

THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN
Hot, flat and crowded. Why the world needs a green revolution
– and how it can renew america

Polirom Publishing House, Iași, 2010

In his latest book, **Hot, Flat and Crowded**, the triple *Pulitzer* award laureate, Thomas Friedman, foreign affairs analyst and columnist at "The New York Times", succeeds a thorough and well-grounded analysis of the weather changes in the present and of the measures to be taken in the near future.

The main issues that humankind needs to confront are included in the title. Global warming is a phenomenon that each of us has already noticed. The world is becoming 'flatter and flatter' while globalization wears out many of the differences among the national economies, allowing the emergence of a middle-class in countries like China and India, which class tends to embrace an 'American-like' consumption style. And, of course, the planet is getting more and more crowded, not only because of population increase (according to the UNO statistics, the globe population will reach 7 billion people on October 31st, 2011¹) but also of urbanization. There are debates concerning the intensity of such phenomena, whose presence may be hardly denied.

This growth in the number of population, along with the rising of the life standards, triggers a dramatic mount in the energy demand and takes to a dependence on the oil-producing countries. The author comes with a quite interesting analysis of the correlation between the oil price and the freedom that the people in the oil-producing large countries enjoy overall. The conclusion that he draws is that there is a reversed relation between the oil price and the degree of democratization of such countries. He even formulates a first law of the petroleum politics: 'The lower the oil price, the faster the freedom evolves.' Thus, at the beginning of the 90's, the oil price went down and the competition, transparency and freedom in these countries surged.

After 2000, when the petroleum price went back up, the free expression, fair elections and the freedom to build political parties started to deteriorate.

Friedman's conclusion is that while the slogan of the American revolution was – 'No taxation without representation', the authoritarian oil-producing country is 'No taxation, hence no representation'. It is obvious that this 'law' does not point at the states that had had strong democratic institutions and diversified industries before discovering they had plenty of oil. Plus, the dependence on 'dirty', polluting energy sources (called the 'Dirty Fuel System') brings its contribution to the climate change.

The expected solution, presented by the author, is the 'economy going green'. This process requires a sustained effort, both from each of us (there is no easy way – Friedman ridicules articles as '205 simple ways to save the Earth') and from the governments worldwide.

¹ <http://www.worldometers.info/population/>.

The green revolution involves the building of a Clean Energy System. This one will ask for, among others, the introduction of a carbon emission tax and the modification in the role of the energy-supplying companies. They should not only deliver the energy in the quantities that the consumers want, but to make them consume less, from not polluted sources. The green revolution is a long and tedious process, mainly if we consider that low funds for research-development are meant for this field – and the result: the latest major finding (the use of the nuclear energy) dates back 50 years ago.

Friedman insists that the energy issue is, in reality, an opportunity that should not be missed. Those who will be able to solve it will be the great winners of the Energy Climate Era, starting now. The warning that America has lost its momentum in this competition comes with the hope that it will somehow recover and will lead the way to be followed by the other economies.

While in his previous book¹, Thomas Friedman believed that the free economy and globalization were enough to provide a long-term welfare, here in the sequel, he admitted the need for a stronger involvement from leadership, acknowledging that a country like China would be more able to solve the challenges stemming from the major changes herein suggested. 'Hence comes his desire, 'to become China for a day (but not two)''.

The purpose of this book was to bring into attention momentous items of the present times and to imprint the eco-economy into the conscience of as wide as possible audience. From this perspective, this book is a success, since it is an easy reading for non-economists, too. Whoever has not become aware of how the weather change, economy, energy cost and national security are all intertwined, **Hot, Flat and Crowded** will be of an unarguably help.

Cristian Uță, Lecturer PhD
22.05.2011

¹ The World is flat.

Redactor: Mihaela N. ȘTEFAN
Tehnoredactor: Magdalena ILIE
Coperta: Magdalena ILIE

Bun de tipar: 23.06.2011; Coli tipar: 11,75

Format: 16/70 × 100

Editura Fundației *România de Mâine*
Bulevardul Timișoara nr. 58, București, Sector 6
Tel./Fax 021/444.20.91; www.spiruharet.ro
e-mail: editurafrm@yahoo.com

