

realistisches Geschichtsverständnis schon die Interviews geleitet haben mag, entzieht sich der Überprüfbarkeit, da ein Fragenkatalog dem Buch nicht anhängt. Generell hätte die Reflexion der Oral History-Methodik mehr Raum verdient, auch im Hinblick auf die Herausforderung, dass Menschen Alltag anders erinnern als besondere Ereignisse. Auch geht die Studie zwar systematisch vor und bindet einzelne Beobachtungen immer wieder an den Forschungsstand zurück, wirkt mit ihrem streng sozialtheoretischen Analyseinstrumentarium aber etwas starr. Nicht minder als die immer wieder diskutierte Frage, inwieweit die beobachteten Phänomene dem vorherrschenden Begriffsverständnis etwa von Proletariat, unternehmerischem Handeln oder kapitalistischer Produktionsweise entsprechen, hätte den Rezensenten das Bewusstsein von der Welt und dem eigenen Ort in ihr interessiert, das *Onyathi* aus ihrer Arbeit in einem global vernetzten Hafen heraus entwickelt haben mochten. Eine Berücksichtigung kulturgeschichtlicher Aspekte wie etwa Medienkonsum, Religion, Kommunikationsweisen oder Alltagsrituale hätte das Bild der *Onyathi* um bedeutende Facetten erweitert. So bleibt am Ende der Eindruck einer grundsollide recherchierten und kompakt dargestellten Untersuchung, die das Erkenntnispotenzial ihres Gegenstands aber nicht gänzlich auszuschöpfen vermag.

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Die Beschleunigung der Berge

Robert Groß, *Die Beschleunigung der Berge. Eine Umweltgeschichte des Wintertourismus in Vorarlberg/Österreich (1920–2010)* (Umwelthistorische Forschungen; Bd. 7), Köln (Böhlau) 2019, 361 S., zahlreiche Abb., 39,99 €

This book offers a fascinating and exhaustive take on the history of how isolated Alpine valleys have become, within less than a century, humming hubs of modernity and speed, embedded into a rich tourism economy. To do so it concentrates on a very specific area of western Austria, the Vorarlberg, and its transformation throughout the twentieth century by the rise of skiing as a leisure activity. This volume inserts itself into a growing literature on both the environmental history of the Alps and the spatialization of modernity. Reviewing such an extremely rich book is a taxing endeavour, mainly because of the number of threads that would have been worth reporting. Here, I focus mainly on the place of the book within the technological history of environmental change, weaving in a few comparative points from the history of conservation in the Alps. As the author himself claims, this book is an attempt at »translating the great acceleration into the small scale.« The geographic focus offers the author the chance, in contrast to other more sweeping comparative accounts, to analyse in painstaking detail all the aspects of the political, economic, technological, and environmental change experienced in the Alps since World War One. Groß moves explicitly beyond the work done, for example, by Andrew Denning in his seminal *Skiing into Modernity*, and prioritises the analysis of the role of technology rather than that of culture. Building upon a rich array of sources, ranging from technical articles to patents and from interviews with the actors to administrative files, Groß has produced an impressive, chronological account of how the great acceleration of the twentieth century has radically transformed the Alps, both economically and environmentally.

The volume begins with the rise of tourism in Vorarlberg in the interwar

era. Here Groß puts the history of tourism in the broader context of how political decisions, in particular the Nazi attempt to curb the afflux of German tourists to Austria, and economic trends, such as the crisis of the 1930s, affected the early developmental patterns of different valleys. Interesting about the first of these aspects is how German tourists were partially substituted by other foreigners, who brought new knowledge about tourism in the Alps, such as information about the first ski lifts set up in Val d'Isère in France, thus igniting the development of the same technology in Austria. The volume continues with a meticulous account of another major political decision that had a transformative impact on the Alps of Vorarlberg: the Marshall Plan. Moving into the history of post-war financial redistribution, Groß shows clearly how the afflux of money made possible by the Marshall Plan, even in the form of debt, and the way it was distributed pressured entrepreneurs and local communities to develop an economic system that has proven to be environmentally unsustainable.

