



Eradicating Ecocide by Polly Higgins
Reviewed by Robin Smith

This excellent book's title suggests that corporations and politicians are committing a crime by murdering the thing that gives all humans life. The earth. And that by changing the law we can eradicate the criminals. Would a change in the human law go deep enough I wondered as I started to read? The book gives a wealth of information on how corruption of natural laws within both the private and welfare state is the root cause of destruction. This lines up well with Georgist ideas.

The book in general is a thorough exposition of the litany of seemingly mindless pollution and destruction that no one can deny is happening. It demonstrates how small changes in the law can bring about large effects and how the law was adapted step by step to prevent people from literally suffocating.

Most interestingly for me was how some time ago law was changed to allow corporations to be "fictional persons". The problem here being that when you want to apply the law you cannot lock up a piece of paper. The book's call is to make ecocide a crime against a person not a corporation. I struggled with this because all people make choices at the ballot, in what they buy and by who they work for, so all people have obligations and responsibilities determined by free choice. Exactly how and why they are compelled to make irrational choices against the good of the planet might be a further consideration for the crime of ecocide.

In the end the nagging question about free people, making bad choices a crime, remained. What is this force that compels us to destroy the thing that gives us life? If that force is more powerful than human law, how might we provide a remedy? The question is still open.