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Factuality of Truth:
An Alternative Look at Popular Environmental Documentary Film Narratives

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Author's declaration

No portion of the work referred to in this thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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Documentary film has become an important arena for the construction of concepts and meanings in the environmental field. Although this is often not the case, many people still believe in the factuality of documentary films and their ability to convey an objective view of the world. While such films have already received academic attention, most research from an environmental point of view has focused on the science in such movies or alternatively on their rhetorical effectiveness with little attention paid to how such narratives construct environmental problems in relation to broader sociopolitical realities. This research aims to fill this research gap and by exploring the narratives of *An Inconvenient Truth* and *Home* discusses the consequences of the different ways of constructing environmental problems in relation to sociopolitical realities. The effects of differing rhetorical contexts and purposes in the two analyzed films suggest that these will have a severe impact on the outcomes of the communication. But as the conclusions will show, the two analyzed films are also reflecting the growing divide in the environmental discourse- one between environmentalism calling for sweeping social transformations and neoliberal environmentalism seeking to solve the problems within current political and social systems.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

The environmental problems faced by our 21st century societies are, just as they're growing in their gravity, becoming a Big Story, receiving increasing coverage by the media, and even finding their place in popular culture (Daniels and Endfield 2009). Based on the research of how the media influenced, indeed shaped political elections, an agenda-setting theory was developed telling us that the issues declared most important by media-consumers will be the issues that the media cover widely and heavily (McCombs and Shaw 1972; McLeod et al. 1974; Cook *et al.* 1983). Indeed, Nelkin (1987) and Wilson (1995) confirm that most of general public's knowledge about environmental issues and the science behind them comes from the mass media, pointing out the significant role played by mass media in the public's cognition and perception of environmental issues (Lowe et al. 2006). Sachsman (1996) as well as Neuzil and Kovarik (1996) have confirmed this finding in their work but they also went on to point out that so-formed public opinion has, with more or less success, focused and influenced policy attention. As a result, much academic attention was turned to analysis of media narratives of environmental issues, particularly those of climate change.

Environmental issues have recently even found their place in popular media forms such as blockbuster film (for instance the 2000 *Erin Brockovich* and 2004 *The Day After Tomorrow*) or 'popular' documentaries such as Albert Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* (USA, 2006) or recently released *Home* (France, 2009). As these forms reach extremely wide audiences, particular academic attention was paid to the environmental narratives in such rhetorical works, resulting in a multitude of various academic analysis and writings on both blockbuster films (*Erin Brockovitch* and *The Day After Tomorrow)* and documentary *An Inconvenient*

Truth (no published analysis of *Home* was found by your author, probably due to the film's recent release). Yet most of this research has focused on representability of environmental (climate change) science or alternatively on the rhetorical effectiveness and impact of such works, with little attention paid to how the environmental problems are framed in wider sociopolitical contexts and what are the underlying assumptions about the nature of such problems. In other words, most of the research focuses on whether, and/or how effectively, the narratives in these films convey the scientific-"why" environmental problems occur but do not pay much attention to how these narratives deal with the question of the wider-social "why" and "how" environmental problems occur and (differently) affect both human and non-human life. That most of our environmental dislocations are caused by human intervention, or are anthropogenic in origin, is an outdated debate and most (or all) environmental rhetoric will point to this, but whether these anthropogenic causes are ethical, technical, political, social(ized) or individual(ized) remains contested. These different understandings, or rather assumptions, will greatly determine the rhetorical contexts and purposes, and will directly impact the proposed solutions to growing environmental dislocations. Murray Bookchin has, back in 1962, in his book *Our Synthetic Environment*, made a distinction between "ecology"-which aims at transforming society, and "environmentalism"-which seeks to 'solve' these problems within current sociopolitical arrangements, or in his words – to ameliorate the worst aspects of capitalist economy. Without retaining Bookchin's ecology-environmentalism terminology, I find the distinction of particular importance for the analysis of environmental narratives. It is between these two understandings of environmental problems and resulting approaches to solving them that I want to locate popular environmental documentary film rhetoric, namely that of *An Inconvenient Truth* and *Home*, and discuss both the assumptions and implications of these two approaches.

1.1 Research objectives

The central contribution this thesis seeks to make to the study of popular public communication of environmental issues is twofold. First, it seeks to analyze this communication in light of how environmental problems are framed in sociopolitical contexts and in relation to other social issues; namely, what are the underlying assumptions about their causes, effects and resulting solutions to these problems. Secondly, this thesis seeks to give a more general critique of the popular environmental rhetoric and put forward discussions about the relatedness between environmental and other social, political, ethical, and other problems, as isolating any problem from the complex realities where everything is indeed connected, would be but a crude misrepresentation of reality.

1.2 Scope of the Study

Investigating, in whatever manner, 'popular public communication of environmental issues' is an extremely large task at hand, because of the multitude of forms as well as the extent of such communication. Due to time limitations of my study and the fact that I am interested in communication of environmental issues that reaches the widest possible global audiences, I have decided to limit my study to communication of environmental issues in popular documentary film rhetoric. Another reason why I find the documentary form important for my analysis is the fact that such films have historically been, and to a large extent still are considered 'factual' (Nichols 1991; Corner 2000). Although less and less people believe that documentary films convey an objective view of the world, the significant number of publics who still do believe in the factuality of these films further calls for investigating this 'factuality'

(Nichols 1991; Corner 2000). Yet, unlike most analysis performed by environmental activists, students and academics alike, I want to focus not on how these films 'represent' the science behind environmental problems but the sociopolitical realities in which they come to life.

Further focusing my study, I aimed at documentary films which have, for one reason or another, managed to reach global audiences and earn global recognition by environmental professionals, media as well as lay publics. Consulting both academic and popular literature, I have identified two such documentary films:

1. *An Inconvenient Truth* – released in 2006, a documentary on Al Gore's campaign to make the issue of global warming a recognized problem was shown at Universities but also theatres worldwide. With no spectacular visual effects, and pure, though mostly simplified, science this documentary became popular across the world and according to Christoff (2009), it has received senior political leaders' endorsement in countries like Germany, United Kingdom, Belgium and Spain. Furthermore, the film has even become a required part of the science curriculum in Germany and United Kingdom (Christoff 2009).

2. *Home-* a movie by the famous French photographer Yann Arthus-Bertrand about the dangers human activities pose to planet Earth, premiered on June 5, 2009 around the globe in free public screenings on squares, theatres and even on television. With simultaneous release in 181 countries across 5 continents in DVD and Blu-ray formats, backed by 81 television stations who broadcasted the movie and outdoor screenings in 70 different countries on that day, the movie broke the world record for the largest film release in history (Lucas 2009). Soon after its premiere, the movie was released free of charge on the Internet. It can be viewed in

14 different languages (Lucas 2009) on YouTube and also downloaded for free from many legal (and illegal) torrent sites. It has already reached around 20 million combined views on YouTube alone (statistics from YouTube, April 8, 2010).

Chapter 2 – Methods

Expanding on the distinction between what Bookchin (1962) initially (both cleverly and clumsily) named 'ecology' and 'environmentalism', and what is essentially a distinction between a broader (sociopolitical) and a narrow (scientific/technocapitalist) approach to environmental problems, I built a multi-theoretical framework for my analysis focusing on the sociopolitical aspects of both the causes and solutions to our growing environmental problems.

With this main distinction in mind, I went on to analyze the narratives of the two films, attempting to locate them in relation to how they construct the causes of and (resulting) solutions to environmental problems they have as their main theme. In a broader framework, analyzing the ethos of the narrator, the narrative logic (logos) and the emotional appeal (pathos) of the film's narratives, I focused on, and later discussed, these main questions:

➢ Are environmental issues placed in broader sociopolitical contexts, and if so –how?

➢ What are, according to these narratives, the causes of our environmental dislocations?

➢ What are the proposed (resulting) solutions?

➢ Are solutions given or subject to negotiation? (Are audiences called upon to participate in these negotiations?)

➢ Do these narratives call for action and if so- what kind of action? (Individual? Social? For or against what? To change what exactly?)

The *ethos-logos-pathos* framework I applied to my study is based on Aristotle's writings on the rhetorical method. Namely, Aristotle (1967, 1984) differentiates between these three basic

elements of rhetoric and explains how, in order to make arguments resonate with others in persuasive ways, the rhetor (exponent of rhetoric) must combine the effects of all three elements, bringing opposing opinions, possibilities and examples together. This is due to the fact that arguments do not operate in an unchanging order of truths, but rather in a world of different, often opposing, opinions – resulting in that their *logos* (logic) is not based on syllogism, but rather enthymeme (Aristotle 1984). Thus *logos*, the clarity, integrity and utility of an argument, is not enough on its own to persuade the audience, so the rhetor should not (indeed mustn't) rely solely on the logic of his argumentation. While arguments which are clear and advocate useful practices do tend to overheard 'bad' ones, Aristotle (1984) points out that the effectiveness of argumentation will also greatly be determined by who is giving the argument. Namely, people are much more willing to <u>listen to</u> someone of standing and repute – hence a concern for how is the rhetor regarded. This regard for the exponent of rhetoric is what Aristotle (1967, 1984) names and means by *ethos*, and explains with numerous elements that inspire confidence in him, such as his dress, manners, known demeanor and background and most of all the integrity of his character. But Aristotle (1967, 1984) goes further and points out that developing a good or strong *ethos* is essentially a relational task, because it depends on how the rhetor's virtue is judged by the audience. Thus the rhetor must understand, and indeed shape, the emotional state as well as opinions inhering in the audience (Aristotle 1984). In other words, he needs to attend to the emotional appeal, or *pathos*, understanding what motivates, enlivens, calms or arouses audience's sympathy and, conversely, what angers, irritates or leads them to stupor.

The analysis was performed directly, by carefully watching the films and taking notes on all the research questions. Additionally, I have obtained scripts for both films and analyzed them, searching for main themes, and expanding the visual analysis of the films with written data. In

the first instance I watched both films approximately 10 times, usually focusing on a single research question each time and taking notes. Only after this initial analysis and answering the research questions, I turned to the scripts, carefully reading them and answering the same research questions, this time based on the scripts. After analyzing the scripts, I revisited watching certain parts of the movies where the analysis of the scripts gave more, or somewhat inconsistent, results compared to the initial visual analysis. Once the analysis was rounded and results systematically written down, I turned to previous analysis of *An Inconvenient Truth*, to support my findings or add to my analysis. While *An Inconvenient Truth* has been subject to numerous research (i.e. Johnson 2009; Spoel et al. 2009; Rosteck and Frentz 2009), and this previous research utilized in my analysis, it seems that no analysis, of any kind, of *Home* has been published yet, almost a year after the film premiered, at least not to my knowledge and despite all my efforts to obtain such publications. Whether premier analysis of *Home* or not, this analysis rested solely on the work of your author.

Chapter 3 – Theoretical framework and literature review

In the following section of my thesis I will summarize the literature which allowed me to place environmental problems in a broader sociopolitical frame, discussing their relation to what is often, from an 'environmental' perspective, seen as 'other social issues' and discussing not their scientific, but sociopolitical causes and effects. This short literature review that I will present will also work to show the multi-theoretical framework that I applied to my study of the two documentary films, or rather the rhetoric of these films.

