a synonym for tourism –as the main means of subsistence. Farmers, for instance, worked as mountain guides as they accompanied British alpinists during their ascents of the valley's peaks throughout the 19th century. Nowadays, most of the alpine guides are outsiders and farmers work on ski lifts in winter, next to their agricultural activities, which allows for a greater predictability and financial security. Tourism accounts for more than 90 percent of the economy and dominates all aspects of life in the village. As I was told countless times by locals, "we are nothing without tourism".

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[5] Owing its name to the Grand Tours that were going through Europe in the 18th century.
[6] Also associated with negative representations of mountain dwellers as "backward".

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As a result of these developments, the village welcomed "new" dwellers next to the "original" native local population made of mountain farmers (*Bergbauern*). Foreign workers, in particular Italian, came to the valley of Grindelwald at the end of the 19th century, like in the rest of Switzerland, to build the train connections, sometimes at the risk of their lives (Moser, 1997). The expansion of the hospitality industry especially contributed to labor migration, with workers – usually women – coming from other cantons to work as chamber maids for instance (Kuhn, 2019).

Since then, migrants from Italy, Spain, Germany, Portugal and more recently from Eastern Europe have represented the overwhelming majority of the hospitality industry's workforce in Grindelwald, as in the rest of Switzerland. More recently, "amenity migrants" seeking a better quality of life in the alpine villages also settled in the village (Boscoboinik & Cretton, 2017; Cretton et al., 2020).

Romantic imaginaries thus catalyzed processes of "vertical globalization" as anthropologist Herta Nöbauer has termed it, describing the "increasing flows of people, ideas, infrastructure, communication technology, trade and finance oriented towards […] high mountain areas" (2021, p. 22). Grindelwald, like many resorts, became a "contact zone" (Pratt, 1991), where flows of people from all horizons converged, between those who came to work, those who came to spend their holiday, or both.

Although tourism radically altered and connected the local economy to the world in new ways, it would be wrong to assume that mountain dwellers were rooted and immobile before touristification, as Romantic narratives so often imply. Emigration, permanent or seasonal, within Switzerland, Europe or intercontinentally has shaped the village for centuries. Mercenaries from alpine valleys were rented out to European powers from the 17th century (Netting, 1981) and much of Switzerland's poor rural population, especially from the canton of Bern, migrated to North America during the 18th and 19th century to find land, resources and gain power (Schelbert, 1976). Contrary to the understanding of Switzerland as a "non-colonial" nation (Purtschert et al., 2012), this reveals how its people, even from the marginalized mountain areas, participated in the colonial enterprise of dispossession and negation of Native American and Black lives as white settlers (Holenstein et al., 2018; Schelbert, 1976).

Grindelwald's demographics reflect these more or less recent and unequal exchanges between the village and the world. In a booklet handed out to all new inhabitants in 2017, local statistics indicated that the "native" *einheimisch* locals made up 30 percent of the population and the proportion of "foreigners" was 24 percent. The latter were overwhelmingly from Southern Europe (Portugal), and the former drew, among other things, on the original markers of belonging such as typical local family names or having Grindelwald inscribed as their "place of origin"[7]. Next to these two categories, Swiss people called "outsiders" or *Auswärtige* also inhabited the village, as I will describe.

[7] *Heimatort* in German is a legal category that defines municipal citizenship, where one's ancestors lived and where family name comes from for every Swiss citizen. The *Heimatort* is inherited through the father, according to the principle of *jus soli*.

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The Alps' history of touristification reveals how Romantic imaginaries of purity, marginality and locality, which originally aimed at countering modernity, paradoxically fostered processes of globalization. Pfau and Mitchell describe such tensions as "Romanticism's marked ambivalence" which "simultaneously extends the project of European modernity while offering itself as a sustained critical reflection on that very process" (2011, p. 267). I will now turn to the influence of Romanticism in linking the alpine village and the Swiss nation.

The Alpine Village and the Origins of the Swiss Nation

It's the 1st of August 2018, the national holiday. In Grindelwald, locals in traditional costumes throw Swiss flags in the air[8]. A Swiss cross is even projected onto the mountain Eiger. These symbols of Swissness please the tourists but locals are also invested in their display. "I would be ashamed to have the flag hanging down my window in Zurich", says one of my friends from the lowlands living in the village, "but everyone does it here, I feel like I have to do it too".

