'A holiday is a holiday': practicing sustainability, home and away

Dr. Stewart Barr*
Prof. Gareth Shaw†
Dr. Tim Coles†
Dr. Jan Prillwitz*

* School of Geography, University of Exeter
† The Business School, University of Exeter

Contact details of corresponding author:

Dr. Stewart Barr
School of Geography, Amory Building, Rennes Drive, University of Exeter, Exeter, EX4 4RJ
Telephone: +44 (0) 1392 263832
Facsimile: +44 (0) 1392 263342
E-mail: S.W.Barr@exeter.ac.uk

Abstract

'Behaviour change' is one of the major concerns for academics and practitioners concerned with tackling climate change. Research amongst tourism geographers has conventionally focussed on the various choices that individuals can make, both before and during their holidays, to reduce environmental footprints, specifically through the use of sustainability criteria. However, whilst there is a developing understanding of the motivations for sustainable tourism practices, there is less appreciation of the relationship tourist practices have to everyday environmental activities in and around the home. This latter issue has been researched extensively by social psychologists and environmental sociologists. Accordingly, the paper will draw upon these two existing bodies of research to argue that a holistic understanding of 'sustainable lifestyles' is needed if effective behavioural change strategies for climate change are to be developed, revealing the complexities of contemporary environmental practices. Using data from a recent British Academy research project, the paper will explore the changing nature of sustainable lifestyles and will demonstrate the relationships between home- and tourism-based environmental practices. The paper will argue that whilst individuals are relatively comfortable with participating in a range of environmental behaviours in and around the home, the transference of these practices to tourism contexts can be problematic. This is particularly the case for high-consumption activities such as low-cost air travel. The paper concludes by arguing that both academics and policy makers need to re-frame their notions of 'sustainable lifestyles', transcending a series of practices and contexts.

Keywords:

1. Introduction and research context

This paper explores the growing role of individual citizens in debates and potential solutions for global environmental challenges, of which climate change is now the most pressing (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2007). The rise in concern for environmental issues over the past 15 to 20 years has witnessed a major shift in how academics and practitioners view the potential solutions to such problems. Conventionally, environmental issues were perceived as macro-scale problems, which required the application of large-scale solutions, implemented by governments or large organizations (Barr, 2008). Indeed, the UK Government's first *Sustainable Development Strategy* (HM Government, 1994) barely makes mention of the role that could be played by other stakeholders, such as individual citizens. However, in recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on the role of individual consumers and their potential to mitigate against global, as well as local, environmental problems. This is clearly reflected in major policy shifts, notably the emphasis placed on peoples' choices by the UK Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) in its most recent sustainable development strategy (DEFRA, 2005) and the newly published *Framework for Environmental Behaviours* (DEFRA, 2008). Accordingly, the role of individual citizens has been raised to an unprecedented position in the policy agenda.

Although there has been significant activity surrounding the establishment of policy frameworks for encouraging and embedding environmental practices into everyday life, these behaviours have tended to be those which are based in and around the home. Accordingly, the types of activities which the UK government has placed greatest emphasis on encouraging have been recycling, energy saving, water

conservation and 'green' consumption, such as reducing packaging and buying 'green' products (DEFRA, 2008). Indeed, in framing environmental action in and around the home, there has also been great emphasis placed on personal travel decisions and personalised travel planning, with behaviour-change messages targeted at those who use private motor transport (for example, the Department for Transport's (DfT) recent investment in *Smarter Choices* as a suite of techniques for encouraging travel planning for sustainability mobility) (DfT, 2008).

Until comparatively recently these policies for promoting sustainable practices in and around the home were heavily compartmentalised, with national or local bodies taking specific responsibility for promoting particular behaviours (such as sustainable travel) with little recourse to the notion of changing lifestyles holistically. Nonetheless, research by social psychologists such as Thogersen (1999), De Young (2000), Thogersen and Olander (2003) and other researchers (e.g. Barr and Gilg, 2006) has clearly demonstrated that sustainable forms of behaviour are closely linked to everyday practices (including 'habits', such as switching off lights and taps, or 'purchasing' activities related to green forms of consumption), providing evidence that in the home environment, sustainable behaviours are unlikely to be compartmentalised and that such behaviours can become embedded into daily lifestyle practices, at least for certain groups in society. Indeed, from the perspective of environmental sociology and geography, the research of Hobson (2002), Shove (2003) and Gregson et al. (2007) also suggests that environmental practice in the home needs to be framed in terms of the everyday context of household routines and 'normality' where environmental behaviour is demonstration of wider household and individual consumption practices.

