

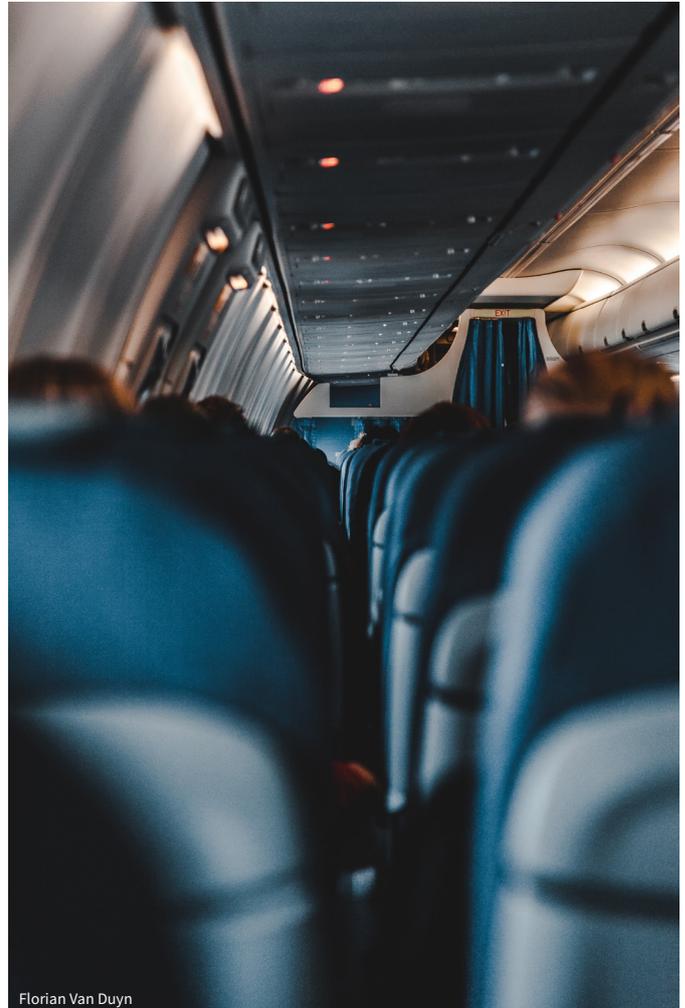
Which sectors are really hard to mitigate?

By John Broderick and Maria Sharmina, University of Manchester

The Tyndall Centre has worked on “hard to mitigate” sectors for most of its two decades. Aviation, road freight, agriculture, and industrial process plants seem different in many ways. They all have a common problem in that change in technology is unlikely to deliver very low emissions in the next few years, regardless of how much resource is committed. Does the inevitable urgency created by twenty years of rising emissions change anything in these or other sectors?

The first point we would make is that urgency is shifting the focus of our response from technology onto demand interventions. It is opening up the space for ‘flygskam’ combined with ‘tagskryt’, the Swedish phenomena of flight shame and train-bragging, to have a discernible impact in Sweden on the aviation sector’s bookings. If this trend holds, and transfers to other countries, it may begin to cause rationalisation of some routes and substantial emissions reductions. Previously, offsetting has been pursued as the favoured mitigation option of the Scandinavian tourism industry but the moral call for radical and urgent action makes that appear asinine by comparison to not flying.

Secondly, urgency has opened the question of who gets to define and say that these sectors are hard to mitigate. If aviation emissions in Sweden can be cut by one whole percentage point by a plain-speaking teenager, why should we in the scientific community or powerful political actors feel justified by applying the label ‘hard to mitigate’. A consequence of this label is The International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) being able to put off policy making at a global scale for two decades and is now presenting growth in sectoral emissions, CORSIA, as an effective climate policy.



Florian Van Duyn



Breno Assis

Urgency also makes us look across at the other sectors that we originally thought tractable with familiar technologies, for instance home insulation and nuclear power.

The cost, complexity and household disruption involved in whole-house improvements is a major barrier, while partial implementation is neither cost-effective nor climatically effective.

It is quite clear that even in locations where the current generation of nuclear power stations can be easily integrated into our existing energy system, and funded through public and private monies, their sheer magnitude and complexity limits their rate of construction. Suddenly, even the heat and power sectors, the ‘easy to mitigate’, seem hard to mitigate also.

We wonder now how scalable they all really are?