

Preface

While natural disasters occurred with increased frequency at the end of the 1990s, especially in the Alpine regions including Austria, it became obvious that a joint research and development platform on natural hazards and risk management was in demand. The priority and necessity for such a forum was commonly perceived and finally met with the formation of the *alpS- Centre for Natural Hazard and Risk Management*. The *alpS*-platform was established in Innsbruck in the centre of the Alps, bringing together important stakeholders from Alpine regions under the umbrella of a one research centre. Thus, the vision of unified natural hazard research could actually be transformed into reality.

The seminal cooperation culture of *alpS* is focussed on project-specific, close and long-term ties with business and scientific partners. This strategy aligned perfectly with the Austrian research sponsorship programme Kplus which proved to be an excellent framework for a research and development centre such as *alpS*.

The overall thematic proximity of most *alpS*-projects to public responsibilities inevitably led to closer cooperation with state agencies as well as other public authorities. According to the integral risk management concept applied, the participation of all relevant players was called for and could be realised within all *alpS*-projects related to natural hazard and risk management.

In the light of rapid demographic and economic changes, which aroused intensive conflict of interest and a significant increase of risk potentials, research into adaptation strategies for highly populated mountain areas needed to envisage such an approach. In this respect, interdisciplinary research and development clearly signifies a fundamental contribution.

This book intends both to describe central approaches to sustainable handling of natural hazards followed by *alpS* and to deliver insights into concrete projects conducted at the centre between 2002 and 2008. Additionally, natural, climatic and socio-economic issues of current and future challenges in Alpine areas are presented as well. Finally, the book echoes the experiences made in the *alpS* Centre throughout its first years of existence.

The projects described were selected on the basis of transdisciplinarity and integral risk management requirements. They intend to provide an insight into the possibilities of modelling and effective monitoring of natural hazard processes. Additionally, the focus rests upon the application of cutting edge methods and techniques in this realm in order to meet the re-

quirements of meticulous data processing and collection. Common to all projects is their focus on preventive and active risk management, including the analysis, evaluation and sustainable governance of risks within a concept of integral risk management.

Besides natural scientific and technical aspects of natural hazard and risk management, their socio-economic perspectives are notably acknowledged and given high priority. Above all, this approach of *alpS* and its network of partners has successfully shown that an active and integral handling of natural hazards is both sustainable and effective.

Finally we would like to thank all project partners – especially authors and reviewers, the scientific and business partners as well as public authorities – for their cooperation and support in all respects. The success of *alpS* and as a result, this book could not have been achieved without the input and engagement of all these partners involved.

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