



[Julian Darley and The Relocalization Movement](#)

Posted by [Dave Cohen](#) on Friday November 18, 2005 at 10:23 PM EST

Topic: [Environment/Sustainability](#)

Tags: [Julian Darley](#), [post carbon](#), [global public media](#), [peak oil](#), [relocalization](#) (all tags)



The day after the ASPO-USA conference, Julian Darley, founder of [Global Public Media](#), spoke with Boulder Valley Relocalization, a local chapter in a nascent but growing movement centered at the [Post Carbon Institute](#). Global Public Media is a valuable web service that features many live audio [interviews](#) (including transcripts) with a diverse collection of people concerned about the effects of oil depletion including Jim Kunstler, Roscoe Bartlett, Chris Skrebowski and many other lesser known figures--some of whom will no doubt be new to TOD readers. There are other worthwhile lectures, news reports and articles at the site as well.

So, what is the relocalization movement all about?

Post Carbon Institute's mission is to assist societies in their efforts to relocalize communities and adapt to an energy constrained world. We believe that production of oil and natural gas will peak soon, climate change is worsening, and the current global economic system is unstable and reinforces huge disparities. Our response is to promote drastically lower consumption, greater local self-reliance, and more cooperative and inclusive communities.

Here we'll describe Darley's thoughts on how dire our situation is and the specific recommendations he made to Boulder's relocalization chapter.

Even within the peak oil community, Darley is a radical. He believes we must start preparing now for the end of the Fossil Fuels Age, the "post carbon" world. As he said at a panel at ASPO-USA, "big energy is destroying the planet", a remark he repeated in the smaller setting. Darley believes the 200 year old Industrialization pathway has been a huge mistake which our descendants will pay for. We must start rectifying that mistake immediately. Humankind has moved too far away from Nature and no longer knows how to live in local, sustainable communities.

Talking to the small Boulder Valley Relocalization group, Darley emphasized the importance of *reduce & produce*-- the need to reduce consumption--especially of energy--you use and produce whatever you need to live locally as far as that is possible. This requires real personal sacrifices and the movement, like others of its type, must start small and grow from there. Refreshingly, Darley is a realist in this regard. He understands how hard it is to persuade others to adopt reduced consumption patterns because afterall, the ethos especially here in the USA involves 1) staying out of other people's business and 2) giving people the freedom to do whatever the hell they want to. Of course, these values underlay our car culture, suburban/exurban sprawl, wasteful energy consumption, destruction of unspoiled land & water resources and just about any other environmental problem you can name. Darley's stated goal was a 10% reduction in energy consumption over the next 10 years. Even if that goal can not be met, failure is no reason to quit trying.

But what are the practical solutions? Darley points to *reducing personal transportation usage* as the essential initial driver of meaningful change. What this means is getting rid of your car. Local communities must start up and use a car sharing service like the [Co-operative Auto Network](#) based in Vancouver, Canada where Darley lives. Taking again a realistic attitude toward human nature, he spoke to the need to set strict policies for this

kind of service and the difficulties of getting people to cooperate without cheating or breaking the rules. He mentioned that it took about 10 years to actually figure out how to do this in a way that really worked. See Vancouver's Auto Network [FAQ](#) to see just how complicated such a venture is. Although such relocalization efforts must come about by trial & error, Darley emphasized that successful demonstrations such as the Vancouver project must accompany education and outreach in order to promote additional relocalization efforts in the coming "post carbon" world.

Beyond the car sharing strategy, Darley spoke briefly about [local energy farms](#) as another future strategy to achieve relocalized economies. It doesn't seem as though Julian Darley is some wide-eyed optimist who believes all this can be achieved overnight without great effort. In fact, his remarks indicated a belief that there will most likely be great suffering in the future due to oil depletion, global warming and other economic or environmental problems. But I think it is fair to say that for Darley, based on his remarks, there are two questions you can ask yourself about your life: 1) how did you live? and 2) what did you leave behind for future generations? And there's a certain idealism in that.

