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Reconstructing Earth: Technology and Environment in the Age of Humans

The Earth's biological, chemical, and physical systems are increasingly shaped by the activities of one species-ours. In our decisions about everything from manufacturing technologies to restaurant menus, the health of the planet has become a product of human choice. Environmentalism, however, has largely failed to adapt to this new reality.

Reconstructing Earth offers seven essays that explore ways of developing a new, more sophisticated approach to the environment that replaces the fantasy of recovering pristine landscapes with a more grounded viewpoint that can foster a better relationship between humans and the planet. Braden Allenby, a lawyer with degrees in both engineering and environmental studies, explains the importance of technological choice, and how that factor is far more significant in shaping our environment (in ways both desirable and not) than environmental controls. Drawing on his varied background and experience in both academia and the corporate world, he describes the emerging field of "earth systems engineering and management," which offers an integrated approach to understanding and managing complex human/natural systems that can serve as a basis for crafting better, more lasting solutions to widespread environmental problems.

Reconstructing Earth not only critiques dysfunctional elements of current environmentalism but establishes a foundation for future environmental management and progress, one built on an understanding of technological evolution and the cultural systems that support modern technologies. Taken together, the essays offer an important means of developing an environmentalism that is robust and realistic enough to address the urgent realities of our planet.

Reconstructing Earth is a thought-provoking new work for anyone concerned with the past or future of environmental thought, including students and teachers of environmental studies, environmental policy, technology policy, technological evolution, or sustainability.

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The Author

BRADEN ALLENBY is professor of civil and environmental engineering and professor of law at Arizona State University. Until 2004, he was vice president for environment, health and safety at AT&T, and is author or co-author of numerous textbooks.

Also of interest from Island Press:

Living with the Genie  
The Sustainable Company  
Earth Rising  
No Man's Garden

Biographies

BRADEN ALLENBY is professor of civil and environmental engineering and professor of law at Arizona State University. Until 2004, he was vice president for environment, health and safety at AT&T, and is author or co-author of numerous textbooks.

Table Of Contents

Acknowledgments

Introduction: The Evolution of a Movement

Chapter 1. The Human Earth

Chapter 2. Real Rubber on Real Roads: Technology and Environment

Chapter 3. From Overhead to Strategic

Chapter 4. Alice in Wonderland: Environmental Management in the Firm

Chapter 5. Thoroughly Modern Marxist Utopianism: Sustainability

Chapter 6. Faith and Science

Chapter 7. Complexity: The New Frontier

Chapter 8. How Humans Construct Their Environment

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Chapter 9. Implementing Earth Systems Engineering and Management

Index