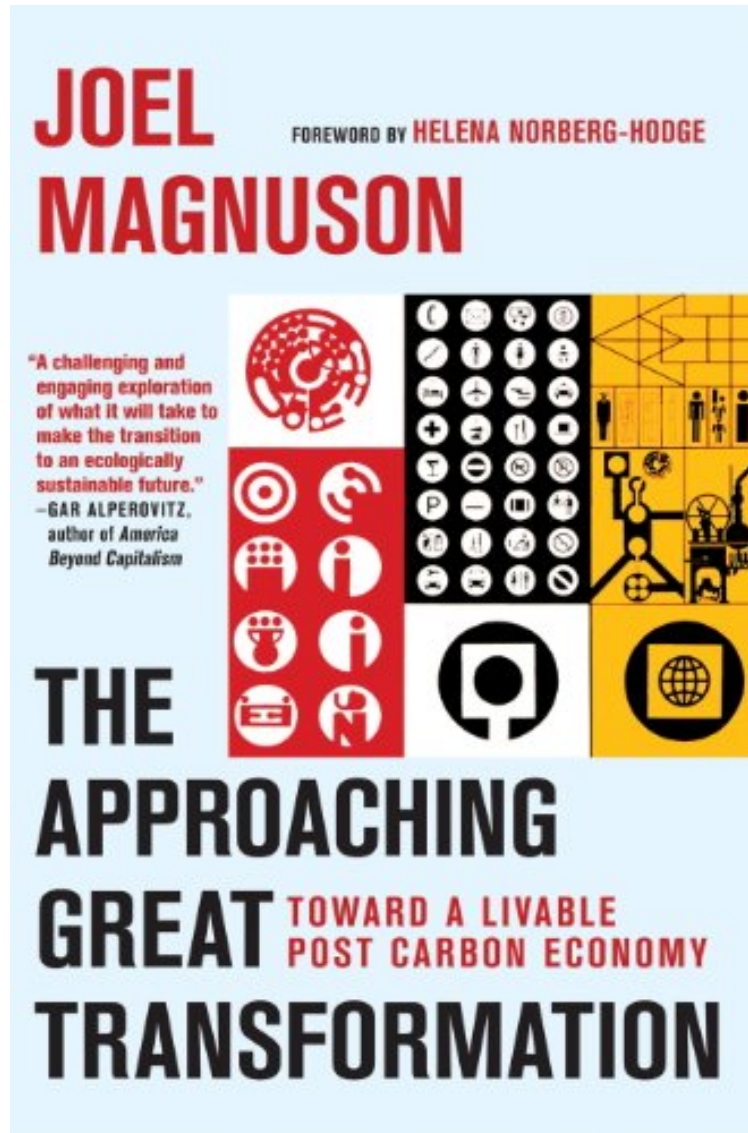


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The Approaching Great Transformation: Toward a Livable Post Carbon Economy

Joel Magnuson

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Joel Magnuson : The Approaching Great Transformation: Toward a Livable Post Carbon Economy before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Approaching Great Transformation: Toward a Livable Post Carbon Economy:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. All gone! Coming, ready or not (so be ready).By J.B. LyleThe bad news is, of course, that "the supply of oil, this amazing finite and one-time resource is now making its inevitable turn from growth to decline." The world is getting close to the bottom of the barrel. A member of the House Committee on

