

**Communicative Democracy and Ecological Democracy:  
Community Media and Prospects for Climate Change  
Communication**

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**Abstract:** Much of the communication, journalism and media studies literature surrounding climate change communication are focussed on mainstream news media coverage. This is hardly surprising, given the sheer enormity and overwhelming threat of climate change and the need for global responses. These responses in the form of international treaties, protocols, targets, mitigation and adaptation plans abound, bringing together national governments, transnational industry and international organisations to foster solutions to our greatest environmental threat. Mainstream news media, with its international networks, reach and resources are well poised to communicate the climate change challenge.

Amid the quagmire of news media, policy announcements and plans, what might be a role for community media? This paper will explore the potential of local community media outlets to communicate climate change. Whilst communicating the usual climate change possibilities and threats, community media is also a site of much innovation and creativity in tackling the climate crisis. Relative freedom from transnational industry, organisations and national governments deem local challenges to policy, industry and overall, unsustainable relations to our environment possible, if not tangible. Empowering communities with ownership of their own media and how they represent themselves and their places is critical here.

This paper will link democratic participation in media - a critical dimension of communicative democracy - to existing efforts to foster participation in environmental decision making, broadly ecological democracy. This paper argues that community media, in Australia and all over the world are fostering these relations between communicative and ecological democracy. This relationship is capable of instigating more than the linear communication of climate change to communities, though this remains important.

Drawing on the Australian experience, I will assert the value of community media in articulating different relations between humans and their environments, capable of interrupting the status quo of climate change communication, and offering a host of democratic possibilities for communication and action for scientists, policymakers and all interested in positive environmental futures.