

"These researchers have a political agenda"

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Mr Mörner, you have been to the archipelago - Fiji in the South Pacific - several times recently to research coastal and sea level changes. Why Fiji?

Nils-Axel Mörner: I knew that there was a science conference in New York in June 2017 dealing with sea level changes in Fiji. And it was known that the island nation would chair the 23rd World Climate Change Conference, which took place in Bonn last November. So Fiji came into the spotlight. It was heard that rising sea levels had already caused a lot of damage there. I wanted to check with my own eyes if that was true.

What made you sceptical?

I have spent my whole life researching sea level change and have travelled to 59 countries to do so. Hardly any other researcher has so much experience in this field. But the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has always misrepresented the facts on this issue. It grossly exaggerates the risks of rising sea levels. In particular, the IPCC relies on questionable computer models rather than field research. But I always want to know the facts. That's why I went to Fiji.

However, according to ProClim, the Swiss platform for climate research, there are measurement series in Fiji that show a strong rise in sea level in recent decades. Specifically, the level has risen by 5.4 millimetres a year since 1990, which is twice the global average.

Yes, I know these measurements. They are two series of records of tidal heights, i.e. of water levels at low and high tide. We have checked these data - with the result that they are of very poor quality. One series is influenced by the fact that harbour facilities were built on loose sedimentary soil near the measuring station, which could have changed the tidal heights. In the other series, the measuring station was even moved locally. The researchers who rely on such data are office drones. They do not specialise in coastal dynamic processes and sea level changes. Many of them have no idea about the real conditions.

How did you go about getting better data?

On the one hand, we followed up on the examples given where sea level rise is said to have led to coastal erosion. The result was that the erosion was caused by human intervention - for example, by new coastal structures that changed the water currents, or the increased harvesting of sea cucumbers, which increased the

could have destabilised the sea bed. To prove changes in sea level over the last 500 years, we have dated sand deposits to see when they were formed. We have also studied the spread of corals over the last few centuries. Typically, coral reefs grow in height when the sea level rises and in width when it remains constant. If the level drops, corals die. Corals do not lie, they are a reliable indicator - much more reliable than tide measurements.

What was the result?

We were able to prove that the sea level in Fiji was about seventy centimetres higher than today from 1550 until about 1700. Then it sank and in the 18th century it was about fifty centimetres lower than today.

Subsequently, it rose to about its present level. In the last 200 years, the level has not changed significantly. During the last 50 to 70 years it has even been absolutely stable.

Were you surprised?

Not really. After all, it was not the first time that the claims of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change turned out to be wrong.

But Fiji is only one group of islands. It is possible that the situation is different in other places.

There are also data from many other places in the world. These do not confirm the picture painted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. In certain places the sea level is indeed rising, but in other places it is stable, and elsewhere it is even falling. In the Indian Ocean and on the Atlantic coast of South America, for example, the level is constant. Even on South Pacific islands like Tuvalu and Kiribati, measurements do not confirm the constant warnings of a sinking of these island groups. Sure, the sea wears away the coasts here and there, but elsewhere islands grow as well. That has always been the case.

"They are office clerks. Many of them have no idea about the real conditions."

Why do so many climate researchers warn of sinking islands?

Because they have a political agenda. They are biased by the interpretation that humans are causing climate change and that this is a threat. After all, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was founded with the purpose of presenting and warning about man-made climate change. So its goal was clear from the beginning. And it sticks to it like dogma - no matter what the facts are. As a specialist in sea-level developments, I have noticed time and again in recent years that the IPCC team on this aspect does not include a single expert in the field.

Is there no problem at all with rising sea levels?

No.

No danger of islands sinking?

The doomsday scenarios usually refer to the year 2100. I estimate that sea levels will rise by an average of five centimetres by then, with an uncertainty of 15 centimetres. So the change ranges from plus 20 centimetres to minus 10 centimetres. That is certainly not a threat. Anyone who claims that there is a threat of a rise of one metre or similar has no idea about physics.