Science, Space and Technology told us recently that the "Best thing about Earth is if you poke holes in it oil and gas come out." Not so much. As Magnuson observes in his splendid book, "When oil companies try drilling and pumping oil from 4 miles beneath the ocean, or cook it from tar sands, this is pretty good evidence that the easy-to-get oil is close to depletion." Other sources of energy, like coal, have drawbacks and, in any case, also exist in finite amounts. If this were all, it would be bad enough--but fresh water is also running out in the sense that needs are far outstripping availability. The good news, and we will fail at our peril to act upon it, is outlined in Magnuson's book--and he gives us inspiring looks at communities and companies who are remaking themselves to be sustainable, livable, and human-scaled, with humane values. If I didn't know the term "transition movement" before, I do now. Needless to say, it's not enough to read the book and ask, "Where do I sign up?" -- it's not that simple; but at least one has a clearer picture of what our goals should be. As Nietzsche said, "The greatest stupidity is forgetting what one is trying to do." Which should be what? I saw the "going local" part of that illustrated during my most recent visit to Tuscany, last October, when I was a guest at the dinner tables of three native Tuscan families of widely varying financial circumstances. Anna had made delicious soup from mushrooms gathered in the nearby woods that day. Lucia's eggs came from the chickens scratching outside. Olive oil came from the trees visible through the window and had been pressed by Carlo in his immaculate facility next to his large house, which is heated by a furnace that uses dried, crushed olive pits as fuel. Wine--this was Chianti country--was local, often from grapes grown on my hosts' own vines. They keep pigs and cure their own hams. A party had gone out and shot the boar that was served roasted. I don't eat meat, but for those who do, their way made much more sense to me than what we get from Big Agrobusiness. Later I said to my host, "Silvio, when I go home I'll be acutely aware of how helpless I am. If I went to the supermarket and there was no food on the shelves; if I could not even get to the supermarket . . ." And, as it happens, I live in the Arizona desert, which is running out of water. Magnuson suggests nothing less than a radical revision of our values, away from consumer culture--which, he shows clearly, has indeed led us, getting and spending, to lay waste our powers. He shows concretely, with living, functioning examples both in the United States and in other countries, that it can be done. If, like me, you thought you were "green" but were vague on the details and especially on "what now?"--this book will both engage you and fill in the blanks. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Extremely relevant and thorough; well documented. By EthosInFreefall Extremely relevant and thorough; well documented. Index not so great but that is common these days; more likely the publisher's fault than the author's. Unlike so many other books about economic and environmental transformation, this book goes beyond what is wrong and provides possible solutions and a plan of actual action. It is shocking to rediscover how long ago accurate predictions of our current situation and not-so-distant future predicaments were made and ignored by government, business, and society in general. At the same time, it was extremely encouraging to discover how many people are actually actively doing things to help provide positive future possibilities through experimentation and actively adapting to outcomes. I have discovered that it is still very difficult to communicate the basic concepts of environmental sustainability to many whose ideological and political posturing shuts out this kind of information. There is still much work to be done in conveying the importance of sustainability to the general public. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. This book has light to shine By Allen T. Casey This was a very interesting journey into the future of the human race. Economics is a social science and this book really brings that concept home. I felt introduced to a lot of different thinkers on the topics of permaculture and urbanism while reading this book. Like pot is a gateway drug to heavier narcotics, this book is a gateway drug into a post oil world without being afraid to fight for what's right. Thank you magnuson, you have created a breath work of art.

"Anbsp;brave book by a smart person with a masterful command of economic theory."mdash;Publisher's Weekly How should we act and think economically in the world as the era of cheap oil comes to an end? The Approaching Great Transformationnbsp;begins to answer this massive question, focusing on the people and communities already at work on the transition: energy descent pioneers in the UK and the US educating their communities about the road ahead, small enterprises defying traditionalnbsp;ldquo;profitrdquo; in favor of permanence and sustainability, and cities preparing for a post carbon future. nbsp; Highlighting the work of thinkers like John Ruskin and E. F. Schumacher, Magnuson here builds on his previous book,nbsp;Mindful Economics.nbsp;From the Trade Paperback edition.

"The Approaching Great Transformation is a breath of fresh air in a world of hackneyed nonsolutions to our social and economic problems. Professor Magnuson pulls no punches regarding the coming collapse of the corporate-commercial-consumer society, or the inability of technological fixes and 'green capitalism' to bail us out of the historical crunch that is virtually upon us. Rather, as we start to run out of energy (read: oil) and are forced to abandon obsolete notions of 'growth' and 'progress', we shall have to confront the question we have collectively been avoiding for roughly 500 years: If money is not the purpose of life, what is? Whether the alternative models discussed in this book prove to be viable or not, the author makes it clear that what we are living with now is no choice at all. His message is simple: change or die." mdash;Morris Berman, author of Why America Failedldquo;A challenging and engaging exploration of what it will take to make the transition to an ecologically sustainable future. nbsp;Magnuson exposes the false

promises of green-wash capitalism—and in the tradition of E.F. Schumacher puts the hopeful shoots of real alternatives squarely on the map for ongoing development.”—Gar Alperovitz, Lionel R. Bauman Professor of Political Economy at the University of Maryland and author of *America Beyond Capitalism* “We are literally in the midst of reshaping the world and as a result, this is the time to make the new economy in a way that is redefining, as economist Joel Magnuson writes, “what is good, beautiful, fair, or wholesome, and making sure that our economic system allows us to live according to these beliefs.”—Truthout

