

# Positive disruption



**The Great Disruption: How the Climate Crisis Will Transform the Global Economy**

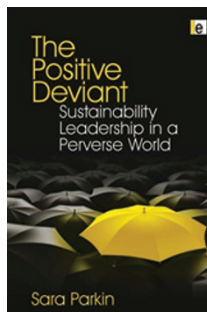
by Paul Gilding

BLOOMSBURY: 2011.  
292 PP. £13

The fallen Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd discovered that if you call climate change “the greatest moral challenge of our generation,” then people will expect you to do something about it (though their enthusiasm will fade as you get closer to their wallets). Similarly, the hype surrounding the United Nations climate talks in Copenhagen in 2009 raised expectations that somebody somewhere would do something to tackle the problem. Almost 18 months later, we are now experiencing the stark realization that the long, loud and legal plans that corporations and governments need to enact to mitigate anthropogenic emissions will not come in time. The question then remains ‘what is to be done?’

In *The Great Disruption*, climate activist and writer Paul Gilding pursues an answer to this conundrum. Gilding’s quest follows a familiar trajectory, from civil action and green politics to educating and cajoling global business leaders, trying to show them the error of their ways. Gilding has led a particularly colourful life, some of which he shares early in his new, and first, book. While serving in the Australian military he spent his weekends protesting the visits of nuclear-powered US navy ships to Sydney Harbour. He was later head of Greenpeace International, leaving in 1995 to found his own eco-consultancy working with Fortune 500 companies.

Gilding offers a harsh analysis of humanity’s plight, opening with the statement “the earth is full,” but he also offers a surprisingly optimistic outcome: growth will stop not because humans legislate, but because physics says it must. Central to Gilding’s assessment is his notion of ‘the one-degree war’, in reference to the maximum temperature



**The Positive Deviant: Sustainability Leadership in a Perverse World**

by Sara Parkin

EARTHSCAN: 2010.  
316 PP. £25

increase he argues we can allow on a sustainable Earth. He developed the concept with Jorgen Randers, one of the authors of *The Limits to Growth*. Although Gilding is aware of the 0.8 °C of warming since the Industrial Revolution,

he entirely overlooks the warming we’re already committed to owing to inertia in the climate system, making a physical impossibility of his target. He also refuses to consider the technological and societal plausibility of such a feat. A comparison of his policy recommendations with the technologies available and their likely contribution to the future global energy mix would have been a welcome addition to his proposal.

Ultimately, Gilding’s book has many interesting passages and signposts to further reading, but the central proposition — that humans will respond at the appropriate speed and scale to climate change because that is the rational course — does not seem to be supported by the evidence of the past two decades,

## ON OUR BOOKSHELF



**Sustainable and Resilient Communities: A Comprehensive Action Plan for Towns, Cities, and Regions**

by Stephen Coyle

WILEY: 2011. 419 PP. £57.50

To maintain environmental, economic and social well-being, communities need to be able to adapt to face upheavals such as a global financial crisis, uncertainty about energy prices and availability, rapid demographic shifts and climate change. This book explains how to create and implement a plan for making neighbourhoods, communities and regions more environmentally healthy, resource-conserving and economically resilient.



**Confronting Climate Change**

by Constance Lever-Tracey

RUTLEDGE: 2011. 116 PP. £17.99

What are the current and potential future consequences of climate change and how should people confront the politics of climate change? Combining perspectives from sociology, environmental science and politics, this book presents an accessible introduction to the topic. In outlining the key issues, Constance Lever-Tracey advocates how the social and natural sciences must work together, and critically assesses climate policy and politics.