3.1 On 'environmental' and 'social' issues

Main images and indeed dominant environmental rhetoric, seldom address the problem of power structures and relations of different parts of the world that are producing and suffering uneven damage to both human and non-human life (Harvey 1996). When 'mankind' as a term is used in dominant environmental (particularly climate change) rhetoric (and it most often is) we are rendered helpless in thinking about how different groups of people not only contribute to the problem, but how they will, or will not suffer from those environmental problems (Branston 2007). We hear (and talk) of 'mankind' and 'humanity' as if women were equitable with men, people of color with 'whites', young with old, rich with poor, educated with uneducated, gay and lesbian with straight, Christian with Muslim with Jewish with… atheist[1],

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[1] While typing the different religions, not aware of the fact that they should be capitalized, Microsoft Word 2007 knew only how to 'autocorrect' the Christian. The others remained underlined as 'incorrect'. Talk about inequalities.

First World with the Third and (or) exploiters with the exploited. And these are but some examples.

It in fact genders the entire debate unhelpfully, just as the term 'the planet' arguably marginalizes different ways of envisaging eco-politics (Branston 2007). It is not about 'saving the planet' (as most environmental rhetoric put it) –because the planet will survive, and continue to live, like it has many times in the past, mutating and becoming home for a new (group of) dominant species. It is about saving the planet as we know it. It is about saving 'the world'. It is, above all, and in all honesty, about saving our own lives (and ways of living) and the lives of our children being a part of that world. Even 'Nature' and 'the natural' are themselves quite often gendered when imagined as embodying, how Branston (2007, p. 213; emphasis added) puts it "quite simply and ahistorically - the values, practices and diversity that are needed for _human_ survival". Not to mention when, and that's most often the case, Nature is defined apart from human life, and from 'society'.

Indeed, the environmental movement and the dominant environmental rhetoric has long upheld western cultures' categorical distinction between 'Nature' and 'Society', which resulted in both a misconstruction of environmental problems but has also crippled coalition politics (Bookchin 1990; Di Chiro 1992, 2008; Darnovsky 1992; Schlosberg 1999). This categorical distinction has only replicated itself in how the movement categorically differentiates between 'environmental' and 'non-environmental' ('other social') issues leading to politics of exclusion rather than inclusion. By narrowly framing what counts as 'environmental', the movement and its proponents have, as Di Chiro puts it (2008, p. 279) "shot itself [sic] in the foot".

Just as Nature knows not of our borders between nation states, reacting and producing consequences halfway around the globe to where we act, it too does not know our borders between one class of people and another, one gender and another, one race, sexuality, culture… and another. Nature is all-encompassing and does not differentiate between the problems that our societies have classified as 'environmental' and 'social', especially when the two are so intertwined, causing and aggravating each other. Indeed, detaching environmental from social problems or not recognizing their crucial relationship would be misconstruing the sources of our rising environmental dislocations. How humans deal with each other is reflected in how they deal with Nature (in fact it IS how they deal with Nature) and is crucial in tackling ecological crisis.

Cultural anthropologist Mary Douglas (1985) defined Nature as an indicator of social morals, taking form of a cruel judge or a victim of a generalized moral disorder. Indeed, a constructionist view of Nature, where it could be defined as a cognitive mirror of the society itself, calls for a society of freedom, equality and justice. The class relationships and hierarchical mentality that infuse our society allow for the very idea of dominating Nature (Bookchin 1993). Not realizing this leads to false blames on technology or population growth, instead of focusing on the root causes such as industrial expansion, trade for profit and the notion of progress structured around the brutally competitive 'grow or die' imperative of the scrupulously impersonal, self-operating mechanisms of the present neoliberal market society. As Bookchin (1993) notes, this will cause us to wrongly focus on the symptoms of a harsh social pathology, instead of on the pathology itself, and direct our efforts towards goals that are limited and whose attainment is not curative but cosmetic. Already we are witnessing the achievements such as recycling, conserving, clean energy production etc. being unequally distributed and publicized and (contributing to) the inequality gaps becoming larger by the day.

The very achievements that are supposed to rid us of our environmental crisis are not quite working- and why? Precisely because of those 'non-environmental' issues. Not to mention the fact that the very environmental crisis we are facing is not caused equally by all the people and parts of the world. Need I say why? It is safe to say that the reasons are not 'environmental'.

Most environmental problems do impact unevenly but not so much randomly. They are foreseeable and therefore preventable, yet they will, and already are, causing certain classes of people to vanish or have their lives disastrously transformed (Branston 2007) - and, arguably, certain parts of the world to be more affected by environmental problems than others. Other classes of human life, bunkered within their wealth and power, will not be as affected nor will the places they inhabit. It is precisely these, already established and existing (and growing!), inequalities of many kinds- location, race, gender, class, education, health, age, etc. – that will cause some parts of the world to be drained, flooded, scorched, overexploited, devoid of any life and tipped beyond any sustainable point.

If framed in such a way, environmental problems require different approaches and indeed different solutions to those offered by the theorists and movements alike who see and attempt to solve environmental problems apart from these 'other', 'non-environmental', 'social' issues. Although the body of literature that addresses 'environmentalism' in this way is not particularly large, it is characterized by writings of brilliant minds such as Benton, Bookchin, Darnovsky, Di Chiro, Dryzek, Liverman, Monbiot, Schlosberg, Zizek etc. They have all, along with a host of other authors, recognized and pointed out that what is popularly referred to as 'environmental' issues (pollution, global warming, natural resource conservation, species extinction, overpopulation*, etc.) and 'social' issues (social inequality, poverty, jobs, housing, transportation, public health, violence, overpopulation*, etc.) are inextricably linked in a

vicious circle where one set of problems exacerbates the other. It is therefore necessary to approach these problems together as singling them out will prove, indeed has proved, to be ineffective. Most of these authors also agree in that the main cause, or the driving force to say the least, of all of these (growing) problems is our current sociopolitical arrangement structured around the neoliberal market, and argue that in order to truly confront the problems, significant social and political transformations are required (Bookchin 1962, 1986, 1990, 1993, 2005; Branston 2007; Darnovsky 1992; Di Chiro 1992, 2008; Dryzek 2000; Schlosberg 1999)

Although differing in the kind and extent of sociopolitical transformations they call for (and it is not my intention here to adjudicate between this) they unanimously speak out against, what Karren Bakker (Page and Bakker 2005) has called – "neoliberalising nature". They all see the current practice of neoliberal 'free market environmentalism' not only failing us, but even driving us further into environmental (and social) crisis.

3.2 On 'neoliberalism' and 'environmentalism'

In recent decades we have been witnessing the rapid global expansion of the neoliberal project, not just as a political economic project but even presenting itself as a project of environmental governance. Building on the Foucauldian gevernmentality theory, McCarthy and Prudham (2004) have indeed conceptualized neoliberalism as being constituted by/of processes of socio-environmental change. Cox (1985) as well as Feeny et al. (1990) have previously discussed such processes pointing to the enclosing of the commons in order to, for instance, grow capitalist farming operations that are driven by export.

Building on Locke's ideological and discursive foundations (Locke and Peardon 1952 (1690)), the neoliberal project has sought to detach nature from the complex social constraints and place it under the self-regulating market's control (Polanyi 1944). The result, as McCarthy and Prudham point out (2004, p. 276) is "jump-starting capitalism through primitive accumulation". Discussing the example of water supply's privatization, Harvey (2003) names this "accumulation by dispossession" and points out that the result of such enclosure of public assets by privatistic profit interest is social inequity. Indeed, the central idea here, and even Locke emphasized this, is that the property rights over land, particularly individual, are foundational for a new social order. For Locke, it was a 'just and more efficient' social order that is to replace the authoritarian and feudal regimes (Barry 1999), but our contemporary practice of neoliberal privatization, commoditization and commercialization of the commons reveals itself as being far from 'just', and in fact results in aggravating social inequity, as Harvey (2003) pointed out. The main idea here is that far from being driven by the impulse to protect or sensibly use nature, the neoliberal project –even when presenting itself as environmental governmentality, works to legitimize particular social orders.

McCarthy and Prudham (2004) remind us that 'environmentalism' and 'neoliberalism' have long been fierce enemies. In fact, they contend that the environmental laws, regulations, norms and constituencies that proliferated in the Keynesian state, constraining capitalist 'growth', have been no less central to neoliberal attacks than labor and social entitlement programs (McCarthy and Prudham 2004). Modern-day opposition is not much different with new environmental and social movements organizing around issues that directly question and contest neoliberal efforts to dissolve social controls and regulations that are governing environmental transformations (Bornstein 2009; McCarthy and Prudham 2004). Perhaps the

best evidence for this is the fact that defining moments for neoliberalism in the U.S. such as the "Reagan revolution", "Contract with America" and the WTO Seattle meeting in 1999 have all failed in particular because of questions of environmental standards and regulation (McCarthy and Prudham 2004). Bornstein (2009) expands this list to include the 2000 meetings in Washington (IMF) and Prague (IMF and the World Bank), 2001 Quebec (FTAA) and Genoa (G8) and 2003 FTAA meetings in Miami. The 2009 Copenhagen fiasco laments the whole list.

But Copenhagen reminds us of another story. Namely, while it is true that 'environmentalism' has historically been resisting 'neoliberalism', and the other way around, it is also evident that they have both shaped each other through these confrontations. They have both incorporated the other's elements and resulted in new forms of both environmentalism and neoliberalism (McCarthy and Prudham 2004). On one hand, some environmentalists have incorporated the neoliberal discourse and this resulted in the creation of the "free market environmentalism". What once would have been considered an oxymoron, 'free market environmentalism' became a strong discourse in the last two decades and introduced 'solutions' such as tradable fishing quotas, pollution emission permits or fees for public goods (McCarthy and Prudham 2004). On the other hand, we have been witnessing the 'greening' of neoliberal institutions such as the World Bank, but also corporations that are now full of green-talk and 'sustainable practices' (Goldman 2001).

By incorporating 'environmentalism' (or rather environmentalist talk), the central institutions of neoliberlism have succeeded in smoothing the 'roll out' of neoliberalizations that proves much more effective than previous outright dismissals of environmental concerns (McCarthy and Prudham 2004). Yet, I find myself sharing Jessop's (2002) suspicion to how true these transformations are. Our faith in such cultural shifts, combined with the current practice of

direct citizen pressure to 'green capitalism' is ultimately very much in line with original neoliberal pressures for self-regulation and (neo)corporatism (Jessop 2002).

In fact – just like Di Chiro (2008) said that by narrowly framing what is 'environmental' the movement shot itself in the foot - I feel that by accepting the neoliberal discourse and the proposed corporate green-wash, the movement has shot itself in the other foot.

Albert Einstein defined insanity as doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. Instead of allowing cosmetic changes to the system, which continues the same practices but with a new face-lift, we need a system change. We need, as Soper (2007) points out, new ways of living, consuming and sharing resources – bit more than that, we need this to be perceived as 'smart' and 'cool' and a desirable alternative to the current oppressive routines and addictions that are causing grievous environmental (and 'other social') problems.

