

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910966157603321
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Titolo	Global catastrophes and trends : the next fifty years / / Vaclav Smil
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Cambridge, MA, : MIT Press, c2008
ISBN	9780262291620 0262291622 9780262283878 0262283875 9781435654990 1435654994
Edizione	[1st ed.]
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (322 p.)
Disciplina	363.34
Soggetti	Environmental risk assessment Natural disasters
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Bibliographic Level Mode of Issuance: Monograph
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references and indexes.
Nota di contenuto	Intro -- Contents -- Preface -- 1 How (Not) to Look Ahead -- 2 Fatal Discontinuities -- 3 Unfolding Trends -- 4 Environmental Change -- 5 Dealing with Risk and Uncertainty -- Appendix A Units and Abbreviations, Prefixes -- Appendix B Acronyms -- References -- Name Index -- Subject Index.
Sommario/riassunto	From the Publisher: Fundamental change occurs most often in one of two ways: as a "fatal discontinuity," a sudden catastrophic event that is potentially world changing, or as a persistent, gradual trend. Global catastrophes include volcanic eruptions, viral pandemics, wars, and large-scale terrorist attacks; trends are demographic, environmental, economic, and political shifts that unfold over time. In this provocative book, scientist Vaclav Smil takes a wide-ranging, interdisciplinary look at the catastrophes and trends the next fifty years may bring. This is not a book of forecasts or scenarios but one that reminds us to pay attention to, and plan for, the consequences of apparently unpredictable events and the ultimate direction of long-term trends. Smil first looks at rare but cataclysmic events, both natural and human-produced, then at trends of global importance: the transition from

fossil fuels to other energy sources; demographic and political shifts in Europe, Japan, Russia, China, the United States, and Islamic nations; the battle for global primacy; and growing economic and social inequality. He also considers environmental change-in some ways an amalgam of sudden discontinuities and gradual change-and assesses the often misunderstood complexities of global warming. Global Catastrophes and Trends does not come down on the side of either doom-and-gloom scenarios or techno-euphoria. Instead, relying on long-term historical perspectives and a distaste for the rigid compartmentalization of knowledge, Smil argues that understanding change will help us reverse negative trends and minimize the risk of catastrophe.