Despite these findings, the theoretical and empirical research on environmental behaviours has generally remained at this home-based scale and thus relates to everyday practices. Yet the notion of 'sustainable lifestyles' implies that individuals would demonstrate a series of commitments across lifestyle practices, not merely as part of their daily routine, but also in tourism contexts. This notion that behavioural commitments in one lifestyle domain could 'spill-over' to another area (i.e. from daily to tourism-related practices) has become an unwritten assumption of many policy makers (Thogersen, 1999) and yet this specific relationship between the home and tourism environments has received very little attention since much earlier work on tourist behaviour (Krippendorf, 1987).

The lack of research on the links between home-based and tourism-related environmental practices does not imply that research on sustainable tourism practices and the wider issue of tourism and climate change is lacking (Hall and Higham, 2005; Becken and Hay, 2007). Indeed, there has been considerable work amongst tourism researchers in the field of sustainable tourism (Becken and Hay, 2007; Blamey and Braithwaite, 1997; Mowforth and Munt, 2003; Shaw and Williams, 2004) and the development of strategies for behaviour change amongst tourists whilst on holiday and the relationships between tourism and transport use (e.g. Anable, 2005; Bohler *et al*., 2006; Dallen, 2007). Similar to the work focused on the home context, this research has identified both motivations and barriers for participating in sustainable activities whilst on holiday. Nonetheless, very few researchers have developed the notion of a holistic 'lifestyles' approach to sustainable behaviours, in which the synergies between different contexts (home, leisure, tourism and work) are explored.

Although tourism researchers have begun to look beyond the tourism context at environmental behaviours more broadly (Miller 2003; Dickinson and Dickinson, 2006; Hunter and Shaw, 2007), there are still relatively few studies that have specifically explored the theoretical and empirical links between home-based and tourism-based environmental behaviours. This link is critical to establish because it is only when individuals are able to transfer their behaviours between contexts, as part of an embedded set of lifestyle practices, that it will be possible to argue that 'sustainable lifestyles' can and do exist. From a social psychological perspective, this raises the challenge of establishing whether there is indeed a 'generalisable' conservation ethics (De Young, 2000) and the characteristics of any such 'spill-over' effects, related to underlying values and beliefs (De Groot and Steg, 2008) and wider socio-structural characteristics.

2. Research programme

This paper therefore aims to provide a brief exploration of the relationships between commitments towards the environment by individuals in and around the home and their behaviours when on holiday. The paper will develop research that the authors have been pursuing since 2001 through a series of externally funded research projects (Figure 1). The first project, from 2001-2003 was dedicated to understanding the motivations and barriers for participating in home-based environmental actions, such as recycling, energy saving, water conservation and green consumption. The findings from this work indicated that environmental practices were clearly related to everyday habits and that there were a series of lifestyle groups, with varying commitments to the environment.

[Figure 1 here]

This research was further developed during a DEFRA-funded project in 2005-06 (Barr *et al*., 2006) when a series of focus groups were held with representatives from each of the four lifestyle groups identified during the earlier research, notably 'committed', 'mainstream', 'occasional' and 'non' environmentalists. In this research, the authors sought to explore both behaviours in the home and also on holiday. Initial findings suggested that there was a major gap between what individuals were willing to do at home and what was acceptable and desirable to undertake on vacation. Indeed, as one specific example, individuals stated that they were very unwilling to give up their use of low cost flights (a high-profile contributor to climate change) and often contested the science behind climate change. Overall, individuals often argued that holidays were 'different' to everyday life in terms of their environmental commitments, with one participant arguing that:

> "I suppose people think a holiday is a holiday and that they go there to relax and do their own thing. And you know, it sounds a bit nasty but you know, when you're holiday, you're really thinking about yourself aren't you because it's your time away". (see Barr *et al*. (2006) for further examples)

On the basis of these initial findings, the research team obtained a British Academy grant to undertake further research on individuals' attitudes towards sustainable holidays, low cost air travel and climate change and it is this research that forms the basis of this paper. This research, undertaken during 2007-08, aimed to explore the notion that sustainable behaviours on holiday were regarded differently to those in the

domestic context. It also sought to explore the ways in which individuals viewed the debate surrounding climate change and flying, a specific issue which has received both regular media attention and also a raised profile in academic work in tourism recently (Becken, 2007; Chapman, 2007; Gössling and Peeters, 2007; Gössling *et al.*, 2006; Graham and Shaw, 2008). The research will also feed into a current study on promoting sustainable travel, which is exploring attitudes towards travel in a range of contexts.