At its core, however, the book focuses on how a number of new infrastructures and technologies radically affected the way tourists and entrepreneurs perceived and acted upon Alpine landscapes. As part of this Groß offers a very detailed technological history of ski lifts, both in how they first drove humans to adapt to their rhythms, and how later they were fixed for greater comfort. In doing so he shows clearly how the limits of the human body (of both tourists and workers) as well as those of Alpine landscapes influenced technical development. As Groß puts it, the development of the transport infrastructure and of new commercial ventures in Alpine villages was more than a mere urbanization of the Alps. They were rather aspects of a »synchroni-

sation of daily and holiday rhythms« that spurred a constant increment of available infrastructures.

Groß brings to the forefront how ski lifts and ski runs have become embedded in the Alpine space and are now no longer only the material expression of a cultural turn but unavoidable components of mountain landscapes that affect the lives of local communities and the area's economies. For instance, with all the justified environmental criticism of the landscape transformation caused by the industrialization of leisure, it must be noted how tourism, in combination with other high-modernist ventures such as hydroelectric power, stopped the ongoing depopulation trends and economic crisis in the region.

The claimed victory of the ski lift over space and time that allowed skiers to reach the slopes faster and more comfortably was never achieved. Acceleration, as Groß shows, is in fact incremental: the more people are drawn to the Alps, the more infrastructures are necessary; the faster people are moved to the slopes, the more people will be drawn to them. More often than not the hoped-for escape from the chaos of the city ends up in a queue at the ski lift station. Development and planning were also quintessential in the overuse of non-protected areas. In the end the efforts made to preserve certain valleys or panoramas fostered the worsening of the environmental conditions in the areas that had first been the object of infrastructural development, in a never-ending loop of path-dependency. This is a typical element in the story of conservation: since early on, preservation initiatives acted as integral elements of modernization, rather than romantic bastions against it. The exploitation of landscapes and their conservation are two sides of the same coin.

As in many environmental histories, conflict over land uses and its mediation play a central role in the development of tourism infrastructures in Vorarlberg. Ski entrepreneurs, for instance, used land seasonally without owning it, re-framing rights of use and passage to allow the use of slopes for winter sports. This created obvious frictions with landowners and even led to physical confrontations and attempts at sabotage. Similar conflicts were later caused by the lengthening of the skiing season through technical means such as artificial snow and the use of snowcats to manage the ski runs. Conflicts, in other words, developed parallel to the change of the uses of Alpine slopes. The overall technologization of snow management made it, for example, necessary to recur to a continued series of adaptations, which also constantly modified the reasons for conflict. For instance, from an environmental history perspective particularly important seems the fact that the increasing mechanization induced a chemicalization of snow management, with a cascade of further secondary effects. This particular cause of conflict, as Groß notes, was also due to a lack of planning and care for the possible consequences. Since the late 1970s, it also accounted for the increasing involvement of conservationists and environmentalists in the struggle.

Even if it is explicitly presented as a very specific case study, Robert Groß' book gives us much more. In line with recent intellectual developments and public debates the book offers what could be termed an anthropocenic reading of the »acceleration of the mountains«. Just to give an example, in the last years, the news has often discussed the indoor ski resort in Dubai. This has been consistently presented as an example of the follies of technological development as applied to leisure, an unnatural fancy, the

product of an extreme technologization of life. Groß shows, however, that this is only the final product of a much longer process. The natural environments surrounding Alpine slopes have been the object of a radical mechanization and industrialization of landscapes over the last century. The purported naturalness of Alpine ski resorts exists only in marketing pitches and flyers: from many points of view the Vorarlberg as we know it is as much a product of modernization as the Dubai ski resort.

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Modern Germany from the Ground

Andrew Stuart Bergerson/Leonard Schmieiding (Hg.), *Ruptures in the Everyday. Views of Modern Germany from the Ground* (Spectrum; Bd. 15), New York (Berghahn) 2017, 342 S., 22 Abb., 4 Karten, 110 €

This book on German *Alltagskultur* between 1914 and 2015 is an experiment in collective authorship. Twenty-six scholars, in ten chapters co-authored by anywhere from two to seven collaborators, explore how ordinary and extraordinary Germans navigated the shifting orders, disruptions, and catastrophes that have characterized German encounters with modernity. Although uneven in its outcomes, the experiment by and large proves successful as the authors and their editors manage to sustain a coherent discourse even as they contest the possibility of master narratives that would make global sense of the German experience.

To be sure, readers who pick up a volume on social and cultural history already know that history as seen »from the ground« builds on the contingency of micro-social interactions, where individ-