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A World of Our Own: Climate Change and the Politics of the Anthropocene

This paper gives an account of several related approaches from social theory about the relationship of humans to their environment and considers their relevance in terms of communication. Theories of reflexive modernisation advanced by Ulrich Beck, Bruno Latour and Anthony Giddens stress the breakdown of boundaries between humans and nature and the reality that human civilisation has enormous power in shaping the physical environment of the planet. A common theme is that politics, in the broadest sense of collective decision-making, must play a greater role in matters of environmental harm. Once made explicit, these decision-making processes can be opened up to greater democratic input which inevitably involves dialogue and deliberation between various actors, often through mediated channels. It is necessary for communication scholars to investigate the space where social theory meets political reality and the discourses which underpin an emerging political ecology.