3. Methodology

The research presented in this paper was undertaken during the spring of 2008 and involved a three-stage process. First, an on-street survey of 202 individuals was undertaken in Exeter High Street, based on a convenience sampling method. This survey was primarily designed to recruit participants to upcoming focus group discussions and so a limited sample size was selected based on a non-probabilistic method of selection. The survey posed questions related to environmental behaviours in and around the home and whilst on holiday, the type and number of holidays individuals took, their flying habits, use of low-cost carriers and attitudes towards acting sustainably on holiday and at home. Individuals were also asked a series of questions related to climate change and their willingness to pay higher environmental taxes to mitigate against global warming, which authors such as Lorenzoni et al. (2007) and Ryley and Davison (2008) have shown to be controversial issues in public discourse. The data from this survey were then subjected to a hierarchical cluster analysis based on reported environmental behaviours in the home, in which three dominant behavioural categories of respondents emerged. Cluster analysis is a multivariate statistical technique that pairs individual cases with the same or similar

scores on survey items and sequentially joins these pairs together. Identifying an appropriate number of clusters for analysis is a subjective process (Wheeler et al., 2004), although in most cases the pairing process easily reveals major groups.

The selection of home based environmental behaviours, as the criterion for cluster analysis, was chosen because the aim of the research was to explore the initial synergies between home-based and tourism-based practices and it would also make the research comparable to previous work. Further research will experiment with alternative forms of clustering on the basis of both holiday-related behaviours and also attitudes.

Second, on the basis of this cluster analysis, three focus groups were convened, one for representatives of each cluster who had said they were willing to undertake a focus group discussion in the survey. The focus groups were held at the University of Exeter and were recorded and transcribed. Groups lasted for between 1.5 and 2 hours and were moderated by a member of research staff. The focus group discussion guide covered material on environmental behaviour in general, sustainable holidays, low cost flying and key policies for reducing flights. Given the small number of focus groups undertaken, the data were manually coded, analysed and grouped.

4. Results

The results in this paper provide a brief overview of the quantitative analysis whilst exploring the focus group data in more depth for two of the clusters identified. The analysis of only two, rather than all three clusters is intended to illustrate the key

differences between environmental practices at home and whilst on holiday for two groups who had generally high levels of commitment towards the environment at home; the first who scored highly on all the aspects of environmental behaviour that were measured, the second who frequently made environmentally conscious purchases, composted kitchen and garden waste and bought organic food. Accordingly, although different, these groups represented individuals who had made a number of environmental commitments in their lifestyles and provided a means of comparing these commitments to behaviour in other contexts. Further papers will explore the interview data in greater detail.

[Table 1 here]

4.1 Quantitative findings: overview

The cluster analysis revealed that when the reported home-based environmental actions of the 202 individuals in the sample were analysed, three segments emerged. Table 1 provides a brief summary of the characteristics of these clusters. In broad terms, the three groups can be described accordingly:

- Cluster 1: Older, retired or in full time employment and committed to the environmental cause at home and away; they tended to take longer breaks to international destinations than other groups. They were in favour of taxation measures and were aware of (and sometimes did) off-set their emissions when they flew on holiday.

- Cluster 2: Young, working, 'home-based' environmentally-conscious consumers, generally taking shorter breaks to Europe. They rarely transferred

environmental habits to holidays or to their air travel attitudes. They had partial awareness of off-setting schemes when taking flights.

- Cluster 3: Middle-aged working and display certain environmental behaviours such as their use of resources at home and on holiday. They travelled to a mix of destinations for longer periods. They were against taxes on air travel and did not off-set their flights when going on holiday.

It is clear that on the basis of the quantitative data, the three groups represent different lifestyle segments. The first group contained individuals who were clearly devoted to an environmentally-based lifestyle, at home and away; they claimed to be committed to environmental actions in all contexts. However, this group also had the highest number of international holiday destinations, took longer holidays and despite their green credentials, only 50% were in favour of taxation to reduce air travel. Nonetheless, this group was by far the most knowledgeable and committed in terms of carbon of-setting and was clearly the most environmentally conscious cluster.

The second cluster illustrates a group of individuals who were environmentally aware and extended this awareness to their purchasing behaviours in the home context. However, they showed less commitment to the environment when on holiday. Indeed, this group tended to take shorter breaks and travelled within Europe. Indeed, whilst they had heard of carbon off-setting, they were unlikely to use this.

