

Recent discussions in earth science literature concerning humanity's transformation of the biosphere, encapsulated in the term the "Anthropocene" suggest that there are boundaries to a "safe operating space" for humanity. How these are to be anticipated, much less what governance structures might be appropriate at various scales, is a crucial part of discussions of environmental change and sustainability. Territorial administrative units, and the strategies of managing their borders now intersect with the global concerns with ecological boundaries are central to this discussion, but in ways that transcend earlier emphasis on preserving "natural" environments. Earth system thinking presents profound difficulties for traditional environmental policies, but is unavoidable in discussions of sustainability now that the scale of the dramatic transformation we are living through is increasingly being recognized.