We have become accustomed to the idea that we may, someday, run out of oil. The world's great forests are being stripped away. Underwater aquifers, a vital source of water for millions, are being depleted at an alarming rate.

But very few of us have ever imagined that we are also in danger of running out of sand.

Sand is easy to ignore. It is, after all, one of the most abundant resources on the planet. But when you look at what sand becomes — concrete, glass, and silicon — you begin to realize that we are living in a world made out of sand...a world that would look very different if we were ever to run out.

According to award-winning journalist **Vince Beiser**, that is exactly what is starting to happen.

*Sand is the thing that our cities are made out of... Every concrete building that you see is basically just a huge pile of sand glued together with cement. All the roads that connect all those buildings — also made of sand. All the windows in those buildings are made from sand. The silicon that powers your computers, your cell phones, the chips in your electronics, that's also from sand. So basically, without sand, we have no modern civilization.*- Vince Beiser

Because the sand found in deserts often isn't suitable for making concrete, miners strip sand from riverbeds and beaches. Usable sand is a finite resource.

Beiser says rapid urbanization all around the world is causing us to consume concrete at an unprecedented rate. That means sand miners are digging deeper and deeper, disrupting sensitive ecosystems, and in some rare cases, swallowing up entire islands.

The growing demand for sand [has also created a deadly black market](https://www.wired.com/2015/03/illegal-sand-mining/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank), sometimes controlled by "sand mafias." In India and Indonesia, sand mafias are believed to have killed hundreds of people in the last few years alone, including police officers and journalists.

Beiser's [reporting on sand](http://pulitzercenter.org/projects/deadly-global-war-sand%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) is supported by the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting, and he is currently at work on a book about the deadly global war for sand for Penguin Random House.

http://www.cbc.ca/radio/thesundayedition/the-world-is-starting-to-run-out-of-sand-1.3776853?autoplay=true