

Experts call for widening the debate on climate change

September 25 2014, by Kath Paddison

Environmental scientists are being urged to broaden the advice they give on global climate change, say experts who are also frustrated that decision makers are not taking enough action.

Writing in the journal *Nature Climate Change*, The University of Manchester researchers argue that scientists are expressing a strong desire to fix the problems highlighted by their studies into human-induced [climate change](#).

The authors suggest there are problems with [environmental scientists](#) offering practical solutions that can help societies adapt to a fast-changing Earth - one where climatic zones will shift and sea levels will rise significantly.

Professor Noel Castree, the lead author of the paper, said: "We are grateful that environmental scientists alert us to the impact that people are having on our planet like shifting climatic zones and rising sea levels.

"But knowing how to respond to these impacts requires a broader skill-set than natural science alone provides. It requires honest recognition of, and mature discussion about, the different values that can guide humans towards a different, better future."

Today, say the authors, few people doubt that man-made climate change is real. And few of us doubt that climate scientists lack integrity. The problem, they believe, is the lack of action on the part of [decision](#)

[makers](#) and the societies they represent.

Castree, a professor of Geography, and co-author Dan Brockington, a professor of Conservation and Development, ask whether climate change scientists risk over-stepping the mark and trying to shape the political agenda while pretending to remain non-political.

They argue that the scientists often view the world as presenting problems that, like mechanics, they believe they can fix. They say that recent scientific discussions about 'geoengineering' technologies reflect this view.

"Global environmental change raises profound questions - such as whether humans lack humility and wisdom," said Castree. "But we are concerned that environmental scientists risk using their authority to convince others that future Earth surface change is no more than a fiendishly complicated alteration to fairly well understood physical systems."

Castree said: "What is needed is a deeper appreciation that such change will cause fundamental disagreements about responsibilities, rights and duties - among humans and towards nature. We think social scientists and humanists could significantly enrich public debates about how to respond to environmental change."

Provided by University of Manchester

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