

Climate change impacts on and adaptation of nature-based tourism in the Alps

- Lessons to learn for Norway?

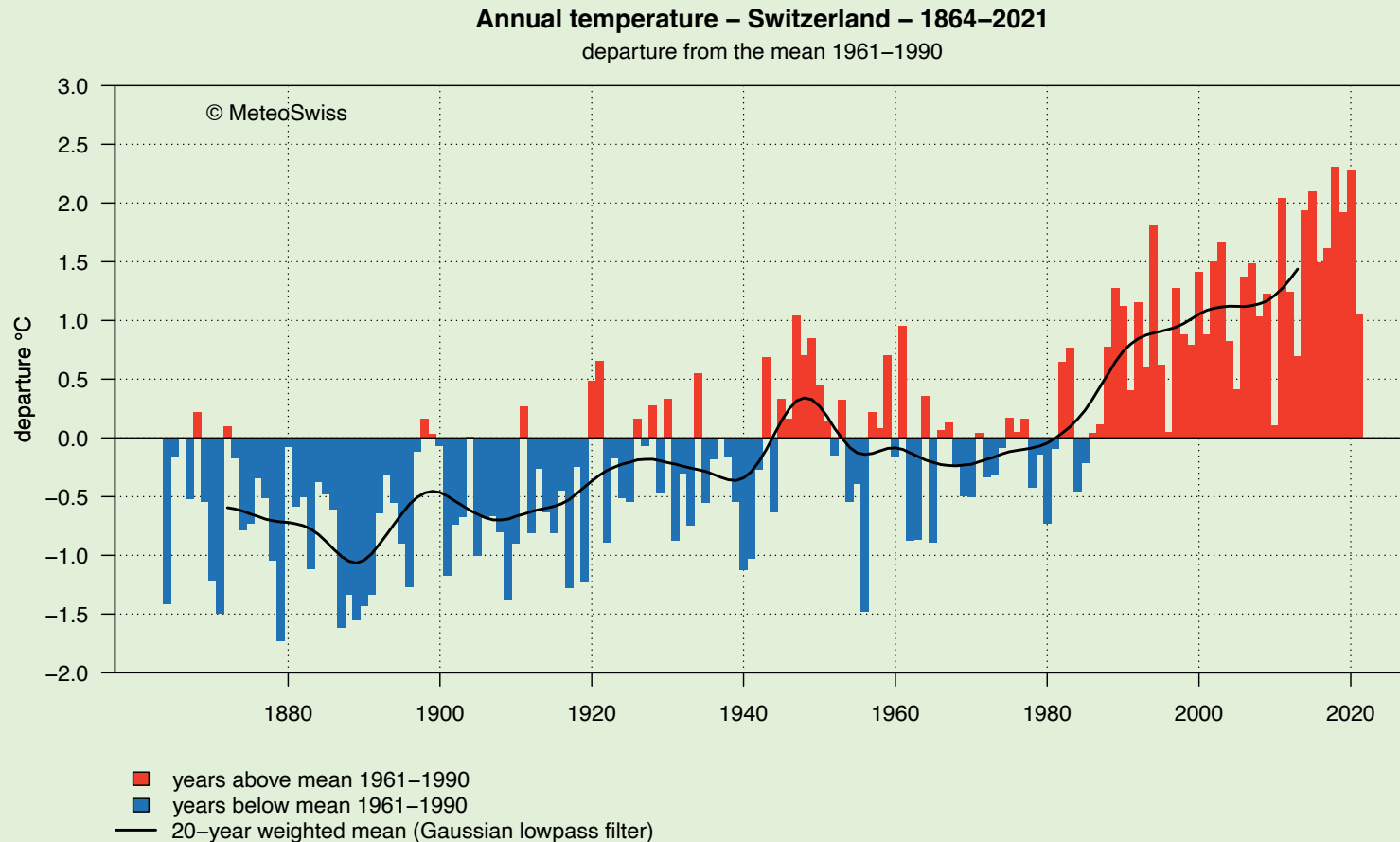
