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Future Scenarios: How Communities Can Adapt to Peak Oil and Climate Change
David Holmgren
Chelsea Green
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The terms “peak oil” and “climate change” have been a part of the national mindset for a few years, but they have been examined in isolation from one another. Books such as James Howard Kunstler’s *The Long Emergency* and Al Gore’s documentary *An Inconvenient Truth* have brought these subjects to the forefront, but David Holmgrens latest book examines these twin threats, the two greatest challenges to humankind this century, in relation to one another.

Holmgren reviews evidence about the future of energy and global climate change in terms of four possible, long-term scenarios: techno-explosion, techno-stability, energy descent, and collapse. These scenarios offer a concrete glimpse into the future and inform readers of the numerous cultural, social, agricultural, economic, and even spiritual implications of the emerging energy and environmental crisis. The author mentions other factors that play into the scenario, such as species extinction and water depletion, but posits that climate change and peak oil are the most fundamental.

The author is the co-originator of the permaculture concept, an approach to designing human settlements that mimic the sustainable relationships found in nature. The modern movement began when Holmgren and Bill Mollinson published *Permaculture One* in 1978. Their ideas have since spread around the globe and permaculture institutes now exist in over 100 countries. Holmgren has written several other books including, *Permaculture-Principles and Pathways Beyond Sustainability*.

Although the scenarios are highly speculative and the energy descent and collapse scenarios in particular present some frightening outcomes-humans will endure miseries such as pandemics and forced migration due to flooded coastal areas-these four futures are not meant to induce a panic-induced call to action. Their purpose is to provide a framework for imagining how the paired threats will impact population, energy resources, and economics.

This is an important, if sobering book about the very real threats that face all humans in the coming decades. Written in clear, concise prose and without unnecessary technicality, *Future Scenarios* would also be appropriate for secondary education readers. Photographs, color

illustrations, and graphs provide helpful information, and detailed footnotes round out the book.

Although unforgiving in his assessment of probable, difficult futures of the planet, Holmgren does emphasize that positive potentials exist. But we must move away from polarized "optimist" vs. "doom and gloom" perspectives and understand that people can be empowered to take creative action and learn to adapt in the face of adversity.

Luise Bolleber