3.3 Public sphere(s) – a place for action!

Environmental stewardship is an issue that is obviously, if not by definition, a collective issue so it seems redundant to point out that it should lend itself to collective mobilization. Yet, the reality is that not only is it not redundant but indeed necessary to lament this in the face of personalistic, consumer-based solutions to environmental problems that have recently flooded us. While we certainly have to work individually as well, this is not as consumers but as citizens, speaking out first in our immediate surroundings, our community, and then utilizing all available media. We need to act as citizens utilizing our historical place for democratic deliberation and debate between the state and the private – our local and global public spheres.

But the public sphere relied on a condition that has arguably transformed over the last century – and that is the power held by the state(s).

The brutal form of neo-liberalism that the world has seen develop over the last thirty years (Giroux 2005), has constantly and increasingly taken the power from the state and shifted it to the market and the corporations or organizations that dominate the market. As Giroux (2005) points out, markets have become the driving force of everyday life and they have disparaged governments as incompetent and threatening to individual freedoms. They have almost completely taken power away from the state and the citizens and reduced citizenship to the function of consumerism, while at the same time privatization, deregulation and other neoliberal processes almost completely freed them from any social control (Tabb 2003).

As we are witnessing the change in this fundamental condition with most power shifting from the state(s) to the market(s) – the very nature and functions of the civil society and the public sphere come under question. As Giroux(2005) points out, within the discourse of neoliberalism there is no critical vocabulary for speaking about democratic projects of social and political transformations, and it offers no way of talking about the fundamentals of critical citizenship, civic life and substantive democracy. Or to quote Buck-Morss (2003, 65-66) who says that neoliberalism "eliminates the very possibility of critical thinking, without which democratic debate becomes impossible". And neoliberalisation seems to be an almost unstoppable process taking over the whole world in the process of globalization and with the institutions such as the World Bank (WB), International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Trade Organization (WTO) that pose dire restrictions and prescribe the same form of market-capitalism to third world or 'semi-peripheral' countries that in the process become clients of the wealthy nations (Aronowitz and Gautney 2003).

Indeed, how do we talk about civil society and public spheres if the neoliberal processes, especially in the last three decades, have eliminated their very function or, at best, made it very limited with a promise of eliminating it in the near future?

Well, if we are to believe Alain Tourmaline (2001) who argues that neoliberal globalization has not yet completely dissolved us of our capacity for political action, there is still a way. But it does require strong political action the roots of which we have been able to see in the recent history. I am of course, talking about the rise of the anti-globalization (or rather alter-globalization or counter-hegemonic globalization) movement here and the growing population of students, intellectuals, community activists, labor organizers and a host of individuals and groups that have been challenging the "corporate capitalist fairytale of neoliberalism" (Giroux 2005:3) and refusing to watch democracy be privatized. But more so than just this movement alone, we need to see (and participate in) alliances made between various movements - the alter-globalization, the human rights, the environmental, the women's, the peace movement and others - across all boarders, not only to struggle against the privatization of democracy and corporate domination, but to reclaim the public spheres (give them back to the publics - citizens) and create a new political culture, political language and set of relations. Only then can we truly talk of global public spheres and a civil society that are not stripped away from its very function of questioning and changing the power relations and impacting decisions that influence our very lives.

Is this even possible? I'll end with the slogan of most counter hegemonic globalization movements – "Another World Is Possible!"

CHAPTER 4 – OVERVIEW AND SYNOPSIS OF THE FILMS

4.1 An Inconvenient Truth

An Inconvenient Truth is a documentary film directed by Davis Guggenheim and released in 2006, about the former U.S. Vice President Albert Gore's crusade to educate people about climate change. It premiered at the 2006 Sundance Film Festival, but within the first year it became a box-office hit, officially released in 30 countries over three continents and becoming forth on the list of all-time highest grossing documentary films in the U.S. (Christoff 2009). The book that accompanied the movie *An Inconvenient Truth: The Planetary Emergency of Global Warming and What We Can Do About It* (2006), had already sold 850 000 copies by March 2007 (Christoff 2009) while the "young person's" edition *An Inconvenient Truth: The Crisis of Global Warming* (2006) has gone through ten printings (Rosteck and Frentz 2009). Mostly due to this success and the contribution to popular culture, the film also won two Academy Awards for Best Documentary Feature and Best Original Song (Christoff 2009). The final crowning of film's (or Gore's?) success came when Gore became a Nobel Laureate, winning the Peace prize alongside the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), or 2500 IPCC scientists to be exact (Rosteck and Frentz 2009; Christoff 2009).

Since its release, the film has been credited for raising international awareness about climate change and recuperating the environmental movement. Perhaps the greatest acknowledgement of all was the fact that, according to Christoff (2009), the film has received senior political leaders' endorsement in countries like Germany, United Kingdom, Belgium and Spain.

Furthermore, *An Inconvenient Truth* has even become a required part of the science curriculum in Germany and United Kingdom (Christoff 2009).

The film is essentially a recording of the former U.S. vice president Al Gore's multimedia presentation in which he discusses the science behind climate change and explains how it is not only a scientific fact, rather than a theory, but that it has already begun to affect our planet and requires urgent action if we are to avoid dire consequences. It is a recording of a presentation that Gore has given across the planet but, as he says at the beginning – he feels that he failed to get the message across. In other words, it is an attempt to finally reach the widest possible audiences using the film media.

Although the primary thrust of the film is the multimedia lecture delivered by Gore, the film also comprises clips documenting Gore's political life, as well as some fragments from his personal life that accompany the climate change narrative. The result is a balanced film which is nominally 'about' climate change, but is also obviously about the hero who's telling the climate change story – Albert Gore. Although at first it might seem that the two stories are unrelated, in effect they work to strengthen each other, as the way in which they are intertwined is that the personal stories are paralleled by climate change stories. Namely, the rise of climate change knowledge is paralleled by Gore's rise as a politician, and then Gore's political 'fall' (or the failure to elect Gore as president) is reflected in the failure to address the problem of climate change. As a result, the story of climate change is personalized bringing it closer to the audiences, while at the same time the story of Gore is 'scientifitized' giving him greater authority.

The presentation part of the film is structured as most environmental rhetoric about climate change – namely, the first portion of the lecture illustrates the science behind climate change

and points to the severity of the problem, culminating with apocalyptic predictions of the future, while the second part (which is disproportionately shorter compared to the first) serves to motivate the audiences and give them both hope for 'salvation' as well as prescriptions for how to reach this salvation.

Throughout the lecture, Gore effectively utilizes different types of rhetoric, leading the audiences to the particular type of conclusions and solutions which he conveys at the end. The analysis will examine these types of rhetoric as well as Gore's construction and solution to climate change.

4.1.1 Synopsis of An Inconvenient Truth

The narrative of *An Inconvenient Truth* begins with an explanation of what climate change is and how it occurs. Gore here utilizes both a standard scientific explanation aided by computer graphics that visualize the theory, and a cartoon (taken from the animated series "Futurama") that gives a humorous explanation, placed in a distant future, of a skeptic understanding of climate change. After briefly describing what climate change is, and showing a graph of atmospheric CO2 concentration since modern measurements started in 1958, Gore continues to frame a causal argument for climate change in terms of ice core evidence. Describing, in approachable and observable ways, how 'ice has stories to tell', Gore tells the audience how scientists can measure both the atmospheric temperature and CO2 levels using oxygen that is trapped in layers and layers of annual snowfall, going as far back as 650,000 years when glaciers from Antarctica are studied. This short introductory explanation prepares the audience to receive the main part of his lecture, that is – the proof of climate change, presented as a

historical correlation of atmospheric CO2 and temperature levels. This information is given in graph form, a typical 'trustworthy' scientific representation, that is constructed in such a manner that it is easy to see the points Gore wants to emphasize. While using the first graph (the historical temperature variance) to discredit some of the so-called skeptic arguments (those of historical warming periods that could classify the current climate change as a 'natural', cyclical phenomena), Gore makes his point stronger and points to the magnitude of current temperature increase. He then introduces a graph that shows both the temperature and CO2 level variance over the last 650,000 years, but with the present data missing. In other words, he shows the data just before CO2 levels started to rise steeply. By showing relatively stable oscillations in both CO2 levels and temperature and pointing out to their correlation (he says that the relationship is complicated but that it is the "one relationship that is far more powerful than all the others"), he continues to extend the CO2 line to show the current levels. Leaving the audience in awe due to the dramatic increase of atmospheric CO2, he continues to show the projected level 50 years from now (if we are to continue with 'unrestricted' burning of fossil fuels), dwarfing the whole graph and indeed, the audience. But what he doesn't show is the current and projected temperature increase. Instead, he leaves it to us – the audience, having been told that the relationship between atmospheric CO2 and temperature is 'far more powerful than all the others', to construct our own vision of what it means and what kind of temperature increase we can expect. After showing us the increase trend of atmospheric CO2 and hinting what it might mean and how it might reflect on the temperature, Gore continues to show that the climate is indeed already changing. Perhaps the strongest evidence he presents to corroborate the story so far is that the 10 warmest (overall) years, since we started recording temperature, all occurred in the last 14 years, that is 14 years prior to 2006 when the film was made. He then establishes a causal relationship between the temperature changes and various climactic changes across the globe and discusses extreme weather patterns, droughts,

floods, forest fires, melting glaciers and how these are all tied together in a fragile climactic balance that is easily disturbed by the smallest temperature changes. He then continues to discuss the resulting consequences to both human and non-human life, still backing his claims up by various scientific findings and visual representations of the presented information.

He sums up his story by saying that "we are witnessing a collision between our civilization and the earth" and names three factors that are causing this collision – population growth, scientific and technological revolution that is not accompanied by change of 'habits' and finally what could be called a way of thinking or the lack of political will. While blames on overpopulation and technology (or the way it is used) is nothing new to environmental rhetoric – the third culprit, 'the way of thinking' Gore explains by using a commonplace example of a frog that, when sitting in water that is slowly brought to boil, will not leave the pot. It will sit there until, Gore surprises us, it is rescued. And then he compares our collective mentality with the mentality of the frog and, pointing to the gradualness of our climate change predicament, posits that we too need to be rescued. (I suppose Gore is this rescuing hand that is to take us out of the boiling water.)

After taking on the skeptics for the last time, or rather pointing out that there is no scientific disagreement about climate change but that it is the affected industry that creates this skepticism (and this is done with a study of scientific and newspaper articles and paralleling the creation of climate change skepticism with the historical creation of skepticism about the effects of smoking on health), Gore concludes with a message that all the solutions we need to solve our climate change problems are already present. He says we are all causing climate change and we have the power to change because it ultimately it depends on <u>what</u> we buy. With the final graph (referring only to the U.S. GHG emissions) Gore demonstrates that if we

use more efficient electric appliances, light bulbs, cars, by switching to green energy sources, and various other efficiency techniques, we (the U.S.) can lower our (their) GHG emissions by 50 percent in the next 45 years. In other words, the projected emissions for year 2050 can be lower than those from the 1970. And just as the film ends and we start seeing the credits, we are reminded once again that it's all in our hands. We are given advices on how to start this change by using more efficient electric appliances, light bulbs, hybrid cars, switching to renewable energy, driving less and using mass transit or riding a bike or walking more, and finally writing to congress and if they don't listen – running for congress!

