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978-0-521-46615-8 - Land Degradation: Development and Breakdown of Terrestrial Environments

C. J. Barrow

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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.

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LAND DEGRADATION

Development and Breakdown of Terrestrial Environments

C. J. BARROW

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[More information](#)

To Anne and Anna

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	<i>page</i> xv
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xvii
1 Land degradation: an overview	1
Introduction	1
What is land degradation?	1
Perception of land degradation	2
Development and concern for land degradation	5
How significant a problem is land degradation?	9
Is there an 'environmental crisis'?	10
What are the costs of land degradation?	11
What forms of land degradation give greatest cause for concern?	11
2 Why is land degradation occurring?	13
Cause and process	13
Natural hazards as a cause of land degradation	15
Population change as a cause of land degradation	16
Marginalization as a cause of land degradation	17
Poverty as a cause of land degradation	18
Land ownership problems as a cause of land degradation	18
Political instability and maladministration as causes of land degradation	18
Economic and social causes of land degradation	19
Health problems as a cause of land degradation	20
Inappropriate agriculture as a cause of land degradation	20
How sensitive is land to degradation? How stable are environments?	21
Ecosystem stability, sensitivity and resilience	21
What are the limits beyond which land degradation occurs?	25
Sustainability and sustainable development	28
The concept of sustainable development	29
3 Land degradation through global pollution: the 'greenhouse effect'	31
What is the 'greenhouse effect'?	31
'Greenhouse gases'	32
What land degradation will the 'greenhouse effect' cause?	37
Dust and climatic change	46
Reactions to the 'greenhouse effect'	47
Control of emissions	47
Adapting to the 'greenhouse effect'	48

CONTENTS	4	Land degradation through global pollution: stratospheric ozone depletion, acid deposition and tropospheric ozone increase	49
		Stratospheric ozone depletion	49
		What is depleting the ozone?	49
		Ozone 'holes'	50
		Responses to ozone depletion	52
		Acid deposition	53
		Causes of acid deposition	54
		The extent of the problem	56
		Impacts of acid deposition	61
		Responses to acid deposition	66
		Low-altitude (tropospheric) ozone pollution	67
	5	Degradation of tropical rainforests, tropical/subtropical seasonally dry and tropical/subtropical upland forests, woodlands and scrublands	71
		The nature of the problem	71
		Tropical rainforest degradation	72
		Humid tropical closed forest	72
		Problem regions	76
		Reasons for tropical rainforest degradation	79
		Upland tropical forest degradation	86
	6	Degradation of seasonally dry tropical/subtropical and Mediterranean woodlands and scrublands, temperate and high-latitude forests	89
		Seasonally dry tropical/subtropical forest, woodland and scrubland degradation	89
		Rate of loss of seasonally dry tropical/subtropical forest, woodland and scrublands	90
		Mediterranean and Mediterranean-type forest, woodland and scrub degradation	90
		Extent and rate of loss	91
		Causes of degradation of seasonally dry and Mediterranean-type forest, woodlands and scrub	91
		High latitude forest and woodland degradation	95
		Causes of degradation	97
		Temperate hedgerow degradation	98
		The consequences of deforestation	98
		Species loss	98
		Climatic change	98
		Impacts on hydrology	99
		Loss of access to forest products	100
		Health impacts	100
		Economic impacts	101
		Aesthetic losses	101
		Countering forest and woodland degradation	101
		Plans to save tropical forests	102
		Measures that could help reduce or reverse degradation	102
		Funding reforestation, afforestation and forest conservation	113
		Citizen action to counter deforestation	113
		The need to reduce waste of timber and improve control of logging and the timber trade	114
		Reduction of fuelwood demand	115
		Reduction of demand for pulp and woodchips	116