[32 comments on Julian Darley and The Relocalization Movement](#)

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[Dan Ur](#) on [Saturday November 19, 2005 at 12:35 AM EST](#) 

I live in a depressed area of my city. In just my 120 some odd home subdivision, 10% or more of the houses stand empty.

Hwy 72 heads north east out of town less than 2 miles away.

The main north-south artery is one shopping frontage away to the west.

We are at the center of a triangle of roads in and out of the city. Yet we remain depressed. The more cul-de-sac section of our subdivision is better filled. Six to eight of the empty houses are on my (the second) street into the area. Whats truly amazing is that the area has been worse. Crack houses, several homes burned out cores, and we aren't even in the bad section of town, just old ranch houses of the early 70's, poor design, no way to keep warm, or cool.

The whole building design and structure of our cities is going to need to change!! Not just what we have!

What we have doesn't work! Never really did, we just fooled ourselves that it did.

A mandate to stop all new construction unless it meets a new energy saving design plan. Is that possible in the GREAT land of the UnWashed?

I have a book started where it all gets fixed, it'll be in the SciFi section if I ever get it finished, But the changes had to happen in a most radical way, and they hurt a lot, even in fiction. In the real world They will hurt a lot more! "The need is great and the workers are few." to borrow a phrase from the Bible (changed for our needs).

[Drum Roll](#) on [Saturday November 19, 2005 at 2:16 AM EST](#) 

Dan U.,

Your post got me to thinking about the difficulties involved in reclaiming suburban sprawl for agricultural use in an attempt at relocalization in a post-peak world.

I live in a suburb which is experiencing rapid growth due to large amounts of available farm land surrounding the much-older town center.

One thing I cannot help but notice as I see each new subdivision, shopping center and office complex project is that the first thing the construction teams do is to strip away the ENTIRE layer of topsoil (until they hit clay) on the piece of land being developed.

How long does it take for fertile topsoil to re-generate? Will it be decades or centuries before the land is suitable for agricultural use again (assuming you remove the buildings and parking lots)? Or even longer?

I know little about the dynamics of soil formation and erosion - comments from those who do are welcomed.

[[Parent](#)]

[unplanner](#) on [Saturday November 19, 2005 at 4:17 AM EST](#) 

Yes there are ways to create fertile soil where there is none. It does take time and a decent sized initial investment of human/animal/machine labor.

Simple composting and spreading is a start. Jevons adds to this with a fundamentally different way to grow crops using double dug raised beds. Check it out at

<http://www.growbiointensive.org/biointensive/GROW-BIOINTENSIVE.html> .

Another option is to try Lion Kuntz EcoSyn method

http://ecosyn.us/ecocity/Ecosyn/IBS_Math.html . Its harder to explain, but permits a more carnivorous diet than Jevons method.

There are no doubt other methods out there as well. All require an investment of time and resources to complete, which is why you don't see land returning to agriculture after development. It IS possible. It ISN'T easy. It won't happen until the fossil fuel subsidy for agriculture is with drawn. Only then will things change and people start ripping out blacktop and putting in farms.

[[Parent](#)]

[Dan Ur](#) on [Saturday November 19, 2005 at 4:47 AM EST](#) 

Have you ever double dug a raised bed? Back breaking work!! I have, It is time consuming and can work wonders over time,, I repeat over TIME.

I have pulled tons of rock out of the ground, (mostly from a wooded area they planted houses on), Back breaking work. Over time you can get enough to feed yourself and maybe a few others.

I have worked soil that had laid fallow for a decade, very good soil, wonderful soil, rich full of life, But I worked hard to get my crops, same result feed me and few others at max.

When we lose the OIL we will lose a lot of people, and have chaos for years, If you happen to live in a protected area, sure you can grow for yourself and a few others.