The third cluster tended only to undertake behaviours that were habitual in nature and that would have demonstrable financial benefits, such as saving energy and water. These were undertaken both within and beyond the home environment. They were

less committed to a wider set of environmental practices, like purchasing organic food or making other environmentally-friendly purchases. They also took long holidays on average, but within Europe and the UK. They were also the group who were least in favour of taxing air travel and held low levels of knowledge about off-setting and were entirely uncommitted to this idea.

These profiles present some useful data regarding three behaviourally defined groupings and demonstrate that there are some clear distinctions between the types of individuals likely to transfer their home-based behaviours to leisure and tourism contexts. In some instances, the sustainability implications of these findings are ambiguous; for example length of holiday does not necessarily imply 'less sustainable' (Gössling et al. 2005; Peeters and Schouten 2006) and the issue of sustainable forms of 'slow travel' (Robbins & Dickinson, 2007) implicitly involves longer holidays. However, perhaps the most interesting finding is that even for the most committed individuals, who would undertake a wide range of environmental activities, there was still only a basic commitment to taxation on flights and off-setting. Indeed, this group tended to be those who flew the furthest. As the focus group data below will illustrate, this group was also the most likely to simply state that they would 'pay the tax' and keep flying anyway. This has implications for individuals in other groups, such has the 'spend-thrifts', who may be opposed to such taxes because it would reduce their mobility.

4.2 Qualitative findings: overview

Once these profiles had been determined, focus groups were organised with individuals representative of each cluster in Exeter during the spring of 2008. For

each group, a discussion guide explored home-based environmental activities, attitudes towards sustainable holidays and low cost air travel. This brief overview of the results will focus on the first two clusters identified previously and will further elaborate on some of the results provided in the preceding section. These two groups have been selected because they both had generally high levels of commitment towards the environment in and around the home, yet contrasting views on sustainable holidays and the use of low cost airlines. All names have been changed from the original focus group participants.

4.2.1 Cluster 1

The group comprised four males (David, Norman, Simon and James) and two females (Mandy and Alice) and was a mix of middle-aged and retired individuals who either lived in Exeter or within 15 miles of the city. The group was well-informed regarding climate change and held holistic views concerning environmental issues. Fundamentally, this group was global in outlook and expressed concerns about environmental problems, including climate change, and individuals in this group displayed their willingness to react to these concerns by participating in environmental actions in and around the home:

> "[We've got to] be aware of the environment and nature and everything like that, obviously the issue now with Global warming" (James)

> "I have an absolute thing about newspapers and I think most of us never, you know, read the whole paper at the weekend; it drives me potty…you know, this is something I'm sure that could be cut down" (David)

Indeed, as illustrated in the quantitative results, the members of this group claimed to be environmentally conscious both in the home and whilst away on holiday:

"Very much the same [on holiday] really, we buy as much as we can when we're there, you know food and consumables, we don't take it with us we buy it there because where we stay there's a corner shop and we support that" (David)

This group was also characterised by the references made to nature and the environment as possible motivations for taking holidays, supporting the notion that these individuals were very environmentally conscious. Indeed, individuals made reference to their membership of organisations such as WWF, RSPB and the National Trust:

"Yes when I'm away I would probably behave very similarly, again I enjoy the countryside when we go on holiday; it is for the birdlife or the animal life and so we are aware of the environment…So that would be my point of going on holiday, I don't go on holiday to…[sit on a beach], I have a husband who won't sit on a beach anyway, so it is to go and see the environment and encourage the environment and as you know we've been out to Singapore and up to Sumatra and have contact with the World Wildlife Fund there and saw birds way beyond my imagination, which was absolutely wonderful and that would be my point of travelling" (Mandy)

The reference in the last quotation to exotic destinations is also a characteristic of this group, illustrated in the larger number of international destinations visited by this cluster in the quantitative data. However, there are clear indications in the focus group transcript that individuals in this group were involved in both this kind of 'exotic' travel alongside a willingness to use 'slow' travel (Robbins and Dickinson, 2007). Both of these may be reflective of the motivations for holidays and the importance of nature and the environment to their holiday taking. In this sense, both 'fast' travel (to exotic and 'wild' destinations) and 'slow' travel can be seen as complementary by this group:

