

A book review by Dan Armstrong

GARDEN PLANET

The Present Phase Change of the Human Species

By William H. Kötke

(146 pages, Authorhouse, 2005)

“The information presented here, contrarily, indicates that there will be a mass die-off. We are preparing the new culture that will flourish after that.”

-William H. Kötke.

There is a growing school of thought that projects a catastrophic socio-economic collapse in this century. The timeline varies from one commentator to the next, but the scenarios are much the same: the inhabitants of the earth will suffer through a difficult period of population recession when the real cost of poor resource management comes due on the planet. Once considered heresy, now trickling into the main stream, this projection follows closely with the 100-year extrapolation of the Club of Rome’s no-change-in-the-way-we-live curve that some call the “die-off.” It is also directly connected to peaking petroleum reserves, global warming, the collapse of the ocean fisheries, and worldwide pandemic potentials. As Mr. Kötke might say, it marks the end of empire. *Garden Planet* is a short, concise blueprint for restoring Earth’s natural garden paradise after the crash.

For those who believe that business as usual on planet Earth is sustainable, Mr. Kötke opens *Garden Planet* with his argument for the likelihood of a severe economic rollback in the not so distant future. He goes through the case piece by piece, pollution, over-population, loss of topsoil, aquifer depletion, and the fallacy of unlimited growth in a closed system. To put it as simply as possible, we can’t continue to consume Earth’s natural resources as if there were no tomorrow—or there won’t be!

So what’s the answer? We learn to garden the planet instead of steadily desecrating it. This is precisely what Kötke offers. He takes us on an anthropological review of several different

cultures and how they have been able to carve out a sustainable way of life in less than optimal conditions. Highlighting the lessons these cultures demonstrate and blending them into a flexible whole, he gives us an outline for the twenty-first century intentional community planet Earth. He tells us how to repair the watershed, regenerate the soil, reforest our landscape, even place and built a shelter. Behind it all is the art and science of permaculture and an entirely different way to imagine horticulture—to climax with the land not impact it.

This is just what we need. A basic plan to make this place work. Right now we run a system built on the economics of war and petroleum. It is reflected in the way we live and who we are. It is the antithesis of husbanding the planet. The society of humans and its relationship with the web of life must evolve—thus the subtitle of this book, “the present phase change of the human species.” Kotke is urging us to make full use of the gift of consciousness and to live intentionally and sustainably. Hopeful, positive, and necessary, Kötke’s vision is the *Garden Planet*.

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