

Summary of Topical Lunch

The lunch began with a brief introduction to the general schemes that are categorized under the rubric of "geoengineering" for climate change mitigation. These include Solar Radiation Management (SRM--much more controversial and theoretical); and Carbon Dioxide Removal(CDR). The latter may include physical technologies to remove carbon from the atmosphere and bury it (CCS) or, for some colleagues, even the enhancement of sinks (afforestation, soil enhancement). There are others who do not include soil sequestration technologies in the overall category of "geoengineering," perhaps because they feel the term might dissuade people from taking it seriously. Since enhancement of sinks is essentially a "natural" process, terms like biomimicry or "carbon balancing" might find a more receptive audience.

After this outline, participants discussed possible roles for the humanities and for critical theory in creating taxonomies of already existing forms of geoengineering or for speculating about future forms; in helping to provide ethical guidelines; in designing technologies that could work towards some combination of mitigation and adaptation; in curbing dangerous practices; in helping to think about global governance of the atmosphere and subsurface.

Attendees of the lunch discussed how their own research and thinking might contribute to research on the technology side. Among humanists there was a split, broadly, between some who study narratives of the past, or think more speculatively vs what are more anthropological/ethnographic kinds of approaches to practices, policies and research.

The lunch brought up some very interesting ideas and some of the scientists found it especially refreshing to hear about how humanists think. In any case, there was broad consensus that as countries buckle down to address their carbon reduction, the questions raised here require a multi-disciplinary approach.

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