Have you done it, year on year, have you lived off the land? Do you know where the wild berrys grow? The plants you can eat, while your crops are getting their first shoots up? IF you think it will be easy!! Think 3 or more times harder than you are now!!

Trust me!! LIFE off the land with only your hand labor is not easy!!

Now Feed the rest of the world too, or teach them to live like you! Most city kids don't even know what a turnip is?

Will they know that Kale is good after the first frost, and that carrots really do need soft loamy soil and cool weather to grow big and sweet?

Oh and name me four (4) plants that grow in most lawns that you can eat?

[[Parent](#)]

[copperweaver](#) on [Saturday November 19, 2005 at 5:17 AM EST](#) 

clover, plantane, dandylions and grass??

[[Parent](#)]

[AlexC](#) on [Saturday November 19, 2005 at 4:02 PM EST](#) 

I agree Dan Ur, the challenge is a large one. But we are not talking the end of the oil when peak oil arrives, hence the large debate on depletion rates.

We could well have several decades of expensive oil to learn. This is when i think the grass roots movements will expand at a rapid rate largely bypassing the government, i also think one of the major factors will be where you live. I live in the UK and believe while it might be very tough for awhile, but i hope our government will do the right things if given the chance and enough public pressure once peak oil is more known. This could range from grants for urban gardens to TV programs on living sustainability, who knows.

To simply say "When we lose the OIL we will lose a lot of people, and have chaos for years" is maybe one way things could go, but i would argue that is an unlikely and extreme outcome.

[[Parent](#)]

[copperweaver](#) on [Saturday November 19, 2005 at 4:56 PM EST](#) 

I just don't see the world economy will adjusting to an increase in oil price and shortage of supply. At least not in the United States. I think when folks in this county are no longer able to live the gluttonous lifestyle we have become addicted to there will be extreme social chaos. Remember guns are very available in the US and lots of people have them. We also have to contend with global climate change etc... Look at how we handled the crisis in New Orleans. Thin Food production and distribution are so heavily dependent on cheap fossil fuels. I see most of the remaining oil being hoarded and used by militaries to secure and protect what is available regionally. I wish I were more of an optimist, but we are talking about to human beings here... and there are no easy solutions. Time will tell.....

[[Parent](#)]

[LevinK](#) on [Monday November 21, 2005 at 4:30 PM EST](#) 

<quote>..At least not in the United States...</quote>

Yeah sometimes I tend to think to Peak Oil as "Peak USA".

We are the only country in the world that has planned its entire life around plentiful fossil fuels. Most other countries have or at least work hard on their plan "B" - in Germany or France you can very easily live without a car of your own; governments stimulate renewables and nuclear energy (soon to come back in Germany) and people generally like to live closer to each other. And maybe more importantly - people has not forgotten where they came from. It is the rich history of wars, crises and suffering that made people learn that sticking together is the only chance for long-term survival.

[[Parent](#)]

[Southsider1](#) on [Tuesday November 22, 2005 at 3:18 AM EST](#) 

Well, isn't it ironic that Henry Ford, the man who created the modern automobile industry, is also credited with the assertion that "history is bunk": a very American belief. It would appear that the United States is about to have its own nasty encounter with History.

[[Parent](#)]

[LevinK](#) on [Tuesday November 22, 2005 at 11:01 AM EST](#) 

Well this is pretty arrogant thought. When you look at the past you see times and times in which people make the same mistakes. What makes us so special? We would be special indeed if we could identify these patterns and avoid them, but denying the existence of history obviously leads in the opposite way.

[[Parent](#)]

[Donal](#) on [Tuesday November 22, 2005 at 12:47 PM EST](#) 

"History is more or less bunk. It's tradition. We don't want tradition. We want to live in the present and the only history that is worth a tinker's damn is the history we made today."
Henry Ford, Interview in Chicago Tribune, May 25th, 1916

<http://www.quotationspage.com/quote/24950.html>

I wonder what the question was?

