

Hot but Habitable

9 – 13 March 2020 @Snellius

A team of 20 interdisciplinary practitioners and researchers who work to manage the risk of extreme heat, technologists, designers, and data scientists gathered in the Lorentz workshop ‘hot but habitable’.

The aim of the workshop was to identify transdisciplinary digital systems-based solutions to minimize the impact of heat waves on the habitability of our cities, the enjoyment of the outdoors, and the health of our people. We focused on how to improve global heat risk and impact monitoring and how to better track, predict, plan, and respond to cascading and simultaneous heat triggered risks, such as extreme heat coupled with power failures, water insecurity, fires, air quality.

Background of the meeting was that humanity is rapidly being hurled into a warming future climate. We face certain exposure to more extreme heat events and warmer climatic conditions over the coming decades. Higher temperatures represent significant risks to how we live, how we get sick, and how we may die. Populations on all inhabited continents are vulnerable to heat exposure, labor productivity is in decline due to rising temperatures, and urban centers and the urban poor are at particularly high risk of extreme heat. We are not prepared for these present realities, nor are we innovating quickly enough to meet growing future challenges with sustainable solutions. But a new global network of is rallying to create new solutions to this problem: the global heat health information network (<http://www.ghhin.org/>) that formed the backbone of the meeting participants.

The workshop proceeded successfully using the Open Space Technology (OST). OST is a method for organizing and running a meeting or multi-day conference. In contrast with pre-planned conferences where who will speak at which time is scheduled often months in advance, and therefore subject to many changes, OST sources participants once they are physically present at the live event venue. The facilitators were able to create a climate in which the participants felt comfortable to share ideas and start new collaborations. In the first day of the workshop we defined the main themes and got inspired by a visit to the Boerhaave museum. During the remainder of the week we processed the main themes in more detail in flexible meetings. This resulted in 18 open space reports, with not only focus on content, but also on policy and communication. The group will draft a final report on the main findings and recommendations and scientific journals have expressed interest to publish it.

After the Lorentz meeting, the workshop proved to be effective to quickly form a team of experts dedicated to defining guidelines on how to cope with the combined threat of heat waves and COVID-19 virus.

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