> "We've used low cost twice, once to Glasgow because that was, we had to get there in a hurry and back again for family problems but my other son is living and working in Holland and so we've flown there, the first time we went, we drove and ferry and there and the next time we did fly but we're going again this year and we've decided that we're going to go by train and enjoy the journey…no matter what the cost" (Simon)

Accordingly, these individuals were driven by motivations to experience nature and generally viewed conservation very highly. This is reflected in their everyday environmental behaviour. However, although this group was the most in favour of taxing low cost air travel and were knowledgeable about off-setting schemes, most participants had not actually used these. For this particular group, these responses can be interpreted as a deep feeling of scepticism about the effectiveness of green taxes:

"I think that it comes down to trust and I don't know how many of us here trust that the taxes we're told are green taxes; I yes, but what I'm saying is you can if the good faith is there and if you're honest…look we've decided that because this is so important, the world leaders who go to the G7 or their meeting…we're going to put an extra green tax because we are so worried about the environment then its not impossible to ring-fence that and to account for it" (Alice)

"I think the government is just using the green issues to generate more cash" (David)

Indeed, whilst this group was highly conscious of climate change, the discussion of low cost flights and the environment indicated that very few were willing to say that flying was overtly negative in itself and participants often argued that in principle flying was good, but that the negative consequences had to be dealt with in innovative ways. This might be interpreted as simply as a 'denial' of air travel's impact on climate change, a theme that has emerged in recent theoretical and empirical work on climate change (Gössling et al., 2007). However, it appeared that this 'denial' represented a deep conflict between lifestyle aspirations and environmental beliefs:

"What the airlines do…, we've all benefited from the knowledge of having travelled around the world…my grandfather couldn't do that and that's awesome, that's completely wonderful, let's not loose sight of that……. And if technology can go on and it's improved, I think we'd all support that" (James)

Accordingly, even this apparently conscious group of committed environmentalists were unwilling to accept that reducing flights was a good thing; indeed, it would inevitably impinge on their lifestyle choices regarding their travel pursuits. Overall, therefore, these were individuals who displayed high levels of environmental concern and who at least partly defined their lifestyles by their attachment to nature and its protection. However, this did cause internal conflict with the damaging impact of flying, a conflict probably related to a perception of self-identity and self-presentation as being a pro-environmental individual (Sadalla nd Krull, 1995; Christensen et al., 2004). The solution therefore suggested by the group on the whole, was not to stop flying, but to develop more trusted off-setting schemes and better technology to reduce carbon emissions:

> *"…*we knew we were going to have this 40 years ago, you know it's panic stations and the same I think with the problem with oil and heating and everything like that, we're going to have a crisis in the not too distant future; well we should know about it, we've known about this, why haven't we invested the money in research?" (David)

To summarise, the typical individuals within this cluster were ones that cared passionately about the environment and participated in actions that they believed to be effective. However, although they were willing to transfer these activities into tourism contexts, they did not necessarily reflect them in their attitudes to flying. Indeed, whilst many were in favour, in principle, of taxes and off-setting, these were viewed with scepticism. Indeed, there was no clear evidence from this group that they would

reduce flying if taxes were raised; rather, they would pay them, arguing that technological advances were the most effective means of reducing carbon emissions from aeroplanes.

4.2.2 Cluster 2

The second group on which this analysis focuses (Cluster 2 in Table 1) contained individuals which the quantitative data indicated were likely to be environmentally conscious in the home, but far less so when on holiday. This focus group comprised six individuals, five of whom were male (Mark, Tim, Andy, Edward and Bob) and one female (Sandra). They were all employed and had a young to middle-aged profile. Although most came from the Exeter area, one individual had travelled from Torquay (25 miles away). This group was fundamentally different from Cluster, with different motivations and characteristics (Table 1). However, in the focus groups they were still concerned about environmental issues, but at a different scale:

> "I recycle everything that I can, my wife and I; each fortnight we have one rubbish bag…We use energy saving light bulbs, we buy triple A rated washing machines…we tend not to… waste food, we don't; I grow my own vegetables and I don't buy clothes as much as I used to, I've only realised this recently, I've got a very small engine car" (Tim)

Throughout the discussion in this group, the emphasis was placed on local environmental contexts, focusing on issues such as waste that were indicative of local-regional sustainability problems; by contrast global warming and climate change was not mentioned at all in the group until prompted by the moderator. Rather, individuals

focused on aspects such as recycling or the purchases they made. As noted in the quantitative results, this group were also less likely to transfer their behaviour into the holiday environment, although this may not be because they are not minded to be environmentally conscious whilst away:

