

1) In our opinion, Al Gore's telethon is a legitimate political campaign. The campaign raises claims, namely that it is science based – with a certainty beyond reasonable doubt -, and that man-made climate change manifests itself throughout the world locally, in particular through extreme meteorological events. The anthropogenic dimension of the warming is indeed a fact beyond reasonable doubt: it is getting warmer faster than what should be expected from internal variability and other presently acting forcings (detection), and this, given our present understanding, cannot be explained without a massive contribution through the anthropogenic greenhouse effect (attribution). With respect to extreme events there are reasonable doubts whether we see a change in the statistics beyond natural variations, and whether this change must be attributed to anthropogenic emissions – given our present knowledge. Thus, the telethon oversells, but most would be surprised if Al Gore would not sex up his narrative, as almost all politicians do when selling their points. In this sense, the telethon is like watching a "best of" Inconvenient Truth forth and back. Furthermore, the political nature of this campaign was disguised behind the repeated assurance that global climate change is not a political, but a human problem (especially in the US, climate politics are indeed an extremely political issue).

2) In our opinion, the telethon is aimed first and foremost at an American audience. Even though the "show" is transmitted from different places all over the world, the setting, style and form of presentation is oriented at CNN and Hollywood films, including both the repetitious presentation of loops of the "best" disasters in 2010/2011 and the notorious expert rounds. There is hardly any local perspective; the American form of presentation (with Al Gore's "Inconvenient Truth" as model) dominates both the narrative and the iconography. Thus, we repeatedly saw the video about the famous tobacco campaign in the US of the fifties (which cigarette does your doctor smoke? Camel!), shown as an analogy to the climate "deniers". There were no references made to recent discussions or reflections about negative or even counterproductive effects of a "politics of fear", of "apocalyptic rhetoric", "overselling" or the inclusion of skeptical arguments, quite the contrary. Furthermore, skeptics were consequently labeled "deniers". There was only one message, an apocalyptic one, with the respective promise of salvation; sometimes the discourse almost switched into a religious sermon: once we behave climate friendly, there won't be any storms or other natural disasters anymore.

3) As far as we have seen, almost every local presentation started with a presentation of recent disasters all around the globe. The local dimension was represented only in the language of the expert-presenter; the local dimension appeared as constructed, somehow staged, with a strong focus on an US audience. Otherwise one would have made sure that truly local "experts" would have prepared their version of the "one" message; instead, the panels of experts were made up to large extent by Americans (or "global" experts arguing in the Anglo-Saxon academic tradition). The omni-present Al Gore exemplified this predominantly global approach – the direction of climate discourse was mostly from the global to the local, and not the other way round. The intended local - global connection doesn't work or was hardly seen. The omni-present round table with (global) experts and usually a sexy female moderator annihilated the local dimension. Thus, this global show didn't succeed in localizing global climate discourse or rooting it in the respective societies. Interesting approaches, such as the mentioning of indigenous Maori weather forecast systems, which due to climate change become fallible, only served as folklore; there was no real interest in the reality of such claims. Highly speculative (and deterministic) assertions such as the interpretation of the Arab upheavals as a result of global warming were made repeatedly, sold as scientific knowledge and without being challenged.

Thus, in our view the telethon was a (legitimate) political campaign concerning climate politics, predominantly addressed at an American audience; in its since "Inconvenient Truth" unchanged message and iconography it manifests a crisis of representation, which easily may turn out counterproductive in the long run; and in terms of the relation of global and local, it still fosters a very naïve understanding of the global – local nexus. But who knows how people in Beijing, Auckland or Mexico City see this. Maybe Al Gore's message resonates completely different in other places. For many people out there, it may be locally extremely important to have the authority of a world famous American politician at hand in order to back up their environmental or other political fights.