Climate Change

Everyone should be aware of the vulnerability of their activities or businesses to both the direct and indirect impacts of climate change. Engaging with the research community is a way for stakeholders to gain a better understanding of the impacts and how to plan to adapt to those impacts.

Tourism

Tourism is one of the world’s most important and fastest growing industries with a gross output of over US$7 trillion. It employs 11% of the globe’s workforce and forms 11.5% of global GDP. Regionally, the tourism industry can be the dominant economic sector.

Tourism and Climate Change

Tourism is clearly climate-sensitive. The perception and memory of weather plays a fundamental role in how tourists make their decisions with regard to their choice of destination. The main driver in the movement of tourists is the search for sunshine in a comfortable environment. Climate changes that impact upon the comfort of tourists (e.g., increase in heat stress) will alter tourists’ perception of a destination. Climate change, therefore, will impact upon tourism, which in turn impacts (through growing greenhouse gas emissions and associated environmental changes) on the climate system. Tourism has a strong international dimension and is sensitive to any changes of climate that alter the competitive balance of holiday destinations. Implementation of climate change mitigation policies and societies response to climate change are both likely to have profound impacts on major tourist flows.

Key Issues for Tourism

There are a number of key issues that the tourism industry and stakeholders need to be aware of and to start addressing, in terms of how climate change interacts with operations and the choice of tourists.

New opportunities

Whilst it may appear that climate change may pose many threats to the tourism industry, it will also create new opportunities. Areas currently not favoured as tourist destinations may gain a competitive advantage over traditional destinations as climate changes and comfort zones move.

Effects of mitigation policies

Tourism, through emissions of greenhouse gases, is a significant contributor to climate change. While some impacts of climate change may only appear in the long-term, it is likely that the effects of climate change mitigation policies will be felt sooner. Stakeholders need to be aware of the quantifiable impacts of these policies upon their area of interest.

Tourism and IPCC

To date the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has not addressed the issues that surround the interactions between climate change, the environment and tourism. These issues are likely to be key factors in the successful implementation of climate change mitigation policies, climate change adaptation strategies and the assessment of the vulnerability of many sectors and countries to climate change.

We urge governments, intergovernmental organisations, NGOs and stakeholder organisations to press the IPCC to give tourism a higher profile in the Fourth Assessment Report and to produce a Special Report on Tourism and Climate Change.

UK Climate Impacts Programme (UKCIP)

UKCIP aims to co-ordinate and integrate assessments of the impacts of climate change at regional, sectoral and national levels that is led by stakeholders. This means that our stakeholders or partners commission the research and determine the research agenda, ensuring that it meets their needs. UKCIP provides support and guidance throughout the process for both stakeholders and the researchers. We are interested in working with stakeholders in the UK to explore the impacts of climate change on tourism, and would be happy to see similar partnerships established elsewhere.
The study of the interactions between climate change, the environment and tourism is an emerging research area. In order therefore, to enhance and develop this area, the ESF Milan Workshop recommended that an international network be established. This network has now been founded; provisionally titled éCLAT (a virtual Network for the Study of the interactions between Climate and Tourism).

The éCLAT community represents a wide range of scientific disciplines, is inter-disciplinary and includes a number of stakeholder organisations. éCLAT has identified a range of actions that it recommends should be addressed: the wider research community.

**Take on board the Science Plan Produced by the éCLAT Community**

Researchers are encouraged to take on board and to try and attempt to tackle these issues under the framework of the éCLAT community.

**Raise the profile of tourism in the IPCC Fourth Assessment Report**

There is a pressing need for the IPCC to raise the profile of Tourism within the Fourth Assessment Report (AR4). The interactions between climate change, the environment and tourism provides a unique cross-cutting research area that addresses the issues that are likely to have a major impact upon one of the world’s most important industries.

**Address the impacts on small island states and developing countries**

Tourism is a vital component of the economies of many small island. Emission reduction policies implemented by developed countries may raise the price of energy and transport, and thus have a negative impact on the number of tourists visiting developing countries.

**Identify the current baseline conditions**

The identification of the current baseline conditions is a pre-requisite for the identification of any future changes and impacts. There is also a need to identify the major interrelationships between climate change and tourism.

**Carry out impacts and adaptation assessment studies**

There is a need to undertake studies to assess, identify and quantify the possible impacts of climate change on tourism, tourist destinations and tourist’s perceptions.

**Develop a database of indicators**

There is a need to develop a database of indicators and Visual Observed Impacts to help provide advice and information to the stakeholder community (including individual tourists).

**Early warning methodologies**

Develop and apply methodologies that would enhance early warning for the impacts of climate change on tourism at all scales.

**Develop and identify links with other organisations**

Develop and identify links with: national and regional governments; international programmes (e.g., WTO, UN EP, IPCC etc.,) and stakeholder organisations.

**Be consistent with the IPCC**

Future research that is undertaken in the context of climate change and tourism should be consistent with the IPCC. That is: adopt the recommendations and make use of any guidance material and data provided by the IPCC.

The éCLAT Research Community

CONTACT DETAILS

The éCLAT community is open and would welcome the participation of other researchers and scientists. The éCLAT network and community will from the outset help disseminate information, exchange ideas and facilitate the collection and exchange of data.

The éCLAT Community website contains information about ongoing activities, workshops, papers and projects. The detailed Science Plan for Climate Change and Tourism Research that was prepared at the ESF Workshop in Milan, June 2003 is also available from the website.

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Other organisations represented at the ESF workshop delegates included:
Polish Academy of Sciences, Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei (FEEM), Zurich University of Applied Sciences Winterthur, Observatorio Astronomico de Lisboa, Environnement Conseil (TEC) University of Zurich, Universidad Politecnica de Madrid, Escuela de Arquitectura, Universidad Europea de Madrid, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, University of Applied Sciences Nordostniedersachsen, Economics Institute, University of O’Dame, Travel Research International, Meteorological Institute, University of Freiburg, University of Siena, Geography Dept., University of Wales Swansea, Lincoln University, New Zealand School of Geography & Environment, University of O’Centre for Marine and Climate Research, Hamburg University.