

Tol e-mails to SEI and Swedish politicians about the Ackerman-Munitz article. (SEI responses available on request.)

From: Richard Tol <Richard.Tol@esri.ie>
Date: 27 oktober 2011 14:05:38 GMT-06:00
To: "johan.rockstrom@sei-international.org" <johan.rockstrom@sei-international.org>
Subject: misrepresentation by SEI staff

Dear Professor Rockstrom,

Dr Ackerman has used our FUND model to analyze the economic impacts of climate change. He reports on that research in an SEI Working Paper (<http://sei-us.org/publications/id/375>) and in four blog posts (<http://realclimateeconomics.org/wp/archives/801>, <http://triplecrisis.com/for-whom-the-blog-tols/>, <http://realclimateeconomics.org/wp/archives/1057>, <http://bishophill.squarespace.com/blog/2011/10/26/for-whom-the-blog-tols.html>).

Dr Ackerman claims to have found a bug in the model code and that this affects the results. The former is true: There is a potential division by zero. The veracity of Dr Ackerman's second claim is more qualified. The bug affects the results if the model is used as Dr Ackerman does. However, it does not affect any of the results that we have published. Dr Ackerman uses our model in a way that we have not, and therefore never tested.

In his writings, however, Dr Ackerman suggests that our results are faulty. While initially that may be interpreted as an honest mistake by Dr Ackerman, it has been repeatedly pointed out to him that our results are unaffected by the bug in the code. Yet, Dr Ackerman continues to repeat his erroneous claim.

I would appreciate it if you would instruct Dr Ackerman to stop spreading disinformation. I would appreciate it if you would grant us the right to reply to Dr Ackerman's claim in one of the more prominent SEI publications.

Yours sincerely
Dr Richard S.J. Tol MEA

From: Richard Tol [mailto:Richard.Tol@esri.ie]
Sent: den 31 oktober 2011 10:27
To: Johan Rockström
Cc: kerstinniblaeus@hotmail.com
Subject: misrepresentations by a member of your staff

Dear Professor Rockstrom,

I am surprised that you did not responded to my previous email.

To reiterate, an SEI staff member, Mr Frank Ackerman, has repeatedly and publicly made claims about a model that I have (co-)developed. These claims are false, Mr Ackerman knows they are false, and they damage my reputation.

Please allow me to respond, in an equally prominent manner, to Mr Ackerman's false allegation.

Sincerely,
Dr Richard S.J. Tol MEA

From: Richard Tol
Sent: Tuesday, November 01, 2011 8:32 AM
To: 'Johan Rockström'
Cc: Frank Ackerman; kerstinniblaeus@hotmail.com
Subject: RE: misrepresentations by a member of your staff

Dear Professor Rockström,

As you can see from my email of March 18, this matter was never settled.

Mr Ackerman drew attention to this matter in his blog posts of October 26 (twice) and October 27. The Twitter account SEI Climate drew attention to this matter on October 26 and October 31. The Twitter account rjtklein drew attention to the matter on October 26.

This may be characterized as a concerted campaign by SEI staff to smear my name and reputation.

Sincerely
Dr Richard S.J. Tol MEA

From: Richard Tol
Sent: Monday, November 21, 2011
To: 'Johan Rockström'
Cc: Frank Ackerman; kerstinniblaeus@hotmail.com
Subject: RE: misrepresentations by a member of your staff

Dear Professor Rockström,

Does your long silence imply that you condone the smear campaign by your staff?

Yours sincerely,
Dr Richard S.J. Tol MEA

Ms Kerstin Niblaeus
Chair, Stockholm Environment Institute
via kerstinniblaeus@hotmail.com

Dublin, 29 November 2011

Re: Smear campaign by SEI staff

Dear Ms Niblaeus,

In December 2010, my colleague, Dr David Anthoff, was contacted by Mr Frank Ackerman, an employee of the Stockholm Environment Institute. Mr Ackerman had downloaded the source code of the Climate Framework for Uncertainty, Negotiation and Distribution, an integrated assessment model developed by us but freely available to all. Following earlier contact, Dr Anthoff had helped Mr Ackerman install and run the model.

Mr Ackerman contacted us regarding a suspected error he had found in the code. Dr Anthoff explained that this was corrected elsewhere and shared with Mr Ackerman the diagnostic tests and their results that we routinely use to guard against such errors. As Mr Ackerman was unconvinced by these tests, Dr Anthoff implemented additional tests and showed that the alleged error is immaterial.