Bruno Abegg, University of St. Gallen



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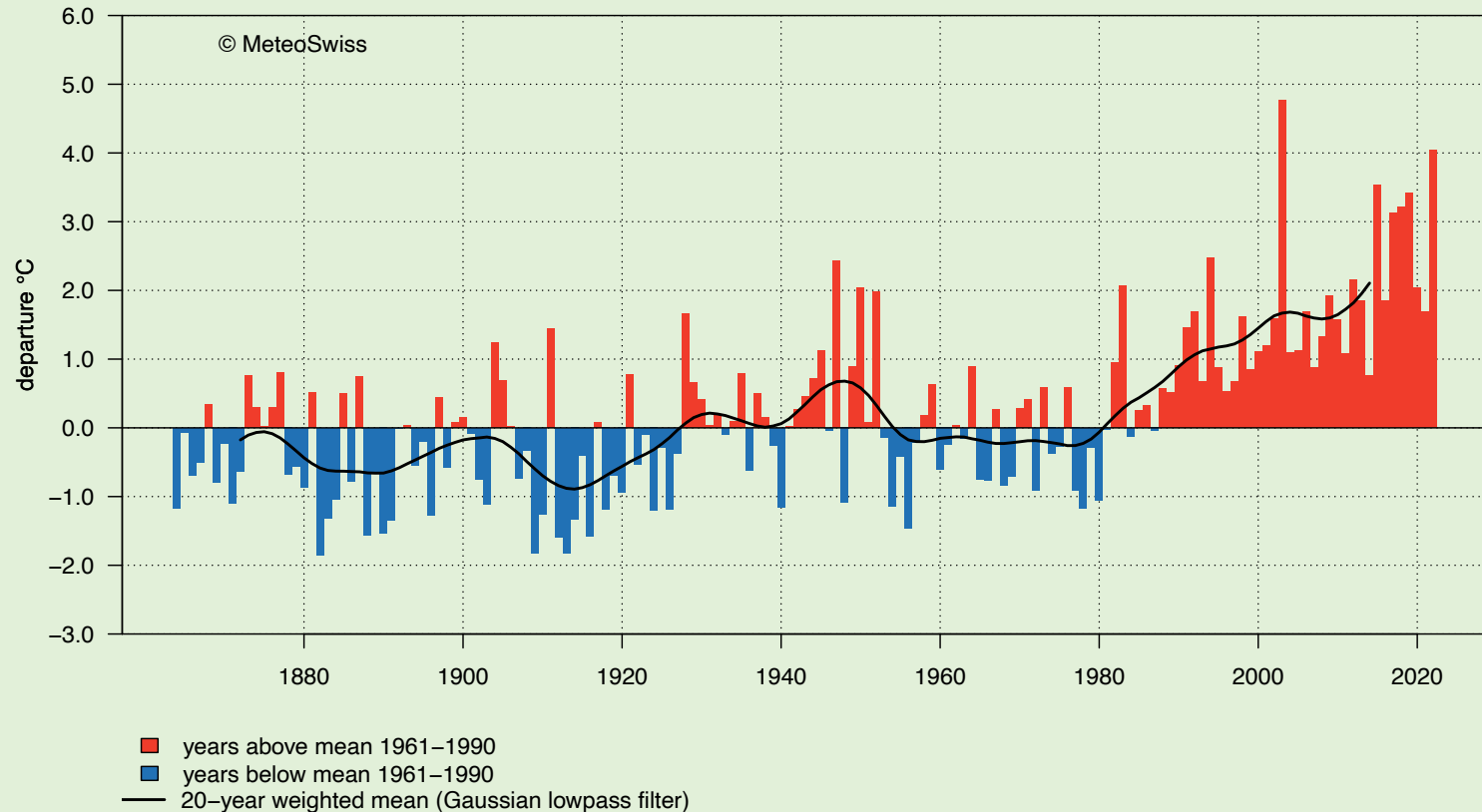
Recent developments – climate change