Such manifestations of Swiss national pride have a long history, once again linked to Romantic visions on the Alps. If Romantic perceptions of nature and rurality were central in shaping various nation-states around the world (Miller, 2013), modern Switzerland presents a particular case of national construction around ideals of locality, the alpine village and the rooted, farming life it stood for. From the end of the 19th century, the Alps have even served to "naturalize" the Swiss nation, as historian Olivier Zimmer (1998) has proposed.

In a context of mounting nationalism, Switzerland's legitimacy as a nation-state had been questioned by the ethno-nationalism of its neighbors. Unable to draw on its linguistic or cultural unity[9], the Swiss state saw its mountains as a "force" capable of "determining national identity", providing it with authenticity and legitimacy and a "compact, homogeneous, unified form" (Miller, 2013, p. 645). At the end of the 1930s, the Alps were even erected as a defense strategy as they became a militarized "castle" and the bedrock of the "spiritual defense of the country" (*Geistige Landesverteidigung*) (Purtschert, 2013). On the one hand, the topography of the country presented material conditions to argue for the naturalness of Switzerland as an alpine country. With 60 percent of the Swiss territory consisting of mountains culminating in peaks higher than 4,000 meters, the objective reality of a national alpine geography gave way to discourses on the Swiss alpine identity (Zimmer, 1998, p. 661)[10]. On the other hand, stories and symbols naturalizing the link between Switzerland, its inhabitants and the Alps progressively spread through the Swiss population, often based on a mix of historical events and fictitious elements.

An older myth on the alleged farming roots of the Swiss confederation –even called a "farmers' nation" (*Bauernnation*)– for instance merged with alpine imaginaries. The farmers who rebelled against foreign bailiffs and allegedly founded Switzerland –the Old Confederates or *Eidgenosse*– were soon portrayed as alpine farmers (Kreis, 2011) following the "alpinization" of the country's identity. Wilhelm Tell, the Swiss national hero *par excellence*, was only systematically portrayed as an

[8] A Swiss tradition called "Schwingen".
[9] Switzerland is a multilingual country, with a population speaking German, French, Italian or Romansh.
[10] Although only a minority of the population lives in the Alps.

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alpine dweller after Schiller's famous Romantic reinterpretation of the play of the same name (Bendix, 1992). The myth of the "farming nation", combined with the topography and the Romantic vision of the alpine environment, consolidated the reputation of Switzerland as an "exceptional"[11] country, fundamentally attached to democratic values (Marchal & Mattioli, 1992).

Between history, environmental conditions, cultural landscape and military strategies, the Alps and the alpine locale soon stood for the origins of the national *Heimat* –the homeland[12]. Swiss ethnologists even researched alpine villages with the intention to study the "genuine" Swiss culture, preserved from modernization (Leimgruber, 2012). But the process of Swiss alpinization importantly also had implications for other parts of the world. Swiss alpinists became symbols of a Swiss, modern, technologically-oriented masculinity which they mobilized for their colonial "discoveries" of peaks far beyond the national borders, like in the Nepalese Himalayas (Purtschert, 2019). Nowadays, references to the Alps as the symbols of national *Heimat* often come from Switzerland's most powerful political party, the far-right SVP (*Schweizerische Volkspartei*), which regularly displays the Alps as a national paradise endangered by so-called "mass immigration" (see Audikana & Kaufmann, 2022).

The production of (alpine) locality thus also stemmed from nationalist discourses, which in turn participated in shaping an unequally divided colonial world. The genealogy of the Romantic vision of locality ascribed to the alpine village I proposed here points to the imbrications of international tourism and nationalism. Yet, the Romantic visions of the Alps and their ramifications with tourism and nationalism remain discourses on the Alps, uttered by urban elites, tourism lobbyists or state actors who have often neglected the views of those who inhabit them. In the next section, I propose to address precisely this point by giving voice to a village dweller, whose views were emblematic of many inhabitants.

