

Facing the 2020s: a job for the elders? Creative simplicity or dismal austerity is a CHOICE!



One of the advocates of
voluntary simplicity

Most people I talk to, even the alert ones, are in denial or despair about the future. I've been terrified, but I'm starting to feel hopeful. Many of the threats *could* be blessings: all it needs is a rapid, radical, miraculous shift of attitude by most people...

The future I'm on about is the medium term: the 2020s and decades beyond. Try to read this without denial or despair.

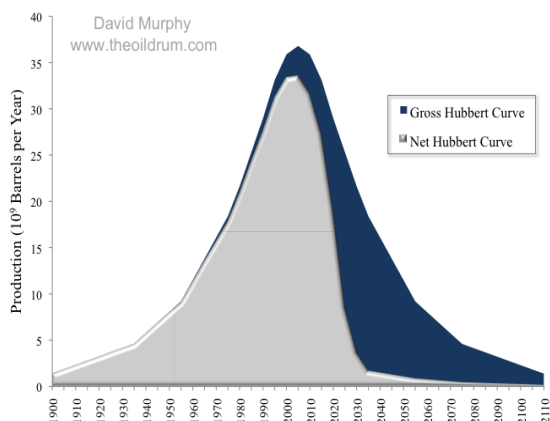
The challenges include: peak oil, climate change, crop failures, debt crises, economic contraction and lots more. The

potential blessing is a move to a more local, more sociable, less materialistic way of life.

I'm basically an optimist, but I've had a year or two of despair about the problems, and my ability to do anything about them. Now I'm more hopeful on both counts, and this blog is an update on my plans, and an invitation to join in. Why is this a job for the elders? Because part of their role is to speak out and act on big issues which are not addressed.

A few months ago, I wrote a list of the crucial questions for the next twenty years: not only the challenges, but also responses to them which could maintain a fair quality of life. Although many of these challenges are global, my questions focus on the UK, to keep the scope manageable.

In January 2012, I approached two of the leading UK organisations already exploring these issues, to ask what answers are currently available, what research they are planning, and how I could help. It's important that none of us feel useless or irrelevant in this situation.



I'm not an expert in global sustainability, but I do have some relevant local experience (see www.living-organically.org), and I have some funds in a charitable trust which could help pay for some of this work.

The response from both [New Economics Foundation](#) and the [Transition Movement](#) was rapid and positive, and in February I've had promising initial meetings at senior level with both organisations.

These meetings show that some useful data already exists, but there are major gaps. For example, NEF tell me there are no good UK forecasts through the 2020s and 2030s for economic and social trends, especially taking account of commodity shortages (oil, precious metals, etc), and the global debt crises.

Based on these meetings, I am now exploring with NEF and Transition a joint research project, which may also involve other organisations or individuals. The 3 phases of this are currently envisioned as:

- i. A UK forecast through the 2020s of the economic and other impacts of major global trends, including scenarios for the social pressures, eg unemployment, arising from them.
- ii. Gathering relevant successful responses to these economic, environmental and social pressures, from the UK and elsewhere, including local Transition Towns. Highlight issues where responses cannot be identified, and seek to create responses.
- iii. Explore how the knowledge, skills and desire to use these responses could be encouraged in local communities around the UK, and among policy-makers.

If you'd like further progress reports, [subscribe to this blog](#). If you have relevant skills or funds which could help this project, please [contact me](#).

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