4.2 Home

On June 5, 2009, a movie entitled *"Home"* by the famous French photographer Yann Arthus-Bertrand, about the dangers human activities pose to planet Earth, premiered in France with a giant open-air screening on Champ-de-Mars in the heart of Paris. This public screening drew an estimated 20,000 people to the square but with free screenings of the movie offered by many theaters and a simultaneous broadcasting on France 2 national television channel – an estimated 8.3 million of people saw the movie that night in France (Lucas 2009). The European Elections took place a week after the film premiered and many political commentators expressed concerns that the movie screening may have had an immense effect on the results of the elections where ecologists made an unexpectedly high score and fell short of being France's second political party (Lucas 2009).

But that is just the story from France. That same day - the United Nations World Environment Day- June 5, 2009, the movie premiered around the globe. It was shown simultaneously in

cinemas across the world, broadcasted by numerous television channels and released on DVD and Blu-ray discs. With simultaneous release in 181 countries across 5 continents in DVD and Blu-ray formats, backed by 81 television stations who broadcasted the movie and outdoor screenings in 70 different countries on that day, the movie broke the world record for the largest film release in history (Lucas 2009).

But that is still not the end of the story. To allow viewers to go even further, four YouTube channels have also been created and five Google Maps that are to enable the public to support the film and its cause. After premiering on television, in cinemas and public screenings, the movie moved to its permanent home which is – the world wide web. Having no copyright, the movie is free for anyone to view. Online, the film can be seen anytime, from any place, on YouTube, but it is also available for download on numerous internet and legal (and illegal) torrent sites. The director Yann Arthus-Bertrand gave the copyrights up so the film could be shown to as many people as possible, meaning that it can be distributed, copied, uploaded, burned to DVD, etc., without restrictions if not altered or edited. As he said on the press conference held in Paris on May 5, 2009: "The benefits of this film cannot be counted in dollars, but in audience figures". He also, recognizing the power of the internet both as a global media and a global public sphere, at that same press conference stated that "The message carried by this film is extremely important because it highlights the issue of survival. We need accessible and powerful platforms like YouTube and Google Maps to reach the greatest numbers". Going further in reaching wide audiences, subtitles are available in most languages, while you can also watch the movie originally dubbed in 14 different languages (Lucas 2009).

All this effort in reaching wide audiences seems to have paid off, with around 20 million combined views on YouTube alone (statistics from YouTube, April 8, 2010). Although it is impossible to count how many times the movie has been downloaded from various internet and torrent sites, that number is surely well above the YouTube count as many people, including myself, are limited by their internet connection speed and unable to stream the movie directly from YouTube thus left only with the option of downloading it. Another important point to be made here is that, once downloaded, the movie(or movies in general) tend to be distributed among friends thus reaching much greater audiences. Having said that, I have already passed my copy of the movie to 5 friends and family members since I downloaded it less than a month ago.

4.2.1 Synopsis of Home

Home is a documentary which chronicles the evolution of life and present day state of the Earth. It captures the beauty and grandness of Earth's delicate ecosystems but also their fragility. It tells us the story and visually documents how we, as the dominant species, have long-term repercussions on the fate of the planet and all its inhabitants. A theme expressed throughout the documentary is that of linkage—how all organisms and the Earth are linked in a "delicate but crucial" natural balance with each other, and how no organism can be self-sufficient.

The movie begins before life occurred on our planet. We see and hear the story of barren volcanic landscapes and an atmosphere devoid of oxygen. Yet, the images we see are not computer graphics. They are filmed in present day in places that, except for the atmosphere,

haven't changed much and look just as the whole planet did some billions of years ago. And then we witness the beginning of the natural world, and hear the story of single cell organisms that fed on the heat energy of the Earth, all the way to single-celled algae developing at the edges of volcanic springs. We hear of their essential role in the evolution of photosynthesis and how they transformed the atmosphere and provided conditions for all future organisms to evolve. All the way to homo sapiens. The wise man. Us.

It took 4,3 billion years of shaping the planet for humans to come into being. And for the longest time, the human history was that of constant search for food. The movie here tells us, and visualizes, about the importance of the agricultural revolution and how it transformed the human fate. But the industrial revolution was soon to follow, transforming, yet again, not just the fate of humans- but of the whole planet and all its inhabitants. Here comes the main theme of the film. We (humans) have managed to change the face of the planet more radically in the last 50 years, in one lifetime, than all previous generations. The remaining hour of the film shows this. With beautiful, yet frightening aerial photography the movie documents the destruction and havoc we wreak on the Earth. We see the true price of our progress. Landscapes devoid of life, rivers depleted of water, unsustainable practices of agriculture based on 'fossil water', and cities flooded by 'economic refugees'. The population increased threefold in the last 60 years and continues to rise. And so do inequality gaps. We see 'the others' that we often talk about but rarely get to see. And we hear their story. We see and hear how melting glaciers, rising sea levels and changing weather patterns are ravaging the people who have least to do with climate change. And in the end we are given harsh facts. We internalize the numbers and the percentages of what we have been watching in the last hour. We quantify the (un)quantifiable and are left to make our own judgments of what it means for our future and the future of the Earth. Our home.

What the movie leaves us with is a message repeated several times towards its end – "It's too late to be a pessimist". In its last minutes, the movie documents and tells about sustainable practices already present in the world. Practices and experiments that are "*examples that testify to a new awareness and lay down markers for a new human adventure based on moderation, intelligence and sharing*". And we are left with one final thought:

"We know that the solutions are there today. We all have the power to change. So what are we waiting for? "

CHAPTER 5 – RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH AND HOME

Both *Home* and *An Inconvenient Truth* employ narrative types of communication although somewhat different from one another. Narratives are a ''method of recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events which actually . . . occurred'' (Labov 1972, pp. 359-360). In lay terms, narratives can be defined as stories that unfold in a linear fashion, and are often, or even always, used when teaching a particular lesion or moral (Shanahan and McComas 1999). Still, the temporal structure of the events recounted differs in these two films. *Home* employs a typical chronological time sequence, whereas Gore, in *An Inconvenient Truth*, chooses how to order the events of the story. Barton and Barton (1988) remind us of this narratological difference, making a distinction between *fabula* (used in *Home*) and *sujet* (used in *An Inconvenient Truth*).

5.1 Ethos of Narrators

Both *Home* and *An Inconvenient Truth* make use of narrators whose ethos significantly contributes to the effectiveness of the story to be told. They are the same in that they both employ nonscientists to tell the story, which is essentially scientific, but they differ significantly in how they construct the ethos of these characters.

5.1.1 An Inconvenient Truth

While Gore is a published author and a speaker on environmental issues, this is something that the majority of audiences are not familiar with, but what they are familiar with is his career as a politician. Having been the U.S. Vice President for 8 years and twice the president candidate, Gore is not only familiar to the national public but also the majority of global publics. For those who somehow managed to miss his career as a politician, the film makes sure they catch up with this knowledge painting a picture of his rise and, well, not so much a 'fall' but what is rather depicted as a 'retreat' from the political arena. It also makes sure we catch up on Gore's political involvement in environmental questions and realize, if didn't know that by now, that the environmental concern is nothing new to Al Gore and that he has indeed dedicated, perhaps most of his time while in politics, to questions about the environment and particularly to the issue of climate change. Gore was there for the Rio Summit, he was a part of the U.S. delegation that was in Kyoto and signed the Accord which the U.S. Senate decided (voting 95-0) not to ratify, he published books and has given thousands of presentations and speeches about climate change across the world (Spoel et al. 2009). Although the original studio audience and the film audiences who saw the film right after it's release were not familiar with this, the fact that *An Inconvenient* Truth won two Academy awards and earned Al Gore a Nobel prize, certainly has an effect on people watching the film nowadays and further advances Gore's ethos.

An Inconvenient Truth relies greatly on Gore's situated ethos as a well known public figure but this situated ethos makes the whole rhetoric necessarily colored, particularly in the US context. While for those who share Gore's political opinions and beliefs, this works to strengthen the persuasiveness of his environmental communicator character, for those who do

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not share those opinions and beliefs – it introduces skepticism about the 'truth' of his environmental claims as well as his political motives. This turns out to be particularly problematic in the US context where there is a strong correlation between political views and opinions about climate change (see for instance the study of Allen *et al.* 2007).

By telling us (parts of) Gore's personal life story the film attempts to 'humanize' him and bring him closer to the audiences. Images and stories from his childhood, student days and family life all serve to show that Gore is a man not much different than anyone of us – his audience. Well, maybe a bit different in that, from the stories we hear and see, Gore seems to be driven, self-sacrificing, committed, socially concerned, experienced, knowledgeable, reflective… in other words he possesses all of these good traits that we can't say we all do. He appears like one of us, but just a little bit better. Indeed, what we too could be if we worked a little bit harder, were a little bit more concerned and reflective and willing to sacrifice some of our own personal interests for greater goods. In other words, Gore's character of a concerned, engaged, knowledgeable and self-sacrificing citizen is a perfect model and an inspiration to the audiences watching the film. Indeed, while on stage, Gore confirms all of these good traits but does even more to make the story he's telling credible. Not only is Gore himself knowledgeable about climate change but he is personal friends with the leading experts and scientists on these issues – so he tells us.*"A friend of mine, Tom Van Sant"; "My friend, the late Carl Sagan"; "I had a professor named Roger Revelle who was the first person to propose measuring carbon dioxide"; "a friend of mine just came back from Kilimanjaro"; "Another friend, Lonnie Thompson, studies glaciers"; "A friend of mine said in 1978..."; "A friend of mine just brought back some pictures of what's going on on Greenland right now"*[2].

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[2] Yet one of the rare examples where Gore speaks of people he has worked with but does not refer to them as 'friends' is when he mentions the stage crew who taught him how to use a

All of these friends allowed Gore to witness scientific breakthroughs in the domain of climate change science -firsthand. So not only is this science credible and trustworthy because - it's science, but also because Gore has seen the evidence himself. Indeed, this certainly has an effect on making his story seem more credible and trustworthy, but what it compromises is the character of Gore being 'one of the' or 'same as' the audience. We certainly don't have so many friends who are leading experts in the field of climate change science (otherwise we wouldn't need this lecture, would we?).

What further compromises this position is when Gore, while presenting a graph that shows the flux of CO_2 and temperature over time, says to the audience that the relationship between the two is "very complicated but…" and continues to give a simplified explanation of this relationship thus implicitly stating that the relationship is beyond the audience's comprehension (but not beyond his own). He so not only moves away from the audience that he was a part of, but also assumes the role of deciding what the public can (not) understand and furthermore what it needs (not) to know about climate change science (Spoel et al. 2009). This, coupled with some rhetorical techniques (for instance when he says that "this incidentally is the first time that anyone outside of a small group of scientists has seen this image" - making the audiences feel special, but making himself even more special) and indeed some camera techniques, as Spoel et al. (2009) pointed out (the use of low angle shots and dynamic camera changes) indeed works to bolster his character's ethos and portray him as credible and authoritative but does so at the price of reminding us of the power distance and inequalities at play.

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scissor lift. After all they are just technicians, and being friends with them would certainly not work to bolster his scientific authority and the character's ethos.

