

# GETTING TO ONE-PLANET LIVING



**Washington, D.C.**—As the world continues down the path of unmitigated and unsustainable development, it is becoming increasingly clear that we have successfully pushed ourselves out of the stable geological era of the Holocene and into the more volatile and unpredictable Anthropocene. Nevertheless, many remain blissfully unaware of this truth due to the fact that ecosystem thresholds are not always marked with warning signs of impending danger. Unfortunately, this means that we may actually pass through a tipping point unaware because it is quite possible that nothing significant will happen at first.

In *State of the World 2013: Is Sustainability Still Possible?*, the Worldwatch Institute ([www.worldwatch.org](http://www.worldwatch.org)) discusses the need to collectively stay within our planetary boundaries if we wish to achieve environmental sustainability and return to a stabler, Holocene-like era.

According to Ecological Footprint studies, humans have already overshoot the planet's ecological capability by about 50 percent. *State of the World 2013* contributing author and Senior Researcher at Oxfam, Kate Raworth, notes that the high consumption levels of the wealthiest 10 percent of people in the world and the resource-intensive production practices of companies are the biggest sources of stress on the planet today.

“If ‘one-planet’ living is the goal, then lifestyle choices will obviously have to entail more than recycling programs and stay-at-home vacations,” said Jennie Moore, Director of Sustainable Development and Environmental Stewardship at the British Columbia Institute of Technology, and also a contributing author. “For success, the world’s nations will have to commit to whole new development strategies with elements ranging from public re-education to ecological fiscal reform, all within a negotiated global sustainability treaty.”

Although it is critical that we reduce our total resource use to a level below the natural threshold, it is equally important that every person has access to the resources they need to lead a life of dignity and opportunity. In *State of the World 2013*, contributing authors suggest taking into account both our planetary and social boundaries when measuring sustainability:

***Examining Planetary Boundaries.*** Nine planetary boundaries have been identified that together describe an envelope for a safe operating space for humanity, and we may be able to achieve environmental sustainability if we collectively live within these boundaries. These include: climate change, biodiversity loss, the nitrogen and phosphorus cycles, stratospheric ozone, ocean acidification, global freshwater use, land use changes, atmospheric aerosol loading, and chemical pollution.

***Incorporating Social Boundaries.*** Living within our planet’s natural boundaries is essential, but taking into consideration social boundaries, such as access to fresh water, education, health care, and other basic needs is as important. Between the social foundation of human rights and the environmental ceiling of planetary boundaries lies a space that is both environmentally safe and socially just, and we must work to move in to that space.

Source: <http://ipfieldnotes.org/getting-to-one-planet-living/>