"…sometimes the recycling facilities aren't available in the hotels, but you know they don't have recycling bins in hotel rooms, occasionally you get them in self-catering" (Bob)

Nonetheless, there was a sense that this group of individuals were more enthusiastic about their behaviours at home, rather than when on holiday. This may partly be due to the demographic characteristics of this cluster, which tended to be composed of younger, full-time working individuals, who took short break holidays. Indeed, there was no mention of 'nature' or 'environment' as being key tourism motivators for these individuals. Rather, this was a group of individuals who were willing to 'do their bit' in and around the home. An allegiance to global environmental issues was felt to be more problematic because of the significant barriers to major change at this scale, a theme of response efficacy highlighted by numerous social-psychological studies (e.g. Lorenzoni et al., 2007). This was notably the case when issues of global citizenship and responsibility were raised:

"I mean the worst culprit or two culprits that I can think of are the Americans and the Chinese. The Americans they have this thing about the environment; Americans, actually, they weren't interested, you know the Chinese they've got their own agenda, you know they will listen to all those other Americans

> so you know so realistically speaking I think the two worse culprits are them"
>
> (Andy)

This externalisation of environmental issues is important in understanding the attitudes this group held towards flying and climate change. Unlike those in Cluster 1, this group were more willing to question the impact of flying on the environment and contest the science underlying claims about climate change and flying:

> "I mean aeroplanes and things; there are lots of other things as well, how many omissions do the trains give off? What others? Lorries; you know these hunking great big things, 38 tonne lorries coming down the motorway…with god knows what and what about all them?" (Mark)

> "…it's kind of a headline issue that people focus on; the more important things are like people's individual cars" (Andy)

Indeed, these sentiments were coupled with arguments about the value of using flying as an accessible and financially astute way to travel:

> "It's a weakness of the trains; its very, very strange because my neighbour, going back 3 weeks ago went to a funeral and she had to go to Cambridge so I think it was 80 something pounds to go to Cambridge yet on July the 3rd we're going to Runcorn to a wedding, £16 each" (Sandra)

These findings are consistent with recent studies on climate change attitudes (Lorenzoni et al., 2007) and illustrate the challenges of communicating the impact of transport on the global environment (Chapman, 2007), as individuals were questioning the basis for singling out air travel as a major issue in climate change. Inevitably therefore, these attitudes were reflected in the views held by individuals in this group concerning taxation of air travel and mitigation measures. A minority of individuals had heard of carbon off-setting and no-one in the focus group had used this facility. In a similar vein to the opinions expressed by individuals in Cluster 1, such measures were viewed with scepticism, alongside a sense of inevitability:

> "A gesture really, so it depends on how it's policed I suppose but I've never been motivated to have to do it ever so far because it doesn't seem that real to me I guess" (Andy)

> "…and I think if they tax planes, then I'll pay it" (Edward)

However, unlike those individuals in Cluster 1, the notion that "it doesn't seem that real" reflects this group's questioning of global climate change and the science behind it, a potential (though not verifiable) illustration of Stoll-Kleemann et al.'s (2001) 'psychology of denial' in climate change studies where individuals develop strategies for avoiding behaviour change when the personal cost of such changes are perceived to be over-bearing. Accordingly, there was little reference in this group to any measures that could or should reduce the impact of flying on the environment. Indeed, as noted previously, individuals viewed any extra taxes as inevitable and this would not necessarily reduce their flying overall.

In summary, this group reflected a very committed group of individuals to practices in and around the home; they recycled, they bought organic, they made environmentally-conscious purchases. However, these home-based practices served essentially local environmental concerns, which were not transferred into tourism contexts and certainly did not have a major impact on their attitudes towards flying. Unlike those in Cluster 1, these individuals were not motivated by strong attachments to nature or a sense of global environmental concern. In other words, they were able to create a sustainable lifestyle in and around the home, as a way to 'trade off' their less sustainable practices when on holiday:

> "Yes, I have thought about it [off-setting] and like Margaret said about planting trees, I do [things], like I recycle 100% of what I possibly can so like now, there's not one piece of paper goes in my bin, so that kind of makes me feel less guilty about using my car as much as I do [and] flying as much as I do, but I don't think I would [off-set] if I'm honest" (Mark)

