

What follows is a commentary on the five chapters that Ramon Margalef wrote in the first edition of this book in 1976 (which are reproduced here), with some remarks on events that have occurred and new knowledge that has been acquired since then. Among the most significant events that have changed in the world is that the dominant Western position is today less clear than it was then. This, and the new technologies that favor the control of information flows by large corporations or States and that open possibilities of participation, may affect the way in which environmental issues will be addressed in the future. The course that has been taken by the management of resources and of the environment is quite disappointing, with repeated failures of international efforts to change the dangerous trends that are still observed in climate warming, land uses or population involvement. We are still far from achieving many of the objectives formulated more than half a century ago. In the energy field, not only has the transition to clean energies not been achieved, but badly polluting techniques, such as fracking, seek to sustain a carbon-based economy. Many countries, such as our own, are highly vulnerable due to the poor development of self-sufficiency. Despite advances, in nature conservation there are still threats associated with urban planning; loss of forests due to grazing, expanding cropland or fragmentation; oil exploitation in the Arctic; a foreseeable reduction of drinking water resources linked to climate warming and to the increase of the demand and of pollution; sea acidification as a result of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, etc. Microplastics have become a global threat. We are still far from recycling a substantial part of the materials we use. The need for new institutions and regulatory mechanisms subsists, becoming more urgent every day. But the coming to power in very important countries like the United States, Russia, Brazil or Indonesia of leaders supported by interests associated with fuels, agro-industry, construction, etc. is a serious obstacle. Many things have to change. Some countries have set off on the path to decarbonization, and China is moving, pushed by the catastrophic results of poor environmental management. The future is not closed.