



# Earth System Governance: World Politics in the Anthropocene

By Frank Biermann

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**Earth System Governance: World Politics in the Anthropocene** By Frank Biermann

Humans are no longer spectators who need to adapt to their natural environment. Our impact on the earth has caused changes that are outside the range of natural variability and are equivalent to such major geological disruptions as ice ages. Some scientists argue that we have entered a new epoch in planetary history: the Anthropocene. In such an era of planet-wide transformation, we need a new model for planet-wide environmental politics. In this book, Frank Biermann proposes "earth system" governance as just such a new paradigm.

Biermann offers both analytical and normative perspectives. He provides detailed analysis of global environmental politics in terms of five dimensions of effective governance: agency, particularly agency beyond that of state actors; architecture of governance, from local to global levels; accountability and legitimacy; equitable allocation of resources; and adaptiveness of governance systems. Biermann goes on to offer a wide range of policy proposals for future environmental governance and a revitalized United Nations, including the establishment of a World Environment Organization and a UN Sustainable Development Council, new mechanisms for strengthened representation of civil society and scientists in global decision making, innovative systems of qualified majority voting in multilateral negotiations, and novel institutions to protect those impacted by global change. Drawing on ten years of research, Biermann formulates earth system governance as an empirical reality and a political necessity.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

Whether or not the Anthropocene is officially accepted as Earth's new geological epoch, the phenomenon demands transformative human responses. In this book, one of the world's foremost scholars on institutions and governance unpacks the implications of the Anthropocene narrative for global-scale governance. A particular strength of the book is the integration of the scientific underpinning of the Anthropocene with both analytical and normative approaches to effective governance. This is a must-read for those interested in where on Earth our increasingly globalized society is going

(Will Steffen, Australian National University)

This remarkable book offers a sweeping overview of the challenges of global environmental governance that now confront humankind. Biermann has done a great job surveying the complex international landscape, and detailing his proposals for the comprehensive reform of multilateral environmental institutions.

(James Meadowcroft, School of Public Policy, Carleton University)

Drawing on insights from international relations theory, Frank Biermann's book contributes to a joint endeavor: the search for new ways to govern the Anthropocene. In taking this new epoch of planetary history seriously -- that is, accepting that the fine line between humankind and nature is becoming increasingly blurred -- this book is testimony to the fact that answers must be found beyond individual disciplines. Frank Biermann should be applauded for building a bridge between people interested in the earth system and people interested in governance.

(Klaus Töpfer, Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies, Potsdam)

... there is currently a massive gap between the reality of global environmental governance and the requirements identified by natural and social scientists who have taken the condition of the earth system seriously. Biermann has provided a thorough and credible program for starting to bridge that gap. Even those who do not share his prescriptions will have to grapple with the analysis that underpins them; *Earth System Governance* is now a clear and standard reference point, and as such should be required reading for all those who care about the condition of the earth system and its governance.

(*Perspectives on Politics*)

... Biermann's examinations of the analytical problems of earth system governance are excellent ... *Earth System Governance* stands out as the most comprehensive, best integrated, and most advanced review of earth system governance research to date.

(*International Studies Review*)

... Frank Biermann's book is an imaginative must-read on the challenges of earth system governance--a book about a realistic utopianism. It conforms to all central criteria for a seminal academic work: It is theoretically interesting, empirically relevant, and up-to-date. And what is more, it is also a bibliophilic delight.

*(International Journal of Social Economics)*

#### About the Author

Frank Biermann is Professor of Political Science and Environmental Policy Sciences at VU University Amsterdam and Visiting Professor of Earth System Governance at Lund University. He is the author, coauthor, or editor of fifteen books, including *Managers of Global Change: The Influence of International Environmental Bureaucracies* (coedited with Bernd Siebenhüner) and *Global Environmental Governance Reconsidered* (coedited with Philipp Pattberg), both published by the MIT Press.

### Users Review

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##### Katie Barry:

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