Moritz and the Freedom of the Native

In front of a wooden ski hut next to the slopes, two flags fly in the wind: a Swiss flag and another, unofficial, most probably unknown to those who do not live in the valley. Made of red and white stripes, the latter stands for the "freedom of the natives" (*die Freiheit der Einheimischen*), a fight for which the hut owner, Moritz, has been involved with over the past years. Like all here, Moritz lives off globalized tourism and, while his allegiance goes to the Swiss nation, he is known to be a fervent supporter of "his valley", "his people".

On the day I met him, Moritz was sitting at a table with three older men in a local hotel restaurant. The table of Grindelwalders was waited on by a hospitality worker standing nearby, a Portuguese man, as the flag under his name tag indicated. The older men were wearing working clothes, hats with the names of local clubs and dirty hiking shoes – "the *einheimisch* outfit", many said. The waiter was dressed in black and white, impeccable suit. But this contrast was not just one of style. On the

[11] The idea of Switzerland being an "exception" (Sonderfall) is also key in its nation-building (Imhof, 2006).

[12] *Heimat* is not precisely translatable into English. This term has different connotations, ranging from the very personal, affective realm, to material property and belonging to the nation (Leimgruber, 2019).

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one hand, the table of "typical Grindelwalders", or *Ureinheimische* ("genuine native"[13]) embodied a form of alpine patrilinear belonging[14] which seemed to originate in the beginning of time. On the other, locals of Portuguese origins, who made up most of the workforce, equated with "new comers".

In spite of their permanent stays in the village and the Swiss nationality they sometimes acquired after decades in Switzerland, the Portuguese, like most foreigners working in the hospitality industry, were often referred to as "*Saisonniers*" (seasonal workers) by Swiss villagers. As I have described elsewhere (Leitenberg, 2021), although abolished in 2002 with the end of the Swiss guest-worker regime, this label was still used in Grindelwald. Used by Swiss locals, the term *Saisonniers* stressed the cultural difference of workers, an association inherited from the guest-worker regime (see Wicker, 2003). For workers, it described a reality of short-term seasonal contracts and precarity. As Andrea, a Portuguese chambermaid, explained, she "did not have any other choice but to work in the hospitality industry" precisely because she was a "foreigner" and this represented her only chance to enter the Swiss job market.

Moritz, on the contrary epitomized a form of genuine, eternal belonging I was encouraged to research as an anthropologist, to get to the "real" villager. He stood up to join me under the astonished gaze of the group of *Einheimische*. The thought of someone like Moritz, an older man speaking local dialect, meeting with me, a young French speaking woman from the lowlands, was "odd", many of my local contacts explained. Moritz sat down and explained that he was born in Grindelwald 50 years ago and was proud to call the village his *Heimat*. He had lived elsewhere in Switzerland and parts of his family had emigrated to the USA decades ago, following the steps of many Grindelwalders before them. In spite of this, Moritz considered his family, an indivisible part of Grindelwald. Moritz, his father, grandfather and great-grandfather were born in the village, they carried a local name and he inherited the family house. He added:

> We are a valley of our own (*ein eigenes Tal*). We could put up a tank barrier (*Panzersperre*), no one would come anymore. […] On the one hand, that's because we are somehow on our own. On the other hand, it has to do with history. 200 years [ago] the peasants with the halberds went to Bern[15]. They beat up the foreign bailiffs (*die fremden Vögten*) because they wanted to command us. […] Grindelwald, […] belonged to the Interlaken monastery. And that's how the rebellions against the authorities came about. Like in a novel (*Wie aus dem Roman*) [and now] we're not in the EU, fortunately, I think. That has to do with the fact that we are still a mountain people (*Bergvolk*), even if we have a lot of tourism and everything, we are still a certain type… And probably the freedom that we have to decide is still greater [than elsewhere].

Moritz acknowledged the importance of globalized tourism for himself and the village which would be "erased" from the map without tourism. Although his valley was globally connected, Moritz described the persisting difference of Grindelwald and its dwellers. To explain this peculiarity, he used the valley's topography to cut it off from the rest of Switzerland with an imaginary "tank barrier" and its "unique" history. With the "peasants with halberds" as opposed to the "foreign bailiffs", Moritz evoked the peasant revolt. The peasant uprisings took place when local farmers fought against the domination of the Habsburgian-led Covent of

[13] This depiction was rather reserved to older men.
[14] See Heady, 1999.
[15] The capital city of Switzerland and the canton of Bern.