Soon, fossil fuels will run out—or become ridiculously complicated and expensive to extract—and the global economy will be in a real pickle, says Magnuson, an economist “specializing in non-orthodox approaches to political economy.” These days, no one is safe from rhetoric about “going green”; Magnuson argues that this is mostly a “marketing ploy,” a way for huge corporations to have and eat their cakes—labeling their products “green” while relentlessly pursuing “endless growth” and ignoring the reality of a finite planet with limited resources. While “green” and “sustainable” have become catchwords, material consumption in the last 25 years has increased. A “deeper transformation of our core economic institutions” is necessary, he argues; i.e. capitalism must go. While eloquently argued, the book’s central message will be difficult to hear for many, though he effectively skewers the mantras of those who hope to ignore the problem: “at least it won’t happen in our life time” and “technology will come through.” This is a brave book by a smart person with a masterful command of economic theory; unfortunately, for these reasons its reach is probably limited: most people will balk at its central message: that we will have to get by with much, much less production and consumption.”—Publishers Weekly

About the Author: JOEL MAGNUSON is an independent economist based in Portland, Oregon. He is a visiting fellow at the Ashcroft International Business School at Anglia Ruskin University in Cambridge, England, serves as an international advisor to Anglia’s Interconnections, and is on the faculty at the East West Sanctuary in Nagykovács, Hungary. He is the author of *Mindful Economics: How the US Economy Works, Why It Matters, and How It Could Be Different* and *The Approaching Great Transformation: Toward a Livable Post Carbon Economy*. Excerpt. copy; Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.

Introduction: ANOTHER SEA CHANGE

Every epic historical transformation began with economic turbulence and collapse. As a general rule, when the economic foundation of a society is significantly disrupted, it destabilizes everything else. Everything begins to change. The Roman Empire finally crumbled when its Mediterranean system of conquest, slavery, and trade was thrown into chaos by the Saracens who launched their invasions from northern Africa. And the feudal system of the Middle Ages was brought down when its agrarian economy was ruined by plague epidemics and wars over religion. Today another historic sea change is beginning to take form and the underlying cause, again, is a major economic disruption. Though this time it will not be caused by invading and conquering armies or plague epidemics, the disruption will be a global decline in the availability of oil—the paramount and finite energy source that has supported all the major industrial systems for the last century. As resource limitation and climate change are beginning to shake the foundation of our entire way of life, another historic sea change is in the making. Our current global system of production and commerce is driven by an imperative for endless growth and expansion. But limited supplies of oil and virtually all other resources are binding this expansion like a rope tightening around every economy in the world. Yet in a kind of blind and desperate attempt to keep charging forward with more economic growth, governments nearly everywhere are plunging themselves into massive and unsustainable debt. Whether it smashes into the wall of resource limitations and debt fatigue, or makes a shift away from business as usual, our global economy is going to change. As we begin to feel these changes we will be forced to reexamine what we consider to be the good life. Many of us in the so-called developed world have high expectations for our career choices, our levels of income, the things we want to buy, and all the other accoutrements of a plentiful lifestyle. But this is all beginning to change. The cause of this change is a fairly simple but sobering reality: the resource base of our planet can no longer sustain it. When I refer to a declining resource base here, I am not only talking about oil, though oil is the big one. Other fossil fuels, water, topsoil, basic metals, and virtually every other resource available to us are being consumed to exhaustion. We often say that our desire for high material standards of living is to provide for our families—our children. The cruel irony is that our children and grandchildren will be the first generations to experience the full brunt of the economic and ecological damage we are doing now. That is, unless we do something now to change that. In his book, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed* (2004, 2011), evolutionary psychologist Jared Diamond chronicles an impressive list of examples of how humans have a penchant for self-destruction. Though his examples are taken from different places and at different times in history, they all basically follow a consistent pattern in which entire societies collapse as a result of their destruction of the environmental habitat that would have otherwise sustained them. But we don’t have to follow this pattern. We are an evolving species and we can learn from the lessons of history. We have conscious awareness and the ability to be proactive and possibly shape the direction of this historic sea change toward something better. This would be our lasting contribution—our great transformation. The choices we make today as we adapt to mounting scarcity may be the most important historical events of the 21st century. We can choose to be forward thinking and work actively toward positive changes in a spirit of celebration and make this transformation in ways that are healthy, ecologically sound, economically stable, and just. or, we can choose to be complacent, to continue treating our world as an infinite

resource pipeline and an infinite waste dump, to brace ourselves for endless wars over resources, and to trudge through one debilitating crisis after another, pushing all of humanity through a long historical period of decline—a descent into a kind of Dark Ages of the third millennium. This would be a tragic downfall for humankind, but the ultimate cause of our downfall would not be the crises themselves. The cause would be our refusal to deal with the obvious fact that the oil Age—the age of seemingly infinite abundance—is coming to an end.