Winter tourism is becoming increasingly globalized thanks to international ownership models of ski resorts, innovative pricing systems, and new travel habits and travel experiences, especially in Europe. This phenomenon has been the subject of several conferences, such as the Tourism Naturally Conference in Austria in 2018. This international exchange was the motivation to compile all of the separate experiences into one book and to draw attention to the fact that this development towards globalization also warrants globalized attention through scientific research. The contributions of more than 40 authors from major winter tourism destinations in North America, Scandinavia and Central and Eastern Europe also allow – for the first time – an overarching discussion and comparison of management issues and main drivers.

The book consists of three parts. Part I Winter Tourism Forces and Challenges is addressed to current challenges including regional planning, socio-cultural conditions, climate change and economic challenges. Part II Winter Tourism Experiences gives an overview of behavioural research in winter tourism. The authors present case studies and methodological concepts for both understanding the preferences and behavioural intentions of current guests as well as the needs and requirements of potential guests in the future. Of high relevance in this context are also the trade-offs between the different attributes of ski resorts and destinations. Part III Winter Tourism Development and Sustainability discusses opportunities for future development considering and implementing sustainable development goals. The presented solutions include national concepts as well as solutions for single aspects such as social conflicts, safety or landscape beauty.

The three main book parts and related chapters show two major outcomes:

1. That ski resorts worldwide face many common challenges and can learn from each other.
2. That the respective development concept and related set of socio-economic and cultural conditions has a significant influence on future development and requires adaptation processes.

* E-mail: ulrike.proebstl@boku.ac.at
Since these two aspects form the background of the book and are essential for an overall understanding of the presented case studies, they are briefly presented in the following.

### 1.1 Common Challenges

The international scientific exchange revealed that ski resorts have many challenges in common, despite different geographical locations. For many winter tourism destinations, adapting to climate change and its impact on the range of products offered is currently the biggest challenge. Many contributions to the book, therefore, discuss winter tourism development in this respect, presenting adaptation opportunities and ways of achieving the desired transformation to an all-season destination. Climate change also influences many other management aspects, such as changing demand, short reaction times to changing weather conditions, cost efficiency or the documentation duties in the case of artificial snowmaking (see Fig. 1.1). While European destinations mostly trust in opportunities of adapting to climate change on a technological level (e.g. snowmaking with only −1°C), global warming has also accelerated the discussion of developing new destinations at higher elevations, e.g. in Kyrgyzstan and other currently still remote places of high conservation value.

However, climate change is only one crucial aspect influencing the management strategies and actions in winter tourism destinations. Societal changes and the shift to an international market have also had a significant effect on demand, on its diversification
and on the development of respective target groups. Part II of the book characterizes the increasing diversity of demand, considers the influence of cultural differences on management and explores the great potential of new emerging demand from Chinese guests. Diverse and changing demand means that ski resorts and winter tourism destinations need to develop adaptation processes consisting of spatial solutions as well as new products, marketing and pricing strategies.

Long-term, resilient, adaptive management must take all these aspects into account. Part III presents these strategies and discusses means to achieve this challenging goal, such as management tools, auditing systems and collaboration, and introduces specific management solutions, e.g. to enhance safety on the slopes.

1.2 The Influence of Development Concepts

For many mountain areas across the world, winter tourism has been the opportunity to gain an attractive source of income, achieve local wealth and further economic development options. However, as the book shows, implementation of winter tourism destinations and ski resorts has been, and still is, diverse. The respective geographical conditions are less of a determining factor in this process than are the differing socio-cultural conditions, histories, forms of land use and ownership structures.

These conditions are strongly related to the respective past developments, but also – as the many case studies in this book show – to the current challenges and opportunities for sustainable development. Two major development processes can be distinguished: the ‘incremental model’ and the ‘business model’.