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Interlaken and their forced conversion to Protestantism with the Reformation in 1528[16]. Centuries later, Moritz and his peers still felt close to their farmer ancestors, as his misdating of the events also reveals (200 instead of 500 years ago). The various local traditions, poems and songs, all originally farming traditions, evoked feelings of pride and belonging in these locals. "These sounds are those of the *Heimat*", said Franziska, an *einheimisch* woman, upon hearing cow bells ringing (*Trycheln*, another Swiss tradition), which made her eyes tear in "inexplicable" ways.

Moritz's stress on local, national as well as environmental and historical differences, and his investment in a mountaineer farming identity associated with values of "freedom" evoke the Romantic visions of the Swiss alpine ideals I described above. The free farmers fought for their self-determination, which Moritz connected to "fortunate" contemporary national decisions such as refusing to be part of the EU, a position largely shared by his peers. These farmers could have well been Wilhelm Tell himself, it appeared to me, a reference that Moritz himself seemed to imply when he stated that his poetic vision of history was as if "taken from a novel".

These farming roots stood for differences between Moritz's "people" and "foreigners" but also other Swiss regions, depending on the context. Switzerland's lowlands inhabitants were stereotypically believed to be leftists leading uprooted, anonymous and meaningless lives by many *Einheimische.* They had the power to decide on the region's fate without any awareness of "what it means to live in the mountains". The national imaginaries of the typical *Eidgenosse* thus informed a vision of the typical, noble Grindelwalder but also a particular distribution of labor. The "genuine" natives, were reluctant to work in the hospitality industry since they were typical Swiss, descendants from the free Confederates, and thus "not servants" as I was told multiple times. The "imperial history" of foreign dwellers, on the other hand, shaped them into good, obeying hospitality workers, like the Portuguese waiter or Andrea.

Moritz's tale of the "freedom of the native", shared and supported by many *Einheimische*, echoed with Romantically-inherited tourism imaginaries and national myths. The latter, I suggest, were moved by a "populist", "pluralist", deeply "expressionist" sensibility, in Berlin's words, as they naturalized the link tying their particular, incommensurably different people to a particular, beautiful "valley of our own".

Contemporary Threats

While Switzerland or Grindelwald were unique and exceptional, as Moritz, Christine or Franziska contended, they also described the very present threats posed by contemporary times. Moritz stated:

> You have to see how much is being built there. The valley is almost becoming a city. Why? Because people are safe in Switzerland. [There is] social security, personal protection, stable relationships to the government, so they come here. From abroad [*vom Ausland*], from the city, from abroad especially.

[16] Locals also fought against the Covent of Interlaken between 1348-1349 in other regions of the Bernese Highlands.

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According to Moritz, Touristikers – tourism lobbyists – were willing to "sell his Heimat" to foreign mass tourists and investors. Immigration also upset the local and national imagined homogenous community. Grindelwald and Switzerland were places that were unique, particularly peaceful, safe and wealthy. As such, they needed to be protected against the threat of the present, posed by the outside, be it with the EU, migrants, or the centralized head of the state and canton in Bern. This motivated him, like the immense majority of Grindelwalders, to vote for the Europhobic, far-right SVP, especially during referenda aiming at restricting migration and asylum. Criminals and profiteers, Moritz argued, were foreigners in their immense majority, who needed to be stopped and/or sent back.

If they sometimes came from the village, capitalist *Touristikers* also wished to increase Grindelwald's dependency on what lay outside of the village and the nation's confines with more "Asian mass tourism". Romantic images which tourism lobbyists were displaying now corresponded less and less to the reality one could witness in the village. "They [the tourism lobbyists and hoteliers] convey beautiful images, but they no longer *have* beautiful images". These were all signs that "something was going in the wrong direction", Moritz said.

