Land degradation is fast becoming recognized as a key issue for world conservation as we approach the end of the twentieth century. The complex relationship between human development and the environment is explored, with particular emphasis on the causes of land degradation processes. Written as an introduction to the topic, this book provides a clear and timely synthesis of our current understanding of the phenomenon of land degradation.
LAND DEGRADATION
Development and Breakdown of Terrestrial Environments
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Development and Breakdown of Terrestrial Environments

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To Anne and Anna
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Preface

When I began writing this book in 1986 I felt there was a need for a synthesis of the growing literature on land degradation. My hope was to consider both environmental and human factors without falling into the trap of using the 'man and environment' clichés that find their way into many works. In the main I wanted to give the reader an idea of 'where we stood', with the emphasis on why, where, and to what degree, degradation was occurring, rather than on avoidance or cures.

Quite a number of works on the 'greenhouse effect', ozone depletion, deforestation, desertification, etc, have appeared since 1986. If my synthesis has been 'eclipsed' then I am delighted, for I set out to make the problem of land degradation better known. My hope is that this book provides a broad introduction, one which might encourage people to pursue some aspect of land degradation – better still prevention or rehabilitation – more fully.

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