

Topics (T)

The Social, Communications, Economic and Cultural Dimensions of Environmental Change (9)

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”EARTHRISE” REVISITED - THE ROLE OF GLOBE IMAGES IN POPULAR COMMUNICATION

Abstract

“Earthrise”, the iconic image of Earth as a planet, was first captured photographically by Apollo 8 astronaut William Anders in 1968. It has been labeled “the most influential environmental photograph ever taken”. In this paper I will discuss the symbolic and political role of globe images in visual culture, more specifically related to the trajectory of the original “Earthrise” image in select Norwegian news media, and its transformation into generic globe images found in news media, marketing/P.R., and popular protest. The paper aims to address the following questions: In what way and to what extent has the symbolic connotations of globe images transformed since Earth was first observed from outer space? In what ways are the current climate change debates reflected in the public use of globe images? The paper draws on theory from visual and media/communication studies and addresses in particular the tension between the indexical and the symbolic dimensions in photography based visual communication.