While attempts have been made to humanize and bring Gore's character closer to the audiences, we are still reminded at the end of the day that he is quite superior to us. Thus, this character, rather than bridging discourse communities in ways as to erase their boundaries; rather than bringing them closer to one another and instigating two-way communication processes; seems to validate the discourse boundaries and in the (same old) rational-instrumentalist information flow model attempts to pass-on information from one (scientific) to the (general public) other (of course - a 'simplified' version, one that is adapted to the general public's 'capacity to understand').

While made particularly powerful, the ethos of Gore's character combining a strong situated ethos and various techniques that further strengthen his environmental communicator ethos, is one that moves away from the audience and in reality ends up *informing*, rather than engaging, the audience in what is essentially a teacherly-preacherly manner. But this highly authoritative, yet seemingly friendly, character is not constructed so by coincidence. Such ethos was in fact necessary in passing on the messages of *An Inconvenient Truth*, as will be discussed further in the analysis.

The image of Gore in front of his presentation screen towards the end of the film perfectly illustrates the authority and strength of his character's ethos (Figure 1).

Fig. 1. The climate change 'prophet' (Source: Still image from the film)

5.2.1 Home

"Listen to me, please. You're like me, a Homo sapiens. A wise human."

These are the first words we hear when we start watching Home. The person telling us the story is one of us, same as you and me and everyone else who is watching the film. But we don't know who it is as we never get to see them during the film. Except for the familiar voice of homo sapiens Glenn Clouse telling the story in English or wise woman Selma Hayek telling the same story in Spanish, or Jacques Gamblin in French, or all those other familiar voices telling the same story in 14 different languages, we are not told who this person is. We are not told how they came to know this story. We are just told to *"listen carefully to this extraordinary story, which is yours, and decide what you want to do with it"*.

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Other than for those who recognize the voices, of indeed famous actors, used in the film, there obviously is no preexisting, situated ethos, attached to the narrator of *Home*. This can arguably turn out to have both a positive and a negative effect on the audiences. Certainly producing an audience that is so predisposed to listen to the story more openly, as it is not colored in any way by the situated ethos of the narrator, for some it may prove to lack authority, that we are so used to and even require in order to 'believe' the story. However, this is exactly the kind of communication that we rarely see, one that emphasizes equality of the narrator and the audience, and one that in doing so bridges the discursive boundaries between science (social) educators and the public. It is the kind of communication that at least attempts to erase some social hierarchies and put forward a greater degree of identification between the narrator, who knowledgeably talks of scientific issues and the history of our planet and societies, as well as questions of ethics and moral, and the lay public.

In the films' first half an hour, although telling a pure scientific story of life's history and the history of human societies, the narrator, discussing this in both substantive and accessible ways, seems to take an outsider perspective. She or he is not a scientist, or at least we haven't been told so. The narrator even points out to deficiencies of current scientific knowledge, although not science as such, by saying:

"What do we know about life on Earth? How many species are we aware of? A 10th of them? A hundredth perhaps? What do we know about the bonds that link them? The Earth is a miracle. Life remains a mystery."

We do not know where the narrator's scientific knowledge comes from, but both the accessible way of recounting and, above all, the imagery that follows the story enhances the narrator's ethos greatly. This section, however, also holds one of the bigger rhetorical

problems that will continue to appear throughout the rest of the film. When the story of natural evolution reaches humans for the first time, the narrator says *"And that's where you, Homo sapiens— 'wise human'— enter the story"*. The narrator, who was like us, a homo sapiens, just ten minutes ago, has somehow miraculously transformed into something else, something other than us - homo sapiens. Indeed, this speaking non-human (Is it you, God?), with the same voice of Glenn Close (if you're watching the English version) will continue to talk of 'you – humans', that (s)he is not a part of, in the next couple of lines, but only to quickly take that humanness from us as well, and start referring to humans as 'them'. This rollercoaster ride, where we're all humans, then the audiences are but the narrator isn't, and then we're all spectators of humanity will repeat itself several times during the rest of the film. Although it might at times prove to be valuable, in gaining a better understanding, to give us both the insider and outsider perspectives, it arguably diminishes the narrator's ethos especially in parts where we, the audience, are humans but the narrator isn't. Again, while this God-like perspective may prove effective with some (religious) people, it jeopardizes the consistency of narrator's position and instead of a win-win situation, which I'm guessing the screenwriters aimed for, it rather creates a lose-lose situation where credibility is lost both with religious and naturalistic people.

In the second part, towards the end of the film, the narrator further tries to bolster her/his ethos by talking of things that (s)he has seen: *"I have seen refugee camps as big as cities"*, *"I have seen agriculture on a human scale"*, *"I have seen fishermen who take care what they catch"*, *"I have seen houses producing their own energy"* etc. This, of course, is all accompanied by visual evidence, so that we too can see the same things. While we had to just believe the story before the present day, not knowing where that knowledge comes from, now we know that the narrators knowledge of the present comes from what (s)he had seen and

what we too can see. This, to some extent, can serve to bolster the credibility of the first section as well, because the story is, in both parts, accompanied with visual 'evidence' so if the present story is true, and we know that not only because the narrator saw the things s(he) speaks of but also because we already knew some of these things having seen them ourselves, then, probably, the story so far has been true as well. It also emphasizes (gives back?) the humanness of the narrator who only sees the present or recent developments, or those seeable in a *human* lifetime. This section of the film also enhances the ethos by introducing some harsh statistical facts about our impact on the planet. This is not presented in complicated, technical chart forms (that would distance itself and lose parts of the audience) but as simple text that appears on the screen and is followed by visuals related to the information presented. Although the information given here is obtained from various International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGO's) and scientific publications (and these sources can be seen on the official *Home* internet site), the sources have not been named in the film itself, probably to completely avoid (politically) coloring the whole rhetorical work.

The fact that *Home* is made free for everyone to see also plays a huge role in contributing to the ethos. It has an immense psychological impact on people watching it, giving a certain authority and a moral high ground to the makers of the film who did not 'do it for the money' and are not 'trying to make money off us'. Still, the fact that it was sponsored by numerous large corporations that are mentioned both at the beginning and the end of the film could cause some people to be skeptical as to the 'films agenda'.

The ethos constructed in Home is indeed an interesting and unconventional one. What supports this ethos the most is the astounding visuals that accompany the narrative. Thus, the ethos mostly relies on the common epistemic criterion (that is not necessarily scientific) which

says that seeing-is-believing. Avoiding all political coloration (with the problem of naming sponsor corporations-which could be taken as a sort of indeed political coloration), emphasizing equality between the narrator and the audience (with the occasional distancing as I have discussed) and truly communicating to global audiences, making no distinction between peoples, all contribute to the creation of this unique, non-authoritative, non-superior, yet still credible (science) communicator.

5.2 Logos - Narrative logic

In this section I would like to deal with, not just the ways in which the stories are told in these two films and whether and how the reasoning is backed up by evidence adding to the credibility and indeed, the logic, of the storyline, but I would also like to analyze the text in light of the social understanding of the environmental problems these films have as their theme. How are these environmental issues placed in broader sociopolitical contexts and what, if any, is their relation to other social issues? Where are the roots of these problems and the consequent -what kind, if any, of action do they call for?

5.2.1 An Inconvenient Truth

An Inconvenient Truth aims to inform (and indeed convince) the audiences, U.S. in the first place, of the validity of climate change theory and the science behind it. What Johnson (2009) has described as the 'particularly agonistic U.S. context' explains the degree to which the narrative is informed by moral suasion in Gore's attempt to create public acceptance of climate

change science, and it also explains the attention and time that is given to refuting the skeptic arguments against climate change.

Throughout his presentation Gore uses a mix of different environmental rhetoric. He most often talks of the environment scientifically, using statistics, graphs, charts and numbers to illustrate data. As Johnson (2009) reminds us, this is often the language of authority so it comes as no surprise that we see so much of it in Gore's presentation.

The utilitarian rhetoric which sees environment as resource, might seem like something that Gore is contesting, for instance when he ridicules the economics-over-environment position, but the solutions he presents (renewables, energy efficiency etc.) are in fact no less utilitarian, perhaps just different in that they call for a different, more rational and less damaging use of natural resources. What could also be considered ultimately utilitarian is the visual appreciation for the environment and this is reflected in the aesthetic rhetoric mostly found in the interludes of the presentation, as well as the film opening and closing by the river, where we get to see or hear Gore reminiscing about the days spent at his home ranch, in pastures, by the river etc. (with the obligatory syrupy music in the background).

Finally, a rhetoric that permeates all the above mentioned but could also stand out on its own is the apocalyptic rhetoric, indeed the commonplace of most environmental rhetoric. Yet, I find that the particular use of apocalyptic rhetoric in *An Inconvenient Truth* is extremely interesting, indeed unique, and as such has particular implications on both the narrative logic and the emotional appeal that the film constructs. Nordhaus and Shellenberger (2007) were right to notice that the first part of the lecture dominated by apocalyptic rhetoric, due to its length and vividness, by far overshadows the second-motivational part of the film. This can have far reaching implications on the narrative logic and emotional appeal, and instead of

motivating audiences, this sort of 'fetishizing' environmental apocalypse can instead inspire apathy and a sense of powerlessness. In other words, too much of a negative, disaster imagery risks missing the goal, or what should be the goal, of instigating action, by putting the spotlight on the irreparable rather than on repair. Furthermore, when so much attention is given to the global apocalypse about to happen, or indeed already happening as Gore tells us, one wonders how the solutions or advices seen at the end of the film can even attempt to prevent this apocalypse. How can our tiny individual changes in behavior, be they walking or riding a bike when we can, using public transport, purchasing a hybrid car, using power-efficient appliances and switching to 'green' energy, writing or running for congress… how can these compare to all the images of floods and droughts and fires around the world, victims of hurricane Katrina, melting glaciers, power plants and industrial sites belching visual pollution, polar bears drowning in the ocean…? Particularly if those photographs and images do not, and indeed cannot, specify parties who are responsible for this havoc.

Although the film utilizes a typical apocalyptic narrative and uses images of future destruction, directly falling into the category of what Killingsworth and Palmer(1996) have named "millennial ecology", it does not use these future images of destruction to predict the fall of the technocapitalist order. While millennial ecology rhetoric, as defined by Kilingsworth and Palmer (1996), is supposed to critique the roots of progressive ideology, they have also noted that in reality "the most influential apocalyptic narratives do not undertake a wholesale attack on the ideology of progress or its attendant faith in science, technology, and liberal democracy" (22). *An Inconvenient Truth* is a perfect example of such a rhetorical work which does not aim to overturn, or even question, technocapitalist progressivism as such, but rather tries to motivate (certain) action by pointing out to the overwhelming consequences of inaction. Gore at one point raises the question of a blind political system when he says:

"I had such faith in our democratic system, our self-government. I actually thought and believed that the story would be compelling enough to cause a real sea change in the way the Congress reacted to that issue. I thought they would be startled, too. And they weren't."

