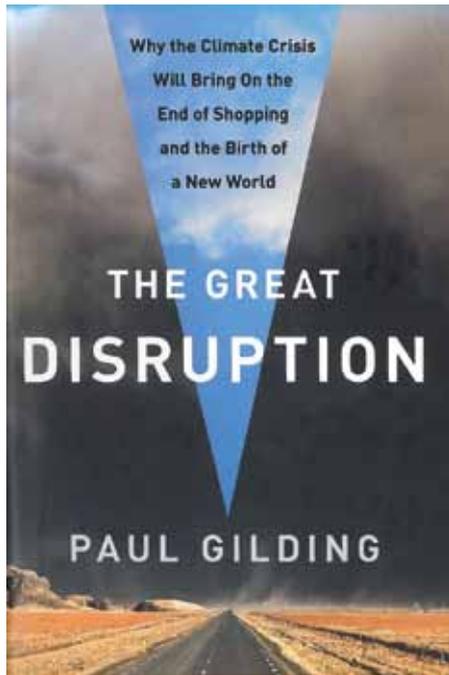


# The Great Disruption

There's much discussion today about global warming and climate change. Paul Gilding brings the effects a little closer to home with his views on how these crises will affect our daily lives.



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**TITLE:**  
The Great Disruption  
**SUBTITLE:**  
Why the climate crisis will bring on the end of shopping and the birth of a new world  
**AUTHOR:**  
Paul Gilding  
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I HEARD PAUL GILDING speaking last year in Singapore at John Gattorna's Global Supply Chain Business Summit. Gattorna invited Gilding as plenary speaker as he regarded the topic of climate crisis important to the supply chain industry. We all received copies of his book and I am pleased to share this review with you as it certainly changed my view on climate change and sustainability in general and the supply chain in particular.

Just imagine the impact on the supply chain if shopping the way we are used to were to end, as anticipated and explained in the book.

Gilding is an international thought leader and advocate for sustainability. He has served as head of Greenpeace International, built and led companies addressing sustainability issues and advised many Fortune 500 corporations and community-based NGOs. He is a member of the core faculty for Cambridge University's Programme for Sustainability Leadership.

The highly respected Thomas Friedman made this comment about him in the New York Times: "One of those who have been warning about climate crisis for a long time is Paul Gilding, the Australian environmental business expert. He has a name for the moment – when both Mother Nature and Father Greed have hit the wall at once – 'The Great Disruption'."

Gilding starts the book with: "The earth is full. In fact our human society and economy is now so large we have passed the limits of our planet's capacity to support us and it is overflowing. Our current model of economic growth is driving this system, the one we rely upon for our present and future prosperity, over the cliff. This in itself presents a major problem. It becomes a much

larger challenge when we consider that billions of people are living desperate lives in appalling poverty and need their personal 'economy' to rapidly grow to alleviate their suffering. But there is no room left." This introduction caught my attention and kept it to the end.

The second chapter covers some history on the warnings and includes reference to the thinking of Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) and his opinion that "it is in vain to dream of a wildness distant from ourselves" and he sought "to regard man as an inhabitant, or a part and parcel of Nature, rather than a member of society". Other references cover the seminal work of Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (1962) and *Limits to Growth* report (1972) of Professor Jorgen Randers, who recently visited South Africa.

Chapter 3 moves attention from the past to the present and discusses current realities in very much and frightening detail. Gilding is of the opinion that most of the early arguments were based on environmental concerns that did not see the issues from an economic perspective. Once the concerns are linked to our existence from an economic and sustainability perspective, scientific reality strikes home and gets very close to the individual.

Chapter 4 analyses the numbers and Gilding addresses the popular opinion that there are just too many people, the capability of humans, markets and technology to respond positively once the impact of the perceived crisis hits or we can just grow the economy in a different way. He discusses the arguments in detail and explains why we cannot avoid the crisis of the Great Disruption.

The next chapter deals with growth and the reality that the global economy is almost five times the size it was half a century ago. If it continues to grow at the same rate, it will be 80 times that size by the year 2100. Growth is deeply ingrained in our global political, economic and cultural systems but it cannot be sustained.

The sixth chapter starts with the reality that we are heading for an ecological and economic crash and although the general response is a reluctant acceptance of the potential accuracy of this hypothesis, there seems to be more qualified acceptance. This is supported by the economic crisis in 2008 when the global economy slowed and almost ground to a halt. Chapters 7 to 9 continue to explore current realities and what might happen when the 'dam of denial' breaks. This brings us to the interesting discussion on the 'One-degree War' in Chapter 10 where Gilding explains why it is important to constrain global warming to one degree and what we need to do to win this war. Some actions include cutting deforestation and other logging by 50 percent, closing 1 000 dirty coal power plants within five years, ration electricity, erect wind turbine plants in every town, and many more.

The next part of the book discusses the alternatives and possibilities to change the course of history and Gilding shares some interesting facts and figures of what is indeed possible. He is outspoken against the modern habit of shopping for pleasure and the fallacy that it makes us happy to shop. He shares the story of Colin

and Michelle Conlin who lived for a year with no net environmental impact. After the first week Colin wrote: "We got the glimpse of a life with an entirely different rhythm. We began to think that, by depriving us of our Madison Avenue addictions, the no impact experiment might actually make us happier. It was only a seven-day experiment, but it convinced us that living no impact can be done, it can be done pleasantly, and that we could conceivably end up happier rather than sadder – which is why we're in it for a year!"

There is much more to share from the book but in conclusion, logistics and supply chain management practitioners need to carefully consider the implications of a radical change in consumer behaviour. We need to be alert and mindful of our response and how we can contribute positively to reduce the effects of the great disruption and continue to serve customers with efficient, sustainable supply chains.

In the many years I have been reviewing titles, I would probably regard this book on my list of Top 3 and a must for all our readers. Gilding managed to keep my attention through all chapters and I found it most encouraging that his arguments are based on scientific research and proper analyses of realistic probabilities of the implications of climate change. There are so many ways this will impact the supply chain that we have to take notice, and hopefully respond with constructive action that contributes to changing the seemingly inevitable course of history. •

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