[[Parent](#)]

[unplanner](#) on [Monday November 21, 2005 at 12:56 AM EST](#) 

Well, I never did say it would be easy.

[[Parent](#)]

[Dan Ur](#) on [Saturday November 19, 2005 at 4:30 AM EST](#) 

I live in the region of Alabama where "Red Clay" is about 5 to 10 inches below ground. The top soil, is just that layer of old dead leaves and grasses, Plus all the worms and bugs that make the layer fertile, for more plants to grow. In some areas of the west before we started farming it, the Top Soil was 2 feet thick! Very few family farms, or any farms have that thick a layer of top soil left. Farming by its nature kills top soil!!

There have been many papers, and reports, and books written about how TOP SOIL has gone "bye bye" in the world over the last few thousand years, since farming came into practice.

From the land use perspective. If it was former farm land and a House farm got built, or roads, or anything much more than just letting it go fallow, you will need a lot of effort to make it farmable again. Even veggie gardens will take a lot of work.

I have 3 decades of land use and study of lands and how to grow things on the land under my belt, Plus Construction Engineering and Landscape Architecture as a foundation for my information.

In general if you convert farmland to anything other than fallow land (this includes trees and just over growth over years or centuries) You can ruin it for future farming without letting it go back to the natural way of things first. This natural way of things takes decades to work its wonders.

DECADES!!

I see it happen, and I know the outcome, We are cutting our veins open and saying "we don't care"!!

In reality Farming never was a "wise use" option for land anyway! Living off the land means really letting the land give you its bounty without changing how we use the land! Go Look at every culture that used the land by farming it, you see the land dying around them.

But we are stuck. We farm, we fish, We need the land to make as much good food as it can, or else we die. OIL Peak is going to hurt us really bad!! FOOD WISE if nothing else.

I hate to see it this way, but the options aren't there!

[[Parent](#)]

[copperweaver](#) on [Saturday November 19, 2005 at 12:52 AM EST](#) 

Great post Dave! Thank you for posting this information!!

I have never commented on TOD before. I am an artist (BFA in Sculpture) and I do not have a background in hard science. I am primarily here to learn from the knowledgeable folks who do have experience and understanding of the oil industry. I am delighted to see a post that is discussing relocalization. It is a very difficult to curb consumption of energy and material resources. I am a non-driver, have never owned a car or had a drivers license by choice. It is not easy, but it is possible. I see relocalization as the best hope for the human race. Unfortunately I do not think our country will move in that direction until we have no other choice. Time will tell.....

[Dan Ur](#) on [Saturday November 19, 2005 at 4:58 AM EST](#) 

At one time we might have been at that stage, but we changed, and so did the rest of the world. We aren't there anymore.

Just a thought, where would you get your copper post peak? Old wires? Not a bad option really. But in all seriousness, you have stepped out of the box and not driven, you won't miss what you never had. You are a step ahead of most of us.

[[Parent](#)]

[copperweaver](#) on [Saturday November 19, 2005 at 5:28 AM EST](#) 

I get my copper wire out of dumpsters. It drives me crazy the things I find in the trash..... I do purchase silver wire for much of my jewelry, most folks do not have the same appreciation of copper that I have so it's harder to sell.....

[[Parent](#)]

[pariah](#) on [Saturday November 19, 2005 at 1:54 AM EST](#) 

Regarding Mr. Darly: it is my impression that the peak oil community is primarily leftist in political terms . As I am a paleo-conservative , What I wish to say is unexpected .

The political left has carried the ball on ecology during my lifetime . The left owns ecology , peak oil , and climatic chaos .

The political left must not apply for a patent on these issues . The future of humankind is absolutely dependent upon education without judgment .

Community localization is a done deal . There are no other options . Life as we know it (business as usual) will not continue . Future adjustments are not going to be pleasant for any one . Some, presumably young people , are delighted at the prospect of anarchy. Send me one . Make my day.The gutshot anarchist will cry out "I want my mommy ".

