

New policy design needed to tackle global environmental threat, according to report

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A pioneering new report has devised a seven-point plan to help policymakers devise new, coherent and collaborative strategies to tackle the greatest global environmental threats.

A team of international researchers, including experts from the Land, Environment, Economics and Policy (LEEP) Institute at the University of Exeter, has examined how politicians and legislators can develop a new way to tackle the growing threat of climate change.

The perspective piece, which is published as the cover article in *Nature Sustainability*, comes in response to advice from leading scientists, suggesting that the [human impact](#) on the environment are already tipping the world into a new geologically significant era.

Called the Anthropocene, this new era is defined by the effect human-kind has already caused on Earth, from mass extinctions of plant and animal species, polluted oceans and altered atmosphere.

In the new report, the scientists argue that while policies are available, there also needs to be a new way to tackle the geographical, boundary, spatial, ecological and socio-political complexities of the issue; and that will require working together across disciplines.

Professor Ian Bateman of LEEP and co-author of the paper said: "The paper shows that the integrated nature of the planetary boundary problems requires an integrated [policy](#) response.

"Traditional policies tend to be highly piecemeal, highly inefficient, prone to failure and can even be counterproductive. Such policies take vital resources from key areas while providing short term sticking-plaster efforts for high visibility, often politically motivated causes."

Recent research into the Anthropocene has suggested that there are multiple threats to the resilience of the Earth systems.

While the report acknowledges that there are no 'simple solutions', it does outline seven guiding principles to help tackle the growing

environmental threat brought by man-made climate change.

These include selecting existing, robust policies to help formulate policy decisions, the need for decisions to be made consistently across regional, national and global boundaries, and a more conclusive look at the true extent that the environment is being impacted.

The report is authored by Professor Bateman, Dr. Donna Carless and Amanda Robinson from Exeter, alongside some of the world's leading researchers in the field.

These include acclaimed natural scientists Professor Johan Rockström (Stockholm Resilience Centre) and Professor Will Steffen (Australian National University) - who pioneered the planetary boundary and Anthropocene concepts—and eminent environmental economists including Professor Thomas Sterner (University of Gothenburg), Professor Edward Barbier (Colorado State University), Professor Carolyn Fischer (Resources for the Future, Washington) and Professor Stephen Polasky (University of Minnesota).

Together the team undertook the first unified assessment of the policy options for tackling the challenges of the Anthropocene. These include the integrated global problems of climate change; the pollution of air, land, freshwater and sea; and the rapid loss of genetic diversity around the world.

"Policy design for the Anthropocene" is published in *Nature Sustainability* on January 10, 2019.

More information: Driving spaceship Earth *Nature Sustainability*.
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