

16. October 2018

*the title of the lecture*

The political dimension of climate science

*a short abstract, which briefly describes the contents*

Climate Science has detected that human activities are changing the climate at a speed, which is, compared to changes in the geological past, fast and with significant consequences for economy and societies as well as ecosystems. Thus, it was science which has made recent and future climate change, and its main driver, the human emissions of greenhouse gases, a key issue in the main global political arena. The science is insofar “settled” that may the change may be steered by the amount of future human emissions, and that all non-avoided climate change, due to past and possible future emissions, needs to be considered as mostly a malevolent and even often adverse change of living conditions, which needs measures to mitigate risks. Since both adapting to all changes and avoiding all climate change seems hardly impossible, societies of the world have to decide about the right mix of adaptation to and mitigation of man-made climate change. Deciding about this is a political task, not a scientific task.

On the other hand, the concept of man-made climate change is not a recent scientific discovery, but is part of the western narrative of creation, divine justice and a number of social constructions. This should be subject to social science studies, but finds too little attention.

Thus “climate” is made up of at least two competing concepts, one being a scientific construction, and the other a string of social constructions (with the scientific one also being a special type of social construction). The result is that climate change becomes a post-normal science, with urgent decisions, inherent uncertainties, values in dispute and costly risks. Typical for such a situation is that representatives of opposing sides adopt a position of knowledge superiority, scientists now, priests in the past, so that arriving in a social negotiation process at acceptable “solutions” is fraught with heavy conflicts and significant delays as well as demands for “expert governments”.

*your affiliation and position with which you would like to be presented*

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*a short bio (or a link to a web page with your bio).*

Prof. Hans von Storch is director emeritus of the Institute of Coastal Research of the Helmholtz Zentrum Geesthacht (HZG), professor at the University of Hamburg and professor at the Ocean University of China (Qingdao). From 1987 - 1995, he was Senior Scientist and leader of the "Statistical Analysis and Modelling" group at the Max Planck-Institute for Meteorology.

His research interests are climate diagnostics and statistical climatology, regional climate change and its transdisciplinary context. He has published twenty books, among them "Statistical Analysis in Climate Research with Francis Zwiers and "Die Klimafalle" with ethnologist Werner Krauss, and numerous articles. He is, or was, member of the advisory boards of, among others, Journal of Climate, Environmental Science and Policy and Meteorologische Zeitschrift. He was a lead author of the Working Group I of the Third Assessment, and of Working Group II of the Fifth Assessment of the IPCC. He chaired efforts for a climate change assessment for the Baltic Sea Catchment (BACC I and II) and for the metropolitan Region of Hamburg.