Having said the above , sincerely, in a subsequent post, I will explain how the left elected the right .

Fascinating in principle .

[karlofi](#) on [Saturday November 19, 2005 at 3:22 AM EST](#) 

At the ASPO-USA Conference, I mentioned to many my opinion of why PO&G is a non-partisan issue:

It's because once the FACT of resource depletion is recognized and accepted, there's no longer any political wrangling over its legitimacy and is viewed as the very major PROBLEM it is. This line of reasoning was accepted as true by everyone--left, right; young, old--I interacted with. It is NON-PARTISAN, as is Climate Chaos. Both are problems to be faced and solved by the whole world. And last I checked, the planet had no political affiliation.

[[Parent](#)]

[Leanan](#) on [Saturday November 19, 2005 at 11:02 AM EST](#) 

I don't think it's really true that peak oilers are primarily lefties. Though I do think lefties are more likely to hang out online, on message boards, blogs, and forums of all sorts, so you might get that impression.

IME, there are a lot of rightwingers who worry about peak oil, too. (I remember one rightwinger at PeakOil.com expressing astonishment when I told him that Michael Moore had a chapter about peak oil in his book, *Dude, Where's My Country?* He didn't realize that libruls knew about peak oil.)

Fiscal conservatives may resist the idea of peak oil, because they tend to buy into the "free market will provide" idea. There are some of them, though, such as Matthew Simmons.

Social conservatives often have no trouble at all believing in peak oil. It's right up the survivalist/militia alley. Just one more reason to hole up in the wilderness with lots of guns and freeze-dried food. There is often a strong racist or at least xenophobic element involved. They believe race wars will erupt, and are anti-immigration for that reason. And religious conservatives may see peak oil as being part of the end times.

My father is extremely conservative, fiscally and socially. (Though he's not at all religious. In fact, he's an atheist, but still has conservative social values.) He told me about Malthus from the time I was very small. And warned me frequently that "Malthus was wrong only in his timing."

[[Parent](#)]

[karlofl](#) on [Saturday November 19, 2005 at 2:52 AM EST](#) 

I first met Julian 2 years ago at a workshop he led at SolFest in Hopland, CA. The premise of the workshop was very simple: How do we provide basic services without fossil fuels? We had six groups of about seven people each consider how to provide ALL of the items that make up a six-ounce glass tumbler filled with water. The ensuing discussion within the groups and the presentation of their findings was fascinating. Most of the knowledge needed to create the tools/technologies of the past needed to be re-discovered, as admitted by all the groups. It was further admitted that the community needed to undertake collective action for the goal to be realized. I challenge TOD readers to think through this little exercise in its totality--all its components from A-Z--because it's far more complex than at first glance--buy a glass at the store and fill it from a tap.

The real lesson drawn from the exercise was how totally dependent we are on the actions of others we don't know--our highly complex interdependencies which I've mentioned in the past. This leads to the problems described in-depth by Joseph Tainter, <http://dieoff.org/page134.htm>

Ultimately, the drive to re-localize is a drive to simplify the overall complexity of our culture and its massive web of unsustainably complex interdependencies. It will not happen overnight, nor will it be easy. There's actually a steep learning curve involving the mastery of lost artisan skills and methods. To the sculptor, I'd ask if he knows how to construct a wood-fired kiln, or if he knows how to make charcoal and a bellows to increase its efficiency, or where to find the best clays in his locale, or how to construct a treddle-powered potter's wheel?