However, he does not pursue this thought and explore its sociopolitical implications (&roots). Although he states that he sees the issue as ethical and political, in the proposed solutions he reduces ethics to the level of an individual, promoting what could be called – *responsible* or *green* consumerism (which works beautifully with the 'responsible' 'green' capitalism), and questioning not the political foundations of our societies, but rather the sets of policies needed to help reduce GHG emissions. It seems that he has not lost 'faith in our democratic system' despite of what he says, as he clearly endorses political action *within* this political system and together with the new technologies he advocates for – he in fact fully supports the current rule of technocapitalist progressivism. What is at odds here is that, not only in this sentence, but throughout the film's interludes Gore laments about his political failure to address climate change, which we are told resulted from the flaws in the political system that allowed political processes to falter. Gore so at the same time encourages us to work within this political system, but points out, from his own experience, that there are (huge) gaps in that same system. But this is no mistake or an oversight. By carefully timing and combining different rhetoric, Gore's narrative actually reaches a very specific goal that it aims to accomplish. It is no coincidence. Accentuating apocalypse, overstating perhaps, Gore makes sure we realize how urgent the problem is. There is no time to think, we need to act now! And just on the verge of this sense of no-time, just before we come to terms that it's too late, Gore starts to motivate us and quickly, as we're on our toes and ready to leave the theatre to start acting-right-now, he tells us what we need to do. This brilliant technique makes sure that we don't question the capitalist progressive culture, we don't question the political system in the face of

the apocalypse. For whether one wants to bring this question into light or not, it is implicit in the apocalyptic rhetoric and Killingsworth and Palmer (1996) remind us of that in their "Millennial Ecology: The Apocalyptic Narrative from Silent Spring to Global Warming":

"To employ apocalyptic rhetoric is to imply the need for radical change, to mark oneself as an outsider in a progressive culture, to risk alienation, and to urge others out into the open air of political rebellion. The apocalyptic narrative is an expansive and offensive rhetorical strategy" (41)

To further make sure that we do not question our political and societal foundations, our capitalist progressive culture, Gore answers these questions in advance. Again, it is no coincidence or a mistake that he raised the question of 'our democratic system'. It is no mistake that we get to see him fail politically (and rise again). He has already answered our questions in advance. He has already questioned the political system and…that's not the problem - so we are told. We do not need to ask this question, because Gore was already there – and that's not it. He has a life-long experience in these matters and we can take his word for it. Indeed we must, for it's also no coincidence that Gore's ethos was constructed as powerful as it was.

5.2.2 Home

Home does not deal with any particular environmental issue that the world faces but tries to tell a story of the problematic, to say the least, relationship that our present society has with the natural environment and the totality of resulting environmental dislocations. Indeed, it discusses numerous specific environmental problems but only as a part of a greater whole. It emphasizes the place of humanity within Nature, contesting the dominant bifurcation of

Human and Nature. At the very beginning of the film we hear: "*Today, life— our life— is just a link in a chain of innumerable living beings that have succeeded one another on Earth over nearly four billion years*". This notion of linkage is repeated throughout the film. Not much later we are told that "*the engine of life is linkage. Everything is linked. Nothing is self-sufficient…Sharing is everything…Our Earth relies on a balance in which every being has a role to play and exists only through the existence of another being*". This is lamented several times during the film, perhaps culminating in "*Our cells talk the same language. We are of the same family*", and making sure that we hear the message. A message that is, as Bookchin (1962, 1993, 2005) himself insisted, essential in understanding and solving our environmental problems. We, humans, are but a part of a greater whole. A part of Nature, not apart from Nature as many would have. In fact, the film's first half an hour, where the history of life on Earth is explained, seems to serve this very purpose – to show the place of humanity in Nature. To show how we come from a long history of evolution and benefit from billions of years of shaping the planet. It aims to show us our arrogance, so that we can watch the rest of the film and observe our current environmental troubles with humility. Towards the end of the film, there is, however, one sentence that jeopardizes this position that the film held so strongly. When the statistical data is given in text form, one of the things it tells us is that "*species are dying out at a rhythm 1,000 times faster than the natural rate*". If we try to find out what this 'natural rate' is - we will see that it refers to a state with no harmful anthropogenic effects. As harmful as human actions are to Nature, and they are tremendously so, they cannot be called 'unnatural' unless we assume the position that the Human and Nature are separate. Thus, this very sentence is extremely problematic in the context of the film's narrative, as it is in contrast to what the film has been telling us all along.

The chronological time sequence that is used in Home, despite the fact that some of the information presented is quite substantive, makes for an easy comprehension. Although some historical determinism was unavoidable in this type of communication, I was particularly glad to see that, having obtained several scripts, many historical determinisms were omitted in the final version of the film. So while one version of the script talks of towns being built for defensive reasons, which is exactly one of the Marxists reductionisms contested by Bookchin (1995), you will not hear this in the final version of the film. And when we hear the story of Rapa Nui, we are told that the story is 'one of the theories'.

What could be identified as a turning point in the story of Home is the discovery of fossil fuels. This, as the film shows us, allowed humanity to 'develop' like never before. But somewhere along this development that only increases in speed as time goes by - something happened. *"Faster and faster"* is a recounting theme heard throughout the film. Our societies became ever so *"attentive to these metronomes of our hopes and illusions. The same hopes and illusions that proliferate along with our needs, increasingly insatiable desires and profligacy"*. Indeed, we became addicted to the black drug that is oil, that is coal, and the 'high-effect' of this 'development'. The film does not name here the root and the driving force of this addiction, but it is implicit. It undercuts the very notion of modern capitalist progressivism. By discussing the environmental, but social consequences (roots) as well, from pollution, unsustainable industrial and consumer practices, social inequalities, famine, water shortages, species extinction, standardization and loss of diversity and many other issues, and linking them all together, in a world where indeed everything is linked, the very social and environmental foundations of our society's development are brought under question. Although not explicitly naming social inequalities and power relations as a core cause of environmental

problems, it effectively points to these and their relation to unsustainable practices further aggravating environmental dislocations.

"In the next 20 years, more ore will be extracted from the Earth than in the whole of humanity's history. As a privilege of power, 80% of this mineral wealth is consumed by 20% of the world's population"

The notion that the neoliberal, technocapitalist mode of development is the driving force of humanity's (further) bifurcation from Nature and the consequent oppressive and exploitative relationship with Nature is also reflected in the lines about the 'totem to total modernity', that is Dubai: *"Nothing seems further removed from nature than Dubai, although nothing depends on nature more than Dubai. The city merely follows the model of wealthy nations"*. Towards the end of the film, after we have indeed seen what we have done and are doing to the planet and its fragile ecosystems, we are given scientific projections for the future- if we are to continue in the same manner. Like (m)any other environmental rhetoric (but rightfully so) Home utilizes an apocalyptic rhetoric gesturing future disaster. But the apocalypse discussed in Home is not just an 'environmental' one. Much attention is given to social problems that are both causing and caused by the environmental problems. Home talks both about the climate refugees that would result from climate change but also the economic refugees that are already flooding the world's cities by the millions. It talks of 50 percent of the world's poor currently living in resource rich countries but having no access to these resources. While documenting the environmental havoc that we have wracked on the planet in the last 50 years, transforming it more radically than all the previous generations of humanity combined, it also tells us that *"In [these same] 50 years the gap between the rich and poor has grown wider than ever"*. The logic of disaster predictions discussed in Home does not

persuade through science, although it is exactly the dominant scientific predictions that are used. It does not attempt to use the language of science to persuade the audience in the truth of these claims, as it merely gives these predictions without any reference or explanations as to how these projections were made. It uses scientific predictions to guide our thinking but relies on our ability to see the logic of these predictions from the past and present events that the movie documents. Home also relies strongly on the emotional appeal that it creates with strong imagery to persuade the audience in the truth of its claims. While this is problematic in terms of creating informed and indeed educated public on scientific issues, this seems a just compromise when the form and aim of this communication is considered. Rather than educating audiences about the science behind environmental issues, the rhetoric of Home aims to strongly engage the audiences and shift the dominant discourse from that of dealing with specific environmental issues to observing them in their totality, as oneness, and placing them in broader and social contexts. While substantially discussing the issue and indeed the science of climate change, Home goes further than pointing to CO2 and other greenhouse gases. It does, like Killingsworth and Palmer described narratives of millennial ecology, point out to and question capitalist progressivism as the root of our problems. "*Our mode of development has not fulfilled its promises*" it tells us. While advocating for the same technological solutions as *An Inconvenient Truth* does in the end, Home does not stop here. Renewable energy sources, energy efficient appliances, recycling…these are not the final solutions to our environmental problems. They are just technical solutions, indeed necessary and urgent, but only the beginning of solving our environmental problems which are far more rooted. Socially rooted, like Benton, Bookchin, Darnovsky, Di Chiro, Dryzek, Liverman, Monbiot, Schlosberg, Zizek and a host of other authors suggested. This is made clear in one of the last sentences we hear in the film:

"Let's face the facts. We must believe what we know. All that we have just seen is a reflection of human behavior. We have shaped the Earth in our image…Must we always build walls… to break the chain of human solidarity, separate peoples and protect the happiness of some from the misery of others?"

5.3 Pathos – The Emotional Appeal

Pathos, or the emotional appeal, is an integral part to most environmental rhetoric, particularly those employing apocalyptic narratives such as both *Home* and *An Inconvenient Truth*. Doomsday scenarios created in such narratives both engender fear that such future scenarios will occur and create hope that they may be avoided, creating commitment to act in ways so to avoid them. Indeed, instead of being detached from rational understanding of the information presented in such environmental communication, pathos acts so to strengthen the effect of the rational understanding and even, as Spoel et al. (2009, p.71) point out, a "powerful form of knowledge-making in its own right". By appealing emotionally, culturally, imaginatively and morally to the audience, engaging them in the issue as whole beings, pathos could be understood as a key dimension in creating engaged and committed forms of public understanding of environmental issues (Spoel et al. 2009).

Both *An Inconvenient Truth* and Home rely greatly on the emotional appeal they create, but going back to how they construct the environmental problems they differ significantly in how and to what they appeal to.

5.3.1 An Inconvenient Truth

While the scientific rhetoric, where 'environment' is used over 'nature', and is depicted with graphs, charts and images, is something that appeals rationally, in a sense, Johnson(2009) was right to observe that it is not all that unemotional – in fact, it appeals to the very emotion of stoicism. It appeals to our belief in, love and commitment for science and scientific and technological progress. It appeals to our commitment and appreciation for modernity.

The utilitarian rhetoric, also present in *An Inconvenient Truth*, so very typical of technocapitalist progressivism and the individualistic western cultures, appeals strongly to the (selfish) emotions of personal survival and comfort. Although not centralized as such, the utilitarian rhetoric is in fact interwoven in the apocalyptic rhetoric where it is our comfort, our way of life, our <u>use value of the environment</u> and ultimately our survival that is threatened by the devastating consequences of climate change. While Gore has not made this utilitarian rhetoric explicit, he in fact counts on the audience (U.S. being the main audience he addresses) to receive the message in such a way, relying on their present, already developed, utilitarian mindset. By not contesting such a view of Nature, he in fact endorses it.

The aesthetic rhetoric at the same time appeals to feelings of spirituality, appreciation of natural splendor as well as those of belonging. Gore's sentimental voiceover while we're watching his family farm at the film's opening, interludes and closing, reminds us of our own childhood and the landscapes we were a part of and indeed that were (are) a part of us. This has particular effect on American audiences as it draws from and centralizes the American tradition of environmental rhapsody (Johnson 2009). The same effect, perhaps to a lesser

extent, echoes in the rest of the world's nations, for we all have our own versions of environmental rhapsodies.

