



Les Liens qui Libèrent

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The Author

Guillaume Pitron is a journalist (*Le Monde & Le Monde Diplomatique*) and documentary maker. In 2017 he won the Prix Erik Izraelewicz for investigative reporting. He regularly shares his expertise on rare metals with parliamentary and European Commission committees.

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THE WAR OVER RARE METALS The Hidden Side of Ecological Transition

Guillaume Pitron

In this timely and hard-hitting counter-history of the 'third industrial revolution', the award-winning journalist Guillaume Pitron explores the darker side of our contemporary reliance on digital technologies and so-called 'green' energies.

In our quest for an ecologically sounder model of growth, are we not in fact in danger of wreaking ever more environmental damage on our planet, with ever more dramatic economic and geopolitical consequences?

The rare metals that dominate our high-tech age are the oil of the 21st century. Exotically named elements such as indium, lithium and neodymium may mean nothing to the average consumer, but thanks to their unique chemical properties, they are the 'vitamins' of the ecological and digital revolution.

But these metals are scarce, and the environmental and human costs of extracting them from the earth can be enormous. To obtain just a few kilos of useable metal, many tonnes of earth have to be extracted. As western countries have sought to emancipate themselves from their reliance of fossil fuels and the attendant pollution, developing countries have taken up the baton. China, for instance, now controls 95% of the global market for 'rare earths', but it has little regard for environmental standards. The much-vaunted transition to sustainable energies turns out to be something of an illusion.

Pitron's book is a timely and weighty contribution to a debate of urgent contemporary importance.