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Oceans are the mirror of our civilization

Translation from German by Jeffrey Michel



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Picture at the top from <http://www.news.ch>

Disclaimer: the views expressed in this paper solemnly engage the author.
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Energy usage is to blame for the desolation

The worsening condition of the oceans is a foreseeable consequence of global energy usage.

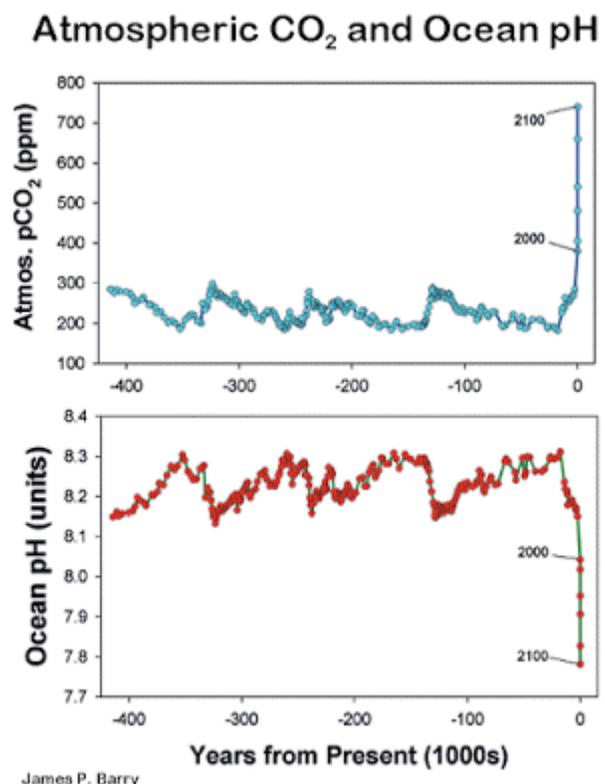
The impairment of sensitive marine biological equilibriums leads to coral degeneration, with ocean acidification threatening increasingly larger expanses. The requisite awareness of government and society remains deficient. In view of this sobering conclusion, energy researcher Jeffrey Michel has called for the definition of carbon dioxide (CO₂) as an environmental pollutant as well as the use of smart meters in this Presstext interview.

"The continued decline in pH in the oceans is now proceeding at 100 times the rate of previous millions of years. The oceans have therefore become a seismograph for the CO₂ pollution caused by the global energy industry" according to Michel. For the expert, who has already advised several German municipalities on energy issues and was awarded the "Climate Hero" 2005 award by WWF for his commitment in the Saxon village of Heuersdorf, the seas thus constitute a "mirror of our modern civilization." Michel notes that "nothing is hidden from this mirror. Relying on fossil fuels ends up as a CO₂ transcript in the oceans."

800 million tons of CO₂ per year

For the researcher, it is only logical to declare the reduction of CO₂ emissions as a primary political objective. However, the reality is different: "The fossil energy industry in Germany releases more than 800 million tons of CO₂ per year into the atmosphere," says Michel. "It also remains unrecognized that biomass combustion contributes to ocean acidification. At present, carbon dioxide has not yet been appreciated in Europe as an environmental pollutant – although that definition has been legally binding in the US since 2012. "This designation of the US Environmental Protection Agency EPA should be applied to all future CO₂ reduction strategies," he urges.

This energy researcher is not alone. As early as 2014, the Left Party in the German Bundestag presented a bill for defining CO₂ as an environmental pollutant to substantiate a systematic phase-out of coal usage. The aim was to save at least and additional 60 million tons of carbon dioxide by



2020. "Unfortunately, the proposal was rejected on January 29th by the parliamentary majority. A change in awareness among political leaders is obviously overdue," Michel has concluded.

Motor vehicles, the internet, and smart power meters

However, all citizens can play a part in protecting the oceans and thus the entire global ecosystem. The necessary public comprehension is often lacking, the expert notes: "Hardly anyone is aware of the fact that not only his own car, but also internet usage entails immense energy expenditures. The World Wide Web consumes more electrical power than Japan and Germany combined. Education campaigns are desperately needed."

A promising way to make energy usage at home more sustainable would particularly be the everyday use of smart metering, according to Michel. "We have to adapt to a growing shortage of energy and environmental resources. Digital power meters can cut energy consumption by simple monitoring and even more by interactive control," the researcher believes.

The practice of yearly power invoicing that still prevails in Germany is unsuitable for this purpose. "A monthly reading would already permit savings of several percent to be achieved on the basis of accumulated experience with power conservation strategies," Michel concludes. "After all, would any motorist accept a petrol receipt only once a year?"