



# **CIGS Symposium**

## **"Climate Realism and European climate policy"**

**(Summary of Q&A, Part 1)**

Date: October 1, 2018

Venue: Shin-Maruru Building Conference Square, Room 901

**Questioner 1:** Dr. Peiser said that past data is less reliable but is it not possible to get the precise temperature of the past through carbon isotopic determination or other means?

**Benny Peiser, Director, Global Warming Policy Foundation (GWPF):** The point is that you only have very limited pieces of evidence. They relate to a particular period or location and do not give you a global picture. To understand global climate change, you need global data. The methods you mentioned are good estimations for past climate but they are simply not as good as the information we have today.

**Questioner 1:** Regarding climate sensitivity, the fifth IPCC working group did not come up with a precise conclusion. Why was it that it was calculated back to look at man-made emissions?

**Taishi Sugiyama, Senior Research Fellow, CIGS:** The fifth IPCC report gave a range from 1.5 to 4.5 degrees Celsius and no single point estimate. 3 degrees was the median figure from the previous report. However, the IPCC works in a silo so it is not perfectly consistent in coming up with a synthesized report. The 3-degree figure is from the penultimate report and was used as a reference.

**Questioner 1:** Is the IPCC doing research for the sake of UN policy, rather than being purely and independently scientific?

**Sugiyama:** The work is done by natural scientists. However, there is an element of politics because the report has a summary intended for policymakers. Each country's negotiation team also participates in discussions before coming up with the summary for policymakers. That said, this is true for almost any scientific council.

**Questioner 1:** If we argue that everything after the Industrial Revolution is due to man-made causes, how do we explain anything before the Industrial Revolution?

**Sugiyama:** There could have been some non-man-made factors involved in the temperature change both after and before the Industrial Revolution .

**Questioner 2:** Dr. Peiser implied that paleoclimate data are unreliable and not global in scope. I think the different paleoclimate records differ in terms of the scope of the data

that they are proxies for. I also wonder how a social scientist is qualified to criticize the interpretation of paleoclimate data and what the sources of funding for the GWPF are.

**Peiser:** GWPF is an educational charity. Donations come entirely from individuals. There are no corporate donors. Donations from the energy sector are not accepted. GWPF simply thinks that the debate on climate change is not being conducted in an open and transparent way. We are a very small organization but there is no one else raising these questions so someone has to do it.

Secondly, I do not think the data is unreliable, rather less reliable. Therefore we cannot make big claims about the past. As a social scientist, I am more interested in the way scientists work and the claims they make and how solid they are. One of the big problems is that too many scientists make far too big claims that are not as solid as they make out.

Finally, when it comes to proxy data, for every single period of Earth's history, you will find at least 10 different research teams coming up with 10 different assessments. There is not as much of a consensus about past climate change as there is a consensus about modern climate change. That is a very important point because it is claimed that the modern warming period is unique. I think that claim is too strong.

**Sugiyama:** Tree rings or pollen volume, etc., are good location-specific data. However, it is difficult to calculate global changes in temperature from them. The variability is large. Local data cannot be used for comprehensively reconstructing the situation of the globe in the past.

**Peiser:** Our understanding of past climate reconstruction is inherently limited to the data that we have. The problem is that it is often claimed that we fully understand the history of climate change, but that is not backed up by strong data. I make this point to clarify that this is an area that remains contentious. That is not the case for the warming effect of CO<sub>2</sub>.

**Questioner 2:** I agree with many of the things that you are saying but I think you are overstating the certainty with which the IPCC and other researchers are stating our understanding of paleoclimate trends. Can you provide some references to support your claims that the paleoclimate data are unreliable?

**Peiser:** I never said that they are unreliable.

**Questioner 2:** You implied that the difference in reliability of the present data compared to the paleoclimate proxies is such that we have to basically greatly discount the implications of the past. The paleoclimate data is not minor. It is growing and the reliability is increasing.

**Peiser:** I did not say it should not be used, quite the opposite. Secondly, the IPCC, in its last report, acknowledged these limitations. I am not questioning the papers or paleoclimate research. All I am saying is that the research to reconstruct the ancient climate is ongoing and not settled. I just wanted to show which areas of climate science have more agreement and which have less agreement.

I know that climate scientists think I am undermining their research or credibility but that is not my aim. I feel it is important for climate scientists to not overstate the knowledge we have at this point about climate history. To convince people that we have to save the planet you have to make statements that are backed up by data.

**Questioner 3:** I have read that solar activities and the axis of the Earth can also impact the Earth's temperatures. Which elements are gaining more influence over climate change? Is there any consensus among climate scientists?

**Peiser:** The mainstream science consensus is that natural factors do not play as much of a role as human factors. Most papers believe that the sun simply does not have a significant role in the warming we have seen. There are a few outsiders with different theories but they are not in mainstream science. This raises the question of how we should treat outside views that contradict the mainstream consensus. I think we should allow outsiders to publish their research and have others assess the viability of their research. Not every consensus in the history of science turns out to be the final word of science. I do not doubt the basic consensus on the effect of CO<sub>2</sub> on climate but am concerned about many of the exaggeration.

**Questioner 4:** Regarding the medieval period warming, is this based on theoretical knowledge or empirical knowledge?

**Peiser:** There is quite a lot of circumstantial evidence. There is also growing research from different parts of the world saying that the warm period was global during the

early medieval period. Clearly, we have gone through warm periods in the past. However, despite all the research showing evidence of these warm periods, they all lack the strength of an observation. It is simply impossible at the current state of science or research to establish exactly how warm they were and whether they were regional or global like today. We have to accept that there are these knowledge gaps in our understanding of climate history. These are the problems climate scientists face and these are areas where the research is ongoing and where there is no consensus.