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# Whose planet? Whose ‘boundaries’? A dialogue on the politics of ‘planetary boundaries’

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## Abstract

### Session Chairs:

David Lansing, University of Maryland Baltimore County

Erle Ellis, University of Maryland Baltimore County

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Whose planet? Whose ‘boundaries’? A dialogue on the politics of ‘planetary boundaries’

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Recent calls to recognize ‘planetary boundaries’ and to integrate these into forms of global governance open a number of political questions: who will be responsible for creating such a ‘safe space for humanity’ and how can it be done? Melissa Leach has recently argued how diverse values and interests over the environment can become silenced during the policy making process that is aimed at planetary scale conceptions. This session aims for a productive conversation that examines the relation between epistemic framings of planetary-wide boundaries and the kinds of politics it allows, and prevents. Does framing environmental issues in terms of planetary-scale limits empower forms of expertise in anti-democratic ways? Or, can the idea of planetary boundaries become a useful heuristic to guide local action, and democratic and socially just policy? What are the epistemic and political limits of governance bodies-such as nation-states, the United Nations, and the World Bank-in understanding and enforcing such complex global phenomena? In this session, we inquire into possibilities, limits and opportunities for states, or even a ”united humanity”, to understand

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\*Speaker

and act globally upon, cross-scale socio-ecological processes such as nitrogen loading, carbon sequestration, or biodiversity conservation, and whether planetary wide conceptions of these systems can be governed in a democratic and sustainable manner.

**Format of the session:**

This session will be a mix of short presentations and a dialogue between the authors and the audience.

Each participant will give a seven minute presentation (35 total minutes), and we will have 25 minutes for a dialogue between authors and the audience.

**Session speakers:**

1. Melissa Leach: "Power, pathways and planetary boundaries: negotiating green and just transformations"
2. Victor Galaz: "A polycentric approach to planetary boundaries?"
3. Garry Peterson: "Planetary Boundaries and a Resilient Anthropocene"
4. Erle Ellis: "Whose land? Planetary opportunities for people, land and nature"
5. Garry Peterson, Oonsie Biggs, Anne-Sophie Crepin (speaker), Victor Galaz: "Addressing pathological dynamics of global environmental problems"

**Keywords:** planetary boundaries, earth system governance, epistemology, power