The future presents a huge challenge. It's just possible to maintain much of the infrastructure we already have in place, but it will cost us our current level of car- and airplane-based personal mobility. IMO, the real challenge to our future is Climate Chaos and the massive population movements and conflicts it will cause; and certainly, PO&G will complicate matters further

[copperweaver](#) on [Saturday November 19, 2005 at 3:45 AM EST](#) 

Karkif1,

I could probably accomplish all of the tasks through scavenging of materials. But it would take years to accomplish without the aid of power tools. I have never tanned a hide, or made charcoal, but I have know the basic theory. I have help in the building of wood fired kilns, but I am by know means a master at it. I think I could build one with some trial and error. Extra hands would also be good because it does take a lot of time. I have collected clay from the shores of lake Erie and pit fired the hand built vessels, but the clay is not the best and the end products lacked the quality of the work I did when I had access to gas and wood fire kilns in Collage. Ceramics is not my expertise though. I could teach you dozens of techniques for weaving a vessel, cloth, and all kinds decorative adornment..... I could teach you how to gather and process a variety of vines and grasses for weaving. I could teach teach you how to process flax, card wool and with some practice and a drop spindle I could spin some so so yarn... If I had a sufficient supply of malachite(unlikely since most of it comes from Zambia) I could probably smelt small amounts of copper, but I could not produce the tools needed to draw the raw metal into wire unless of coarse I scavenged them. I am primarily a weaver, copper smith, and scavenger. But I am also a product of modern society and culture. I am Caffeine and nicotine addict, and I have an huge list of imperfections.....I do have some survival skills and experience living off the land for weeks at a time, but I have never tried it in the dead of winter. I have a fair knowledge of local edible plants, how to harvest and cure them and a fair knowledge of medicinal plants. I can make fire, etc.... But I also extremely unconventional.... and I have made a point of gathering these skills because they are what bring me joy in my day to day existence. Unfourtunately my skills have little value in the current economy.

[[Parent](#)]

[Dan Ur](#) on [Saturday November 19, 2005 at 5:16 AM EST](#) 

Hone them a little more, you will need them in the next few years or decades. Learn more about the lands around you. Find a book on your local edible plants, or those throughout your region. Learn skills for winter survival.

This actually goes for everyone who thinks that peak oil will impact their lives.

Learn the skills you need to live with out any heat, or transportation, or food from the store. Even if you never use them, cause the miracle happens and something comes to save us, you will have knowledge you can use sooner or later.

[[Parent](#)]

[Twilight](#) on [Saturday November 19, 2005 at 11:29 AM EST](#) 

Well, I do have books on edible wild plants, etc. And my plan is to study organic gardening techniques & plan my garden this winter. I've installed a new & very efficient wood stove, and am planning to rebuild my old leaky sunporch into a passive solar room, with solar hot water pre-heater.....BUT! I don't think were going to make a step change back to the 19th century.

Remember that we will not be running out of all oil at the peak, we will be running out of cheap oil. Half of it is left. So there will be high prices and supply disruptions, but that does not mean there will be no fuel available. Every time I have looked into products I could design to allow people to replace or supplement their conventional energy sources, I have been foiled by the same issue, which is that there is so damn much energy in a gallon of oil and in the cheap electricity we have. Yes, we waste so much of it we don't even notice, but if things get tough we will start to remember just how much work can be done with a little gas or diesel. Somewhere i read the conversion of a gallon of gasoline to man-hours - was it 500mn-hrs/gal? If I can get just a couple of gallons of gasoline, I can run my old Gravely 2-wheel tractor, and massively reduce the manual labor needed to make a garden. Or use it

to run my chainsaw for cutting wood. Sure beats gardening or logging by hand. I'm betting that I'll be able to get that much, or if not I could convert it to ethanol rather easily.

While I have a larger tractor and I could buy more implements for it, I'm focusing instead on gathering more attachments for the Gravelly. I'm betting I can get enough fuel for it, at least for the near term.

This is my main focus on everything these days - figure out how to do with less - less spending and less fuel use. I keep what I have if it still works (repair if needed), and think twice about replacing those things that do break. But I will keep driving the 50mi round trip to work, because that is where the money is for now and I've a family to support.

One other thing to keep in mind, which is the power of this thing we're all using here - the internet. I could care less about TV, I don't watch it, but I rely heavily on the information I gather online. After the basics of life are covered, I would put the internet very near the top of the list in terms of essential infrastructure. Information is power, those who make use of it have a distinct advantage. This will only be more so if the SHTF.