I was therefore surprised to discover that Mr Ackerman published an SEI working paper in March 2011 in which he claims that the alleged error has a substantial effect on one core result. In the accompanying blog post, Mr Ackerman calls this a "flat-out algebra mistake".

I immediately protested with Mr Ackerman and Professor Johann Rockström, the SEI director. My protest was dismissed. As Mr Ackerman's writings were widely ignored, I decided to let the matter rest. Besides, in the exchange of emails, Mr Ackerman had admitted that he had altered the code and disabled part of the post-processing. The error reported by Mr Ackerman is an error that Mr Ackerman himself had introduced into the code.

Mr Ackerman repeated his claims on three blogs in late October 2011. Attention was drawn to these posts by the Twitter accounts @SEIClimate and @rjtklein.

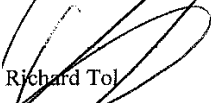
I again contacted Professor Rockström, pointing out that three members his staff were involved in maliciously spreading allegations that are false, known to be false, and damaging to my reputation.

Professor Rockström has yet to reply to my request for the right to reply in an equally prominent SEI publication to Mr Ackerman's false allegations. The Twitter account @rjtklein today stated that restoring my good name and reputation is not a priority of SEI.

I therefore turn to you, as the chair of SEI board, in the hope for an amicable settlement of this matter.

Looking forward to your timely reply, I remain,

Yours sincerely



Richard Tol

From: Richard Tol [mailto:Richard.Tol@esri.ie]

Sent: den 22 december 2011 10:06

To: Johan Rockström

Cc: Frank Ackerman; Richard Klein; Johan KuylensstiernaSE; Charlie Heaps; Kerstin Niblaeus; Ian Caldwell

Subject:

RE: response from SEI

Dear Professor Rockström,

While I am still hoping for an amicable solution, it is time to prepare for a more formal resolution. For the moment, I will put aside the option of a civil case for infringement of copyright and defamation. I will seek arbitration, however.

I assume that SEI is regulated by the Royal Swedish Academy of the Arts and Sciences. I would be grateful if you could let me know the name of the right committee and its chairperson.

Would this cover Mr Ackerman as well, or should I turn to the National Academies? If so, please inform me of the correct committee and chair.

Please note that this is the third request for this information. The previous two were directed at your colleague Ian Caldwell. Please also note that it is customary, and in many jurisdictions mandatory, to inform complainants about appeal procedures.

Sincerely,
Richard Tol

Lena Ek
Minister for the Environment
Tegelbacken 2
SE 103 33 Stockholm
Sweden

Barcombe, 26 April 2012

Re: Mr Johan Rockstrom

Dear Ms Ek,

In December 2010, my colleague, Dr David Anthoff, was contacted by Mr Frank Ackerman, an employee of the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI). Mr Ackerman had downloaded the source code of the Climate Framework for Uncertainty, Negotiation and Distribution, an integrated assessment model developed by us but freely available to all. Following earlier contact, Dr Anthoff had helped Mr Ackerman install and run the model.

Mr Ackerman contacted us regarding a suspected error he had found in the code. Dr Anthoff explained that this was corrected elsewhere in the code, and he shared with Mr Ackerman the diagnostic tests and their results that we routinely use to guard against such errors. As Mr Ackerman was unconvinced by these tests, Dr Anthoff implemented additional tests and again showed that the alleged error is immaterial.

I was therefore surprised to discover that in March 2011 SEI published a working paper authored by Mr Ackerman, in which he claims that the alleged error has a substantial effect on one core result. In the accompanying blog post, Mr Ackerman calls this a “flat-out algebra mistake”.

I immediately protested with Mr Ackerman and Professor Johann Rockström, the SEI director and publisher of the working paper. Our protest was dismissed. As Mr Ackerman’s writings were widely ignored, I decided to let the matter rest. Besides, in the ensuing exchange of emails, Mr Ackerman had admitted that he had altered the code and disabled part of the post-processing. The error reported by Mr Ackerman is an error that Mr Ackerman himself had introduced in the code.

Mr Ackerman repeated his claims on three blogs in late October 2011. Attention was drawn to these posts by the Twitter accounts @SEIClimate and @rjtklein. I believe that @rjtklein is Mr Richard J.T. Klein, a SEI employee.

