

Climate Change and Geoengineering

‘intentional large scale manipulation of the global environment’

By [Wayne Hall](#)

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One element that is missing from ecological and social movement discussion about climate change is ‘geoengineering’. ‘Geoengineering’ is one of the words used for techniques being proposed more and more frequently by scientists and commercial journalists as a ‘politically realistic’ remedy for climate change.

An article recently published in the magazine Popular Science provides a characteristic example of these kinds of proposals.

Describing a meeting in the White House in September 2001 organized by the US President’s Climate Change Technology Program to discuss ‘Response Options to Rapid or Severe Climate Change’, the article frankly admits that ‘while administration officials were insisting publicly that there was no firm proof that the planet was warming, they were quietly exploring potential ways to turn down the heat.’

In March 2001 President Bush had withdrawn US support from the Kyoto Protocol. This meeting therefore represented something like a US counterproposal to Kyoto, an ‘alternative approach to climate change’.

Some years ago Edward Teller, in his ‘Sunscreen for Planet Earth’, made a similar [‘alternative’ proposal](#).

The physicist and economist David Keith, who was present at the White House meeting, is quoted in the article as saying ‘if they had broadcast that meeting live to people in Europe, there would have been riots.’

Anyone can see what the ‘geoengineering’ proposals were simply by reading the [relevant article](#) in Popular Science.

For those for whom that is difficult, the proposals included: 1) underground storage of carbon dioxide, 2) wind scrubbers to filter carbon dioxide from the air, 3) ‘fertilization’ of oceans with iron to encourage growth of plankton, 4) petrification of carbon dioxide, 5) deflection of sunlight from the earth through the use of a giant space mirror ‘spanning 600,000 square miles’.

One point worth mentioning at least in passing is that, apart from the question of how effective these measures would really be, all these highly oil-dependent ‘solutions’ to problems largely caused in the first place by burning fossil fuels, are being prepared for a

world that is beginning to run out of oil. (!)

In the case of at least one geoengineering measure, by no means the most 'outlandish', namely: 'Enhancing Clouds to Reflect Sunlight', a mass of eyewitness evidence for all over the world suggests that, despite official denials, a programme serving some such purpose is not merely a proposal but a reality and has been under implementation on an immensely large scale for at least a decade.

How significant are official denials? Note that the Popular Science article itself admits that the US administration's words about 'proof that the planet is warming' do not match its deeds. If untruthful official denial of global warming is possible, why should untruthful official denial of actually ongoing measures, supposedly to combat global warming, not similarly be possible?

Geoengineering is defined as 'intentional large scale manipulation of the global environment', e.g. by altering climate with the primary intention of reducing undesired climate change caused by human influences. 'Geoengineering schemes seek to mitigate the effect of fossil-fuel combustion on the climate without abating fossil fuel use; for example by placing shields in space to reduce the sunlight incident on the Earth.' (Keith D.W. 1999. Geoengineering, Encyclopedia of Global Change, New York).

In relation to 'geoengineering', the 'Climate Change 2001' [report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) confirms that it 'includes the possibility of engineering the earth's climate system by large-scale manipulation of the global energy balance. It has been estimated, for example, that the mean effect on the earth surface energy balance from a doubling of CO₂ could be offset by an increase of 1.5% to 2% in the earth's albedo, i.e. by reflecting additional incoming solar radiation back into space.... Teller et al. (1997) found that ~107 t of dielectric aerosols of ~100 nm diameter would be sufficient to increase the albedo of the earth by ~1%. They showed that the required mass of a system based on alumina particles would be similar to that of a system based on sulphuric acid aerosol...(They) demonstrate that use of metallic or optically resonant scatterers can, in principle, greatly reduce the required total mass of scattering particles required."

If, as very many indications suggest, such programmes and such ideas are already under implementation on a very large scale and outside the framework of international law, then they must either be stopped or legalized.

There is no point in ecological organizations disagreeing with them 'behind closed doors' and in public confining themselves to objections at the 'philosophical' level.

In early September 2005 the meteorologist Scott Stevens provoked a nation-wide scandal in the United States with accusations that hurricane Katrina had been caused by Japanese mafiosi using an electromagnetic generator sold to them by the Russians. (In much the same way last year, just before the December 26 tsunami that killed 300,000 people in South-East Asia, the author Michael Crichton published a best-selling novel 'State of Fear', which told of 'ecologist terrorists' who, for the purpose of securing funding for their programmes, engaged in artificial production of earthquakes and tsunamis.)

The truth is that we are not in a position to prove to conspiracy theorists that they are mistaken when they come out with scenarios of this kind. It is no easy task in situations of secrecy and non-transparency for ordinary citizens (and possibly not only ordinary citizens)

to distinguish between non-military climate mitigation and the techniques of 'climate as weapon'.

If the political parties, parliaments and mainstream mass media are not willing to bear the political cost of honesty in relation to 'geoengineering' then the Social Forums must assume this responsibility on their behalf.

Wayne Hall is a founding member of ATTAC-Hellas <http://www.attac-hellas.org>

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