I think people would be better served by making plans to survive with very little oil products, rather than with none. It may mean you need to acquire some different equipment, even if it still uses gas or diesel.

[[Parent](#)]

[Leanan](#) on [Saturday November 19, 2005 at 11:18 AM EST](#) 

I think re-localization is inevitable. Forget about globalization. Without cheap energy, it won't work.

I don't think I'd consider Darley a radical. He's rather optimistic, as peak oilers go, and isn't asking for huge changes. Many peak oilers think we need to forget about cars altogether and start thinking about bikes.

I think we have to consider *where* we are living, not just how. Everyone's moving west, to the sun belt. Arizona, New Mexico, etc. There is no way that will be sustainable in the long run. There's not enough water. It's a desert. They won't be able to raise their food locally there.

I think Kunstler's right - people are going to be fleeing the southwest. Though where they will go is an open question. I suspect we already have far too many people in the U.S. to support everyone sustainably.

[Twilight](#) on [Saturday November 19, 2005 at 11:36 AM EST](#) 

Every time I hear about Phoenix and the boom that's going on there, it makes my head spin. I just cannot imagine living there - you would have to be oblivious to the energy and water issues to be comfortable there. I look at it about the same way I would building along the coast in hurricane ally, or below sea level behind levys.

[[Parent](#)]

[TN Granny](#) on [Sunday November 20, 2005 at 9:52 AM EST](#) 

I am an old lady and grew up in Tennessee on a small 10 acre plot where my parents did basically subsistence farming. I found the comment on the Gravelly tractor interesting as that is what my father used throughout my childhood to tend to our place. But in the spring, he would hire a neighbor with a mule to turn the garden the first time, because he said the mule did not compact the soil as much as a tractor. We were always able to feed ourselves and have a small surplus to sell to the local grocery. My parents both had jobs, so all farm work was done on evenings and weekends.

We kept chickens, pigs and cattle, even though we basically lived in town where I was able to walk to school. I know, from experience, that growing your own food is backbreaking and difficult compared to the plush life most of us live today. But, according to my father, wrestling that Gravelly around the place was a whole lot

easier than plowing with a mule!

Twilight on [Sunday November 20, 2005 at 10:47 AM EST](#) 

Such 2-wheel tractors are the norm in places where income is low and farm plots are small. They are often diesel powered. They make a lot of sense and are very efficient.

[[Parent](#)]

pariah on [Sunday November 20, 2005 at 2:42 PM EST](#) 

My hat is off to TN Grannie for a walk down memory lane .

Twilight: your posts suggest that you are involved in retrofitting an existing structure . I have found some interesting and free software that might be of interest . One is "RetScreen" and the other can be found by searching for "Homer software " .

Both of these programs employ optimization algorithms . Although I am math challenged , I'm fascinated with optimization software .

The "RetScreen" site discusses using perforated sheet metal as a solar collector. This would be an incredibly inexpensive solution to gathering big time BTU's. the heat transfer medium would be air . This is a Canadian outfit and if the Canadians can intercept solar with this system it should be a piece of cake further south.

Furthermore, if suitable for an individual retrofit , engineering issues could be surmounted by simply over-building the damn thing . One would 'of course' need power to move the air around .

Additionally, there is a tried and true operating system , at the Canadian border, which drips water down sheet metal roofing which is glass covered. For the DIY homeowner this should also be inexpensive . A wild guess , on my part, would be that either system , if applicable, would pay off in one winter . Just trying to help !

