

## Climate Change, Smoke and Mirrors

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## A civil society briefing on Geoengineering

## Climate change, smoke and mirrors

Geoeconomics is inherently global and is negative about the likelihood of a "Plan B" scenario. Because of this, geoeconomics has often been presented as a "Plan B" to confront the climate crisis. But after the Paris Agreement, which set the ambitious goal of keeping the temperature to well below 2°C, and possibly even 1.5°C, the discourse has changed. Now, geoeconomics is increasingly being advanced as an "insertion" meant to reach this goal, through a mix of risky technologies that would take carbon out of the atmosphere and/or to alter "negative emissions," or the control of the global thermostat to directly lower the climate's temperature.

## What is geoengineering?

As a means of geoengineering, the climate has been around for well over a century. Until recently, it was mostly discussed as a proposed military tool to control the weather for hostile purposes. With the onset of the growing climate crisis, the spectrum of geoengineering proposals has increased, and today public debate about geoengineering explores whether it is a means to combat climate change rather than other nations.

geoengineering, or climate geoengineering, refers to a set of proposed techniques and technologies to deliberately intervene in and alter Earth systems on a large scale – particularly to climate system manipulations as a “technofix” for climate change. It is increasingly suggested as a way to “buy more time” for real, transformative change in the future, or as an insurance policy for our great grandchildren, thus passing on the difficult burden to the

Geoeengineering may comprise interventions on land, oceans, or in the atmosphere. It may include so-called solar radiation management (SRM), as well as other Earth system interventions under the umbrella of carbon dioxide removal (CDR) or greenhouse gas removal (GGR). These are all theoretical proposals, and although a few CDR

techniques may be closer to the market according to their promoters, the claim that these technologies would be effective for addressing climate change is speculation, based at best on limited computer modeling.

Significantly, none of the geospatial techniques on the table aim to address the root causes of climate change. Instead, they are intended to partially counteract some of its symptoms. Underlying drivers of climate change (e.g. growing consumption, deforestation, unsustainable agriculture and land use change) will continue unaffected. Because geoengineering by definition aims at neutralising

because geoscientists by definition aim to rationally alter Earth systems—such as the carbon cycle and hydrological cycle, it is unambiguously in nature. And because we know very little about the functioning of the planetary ecosystem as a whole, and all its subsystems, there is a significant likelihood that rather than improving the climate, it could make things worse.

We consider this a work in progress and plan to publish more documents in the coming months.  
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For the past decade, a small but growing group of scientists and activists, the majority from the most powerful and most climate-political countries in the world, has been pushing for political consideration of geoeconomics: the different large-scale technological manipulations of the climate.

Geoeconomics is inherently high-risk and its negative effects will likely be asymmetrically distributed. Because of this, geoeconomics has often been presented as a "Plan B" to confront the climate crisis. But after the Paris Agreement, the world has been able to pursue the conventional route to 2°C, and possibly even 1.5°C, the climate has changed. Now, geoeconomics is increasingly being advanced as an "auxiliary" means to reach that goal, through a mix of risky technologies that would take carbon out of the atmosphere to create so-called "negative emissions" or take control of the global atmosphere to directly lower the temperature.

### What is geoen지니어ing?

The notion of geoengineering the climate has been around for well over a century. Until recently, it was mostly discussed as a proposed military tool to control the weather for hostile purposes. With the onset of the growing climate crisis, the spectrum of geoengineering proposals has increased, and today public debate about geoengineering explores whether it is a means to combat climate change rather than other nations.

Geoengineering, or climate geoengineering, refers to a set of proposed techniques and technologies to deliberately intervene in and alter Earth systems on a large scale – particularly in climate system manipulations as a “backstop” for climate change. It is increasingly suggested as a way to “buy more time” for real, transformational change in the future, or as an insurance policy for our present.

Geoscientists may comprise interventions on land, oceans, or in the atmosphere. It may include so-called solar radiation management (SRM), as well as other Earth system interventions under the umbrella of carbon dioxide removal (CDR) or geoengineering (see removal (GGR)). These

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the table aim to address the root causes of climate change. Instead, they are intended to partially counteract some of its symptoms. Underlying drivers of climate change (e.g. growing consumption, deforestation, unsustainable agriculture and land use changes) will continue unaffected. Because greenhouse-gas by definition acts to insulate earth, Earth systems such as the carbon cycle and

hydrological cycle, is a transboundary system, and because we know very little about the functioning of the planetary ecosystem as a whole, and all its subsystems, there is a significant likelihood that rather than improving the climate, it could make things worse.

We consider this a work in progress and plan to publish more documents in the coming months.  
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For the past decade, a small but growing group of governments and scientists, the majority from the most powerful and most climate-polluting countries in the world, has been pushing for political consideration of geoengineering, the deliberate large-scale technological manipulation of the climate.

Geoengineering is inherently high-risk and its negative effects will likely be unequally distributed. Because of this, geoengineering has often been presented as a “Plan B” to confront the climate crisis. But after the Paris Agreement, which set the ambitious goal of keeping the temperature to well below 2°C and possibly even 1.5°C, the discourse has changed. Now, geoengineering is increasingly being advanced as an “essential” means to reach this goal, through a mix of risky technologies that would take carbon out of the atmosphere to create so-called “negative emissions” or take control of the global thermostat to directly lower the climate’s temperature.

A new [briefing paper](#) by [ETC Group](#) and [Heinrich Böll Foundation](#) in advance of the UNFCCC intersessional meetings in Bonn, May 2017, gives an overview of what geoengineering is and why it is dangerous, as well as up-to-date information on proposed geoengineering technologies and governance.

A crucial read for anyone engaged in the fight against climate change.

[Download the briefing here.](#)

(A German version of this briefing in pdf format is also available.)