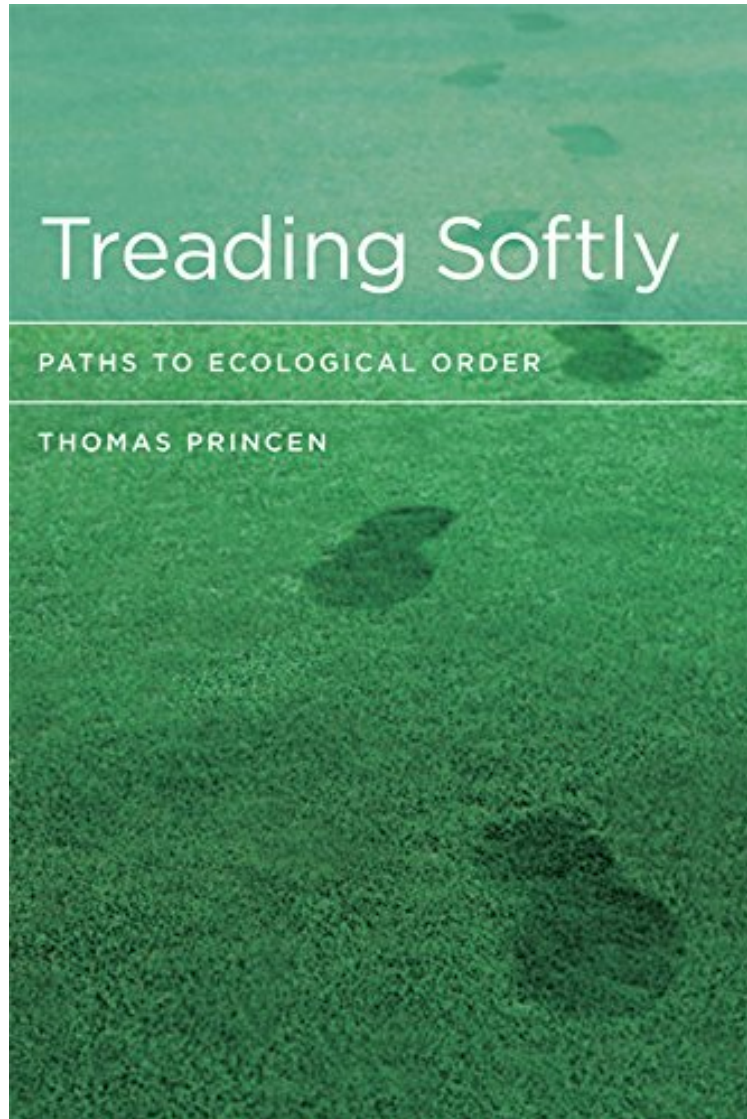


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Treading Softly: Paths to Ecological Order (MIT Press)

Thomas Princen

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Thomas Princen : Treading Softly: Paths to Ecological Order (MIT Press) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Treading Softly: Paths to Ecological Order (MIT Press):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Admirable, but NaiveBy IncognitoNoble sentiments, but impractical advice.2 of 7 people found the following review helpful. A Path to Understanding Ecology in s Treading Softly thesisBy Bruce HarryMr. Thomas Princen has written a masterpiece of understanding the critical interaction of humans and Earth's only environment in his outstanding thesis on our ecological order! He understands the role of humans soiling our own nest with the detritus of our "progress". The path we should all undertake has to begin right now, with no further delay.2 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Disjointed and UnsatisfyingBy Annie

O. Dr. Thomas Princen has written an utterly devastating account of the human framing of environmental problems, in that after I read it I felt devastated at the loss of three days and countless brain cells. More seriously: Princen accurately identifies a number of societal problems but poorly balances his critiques such that they feel morally disorganized and inconsistent. He deliberately avoids quoting strong opposing arguments, favoring instead italicized straw man quotes which he feels sum up consumer ideologies. As a result, he misses crucial overlaps in multiple orthogonal philosophies that could draw people from different intellectual niches into cooperation on these environmental issues. The book reads as an exercise in in-group creation for a green-identified upper middle class already comfortable in their moral superiority. Its metaphors are confusing and, on occasion, lazy. Its conclusions give no clear paths forward to the communities Princen idealizes. Frequently, intriguing points are raised seemingly by accident, then glossed over in favor of repetition. The writing style is list-like, hackneyed, and vague. Dr. Princen writes, "This book is also for those who have had enough documentation." If you've had enough documentation, you should stop reading altogether. This book has effectively excluded its own audience. Leave it on the shelf.

We are living beyond our means, running up debts both economic and ecological, consuming the planet's resources at rates not remotely sustainable. But it's hard to imagine a different way. How can we live without cheap goods and easy credit? How can we consume without consuming the systems that support life? How can we live well and live within our means? In *Treading Softly*, Thomas Princen helps us imagine an alternative. We need, he says, a new normal, an ecological order that is actually economical with resources, that embraces limits, that sees sustainable living not as a "lifestyle" but as a long-term connection to fresh, free-flowing water, fertile soil, and healthy food. The goal would be to live well by living well within the capacities of our resources. Princen doesn't offer a quick fix -- there's no list of easy ways to save the planet to hang on the refrigerator. He gives us instead a positive, realistic sense of the possible, with an abundance of examples, concepts, and tools for imagining, then realizing, how to live within our biophysical means.

From Publishers Weekly: Rejecting the "tried-and-true path" as well as the promise of high-tech innovation, University of Michigan professor Princen (*Confronting Consumption*) makes an impassioned and illustrative plea for radical societal transformation, from consumerism to sustainability. Taking issue with a stripe of environmentalist and progressive thinker, like Thomas L. Friedman, anticipating a quick fix (high-tech or otherwise) to retrofit the existing, growth-based consumer economy, Princen rejects the idea of endless growth, which defies all laws of logic and physics: "A system that grows endlessly crashes... unendingly increasing consumption cannot continue on a finite planet." Looking to historical economic reversals, like the upheaval that occurred after slavery was abolished or the plummeting popularity of cigarettes, Princen argues that society must dethrone the "sovereign consumer" and adopt the ethos of sacrifice if it is to survive. Practically, many more people need to overcome widespread alienation from the natural world by prioritizing community over profit, becoming direct producers of goods, and adapting better to the rhythms (and limits) of nature; ideas include an intermittent electricity supply, season-appropriate availability of many foods, and communities that are largely self-sufficient. Genuinely provocative, this book challenges practices and theories sacred to both sides of the ecology debate. Copyright copy; Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. "This is an eloquent and impassioned book. It is clearly written, lacks confounding academic artifice, and conveys a message that is simultaneously simple and profound." -- Maurice J. Cohen, New Jersey Institute of Technology "As the epoch of seemingly limitless expansion comes to an end, *Treading Softly* represents an important springboard for debate about what comes next. It finds an appropriate balance of 'realistic hope,' going beyond the easy answers so often put forward in environmental debates. Above all, it succeeds in encouraging readers to imagine a possible new world, and in emboldening us to get to work in creating it." Anders Hayden *Sustainability: Science, Practice, Policy* About the Author Thomas Princen is the author of *The Logic of Sufficiency* and lead editor of *Confronting Consumption*, both published by the MIT Press and both winners of the International Studies Association's Harold and Margaret Sprout Award for best book on international environmental affairs. He teaches social and ecological sustainability at the University of Michigan.