But it does pour a lot of meltwater from glaciers and ice sheets into the sea.

Much less than you think. In the Antarctic, no ice is melting overall. When ice melts in the Arctic, it does not change the sea level - because, according to the laws of physics, floating ice does not influence the level when it melts. Essentially, only melting ice on Greenland contributes to a rise in sea level. But this contribution is small.

Seawater heats up and expands in the process, which increases the level.

That is true, but we are also only talking about a few centimetres here, not decimetres or even metres. Basically, there are much more important influences that affect the height of the sea level, especially solar radiation. There are also significant horizontal shifts of water, from one ocean to another. Like the data from Fiji, those from the Maldives show that levels in the 17th century were clearly higher than today. Significantly, this was the time when it was cold in the northern hemisphere, known as the Little Ice Age. At that time, solar radiation was lower than today. It was the great solar minimum. It seems that low solar radiation is associated with high sea levels in the tropics - and vice versa. Sea levels seem to depend mainly on the oscillation of solar cycles and hardly on melting ice.

You are one of the most prominent critics of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. What was the trigger that made you distance yourself from the warnings of man-made climate change?

In 1991, I gave a scientific paper at a conference on sea level change in the USA. The representative of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change who was there reacted with great anger to my points of view. This reaction surprised me. In scientific circles, people listen to each other and debate different points of view. As a result, I noticed more and more that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was spreading completely false information and was also sticking to obvious errors. I then once published a paper on the influence of the sun on sea levels, which was backed by 19 recognised experts. But the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change attacked the paper with outrageous claims and caused the scientific journal in which it was published to be closed down.

So they want to stop you?

There is no stopping me. To date I have about 650

scientific papers published. But young colleagues who think critically have no chance in the face of manipulation. Basically, most editors of science magazines no longer accept papers that contradict the claims of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change - regardless of the quality of these papers.

But 97 percent of climate researchers are convinced that global warming is man-made?

This is nonsense. This figure is based on dubious surveys. In truth, the majority of researchers reject the claims of the IPCC, between 50 and 80 percent depending on the field. Only the meteorologists agree almost one hundred percent with the IPCC. But these people are financially dependent on the IPCC.

But doesn't it make sense in principle to reduce CO₂?

Why? It is obvious that CO₂ is not the main driver of temperatures. It is remarkable that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change itself has reduced the announced warming several times in recent years. But if only 1.5 degrees higher temperatures are to be expected, that is really of no significance.

"Effectively, the fight against climate change is hurting people a lot."

Why do we hear so many warnings about climate change?

Some people have exposed themselves greatly with their claims and now obviously cannot go back. Moreover, public research money flows almost exclusively to the climate change alarmists. We are dealing with a quasi-religious movement that claims to want to protect the environment. It now puts the fight against global warming before the fight against poverty.

What would be the right priorities?

It would be important to protect people from natural disasters such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and tsunamis. In addition, 25,000 people die every day because they have no access to clean drinking water. The supply of food is often just as catastrophic. Yet Nigeria, for example, is prevented from using coal to achieve economic development and prosperity that would reduce hunger and poverty.

Yet today there are efficient technologies to filter out air pollutants from coal use. Effectively, the fight against climate change is very damaging to people.

What will happen next?

It is expected that solar radiation will decrease in the next decades and that cooling will occur. Then, at the latest, it will become clear how wrong the warnings about global warming are.

Nils-Axel Mörner, born in 1938, looks back on a long research career. He was Dean of the Faculty of Palaeogeophysics and Geodynamics at Stockholm University, where he taught as a professor. From 1981 to 1989

he chaired the Neotectonics Commission of the International Association for Quaternary Research (Inqua). From 1997, he led an EU science project on geomagnetism and climate for six years. From 1999 to 2003, Mörner was also President of the Inqua Commission on Sea Level Change and Coastal Development. He has published many hundreds of scientific papers.

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