7	The degradation of wetlands, tundra, uplands and islands	117	CONTENTS
	Degradation of wetlands	117	
	Mangrove swamps	121	
	Coastal wetlands and saltmarshes	123	
	Peatlands	123	
	Tundra	128	
	Protection of wetlands and peatlands	129	
	Degradation of uplands	130	
	Deforestation of uplands	132	
	Cultivation and pastoralism in uplands	133	
	Soil erosion in uplands	133	
	Tourism impact	133	
	Degradation due to mining in uplands	135	
	Transport and communications development impact	135	
	Degradation of islands	136	
	Island biogeography: relevance to island degradation	136	
	The causes of degradation of island environments	137	
8	Land degradation in drylands	141	
	Drylands	141	
	Desertification	142	
	Crucial questions	143	
	How great a problem is desertification?	145	
	What are the causes and processes?	146	
	Natural causes of desertification	148	
	Human causes of desertification	156	
	What are the implications of desertification?	162	
	Desertification problem regions	163	
	Desertification monitoring and control	175	
	Who is fighting desertification?	176	
	Cost of desertification control	177	
	What can be done?	177	
9	Non-erosive soil degradation	179	
	Causes of non-erosive soil degradation	180	
	Compaction and burning	180	
	Decline of soil fertility	181	
	Loss of soil organic matter	181	
	Problems with dung	181	
	Structural changes, 'laterization', crust and pan formation	182	
	Acidification	183	
	The accumulation of toxic compounds and pest organisms	183	
	Land degradation as a consequence of waterlogging, salinization or alkalization	183	
	Waterlogging	183	
	Salinity and alkalinity problems	185	
	Forms of salinization and alkalization	186	
	Causes of salinization and alkalization	187	
	The extent, rate of increase and costs of salinization and alkalization	188	
	Countering waterlogging, salinization and alkalization	190	
	Land degradation as a consequence of agricultural pollution	192	
	Agrochemicals: pesticides, herbicides, fungicides, etc	192	
	Agrochemicals: fertilizers, lime, etc	194	
	Farm slurry, silage effluent and waste from processing agricultural products	195	
	Land drainage	195	

CONTENTS	Avoiding agrochemicals: organic farming	196
	Areas that are especially vulnerable to soil degradation	196
	Tropical soils	196
	Acid-sulphate soil problem areas	196
	Peaty soils and permafrost soils	197
10	Erosive soil degradation	199
	Soil erosion, mass movement and solution	199
	Measurement of soil erosion	202
	The Universal Soil Loss Equation	203
	Measuring wind erosion	204
	Monitoring erosion	204
	The costs and effects of soil erosion	206
	Causes of soil erosion	207
	Shifting cultivation	208
	Livestock herding activity	208
	Arable cultivation	208
	Fire	208
	Human access and tourism	208
	Commercial causes	209
	Land drainage	209
	Extent and rate of soil erosion	209
	What are permissible rates of soil erosion?	212
	Areas that are especially vulnerable to soil erosion	213
	Loess soil areas	213
	Steep slopes	213
	Drylands soils	213
	Controlling soil degradation	213
	Measures for countering water erosion	215
	Measures for countering wind erosion	218
	Reducing damage caused by agricultural activity	219
	Encouraging, supporting and enforcing soil degradation control	219
11	Land degradation through warfare, mineral extraction, industrial and urban development and increased movement of organisms	223
	Land degradation as a consequence of warfare	223
	Conventional warfare	223
	Chemical and biological warfare	225
	Environmental warfare	227
	Nuclear warfare	227
	Land degradation as a consequence of mining and quarrying	229
	Surface mining	229
	Deep mining	231
	Extraction of minerals by borehole	232
	Indirect impacts of mining	232
	Rehabilitation and restoration of land degraded by mining and quarrying	233
	Land degraded as a consequence of industrial activity and disposal of domestic and industrial waste	233
	Land degradation caused by domestic wastes	234
	Land degradation caused by industrial wastes	235
	Land degradation caused by burial of the dead	236
	Land degradation caused by power generation	236

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-46615-8 - Land Degradation: Development and Breakdown of Terrestrial Environments

C. J. Barrow

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Land degradation caused by nuclear waste disposal	238	CONTENTS
Land degradation caused by transportation	238	
Land degradation caused by urban expansion	238	
Industrial and energy crops and land degradation	239	
Land degradation through electromagnetic pollution (excluding radioactivity)	239	
Land degradation as a consequence of plant and animal 'invasions', introductions and 'ecological explosions'	239	
Introduced or 'invading' plants that have caused land degradation	240	
Introduced or 'invading' animals that have caused land degradation	242	
12 Conclusion: conservation and preventative/remedial strategies	245	
Conservation	245	
Conservation areas	247	
What size should conservation areas be?	248	
What areas should be conserved?	250	
Helping conservation areas conserve	251	
Paying for conservation	256	
Preventative and remedial strategies	257	
<i>References</i>	261	
<i>Index</i>	287	

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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