5. Discussion and conclusions

The results from this research project have illustrated some of the challenges policy makers face in an attempt to change attitudes towards activities such as flying. In the second part of this paper, we explored the discussions of two groups who were both environmentally active. However, neither of these groups argued that flying should be reduced in any significant way. For those who were the most conscious (Cluster 1), acting in a sustainable way was important when on holiday. Indeed, these holidays were often reflective of their close attachment to nature. However, they viewed flying

as an important part of many holidays and argued that innovative ways needed to be found to make flying environmentally acceptable, such as better and more trusted off-setting schemes, meaningful taxes and the effective use of technology. Nonetheless, this group also stated that whilst they would use off-setting schemes and would support fair and 'ring fenced' taxes, they would also be willing to pay these, rather than reducing their flights. Overall, this group appeared to represent individuals who were able to manage a potential conflict in their self-identity when environmental issues were concerned (Christiansen et al., 2004); they were highly committed to environmental behaviours and their holidays reflected their attachment to nature, yet the holidays, which enabled them to present social and cultural capital, were also coming to represent an anti-environmental discourse in the form of flying and climate change that was in potential conflict with this self-presentation (Sadalla and Krull,1995).

Individuals in Cluster 2 also displayed a series of domestically driven environmentally conscious behaviours. However, these were less frequently transferred into tourism contexts and this may be because these individuals externalized many global environmental issues. Indeed, the science of such issues was often contested and viewed with scepticism, as were policy interventions such as taxes and off-setting (Lorenzoni et al., 2007). In line with Cluster 1, individuals in Cluster 2 claimed that they would pay whatever taxes were levied, but more out of a sense of disaffected inevitability, rather than a conscious commitment to reducing environmental damage.

These findings indicate that even those who appear to be very committed to environmental action find it difficult to transfer these behaviours into more

problematic contexts. In particular, the issue of flying is perceived to be one where there is both scientific contestation and an underlying political agenda to raise taxes in ways which are less than transparent. However, such reasoning may mask a wider, more embedded issue, which is the ability of individuals to view their choices about the environment in a wider, holistic context.

The results from this research demonstrate that those who are most conscious about the environment accept that flying is contributing to climate change and are willing to accept taxes to mitigate against this; but they are not actually willing to reduce their flying habits significantly. In contrast, those individuals in Custer 2 fundamentally contested the science and basis for taxation and this is their basis for not reducing their flights, despite their commitment to home-based environmental issues. In both cases, neither group wished to reduce flying and this illustrates that even when individuals are committed to environmental issues, even when on holiday, one of the most damaging parts of that holiday is viewed as less of a problem.

Intellectually, there are a number of academic implications of the research. First, the data presented here provide further evidence that motivations for commitments to environmental behaviour need to be seen across contexts for different lifestyle groups. For some groups, behaviour will not transfer into another context; for others there will be little difference across contexts. This further develops the work of social psychologists such as De Young (2000), Thogersen (1999) and Thogersen and Olander (2003) who have argued that the notion of 'spill-over' or catalyst behaviours (DEFRA, 2008) is important to document and track. The evidence in this paper suggests that spill-over is a complex, lifestyle-specific process and that studying

leisure and tourism contexts is particularly important for tracking behavioural change. Second, the research provides further evidence that tourism practices based on low-cost air travel have become embedded into lifestyle aspirations and this will be a hard habit to break (Becken, 2007). Whilst individuals from the most environmentally conscious group did recognize the 'problem' of air travel in contributing to climate change, their aspirations to travel to exotic locations necessitated this activity. Indeed, there is evidence that for many individuals, the case of a link between air travel and climate change remains contested (Gössling and Peeters, 2007; Gössling *et al*., 2006). Third, the research suggested that for some individuals, being environmentally conscious at home could be used to justify, or 'trade-off', their lack of commitments whilst on holiday. This corroborates Becken's (2007) suggestion that for some individuals, tourism is not considered as a context for environmentally responsible behaviour. Such an assertion partly relates back to Stoll-Kleemann et al.'s (2001) notion of the psychology of denial, where individuals are able to rationalise inaction through highlighting a variety of intellectual or practical barriers to accepting the need for behaviour change. However, it may also relate to the wider issue of context mentioned previously, and the ways in which individuals frame their behaviours according to the values and social norms associated with a particular space or place. Through such an approach based on context, the attitudes and behaviours of key groups in society can be explored and policies for changing behaviour can be more effectively targeted. Yet even a focus on lifestyle groups who may be the most likely to change their views will require both time and political will to convince; the data presented in this paper indicates that many consumers are not yet ready to reduce the amount they fly to reduce their impact on climate change.