Recent developments – climate change

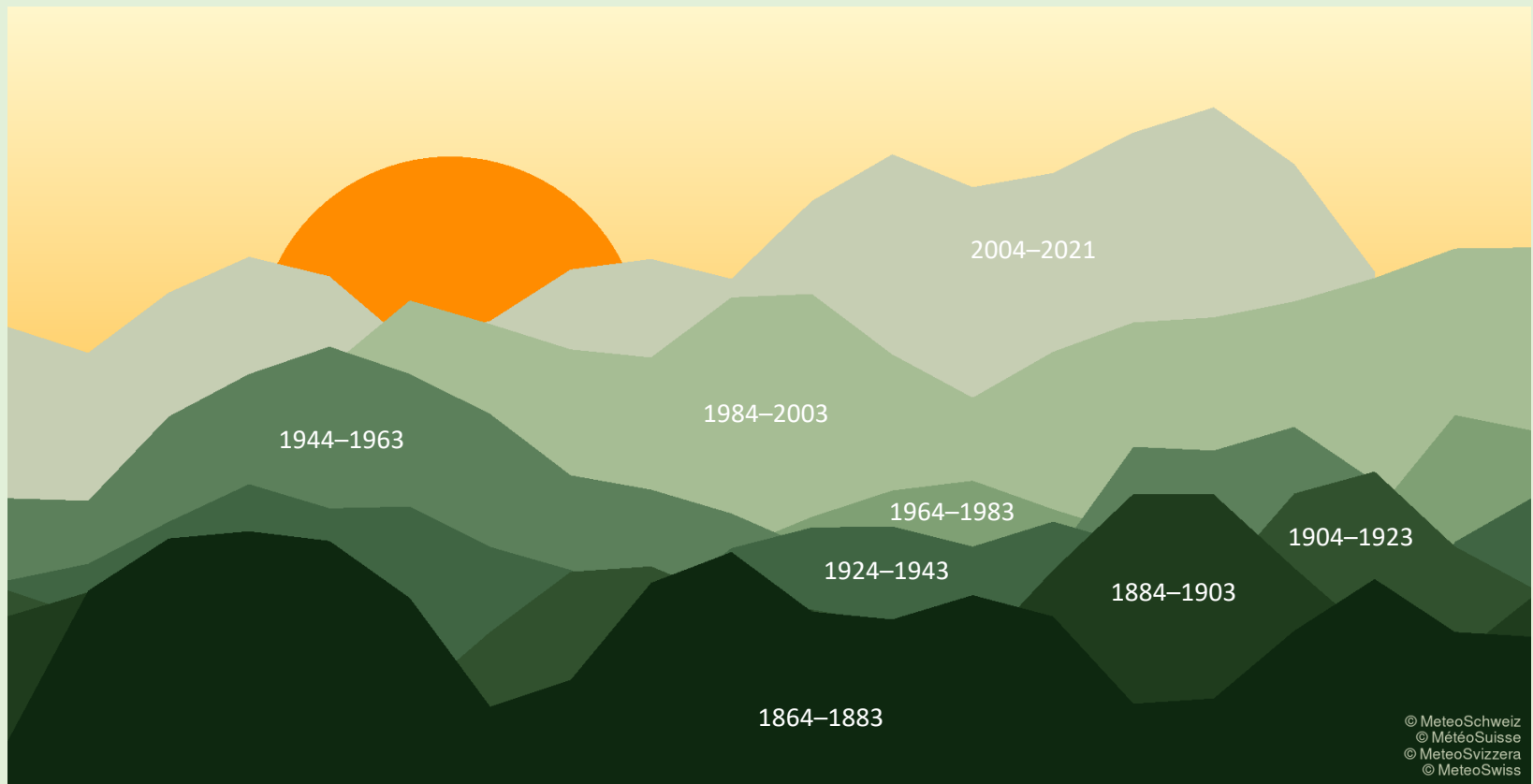
Quarterly temperature (JJA) – Switzerland – 1864–2022

departure from the mean 1961–1990



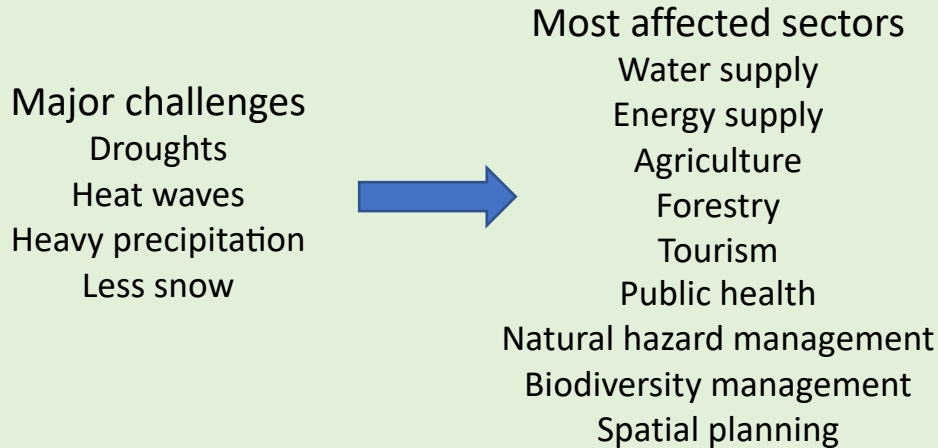
2021/22: Winter DJF warm, dry in the South, sunny
Spring MAM warm, extremely dry, sunny, early snow melt
Summer JJA extremely warm, dry and sunny, deglaciation, zero-degree line
Autumn SO Sept: normal; Oct: warmest ever in D and CH