While Grindelwald had developed thanks to international tourism which pulled it out of poverty, my discussions with *einheimisch* locals often revolved around the threats posed by globalization. The acceleration of life, the growth of Asian "mass tourism", the urbanization of the valley and the increasingly strong presence of foreigners were met with deep skepticism. The valley's unique environment and culture were seen as negatively impacted by these fundamentally new and destructive processes, locals explained. Moritz actively fought against such developments: he legally appealed against new touristic projects, had founded a club safeguarding the *einheimisch* interests regarding housing and had regularly confronted the *Touristikers* in the media and various assemblies.

Hans, an *einheimisch* man I visited in his farm was also concerned with the changes in his *Heimat*, its environment but also its culture. The "new blood" (*neues Blut*) coming to the valley with the arrival of "outsiders" (*Auswärtige*) and "foreigners" (*Ausländer*) settling in the village was particularly worrying, he said. The latter spoke foreign languages that Hans believed contributed to the disappearance of the typical Grindelwald Swiss-German dialect that he and the other *Einheimische* had been speaking for centuries. Life and customs of those who "really lived here" were about to die out. "Real Grindelwalders are disappearing", Hans said, before adding: "The [Portuguese] kids in front of the school speak languages I don't understand". "I know *you* are used to it but *I* am having difficulties with it", he told his life partner and me, both from the urban lowlands.

The discourse mobilized by the *einheimisch* population thus oscillated between a strong feeling of belonging to a particular locale (be it Swiss or Grindelwalder) and the threat posed to its purity and integrity by elements coming from the outside. Shaped by Romantic inclinations towards values of "populism", "expressionism" and "pluralism", they worryingly saw the village life transformed into a world order that was no longer healthy. A man whose family had been living in Grindelwald for generations told me: "You know, it scares me when I come here" (*Es macht mir Angst*), repeating the word "*Angst*" (fear) as he pressed his hand on his chest multiple times, looking at the crowded center of the village from the restaurant table where we were talking.

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This man and other *Einheimische* like Hans or Christine, who usually lived on the outskirts of the settlement in inherited houses, admitted avoiding the touristic center of Grindelwald precisely because it no longer corresponded with their memories and ideals of village life, where one could see other native locals and chat (*dorfen*). They also avoided working in the hospitality industry or in direct contact with the "new" Asian "mass tourists" who stood for a particularly bothering and destructive type of tourism because of the "cultural misunderstandings" they created and new accelerated travel habits they had. Feeling "rooted" (*verwurzelt*) in the *Heimat*, an essential value, was getting lost in the fast-paced contemporary society, Christine said.

Building on Isaiah Berlin's analysis of Romantic sensibilities, anthropologist Douglas Holmes has proposed that the fear of cultural alienation[17] shapes contemporary responses to globalization and multiculturalism. Holmes argues that "alienation" or "estrangement" appear to those who are skeptical of globalization as "the outcome of uprooting, of a deracination" from the "populist" belief in a "texture to which humans naturally belong" (2000, p. 7). Based on his research among far-right leaders, he states that feeling alienated does not necessitate a "physical" dislocation but can also emerge from more symbolic forms of uprootedness such as the "cosmopolitanization" of one's society in a "fast capitalism" that "flattens relations" (p. 5).

I suggest that experiences of the *Einheimische* I described above can be understood as forms of alienation, as a feeling of disorientation when the world (rapidly) changes and deteriorates around oneself. While the feeling of being a "stranger in one's homeland" has been described elsewhere, as part of reactionary politics (Hochschild, 2018), Alpine regions are particularly impregnated by these ideas of alienation.

As I have shown, the Alps have been construed as "exceptional", "rooted", "pure" and "authentic" in both touristic and nationalistic imaginaries, while involved in intense global exchanges for the past two centuries. Contrary to other parts of Switzerland, where multiple industries and political sensibilities compete, tourism and (far) right politics have been dominant in the German-speaking alpine political, economic and ideological landscape (Caramani & Mény, 2005). If Romanticism presents a paradoxical nature as it both has been extending and critiquing modernity, I suggest that alienation could be seen as the existential manifestation of such ambivalence. In other words, living in a place shaped by such Romantic visions and tensions is a fertile ground for the emergence of feelings of alienation. Paying attention to Romantic visions does not only help us to understand the developments following visions *on* the alpine village such as touristification and nationalism, but also visions *in* the alpine village, such as the feelings of pride and anxiety experienced by inhabitants, in this case, the *Einheimische*.