The incremental model, which is characteristic of many destinations in Austria, Germany and Italy, but also of most Scandinavian resorts, describes a destination development in co-existence with existing settlements, forms of land use and traditions. The triggering of tourism development was based on multiple activities by farmer families or other community members, who started new businesses by providing accommodation, opening ski schools, constructing cable cars or becoming operators of ski lifts. What is more, this model is characterized by an overlap of the agricultural and touristic operations, without spatial discrimination between the two. Initially, the developing tourism infrastructure followed the traditional architectural characteristics and the local style.

The incremental model stands for a rather smooth or soft transition from an agricultural- to a tourism-dominated society. This model succeeds in providing a quality tourism product that is perceived as authentic and highly beneficial for the local population. Positive effects include the significant contribution to maintaining traditional agricultural land use, the creation of new jobs and related deceleration of rural depopulation, and the limited environmental impacts due to dual use.

Very often, incrementally developed resorts are characterized by an attractive, unique atmosphere consisting of traditional architecture, visible elements of former land use traditions, and a high diversity of owners and respective variety of entrepreneurial decisions.

However, this diverse ownership structure, ranging from accommodation to ski instruction to cable car services, may be a weakness when it comes to reacting to the challenges mentioned above. For example, increasing costs for artificial snowmaking are typically covered by the cable car enterprise but not by the whole accommodation
industry that profits from the provided snow security on the slopes. On the other hand, the diverse ownership structure, in combination with communal leadership, might make these resorts more resilient in finding new niches or transforming from winter to all-season destinations.

The ‘business model’, largely applied in the French Alps, the United States and Canada, describes resorts that have been started from scratch. They have been specially constructed for winter tourism purposes without any or only very little link to existing settlements, and are commonly not based on local but rather on external investment. The design of these specific winter tourism destinations is independent from existing socio-cultural and economic structures, but is addressed to the market, to demand and to the expected economic return. These investments are likely to bring external money to the mountains, and they form a new, rather urban development within the mountains, with attractive job opportunities, e.g. management positions. The new resorts are often detached from the traditional communities and are operated by external companies owning several resorts, such as the Compagnie des Alpes in France or Vail Resorts, Inc. based in North America.

In this case, the developer profits from the increasing property value. The economic benefit for the local population is significantly lower than in the incremental model. However, adaptation strategies, such as a strategic shift or the implementation of new, sustainable development goals, are relatively easy to achieve.

Considering these different development approaches is helpful, and is in fact crucial to understanding the challenges and respective strategies that follow in the presented international case studies. However, the discussion of future development and the consideration of sustainable development goals (UNWTO, 2015) should also take further ‘waves of development’ into account. So, a number of resort communities in Canada and the USA have shown ‘incremental development’ over many years. Examples clearly include Vail, Aspen, Jackson Hole, Steamboat Springs, Whistler, Squaw Valley and other communities that have uphill capacity and communities attached which have developed in conjunction with them. Further examples of distinctive towns (based on other economic drivers previously, but now having a more prominent focus on winter sports) include, amongst others, Fernie (Fernie Mountain Resort), Rossland (Red Mountain), Revelstoke (Revelstoke Mountain Resort), Ketchum (Sun Valley) and Crested Butte (Crested Butte Mountain Resort). Globalized ownership, engagement of investors outside tourism, new regional cooperations with and without communal initiatives and other drivers will shape and influence the development options in the future.

1.3 Lessons Learnt

We, the editors from Europe and North America, believe that the greatest benefit of this book is the globally integrated view on winter tourism, with contributing authors from 12 different countries and even more destinations. Many aspects underline the need to discuss winter tourism from a global perspective:

- Winter tourism demand has changed from a local to an international focus, including the significant impulse provided by a potential Chinese market.
- The impacts of climate change affect ski resorts worldwide and, therefore, require common actions as well as adaptation strategies in all parts of the world.
The contributions in this book show that, rather than ‘re-inventing the wheel’, we should learn from each other and transfer best practices, e.g. in the field of pricing, environmental management, security and health issues, and in considering the demand side.

Finally, the case studies presented in this book illustrate the various solutions, business models, planning tools and governance models applied to achieve sustainable development and a successful business.

References

