

Interactive comment on “Ideas: a simple proposal to improve the contribution of IPCC WG1 to the assessment and communication of climate change risks” by Rowan T. Sutton

R. Sutton

rowan.sutton@ncas.ac.uk

Received and published: 31 July 2018

I thank Alan Gadian for his comment on my proposal, and I’m glad we agree that IPCC WG1 has a responsibility to pay much greater attention to low likelihood high impact scenarios. I thank him also for pointing me to Kerry Emanuel’s highly relevant 2014 comment “Tail Risk vs Alarmism” (<http://climatechangenationalforum.org/tail-risk-vs-alarmism/>), the substance of which I entirely agree with.

Alan goes beyond the scope of my proposal to criticise IPCC and WG1 climate scientists for failing to include adequately in the assessment process the expertise of the “few . . . who understand the tail”, a group which implicitly includes himself. In these

Printer-friendly version

Discussion paper



comments he should be wary of hubris. The fact is that no-one fully understands the tail risk because there are deep uncertainties that we cannot fully quantify with current tools and knowledge (see referee comments by S. Hallegatte). These risks are not a product of the meso/micro-scale alone – on the contrary they are influenced by all scales up to that of the Earth as a whole. For this reason global climate models are one important tool amongst others for studying the problem. Like other tools and approaches they have strengths and weaknesses, and must be handled with care.

Tail risks are difficult to assess, but we agree they cannot be ignored and must be afforded greater attention. We also agree that in making the relevant assessments the IPCC must draw on the widest possible range of expertise and literature. In my response to the referee comments by S. Hallegatte I have provided further explanation of how the necessary assessments could be readily included within existing IPCC procedures. I attach this discussion again here.

Interactive comment on Earth Syst. Dynam. Discuss., <https://doi.org/10.5194/esd-2018-36>, 2018.

Printer-friendly version

Discussion paper