Listener on [Sunday November 20, 2005 at 3:37 PM EST](#) 

Fascinating reading on a Sunday. I think (hope) that Twilight's world view is our fate at least for the near future. A little oil for the Gravelly is definitely the more pleasant future to consider. I read "Undaunted Courage" about Merriweather Lewis and the America of 1800. I thought after reading these comments that that's our goal to return to the life of Lewis, Clark and Jefferson as gentlemen farmers of 1800 Virginia. (less slavery of course, the labor would be our own). Then a thought struck me. How many people lived in America in 1800? The answer is about 5 million. In the next 5 or 10 years America will soon have a population of 300 million. I fear we are in for dire times IF the main thesis of this site occurs that the SHTF. Readers of this site are infused with an admirable "can do spirit" but we will never be able to stay ahead and away from the crowd.

Bold talk about shotguns etc. is just whistling in the dark. There will be 295 million other Americans trying to survive who don't have gentleman's farms.

Twilight on [Sunday November 20, 2005 at 8:08 PM EST](#) 

Your comments are accurate. The issue of how to provide food and other support for the existing population of the earth without as much petroleum as we have now is a topic that has been discussed previously. It is really the most important issue. But as in all conjecture about what the results of PO will be and what our world will look like, it really all depends upon the rate at which things change. I have no doubt we will all have to learn to live using less energy. If this change happens very quickly, it will lead to greater disturbance and social problems. I'm trying to adapt to this before hand, but I'm trying to be pragmatic about it too. I have a family to support, and misjudging the effects of PO in either direction would probably result in placing my family at a disadvantage.

I like using my head and my own labor to do things, but I'm under no illusions that I could survive well in the face of complete social collapse. I think it's foolish to build an arsenal of weapons in anticipation of complete social collapse. If that should happen, survival would be mostly a matter of good luck. Far better to spend one's efforts in building the social connections and the skills that will be most beneficial, if you can figure out what those will be. With a family, I have to plan on a future - for me, that does not include holing up with assault weapons.

I know that I am fortunate in having a "gentleman's farm". It is mostly the result of taking advantage the

present housing bubble and urban sprawl. Three years ago we were driven out of the house we had been restoring for 11 years by encroaching urban sprawl and attendant skyrocketing housing prices. We moved as far out into the sticks as I could stand to commute (45min). Because I did not fully understand the PO issues then, it was mostly a lifestyle decision. But if it was good luck, there was also a part of it that was due to keeping my eyes open and being willing to make big changes when the opportunity presented. From being active in local government and working for farmland preservation, I understood what was coming in the area I lived - many of my friends and neighbors did not understand at all why we were moving. They do now - some like it, but realize that we would have hated it. This is what I am trying to accomplish with researching PO and energy depletion. I really believe this will be the issue that defines our future, and I want to be as best positioned as I can. There are no guarantees, but one must do what one can.

[[Parent](#)]

[copperweaver](#) on [Sunday November 20, 2005 at 9:30 PM EST](#) 

Well said Twilight. I do appreciate your optimism.

We really have no way of knowing how this will all play out. It is much easier for me to look at a worse case scenario because I do not have a family to provide for.

I am an idealist and a cultural dropout. I was raised to take a long view and I see how capitalism exploits and impoverishes one set of humans so another set of humans can live extravagantly. I have been preparing and trying to live a lifestyle that fits my ideal of local sustainability. My pessimism is primarily rooted in watching our society dig deeper and deeper into a hole of oil dependence, destroying the earth that sustains us in the process. I am always asking myself why I see the dangers but most people here in the US seem oblivious. I do know why, but it still boggles my mind.

At 31 I have accumulated many skills that would be useful in a post peak world, but I have not cultivated skills that are useful in our present economy. Because of my beliefs and choices that put humans before \$\$ it is a struggle for me to survive in a world where \$\$\$=god. I live from day to day, making my art, doing landscaping and other manual labor(which I love! it makes me feel alive) for cash, and I can exist this way because I have no family to support. Sorry for the ramble. I do hope some seeds of sustainable society are planted and flourish in the post peak world. That would be my greatest hope for humanity.

[[Parent](#)]

[jonjon](#) on [Monday August 21, 2006 at 4:24 PM EST](#) 

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