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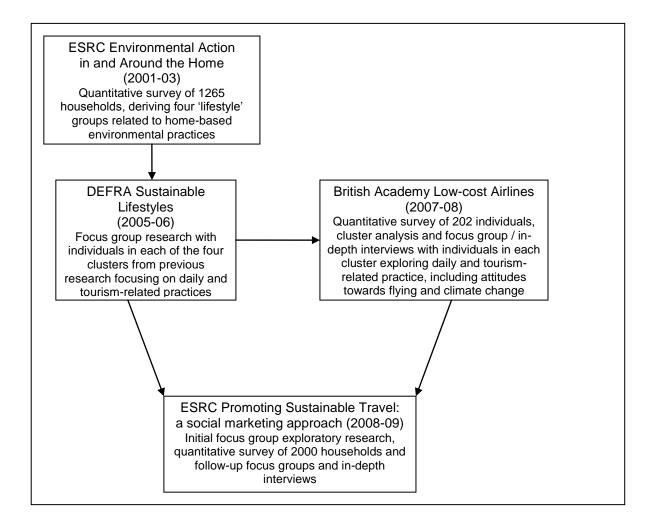
Figure 1   Research programme

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│  ┌─────────────────────────────┐                                                   │
│  │ ESRC Environmental Action   │                                                   │
│  │    in and Around the Home   │                                                   │
│  │         (2001-03)           │                                                   │
│  │ Quantitative survey of 1265 │                                                   │
│  │ households, deriving four   │                                                   │
│  │ 'lifestyle' groups related  │                                                   │
│  │ to home-based environmental │                                                   │
│  │ practices                   │                                                   │
│  └─────────────────────────────┘                                                   │
│                 │                                                                  │
│                 ▼                                                                  │
│  ┌─────────────────────────────┐          ┌──────────────────────────────────┐   │
│  │   DEFRA Sustainable         │          │ British Academy Low-cost Airlines│   │
│  │       Lifestyles            │          │          (2007-08)               │   │
│  │        (2005-06)            │ ───────▶ │ Quantitative survey of 202       │   │
│  │ Focus group research with   │          │ individuals, cluster analysis    │   │
│  │ individuals in each of the  │          │ and focus group / in-depth       │   │
│  │ four clusters from previous │          │ interviews with individuals in   │   │
│  │ research focusing on daily  │          │ each cluster exploring daily and │   │
│  │ and tourism-related         │          │ tourism-related practice,        │   │
│  │ practices                   │          │ including attitudes towards      │   │
│  └─────────────────────────────┘          │ flying and climate change        │   │
│                 ╲                          └──────────────────────────────────┘   │
│                  ╲                                      ╱                          │
│                   ▼                                    ▼                           │
│        ┌────────────────────────────────────────────┐                             │
│        │ ESRC Promoting Sustainable Travel:          │                             │
│        │ a social marketing approach (2008-09)       │                             │
│        │ Initial focus group exploratory research,   │                             │
│        │ quantitative survey of 2000 households and  │                             │
│        │ follow-up focus groups and in-depth         │                             │
│        │ interviews                                  │                             │
│        └────────────────────────────────────────────┘                             │
└──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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Table 1   Attributes of the three clusters

Characteristic	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3
Number*	52 (26%)	105 (52%)	44 (22%)
Profile	Tend to be older, with a high proportion of retired	Mostly young and employed FT	Young / middle aged, working FT
Home-based environmental actions	Undertake the whole range of environmental actions with the greatest frequency	Tend to be conscious consumers, buy organic food, compost their waste and buy environmentally-friendly products. Tend to recycle, save energy and water less often than other clusters	Tend to save water and energy in the home and to purchase devices that help them do this. Tend to make environmentally-conscious purchases, compost their waste and buy organic food less frequently.
Environmental actions on holiday	Most committed to environmental actions on holiday	Least committed to environmental actions on holiday	Committed to saving energy and water on holiday
Holiday taking	UK 28% Europe 33% Int. 39%	UK 34% Europe 50% Int. 16%	UK 29% Europe 50% Int. 21%
Average nights away	12	9	12
Mean flights in last 12 months	2.6	2.3	2.3
Attitudes to taxes on air travel	50% in favour of tax	38% in favour of tax	36% in favour of tax
Heard of carbon off-setting	73%	52%	39%
Used carbon off-setting	36%	11%	0%

* N = 201 (1 case contained missing values)

Acknowledgements