[17] This differs from Marxist understandings of alienation as the outcome of socio-economic processes of capitalist exploitation although Marx was influenced by Herder's writings (Holmes, 2000, p. 7).

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The Politics of (Non-)Belonging

Besides the very practical strategies of avoidance, many alienated *Einheimische* stated that a "priority" needed to be given to genuine locals instead of outsiders and foreigners. "We [the *Einheimische*] must be first, we were born here, so we must see that our people have work first. Afterwards, only the others", Moritz claimed. While this wish was shared by many locals, they knew the difficulties it presented: the Swiss and *a fortiori* the *einheimisch* locals were extremely reluctant to undertake hospitality work, because it was poorly paid, time-consuming and stood for a degrading form of "servility", as I have mentioned above. Instead, thanks to their contacts, they were able to take jobs that were safer, at the regional railway company for instance, and in less direct contact with guests, especially the new "masses".

Such a vision nonetheless reveals a hierarchy created between village dwellers, which rests on the Romantic pluralist idea of multiple, incompatible cultures. The belief in incommensurable difference is necessary for the emergence of a nativist ideology which defines "a preference for the 'native' exclusively on the grounds of '*being* native'" (De Genova, 2016, pp. 233, italics in original). In a nativist manner, Moritz and other *Einheimische* reasserted the difference between those who came *to* the village *from the outside* and those who came *from the village*, who naturally belonged to and in it and should be given preference.

Nativist talk calls upon us to look at *how* differences are re-made and performed between those who belong to the village and those who don't, those who are made into insiders like the *Einheimische* and outsiders, like the Portuguese or, as we will see, other Swiss locals. If Grindelwald was indeed a product of "vertical globalization", I suggest that Romantic visions of "populist" belonging, cultural difference and incommensurability informed particular "politics of belonging" (Yuval-Davis, 2006) , in which the belonging of some implied the non-belonging of others.

As Yuval-Davis has put it, belonging on the one hand implies an emotional and highly personal attachment to a group, an object or a place (2006: 11). On the other, it is also anchored in particular politics, hierarchies and power relations (*ibid.*). Many of the people I met who chose to permanently settle in Grindelwald expressed feelings of intimate belonging in the village. They loved its environment, had made friends there, sometimes built families. Some like Kristi, a sport instructor from Zurich, explained that she chose to move to Grindelwald as the resort reminded her of the various places she visited around the world. The "multicultural feel" of the village contributed to making her feel "at home" in the locale of Grindelwald (see Friedli, 2020a; Friedli, 2020b for a similar case).

However, these "new" inhabitants usually added that if they considered Grindelwald as their home, they were far from being considered as natives by other locals, especially the *Einheimische.* Simone, originally a town dweller who had been living in the village for decades, nodded in the direction of a neighboring table as I shared dinner with her and other friends at a restaurant. She guessed that these customers were probably an *einheimisch* family, judging by their dialect and the men's clothing style. A friend of hers responded that Simone herself was probably an *Einheimische* too, given the years she had spent there. "I doubt I would ever really become one", Simone responded with a shrug. Although she considered Grindelwald her *Heimat* and had access to the reduced *einheimisch* price when buying a ski pass, she would never call herself an *Einheimische* as the latter made her feel like she did

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not genuinely belong. Her lowlander dialect and her untypical family name represented nearly unsurmountable boundaries that were standing in the way of her complete integration, Simone explained. She was upset by this situation as she was not only denied a status of genuine insider but native locals remained "distant" and "cold" to her after all these years.