I again contacted Professor Rockström, pointing out that three members his staff were involved in maliciously spreading allegations that are false, known to be false, and damaging to my reputation. Besides making this libelous and slanderous claim, Mr Ackerman also presents his alteration of our work as ours, which constitutes a violation of our copyright.

I requested that Professor Rockström grant me the right to reply to Mr Ackerman's false allegations in an equally prominent SEI publication. I repeatedly made this request, and it was repeatedly refused.

In response to one of these requests, the Twitter account @rjtklein stated that restoring my good name and reputation is not a priority of SEI.

Professor Rockström claimed that the SEI does not publish any documents, a claim that seems to be inconsistent with the many in-house publications listed on the SEI website.

As Professor Rockström refused my request, probably on fictitious grounds, I instead asked him for the identity of his regulator. I had contacted Ms Kerstin Niblaeus, the chair of SEI board, but she has yet to respond. Professor Rockström claimed, astoundingly, that both he and SEI are unregulated and that neither he nor the SEI answer to any authority.

As I find Professor Rockström's claim incredible, I hereby contact you as a potential authority, again seeking an amicable solution to this problem.

Looking forward to your timely reply, I remain,

Yours sincerely

Richard Tol

[Note: The original Tol e-mail of June 2012 was not available, but was quoted verbatim in the following response from SEI]

From: Johan KuylensstiernaSE [johan.kuylensstiernaSE@sei-international.org]

Sent: Tuesday, June 12, 2012

To: Charlie Heaps; Frank Ackerman; Robert Watt; Bob Stetina; Richard Klein

Cc: Jonna Lundberg

Re: Richard Tol

Colleagues,

Richard Toll continues to harass us – now sending letters to me directly (with cc to SEI Chair of the Board, the Vice-Chancellor of Stockholm University, the President of the Royal Academy of Sciences, The Minister for the Environment and the Minister for Education). ...

My interpretation is that he is now lying about the process. Anyway, here is the letter:

“In March 2011, the SEI published working paper WP-US-1105 by Frank Ackerman and Mr Munitz. I have repeatedly pointed out to your predecessor, Professor Johan Rockström, and to the chair of the board, Ms Kerstin Niblaeus, that the paper contains errors and damage my reputation. Mr Rockström dismissed my claims. Ms Niblaeus ignored my letters.

The paper has since been published by Ecological Economics. Upon closer inspection, the editors and publishers of the journal have agreed to my core complaints:

- Mr Ackerman and Mr Munitz present as ours work that is not ours.
- Mr Ackerman and Mr Munitz falsely claim that there is a bug in our code.

The journal has now told Mr Ackerman and Mr Munitz to rewrite the offending parts of the paper, and has granted us the customary right to reply.

I hereby demand one final time that you:

- Amend the working paper
- Give us the opportunity to reply; and
- Publicly apologize for the damage done.

Looking forward to your reply etc, etc”

...

Professor Johan Kuylensstierna
Stockholm Environment Institute
Kräftriket 2b, Stockholm
SE 106 91 Sweden

Falmer, 12 July 2012

Re: Your letter

Dear Professor Kuylensstierna,

Thank you for letter of 20 June 2012.

You state that the editors of Ecological Economics did not ask for changes to be made in the paper by Ackerman and Munitz. Unfortunately, your information is incorrect.

As you can see from the attached comment by Associate Editor Stern, the paper is wrong in five places and on two points:

1. The paper attributes work to Anthoff and Tol that is not by Anthoff and Tol.
2. The paper falsely claims that there is a division-by-zero error in the work of Anthoff and Tol.

Professor Stern also notes that Ackerman and Munitz suppressed relevant information.

I also attach our comment, which shows that the tests in the Ackerman and Munitz paper are inconclusive.

I hereby demand one last time that you:

- amend the working paper;
- give us the opportunity to reply; and
- publicly apologize for the damage done.

Looking forward to your timely reply, I remain,

Yours sincerely,


Richard Tol

cc

Kerstin Niblaeus, Chair, Stockholm Environment Institute, kerstinniblaeus@hotmail.com
Kare Bremer, Vice-Chancellor, Stockholm University, SE 106 91 Stockholm, Sweden
Barbara Cannon, President, Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, Box 50005, SE 104 05, Stockholm, Sweden
Lena Ek, Minister for the Environment, Tegelbacken 2, SE 103 33 Stockholm, Sweden
Jan Björklund, Minister for Education, Drottninggatan 16, SE 103 33 Stockholm, Sweden