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Conference on European Tornadoes and Severe Storms

Tornadoes and meteorological research in Ireland: an empirical and historical approach.

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The study of tornadoes in Ireland is very recent. In Ireland, tornadoes are generally regarded as atmospheric freaks that do not belong to the climatic profile of the country. It is argued that climate as a social construct that excludes these phenomena undermines essential empirical research that depends heavily on public cooperation and groundtruthing fieldwork. But the root of this problem lies in our own science. An historical review of two centuries of meteorological research in Ireland compares the research questions addressed by the nineteenth and twentieth century atmospheric scientists in Ireland and the paradigms used as a framework for their research agendas. The consequences of this for the nature of the Irish climate monitoring system and the nature of the Irish climatic data base is shown through an examination of the Irish record of thunderstorms and tornado activity over the same period. The results are used to highlight some of the problems of empirical research in this area today. Particular reference is given to a number of historical case studies.