



## Les Liens qui Libèrent

(Paris)

October 2019 (updated ed.)

276 pages

**Rights sold:** Spanish (Península-Planeta), Italian (LUISS), English (Scribe), Chinese compl. (Commonwealth), Polish (Kogut), Korean (Galapagos), Russian (offer in), Japanese (Hara Shobo).

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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 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.

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