Finally, the apocalyptic rhetoric not only complicates and amplifies all the others but has its own effect, its own emotional appeal that captures the hearts and minds of all those people who didn't find the other rhetoric's emotional appeal to be enough. Whatever it is that you care for, be it something personal, collective, human or nonhuman, it is all threatened by the predicted apocalypse. It can all be lost. We are <u>all</u> affected. But we still have a choice, Gore tells us. We need not lose – whatever it is that we don't want to lose. This is an extremely important point that has to be made and one that Robert Cox (1982) discussed pointing out that the rhetoric of irreparable would cease to be rhetorical if it was taken as inevitable or predictive. Both the solutions that Gore (briefly) discusses and, even more so, his obvious enthusiasm despite all his knowledge and decades of failure in 'getting the message across' – offer tremendous hope. By combining Gore's ethos with the 'salvation' rhetoric, the full potential of apocalyptic rhetoric's capacity to appeal emotionally is realized, despite the fact that we have been motivated and encouraged far less (shorter) than scared and frightened. And as a result of Gore's both situated and constructed ethos, this hope for salvation is precisely located where Gore sees it. If the situation is so serious, so dire, and Gore still, after decades of having this knowledge and failing to pass it on to enough people… if he still has hope, if he is still fighting for our salvation – then that salvation must rest exactly where he tells us.

An Inconvenient Truth not only produces a strong emotional appeal, but directs this appeal towards exactly those actions, those outcomes that it aims for. It is possibly one of the best examples how emotional, non-rational, can be put in line with the rational. Indeed the whole

rhetorical work of *An Inconvenient Truth* testifies how different, even opposing, rhetoric can be combined, and strengthened by emotional appeals, to work together towards a single goal.

5.3.2 Home

The emotional appeal *Home* attempts to create is quite different than the one just discussed and constructed by the rhetoric and visuals of *An Inconvenient Truth*. Although the astounding visuals of *Home* (strongly) appeal aesthetically on their own, instigating feelings of spirituality, belongingness and appreciation for the natural splendor of Earth, similar to the aesthetic rhetoric and visuals in *An Inconvenient Truth*, yet more strongly and further reaching due to the artistic abilities of Yann Arthrus-Bertrand and the fact that he has documented 'all' the different corners of our planet, to fully understand the emotional appeal created by *Home* one needs to analyze the narrative as well.

One of the key massages *Home* is communicating is that of humanity's place in Nature or the contestation of their separateness. This understanding has far reaching implications. It emphasizes seeing the 'environment', as well as other human and non-human beings, not as the Other but the extension of the Self. It emphasizes the linkage of all that is living and non-living on our planet. And it reminds us that in a world where everything is linked – <u>sharing is everything</u>. One cannot prosper at the price of another…not in the long run.

This distinction in how *Home* and *An Inconvenient Truth* place humanity (society) in relation to Nature is in fact reflected in the film's imagery. *An Inconvenient Truth* on the one hand, when picturing nature shows either satellite images of the Earth (Figure 2) that are too

'distant' and don't allow us to see human beings on that planet thus detaching humanity from Nature, or shows close up images of Nature as sublime (Figure 3), without humans in the picture. On the other hand, it gives personal images of Gore that reflect the personalistic solutions that the film advocates.

Fig. 2. Satellite images used in *An Inconvenient Truth*. (Source: Still image from the film)

Fig. 3. Nature as sublime – *An Inconvenient Truth*. (Source: Still image from the film)

The whole video footage in *Home* is filmed from a helicopter resulting in that the image is far enough to give us an "objective" view of the planet, but near enough that we can see people on those images and see them as a part of the planet (Figure 4). In other words, it is far enough to see the havoc that our societies wrack on the planet, but near enough to see that indeed it is our <u>collective</u> action that is producing this harm.

Fig. 4. The visuals of *Home*. (Source: Still image from the film)

The nature of *Home*'s imagery, with its distant-enough yet close-enough character, strengthens the emotional appeal that the narrative creates, engaging us both as a part of humanity with its myriad of (social) issues, and part of Nature that is the source of our life and is threatened by our <u>collective</u> actions. This imagery effectively points out to our society (or rather its mode of functioning and 'development') as the party responsible for the environmental dislocations and thus appeals to our social (collective) being and calls for social (collective) action.

Chapter 6 – Discussion

As the analysis I have conducted has shown, the rhetorical works of *An Inconvenient Truth* and *Home* are vitally different in <u>how</u> and, to some extent, in <u>what</u> they communicate, despite the fact that the main themes of these films are very much akin. This is not just the result of the different genres these films belong to, but because of the difference in the basic assumptions about the Nature and Humanity, and the different approaches and understandings of environmental problems, revealing the difference of what is popularly called social and liberal ecology. They are, more than anything else, differences arising from the different rhetorical <u>contexts and purposes</u>.

Both *An Inconvenient Truth* and *Home* are, from a rhetorical perspective, indeed noteworthy and essential in forming an educated public that is able to meaningfully participate in discussions about the environment and our 'environmental crisis'. *An Inconvenient Truth* proves to be one of the most important rhetorical works about environmental problems, or those of global warming, to be more precise. Not only is it proof that public communication of science need not be dull, dry and unengaging even when rather substantial scientific facts and findings are communicated, but it is perhaps one of the most complex rhetorical works that successfully combine different types of rhetoric, often even contradicting, and integrating the dynamics of ethos, logos and pathos in a larger narrative frame leading to a particular set of conclusions and instigating particular type of action. And while these actions that *An Inconvenient Truth* promotes are the same sets of actions found in *Home*'s concluding

chapter, for *Home* they are just a part, urgent indeed, but just a beginning of a much more complex and larger solution that lays in questioning our societies' sociopolitical foundations, and through that questioning – it's reconstruction. This broader solution that *Home* communicates is only reflective of its broader construction of environmental problems. *An Inconvenient Truth* constructs environmental problems (those of global warming) as caused by our behavior as <u>consumers</u> (and producers), and therefore offers solutions which rely on our behavior as consumers. *Home* sees the problem in our behavior as <u>human beings</u>, where consumer is just a part of that (today's) being, and puts forward discussions of the totality of our being and behaving.

6.1 An Inappropriate Solution to an Inconvenient Problem

By narrowly constructing our environmental crisis, *An Inconvenient Truth* participates in the mainstream discourse of market environmentalism, one that presumes that we can deal with this crisis within current political, social, economic and scientific systems. For although it may seem, at certain points, that *An Inconvenient Truth* contests current political and economic practices, it in fact only questions existing governmental policy and not the whole (American) political system and its values and ideas of progress. In fact, as I concluded in the analysis, *An Inconvenient Truth* endorses this political system based upon the capitalist progressivist notion of growth, or rather - its "growth fetish", relying on the productivist ethic and the belief that economic growth is necessary and ultimately beneficial to both rich and poor, and that it holds the key to all our societal problems, be they environmental degradation or various social inequalities. This growth, measured by the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) indicator, means that we all have to both produce and consume a certain percent of goods more this year than

the last, and again more of it next year (Robbins 2009). And according to the same capitalist economics, this must never stop if we are (which we must) to further develop and grow. This perpetual growth, if presented on a graph, would look surprisingly similar to that graph of atmospheric CO2 concentration. So while Gore accentuates the 'what' in his "It all depends on <u>what</u> we buy" - what I believe he truly meant is – what we <u>buy</u>. If we <u>buy</u> more efficient electric appliances, if we <u>buy</u> energy efficient light bulbs, if we <u>buy</u> more efficient cars, if we <u>buy</u> electricity that is 'green', if we <u>buy</u> a bicycle and, sometimes, ride it instead of driving a car (and this is only until someone develops a fully 'green' car…then we can forget the bicycle and walking), if we tell our friends about this movie so they can go and <u>buy </u>it or <u>buy</u> a ticket to see it in a theatre, and in the end if we <u>buy</u> our way into congress (okay, he didn't say that, but how else are you going to get into congress?).

The solution is, according to *An Inconvenient Truth*, that this will all, combined, cause the emissions of CO2 to decrease enough that we won't have to worry about climate change. Mind you, there will still be hurricanes, tornados, floods, droughts, fires, species going extinct, people dying of hunger while wheat is used as stock feed or for 'alternative fuels', there will still be people getting killed or made to suffer because of who they are, because of the color of their skin, their nationality, sexuality, physical or mental disability, religion or lack of one, there will still be disease, there will still be refugees, perhaps not (as many) 'climate refugees' but certainly more and more 'economic refugees' and there will still be irresponsible governments not taking care of these victims or its poor. Worst of all, we will still have the same exploitative relationship with our environment and with each other, but will exploit in ways that will allow us to exploit longer. But hey, the CO2 levels will be down.

Yet this 'solution', if given just a little bit of thought, fails on many accounts to address our growing environmental degradations. If we are to continue 'growing' in the same manner, consuming more and more each year, will that not drive our CO_2 emissions upwards no matter how the 'CO_2 footprint' of individual products we consume is lowered? Furthermore, even if we presume that the increase in consumption is somehow leveraged by the decrease in individual product's CO_2 footprint and thus our CO_2 footprint somehow kept at the same, or ideally decreasing, level – what about the growing creation of waste inherent in the processes of production, transportation and consumption, waste that is most often detrimentally returned to the environment and often treated as an external factor not captured by capitalist economic models? As Burkett (1999) notes, these solutions of 'green capitalism' are in fact just 'technical sustainability fixes' that are to allow certain changes but only to the point where they avoid sweeping transformations in the social relations of production. They misdiagnose both the extent and, more importantly, the sources of environmental threats that we are facing and result in approaches that move us deeper into the crises instead of producing an ecological equilibrium (Singer 2010). For how can a system which transforms everything around us, including us, into commodities – even attempt to 'protect' those same things? Capitalism views nature, as Chernomas and Hudson (2007) point out, as the sum of its components which can be assigned a market value, and it has resulted in that our only connection to Nature is through the cash nexus (Foster 1994). Solutions of green capitalism, such as those advocated in *An Inconvenient Truth*, rest on a belief that ecological sustainability can be somehow added to the foundation of capitalism - which is economic self-interest, but these solutions evade addressing problems of global inequality and poverty that arise out of unequal access to *finite* natural resources or the role that that poverty plays in population growth resulting in further growing of resource needs AND inequality gaps.

