

Fall 9-25-2018

# Community ownership in winter recreation and tourism: Ski hills and club fields

Massimo Morellato

AUT University, [massimo.morellato@aut.ac.nz](mailto:massimo.morellato@aut.ac.nz)

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Morellato, Massimo, "Community ownership in winter recreation and tourism: Ski hills and club fields" (2018). *TTRA Canada 2018 Conference*. 17.

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# **COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP IN WINTER RECREATION AND TOURISM: SKI HILLS AND CLUB FIELDS**

Massimo Morellato  
Lecturer, School of Hospitality and Tourism,  
Auckland University of Technology  
49 Wellesley St East, Auckland 1010, New Zealand.  
E-mail: massimo.morellato@aut.ac.nz  
T: +64 9 921 999 ext. 8167

## **5-lines biography presenter:**

Massimo Morellato is a Lecturer at Auckland University of Technology. He is currently exploring patterns of leisure consumption in coastal and mountain destinations with an attention on local economic development under a more sustainable use of natural, cultural and recreational resources. His living between Canada and New Zealand has been crucial in enriching his research with cases from countries that share similar challenges in advancing community development goals through tourism.

## **Presentation format:**

15-20 minutes presentations in concurrent sessions (a panel could also be considered in case of a contribution on a similar topic)

**Keywords:** ski hills, community service co-operative, tourism and recreation policies, amenity retention, snow recreation value.

## **Contribution to the conference theme and address a research need:**

The study of ski areas in Northern BC and New Zealand enriches the conference platform with alternative management models for winter leisure. The theme of shifting from 'more' tourism to 'better' tourism will be discussed in relation to the ski hills and the role of associative and cooperative models in bracing local communities and attracting snow seekers hunting for authentic places and experiences.

## Short Description

The winter recreation is facing several challenges in navigating the evolving trends and issues related to climate change, demographic patterns, falling demand and ways in which experiences are constructed and consumed (Morellato, 2008; Steiger, 2011; Unbehaun, Pröbstl, Haider, 2008). This work presents findings from the ongoing research on ski tourism experiences and ski area management with cases outside the main stream of the snow industry. Building new demand for skiing does not necessarily mean pursuing and replicating the pro-growth approach widely employed in the history of mountain resorts (Nepal & Jamal, 2011). Several ski hills in Northern BC as well as club fields in New Zealand provide examples of old and new approaches where the local community is involved in the “factory” of recreational value following a more sustainable development (Milne, Bremner & Delpero, 2006). In some cases, the local identity and the social relationships are also wrought around the snow, and this seems to create what locals and visitors perceive as a more “authentic and friendly atmosphere”.

Little ski hills are the playgrounds for people who live and work a few hours away and they have a crucial role to play in the policies for amenity retention in remote areas and towns. Ski hills and club fields are also nurturing the next generations of skiers and snow boarders. Furthermore, ski hills are attracting savvy ski tourists who are willing to travel further a field to destinations that can guarantee snow and offer individual experiences in connection with locals (lived “like locals”).

The analysis of six ski areas in the Northern BC and seven in New Zealand spans across different management models: non-profit, for-profit, hybrid organizations, but also family owned ski hills. Findings show the significance of associative and co-operative management models in stimulating a high level of engagement that could also lead to an effective and liveable community ownership. The incorporation of leisure associations into “community service co-operative” entities allows individual and corporate memberships as potential sources of funding as well as the opportunity to compete for public funds. Other places in BC and internationally have been recently watching this management model with interest. However, the adoption of a certain management model is not per se a sufficient condition for future success. Owners and managers of ski hills need to also understand factors for recruiting talents, retaining volunteers, accessing resources amongst a variety of different stakeholders, and ultimately ensuring long term resilience (of a place) (Hudson, Ritchie & Timur, 2004; Reid, 2012). The final part of the presentation focuses on the crucial role of the research in the development of winter recreation and tourism.

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