Tourism, slow consumption and slow tourism

Professor Michael Hall
University of Canterbury

At one level the notion of sustainable tourism is incredibly successful - every tourism business, destination and academic seems to refer to it. But in reality tourism is less sustainable than ever. One course that tourism has charted is with respect to notions of efficiency and green growth, ideas that are currently being championed by a number of institutional and government bodies. However, this approach has a number of significant difficulties, especially with respect to rebound effects. Another approach is with respect to sufficiency and the slowing of consumption, an idea which is partly expressed in the growing concept of slow tourism. Although there is danger in slow tourism becoming another tourism fad or form of greenwash there is some significant merit in the notion of slow for encouraging greater sustainability. However, the presentation argues that both efficiency and sufficiency approaches are going to be required, but that more than just going ‘slow’ attempts to make tourism more sustainable, i.e. use less natural capital and resources, will require a) a reassessment of what sustainability stands for in tourism; b) a fundamental questioning of the growth paradigm in tourism; and c) an end to environmental subsidies and changes in the way that tourism is governed.