Recent developments – climate information/services



A wealth of information (a lot of it free available)
Numerous initiatives to turn information to services
Gap between what is wanted and what can be delivered
Limited use of climate information in decision-making processes

Recent developments – climate change impacts



Tourism

- Past: strong focus on snow-based tourism
(in particular downhill skiing)
- Present: wider focus (seasons, tourism forms,
indirect environmental impacts), raising
awareness and sense of urgency(?)



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Recent developments – climate change adaptation

Adaptation is “daily business”

Diversification as a common strategy

Focus on current climate variability (short-term impacts)

Focus on organizational and technical adaptation

Some evidence that technical adaptation might not help

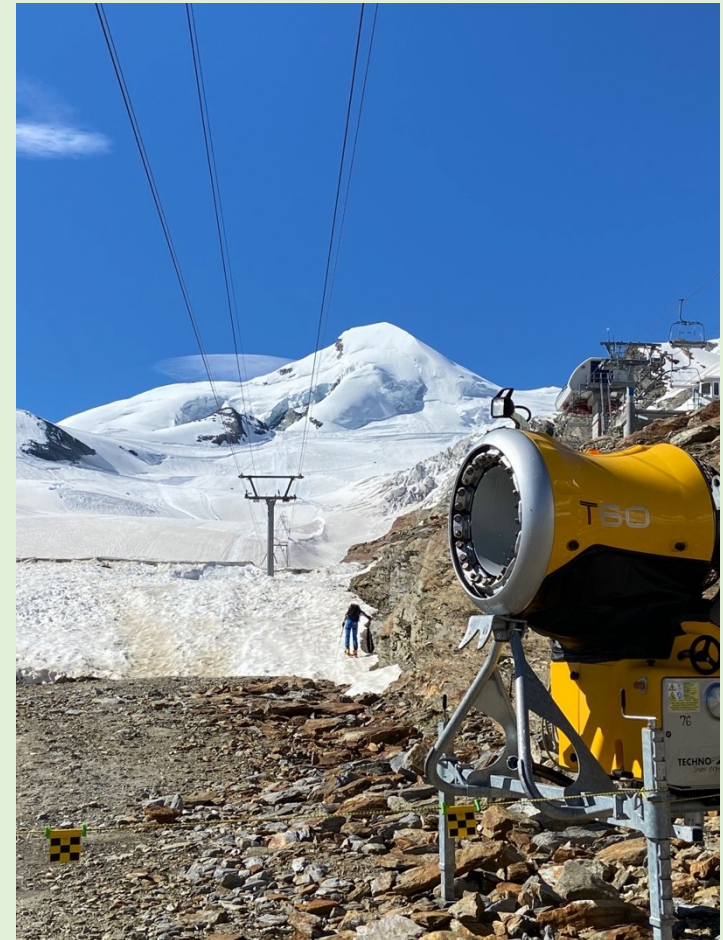
Emphasis on risks rather than opportunities

Mostly minor changes in the business models

If major changes then because of financial emergencies

Subsidies to support struggling tourism operators

With public money adaptation becomes a socio-political process



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??? What exactly is the role of climate change in transforming tourism ???

COVID-19



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Nature: some places got a break, other places were overrun as never before
Tourism operators/destinations: some were on the brink of collapse, others had the best seasons ever

War in Ukraine / Energy Crisis



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Concluding remarks

We aren't talking about a prosperous industry, it's rather a struggling industry

Quite a few players are operating in survival mode

Survival mode means dealing with the most pressing issues – day in, day out

Climate change (again) becomes a distanced threat with lower priority

Right now, we are a bit „overwhelmed“ (multiple risks, complexities)

Likely, there is a “finite pool of capacity” to deal with these challenges

Climate change impact research is still dominated by the natural sciences

More emphasis on the financial, social and political aspects is needed

Re-evaluate approaches, concepts and frameworks to better catch

actors' realities, scales and systems

Something to learn for Norway?

You decide

Thank you very much for your attention

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