

## The Invention of Sustainability

The issue of sustainability, and the idea that economic growth and development might destroy its own foundations, is one of the defining political problems of our era. This ground-breaking study traces the emergence of this idea, and demonstrates how sustainability was closely linked to hopes for growth, and the destiny of expanding European states, from the sixteenth century. Weaving together aspirations for power, for economic development and agricultural improvement, and ideas about forestry, climate, the sciences of the soil and of life itself, this book sets out how new knowledge and metrics led people to imagine both new horizons for progress, but also the possibility of collapse. In the nineteenth century anxieties about sustainability, often driven by science, proliferated in debates about contemporary and historical empires and the American frontier. The fear of progress undoing itself confronted society with finding ways to live with and manage nature.

**Paul Warde** is a Reader in Environmental History at the University of Cambridge. His previous publications include *Ecology, economy and state formation in early modern Germany* (Cambridge, 2006), *Power to the people. Energy in Europe over the last five centuries* (2013) and *The future of nature. Documents of global change* (2013).

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# The Invention of Sustainability

Nature and Destiny, c. 1500–1870

Paul Warde  
*University of Cambridge*



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**For my mother, Brenda Warde,  
and in memory of my father, Noel Warde**

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AHEW	Agrarian History of England and Wales
BL	British Library
CSPD	Calendar of State Papers Domestic
<i>EcHR</i>	<i>Economic History Review</i>
GUL	Glasgow University Library
<i>JHC</i>	<i>Journal of the House of Commons</i>
<i>JHL</i>	<i>Journal of the House of Lords</i>
<i>JPQE</i>	<i>Journals of all the Parliaments during the Reign of Queen Elizabeth</i>
TNA	The National Archives
WN	<i>An inquiry into the nature and causes of the Wealth of Nations</i>

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