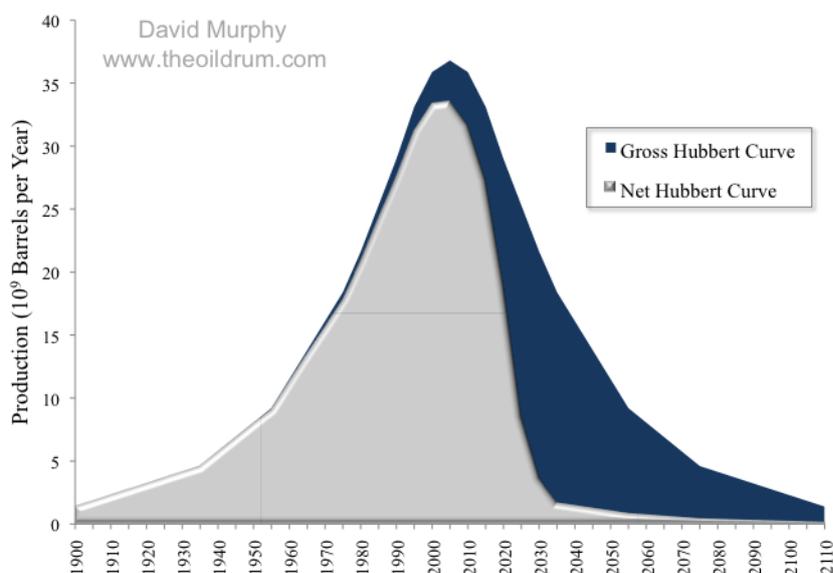


The Hubbert Curve: why we all need to know about it

Whatever your age and gender, the Hubbert Curve predicts huge changes which will have a big impact on your life, and everyone worldwide.

Hubbert was an American petroleum geologist, who in the 1950s started to calculate global supply and demand. His work has since been updated, and the current Hubbert Curve is shown below. Just Google it to find out more: this is not some cranky astrologer talking, it's a respected tool within the industry.



Take a few minutes to sit with this: the implications are so huge that it is easy to zone out and turn away. I heard about this from a Canadian expert, Nicole Foss, whose website is worth visiting: www.theautomaticearth.blogspot.com. She says that it's impossible for alternative energy sources to make up this shortfall.

What we must be heading for is large reductions in global energy use, and huge rises in the cost of oil, and oil-derived products such as plastics, fertilisers and many more. Demand for oil is pretty inelastic, ie there are no quick, easy substitutes, and the activities which consume it can't readily be cut back, except marginally. This means that as output declines, prices will be bid up very fast.

Predictions like this are not new, but now they are more authoritative, more imminent, and we have already had a foretaste: remember in 2008 when oil hit \$145 a barrel?

The obvious question, what can we do about it, is painfully hard to answer. The Transition Town movement was a well-conceived attempt to provide answers, but its uptake and impact so far I would say, sadly, has been quite low. Governments have election cycles of a few years, so we can't expect much from them until things become extreme.

Having pondered this over the past few months, I have a few starter suggestions – but this post is more a plea for others to join a conversation and offer their view, which may be much more deeply based than mine.

- Tell people about the Hubbert Curve, ask them to consider its implications: I have been amazed how few of my contacts know about it.
- Study precedents for handling severe economic and social change, and ways to disseminate this when things get severe.
- Look at social structures which would enable households to share resources, such as transport, and food production. Various small-scale structures already exist, but would need to be scaled up dramatically.
- Research and imagine how, UK and worldwide, people can enjoy good quality of life amid large, ongoing drops in real income.
- Explore models to help the many developing countries whose economies are now dependent on relatively cheap road and air transport. Cuba offers one potential role-model, but they had the benefit of a strong central government.

Try a Google search on 'social impact of peak oil': I got over 5 million results. One of the interesting ones, which came second of all in my search, was dated 1st October 2007, from www.theoil drum.com. This is a vast website, which can guide you through to an equally vast range of other websites and blogs. This 2007 posting is useful in giving some specific forecasts of the economic and social impact of major declines in global oil production. You will find plenty more good reading from your Google search. If you want more facts and validation about peak oil and its implications, try www.oilcrisis.com and www.peakoil.net.

I look forward to other responses, including blogs and websites focussed on these issues.