While promoters of green capitalism try to remind us of 'good practices' born out of such approach to environmental problems, often telling the story of how the Yellowstone National Park was founded in 1872, thanks to the Northern Pacific Railroad which owned much of the land north of the park (Singer 2010), they fail to tell the whole story and the reasons why Northern Pacific Railroad pushed for the park's establishment. Runte (1990) reminds us that such a decision was made by the company only after it was determined that the park's land had limited value in terms of natural resources and that more profit would be gained if a national recreational site was established. And once it was, the park's first Superintendant, who was *coincidentally* a brother-in-law to one of the largest Northern Pacific Railroad investors, approved that the Railroad extend its tracks and build hotels within the park's limits (Runte 1990). What would happen, I ask, if one of these days the value of natural resources found in Yellowstone surpassed its value as a recreational site due to the global depletion and consequent value (price) increase of scarce resources? How would our capitalist system react if, say, large quantities of oil were now discovered within the park's borders? I wonder…

Another example of how green capitalism 'solves' our environmental problems is the growing production of biofuels, an energy source deemed 'green', 'sustainable' and that makes countries 'less dependent on foreign oil'. Biofuels, such as corn produced ethanol, are not green because their production requires colossal amounts of energy, mostly fossil fuels, which often, as Pimentel (1998) reminds us, surpass the levels of ethanol that is produced. They are not sustainable because their production requires vast areas of land, contributing not only to the deforestation, such as the case with millions of acres of rainforest in Brazil and Malaysia that were destroyed in order to plant soy for biofuel production (Farigone et al. 2008), but also because it threatens food production in the same developing countries because more money can be made on biofuels to supply wealthy countries than on food that would feed the

poor of those developing countries. While it takes about 10 acres of land to produce enough ethanol to fuel a car for one year (Singer 2010), the availability of the same grain producing land is about 3/10 of an acre per capita worldwide and continues to shrink due to both population increase and use of land for biofuel production or stock feed (Gardner 1997). Other than the fact that biofuels are neither 'green' nor 'sustainable', the third argument used for their production (dependence on foreign oil) has been rightfully (and importantly) named by Ziegler (2008) as 'nationalistic environmentalism'. The pragmatic ethics of capitalist advertising guided by the principle 'whatever works' will often tap into the worst feelings (weaknesses) of humans such as nationalism, classism, sexism (did anyone say beer commercials?), racism etc. or their related (founding) phobias. Mickelson (1993) reminds us that the same Northern Pacific Railroads, once the Yellowstone Park was established, used a marketing campaign centered on nationalism (promoting American outdoors as far superior to the European) and classism (advertising it as a 'safe', 'luxury' trip and without the 'unwanted company' – that is the company of the poor who are unable to afford such an adventure).

That capitalist concern for the environment, or any of the countless social issues, is in fact only concern for profit - can be seen everywhere we look. Singer (2010) reminds us of the 'environmental friendly' and 'socially responsible' company The Body Shop and numerous examples of how they have, despite the image they created, performed business in ways that are neither 'environmental friendly' nor 'socially responsible', culminating with the company being sold to L'Oreal – the company against which The Body Shop created its original image. Furthermore, Baer and Singer (2008) have documented a long history of corporations marketing socially irresponsible and often undeniably dangerous products, even when the advertising campaigns use the very ecological and social verbiage. Not only is the current practice of 'green capitalism' most often only an advertising technique used to appeal to the

new eco-friendly consumers, but even the rare cases of when products AND production are actually 'green', whatever this means, they are still doomed to be both unsustainable and socially irresponsible due to the very capitalist market they are born out of, with its drive for perpetual growth and thus inherent contradictions to sustainability. Evans (2005) reminds us that even neo-classical economic theory has recognized that markets may not resolve 'the externality' that is environmental degradation, particularly when externalities are split across national political jurisdictions.

Popular pressure, that of *An Inconvenient Truth* being exemplary, can indeed produce gains in preventing, or rather limiting, environmental effects of capitalism's environmental contradictions. However, such gains will prove to be short-term, and most often localized (Singer 2010). In order to fully come to terms and solve (eliminate) capitalism's environmental (and other) contradictions in the struggle for sustainability, a different, alternative and <u>social</u> narrative is required. Such an alternative is offered by a number of both scholars and activists who see and point out to the connection between ecological sustainability and social equity. We can call it Social Ecology as did Murray Bookchin, one of the most critical opponents of market-environmentalism (or what Bookchin called 'liberal ecology'), or we can call it 'civic environmentalism' as some academics do, but we can find that narrative in the 'environmental justice' movement as well a host of other new social movements. And we can also find such an understanding in the narrative of *Home*.

6.2 A Home We All Share…

Commodities, products, goods, services… these are most often based on materials that are extracted from our environment, or rather – nature. Yet they do not come into being without human intervention. They are, in fact, materialized through social processes that are expressions of underlying social relationships (Singer 2010).

A capitalist system relies on, indeed requires, a set of hierarchical relations between one group of people and another. Between the dominant and subordinate. Between the consumer and the producer. The exploiter and the exploited. Such relations are observable on local levels, within nations, between social classes, but they are now most prominent between nations, reflecting the North-South divide, or alternatively the West-East. The capitalist hierarchical production relations are both born out of and give birth to hierarchical social relations and social domination of one group of people over another. In other words, they both require and exacerbate social hierarchy. Globalization has, since its first form of outright transparent imperialism, arranged both extraction of resources and production of goods to the advantage of dominant nations (Howell 2003). In its current form, the neoliberal market globalization is not much different. The modern globalization entails both economic domination and exploitation by the wealthy nations but also political and cultural domination (Singer 2010) and a push of moral values and emotionally charged expectations – what Bourdeu and Wacquant (2001, 1) have termed "symbolic violence". When a capitalist solution, in the form of 'green capitalism' is advocated by (indeed 'for') the same wealthy nations and imposed globally as the 'right way to act and solve the problem', violating, in a way, the sovereignty of the poor nations, it is not unfounded that some academics qualify this as 'eco-imperialism' (see for instance Lim and Shirley 2009). Perhaps there's less guns and violence (although not less people dying due to hunger, disease and lack of drinking water), but other than that, the new-style globalization is not that much different from old style imperialism. It both relies on and produces more social inequalities. Inequalities that further aggravate environmental

degradation (Bookchin, 1986, 1990, 1993, 2005; Branston 2007). Almost a century and half ago, Reclus wrote:

> *"So long as men are struggling to shift the boundaries of their property and the false borders between one people and another, so long as the soil which feeds us is reddened with the blood of the unfortunate who struggle for a strip of land, for reasons of so-called honor or, simply, through pure anger, so long as the starving have to seek, with no guarantee of success, both their daily bread and food for their spirit, the Earth will never be the paradise that intellectuals predict for the future. The lineaments of the planet will have no harmony unless men are first united in a chorus of peace and justice." (Reclus 1868-1869)*

Indeed, a society that is truly sustainable can only be achieved as a justice-based, democratic arrangement, combining environmental and social justice in a united struggle for sustainability (Singer 2010; Foster 2009) and being equally committed to both long-term environmental sustainability as to achieving social equity (Baer and Singer 2009). As Bookchin (1986, 1990, 1993, 2005) has noted - if we fail to recognize that the impact our hierarchical and class, capitalist society has on the environment, comes from the (unregulated use of a) very blind social mechanism, namely the market, which is poisoning the soil, water and air, causing comprehensive atmospheric and climactic changes, and broadening the inequality gaps among countries and people by the hour, we will continue to fight the wrong battles. Our idea of growth and development, defined solely in economic terms, together with the myriad of oppressions, be they gender, ethnic, racial, class or those of the corporate, state and bureaucratic interests – these have a far greater impact on shaping the future of the natural world than our private forms of moral and spiritual regeneration (Bookchin 1993, 2005). The modern capitalist marketplace, with its mindless 'laws' of demand and supply, and completely

amoral social-evolutionist axioms of 'survival of the fittest' or 'eat or be eaten' or ''grow or die!' (expression coined by Bookchin), does not depend upon ethical factors but has imperatives of its own. The maxim 'business is business' illustrates this perfectly, telling us that ethical, psychological and emotional factors have no say in the brutal world of production, profit and 'growth' (Bookchin 1993).

But there are alternative ways of organizing our world and making it less brutal. And this depends neither on "<u>what</u> we buy" nor on "what we <u>buy</u>", whichever way it is that you hear the message in *An Inconvenient Truth*. It depends on *how we behave* - towards each other and the rest of Nature. And this entails both personal, but more importantly <u>collective</u> transformations. Our selfish individualistic behavior is exactly what got us into these problems. Both our personal selfishness and individualism and our collective selfishness and speciesism. We seem to have forgotten that we share this planet, with each other and the rest of Earth's inhabitants. And this is exactly what *Home* is trying to remind us of. It tels us that "*the engine of life is linkage. Everything is linked. Nothing is self-sufficient…Sharing is everything*" and that "*a new human adventure* [needs to be] *based on moderation, intelligence and sharing*". And it sets the example by sharing the ideas presented in the film with the whole world – for free.

Chapter 7 – Conclusion

For decades now, the environmental movement has been facing internal obstacles that stifled its internal consolidation into a strong global movement. The narrow-mindedness of the "conservationist" and "global" agenda of the traditional Northern environmental groups has failed on many accounts to integrate the South's "environmentalism of the poor", which is above all concerned with the livelihoods of resource-dependent communities, as well as local concerns such as the health consequences of toxic dumps (Evans 2005). Furthermore, by narrowly defining what counts as "environmental", the doors have been closed, one too many times, to building coalition politics (Di Chiro 2008) with other new social movements such as the women's, human rights, peace or alter-globalization movements.

Yet, despite all these structural challenges that it faces, Evans (2005) reminds us that the global environmental movement is considered among the most successful transnational social movements and with its "scientific analysis" paradigm, one of the strongest (potential) counter-hegemonic globalization movements. To fully realize its potentials, and also overcome the internal North-South and global-local divides, the environmental movement needs to build closer alliances with other new social movements. It needs to recognize that, for instance, the issues of urban livability or structural adjustment programs are gendered in their impact as most responsibilities and consequences are shouldered by women. Therein lays the common ground between not only environmental and women's, but also human rights movements. To the extent that prominent environmental INGO's such as World Wildlife Fund or Greenpeace were open to such issues, it would help bridge both global-local and North-South divides (Evans 2005).

Yet, it seems to me that another division within the environmental movement has started to arise. On one hand, the alliances and recognition of shared causes that I talked about is entering the popular discourse, and *Home* serves as a testament to this. By discussing the science behind environmental problems, but focusing on the sociopolitical roots and consequences of these problems and their relation to 'other social issues' such as social inequalities, poverty and both environmental and social injustice – *Home* raises questions about our society's sociopolitical foundations and opens the door for coalition politics. It posits that it is "our mode of development [that] has failed us" – not us as environmentalists, but us as human beings – bringing us together as human beings in the needed transformations of our societies.

However we are also witnessing other doors opening recently, allowing not these alliances, but alliances with neoliberal institutions – the very, or what should be, enemy of environmental concerns. The construction of environmental problems in *An Inconvenient Truth*, and more importantly the prescribed solutions to them are no strangers to neoliberalism. In fact, they work perfectly together relying on our (limited) ability to shape the self regulating market with our 'demands for greener products' and even more limited political action of writing to or running for congress.

While certainly deserving credit for turning both media and public attention to our growing environmental problems as well as forming a public that is scientifically more educated about the issue of climate change, *An Inconvenient Truth* proves that the outcomes of public communication of environmental issues depend not only on 'how much' communication takes place but even more on the contexts and purposes of this communication.

The fact that it was *An Inconvenient Truth* and not *Home* which received senior politician's endorsement and was included in school curricula is not surprising but should indeed be very worrying. This sort of reshaping environmentalism combined with the capacity of its proponents to "market" it as a mainstream environmental discourse – is, to my judgment, a new, and perhaps the greatest threat ever faced by the environmental movement.

I have conducted this analysis in hope to meaningfully point out to this problem, and instigate action to solve it.

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