Although Simone felt that she belonged to the village, she remained excluded in what I would describe as a rather strict politics of belonging, drawing on lines of in-/exclusion that were hardly permeable. Like her, many of the "outsiders" (*Auswärtige*) in the village stated that becoming an *Einheimische* was a very difficult if not nearly impossible endeavor, even if one was born in the village or came from places located closer than Simone and Kristi's urban hometowns. A man from a region of the Bernese Highlands who had lived in the village for the past 30 years and married a local woman explained "it takes three generations to become *einheimisch*". A woman from the very next village who married a native local man told me that she was still considered an outsider by the genuine natives. She had been "imported here even if not from very far away". Two older men whose parents were born in Grindelwald explained that they too were not considered "genuine" *Einheimische* or *Ureinheimische* because of their non-*einheimisch* family names. In spite of their dialect and a local family history anchored in Grindelwald, they were not perceived as authentic dwellers.

As these account show, the boundaries drawn between "genuine" natives and outsiders took localist and regionalist contours. Although Simone and many of these "outsiders" had never been formally excluded from local life, there was a sense of incommensurable difference separating those who were native and those who simply weren't. While it would be tempting to understand nativism as an ideology of incommensurable or even ontological difference (De Genova, 2016), I believe it is essential to account for the various forms and hierarchization of difference which form the particular politics of belonging I encountered in Grindelwald. Localist nativism was juxtaposed to a national, exclusionary nativism when it came to foreigners – *Ausländer* – and particularly migrant workers.

As I questioned Swiss locals on whether foreigners could one day become a native, an overwhelming majority responded with a categorical "no", sometimes with a laugh even. This was "impossible" because of the great cultural difference they posed, a persisting accent or a lack of interest to integrate in the local and national community. In spite of their historical presence and socio-economic contribution to the region and Switzerland, migrant hospitality workers faced forms of local *and* national exclusion, re-performing their cultural, social, legal and economic difference.

While the capacity of Swiss outsiders to be called a native were limited in practice, many *Einheimische* explained this was still possible even if difficult. Foreigners, especially working in the hospitality industry, were more strictly excluded from the village and the nation as *Heimat*. This difference was then put to work in the globalized capitalist economy of tourism, in which, hospitality workers were deskilled, underpaid migrants who had little time for themselves, no prospects of upwards mobility and were often employed temporarily like in many other countries (Baum, 2007).

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This made for an unequal village economy where few social contacts were tied between the categories of local, national, and foreign residents. The *einheimisch* locals, could circumvent the most "alienating" spaces and destructive consequences of tourism development. The most exploitative jobs were performed by migrant hospitality workers in the center of the village, as they had "no other choice" but to be "exploited" in order to stay on the national Swiss territory. If localism or regionalism have been shaping alpine societies (Caramani & Mény, 2005; Stacul, 2003), one needs to account for their juxtaposition with various forms of difference (such as national) and their consequences.

Conclusion

Departing from Christine's remarks on the persistence of a village identity and values in a globalized world, in this article I have traced a genealogy of the meanings ascribed to the local or the village in the Alps, through the example of Grindelwald. This genealogy reveals how Romantic sensibilities around the Alps *both* informed tourism imaginaries fostering the mobility of objects, visitors and investors to the resort *as well as* nationalistic imaginaries of cultural belonging, rootedness and boundedness. By coming back to the present and the preoccupations of native dwellers, I have also shown how Romantic visions were also those of a category of locals, the *Einheimische*. The latter, I proposed, epitomized and experienced native belonging but also felt threatened and alienated as a consequence of their village having been treated as "exceptional" and "pure" in both tourism and nationalist Romantic imaginaries. Romantic visions had been involved in attracting people and goods from the whole world to the valley, *and* in reasserting the incommensurable differences and incompatibility between what lied inside and outside of the village. As a consequence, the Romantic imaginaries were part of how locals felt and how structures of (non-)belonging were reproduced in the village. I have also called for a consideration of the multiple degrees, qualities and hierarchization of difference in the last part of this article.

Paying attention to locality in places that seem so transnational and to so clearly have "won" from globalization, thus reveals the simultaneous unfolding of contradictory processes and their legacies in the present, which are too often overshadowed by global metaphors of connectivity and flow. The Alps are a privileged site to address the on-going creation and meanings of national and local difference in a globalized world as they draw on a long history of Romantic fascination, which has in turn fostered tourism development, globalization and transnational mobility. At the same time, (some of) their dwellers are attached to strong forms of national and local regionalism or nativism based on ideals of rootedness and immobility.

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