

From Media Evolution to the Anthropocene: Unpacking Socio-technical Autopoiesis

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This paper examines the Anthropocene concept through a media and socio-evolutionary lens. It questions the impact of media and technology on socio-evolution and the social environment, especially the inception and development of the Anthropocene. The term is critiqued, challenging the notion of humanity's, a middle food chain mammal, influence on Earth's geological state. Some trace human geological impacts back to the 1850s capitalist coal burning, suggesting 'Capitalocene' (Malm, 2016) as a more fitting term. This paper argues that capitalism is just a theory of a societal system, and adopts a wider system-theoretical view, primarily following Niklas Luhmann.

The thesis suggests society emerged with language, shaping human cooperation. It proposes the Anthropocene's origins extend beyond the 19th century to the Pleistocene, with humanity being a mix of biology, consciousness, and technology, shaped by a dominant social system. The paper explores this "social machine," its structure, and influence on both human physiology and the environment, through historical and contemporary technological advancements.

The text comes from a Danish anthology I am editing together with Michael Paulsen about the Anthropocene and which will be published approx. at the same time as our annual meeting and I also want to say a little about the anthology.