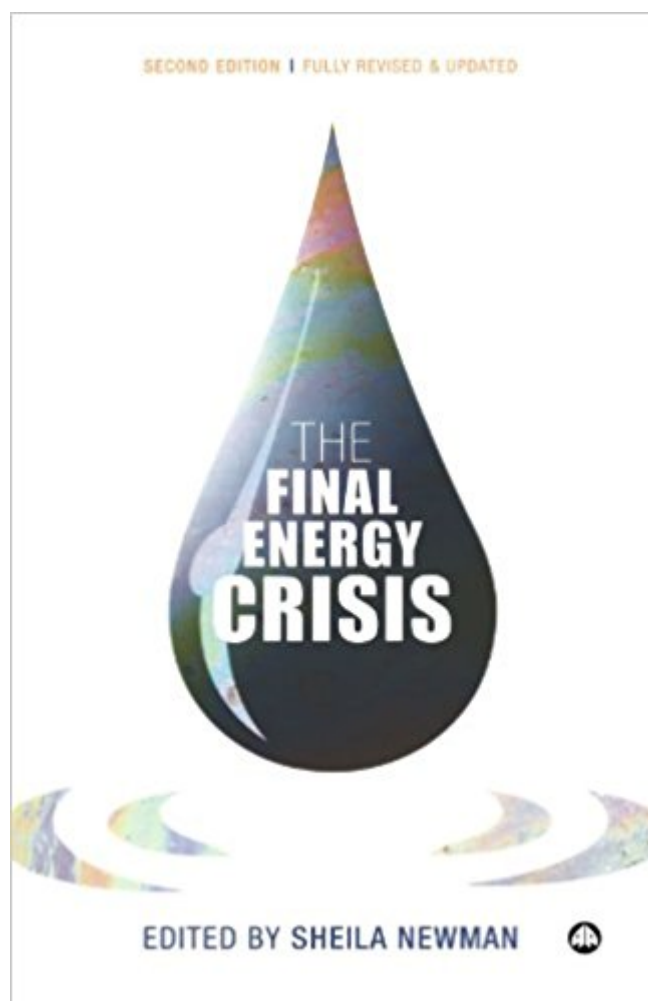


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The Final Energy Crisis



Synopsis

With oil reaching \$100 a barrel in January 2008 and the US facing challenges to dollar hegemony, few people would now deny that there is an energy crisis and that it is linked to economic uncertainty. However, the mainstream lacks a theory to explain this apparently sudden challenge to optimistic expectations of long-term economic growth and an end to world poverty. The Final Energy Crisis provides political explanations to fill that gap. The authors engage with depletion trends in oil, gas, coal, uranium, soil and biodiversity. Taking an interdisciplinary approach, they study energy trends, prospects, assets and liabilities in different political systems and regions, including the US, Venezuela, China, Africa, the ex-Soviet Union, North Korea, Japan, France and Australia. Far from being a doom-laden work on peak oil, this book offers practical suggestions for readers keen to be part of the solution to resource depletion. This comprehensively updated edition includes 13 new chapters and thorough revisions of existing material.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Sheila Newman is an environmental sociologist and editor of articles on energy, population, land-use planning and resources. She co-edited the first edition of *The Final Energy Crisis* (Pluto Press, 2005). Her blog is at <http://candobetter.org/sheila>. She is also an environmental film-maker.

(For longer review, visit [...]) This is a book like no other on the topic of energy and peak oil of which I

am aware. It contains 23 chapters, by different authors which have been skilfully integrated by the editor. It is divided into four sections, each with its own introduction: Part I: Measuring Our Predicament Part II: Geopolitics Part III: The Big Picture - False Solutions, Hopes and Fears Part IV: After Oil Like other books on the subject of 'peak oil' The Final Energy Crisis, (with engineering professor, Seppo Korpela and oil geophysicist Colin Campbell) does examine and test Hubbert's theory - for gas and coal as well as oil, but it goes well beyond just that. It seriously examines (among other possibilities) nuclear fusion, nuclear fission, geothermal, terra preta/agrichar and the logistics of energy distribution in different social systems. It is like most books before this were explaining that society depends on fossil-fuels, but this book assumes you know that, and discusses the world within that knowledge perspective. It is for people who have already looked into the subject broadly but would like help to understand the limitations of different proposed technologies and political solutions. Michael Dittmar's description in the chapter "Fusion Illusions" of the staggeringly complex and difficult technical problems to be overcome before the dream of unlimited cheap power held out by the proponents of nuclear fusion is to be realised left me in little doubt that further expenditure on the 10 billion Euro International Thermonuclear Experimental ITER is a massive waste of public resources. Alice Friedemann's Chapter "Peak Soil" shows that the proffered 'solution' of the large-scale manufacture of bio-fuel, promises, instead to create ecological and social calamity and only make our energy situation worse. Other technologies, which are somewhat more promising than the above two described in the book, but all with their own limitations and problems are geothermal and the other more familiar forms of renewable energy such as wind, solar, hydro-electric, tidal, etc, and even nuclear fission. This is one of those rare books which left few questions begging. It seems as if the editors and the contributors had already gone nearly everywhere I had intended to go and a good many other places, besides, and had thoroughly researched the issues and thought through the questions posed. The orthodoxies of the mainstream environment movement and scientific community are held up to critical scrutiny and often rejected. This is particularly the case with the last two sections which are focused on proposed solutions and future prospects. Andrew McKillop's critique of 'free market' 'solutions' to the energy crisis, in particular the 'carbon finance and credits circus', in the chapter "No Choice But International Energy Transition" was particularly satisfying. The editor has a good feeling for the absurd and finds humour and hope in unusual places. A message comes through not to panic, but to think. For all the absurd beliefs and ugly outlooks exposed by the various authors in this book, we find hope in unusual and unexpected places and a sense that, although answers will not necessarily come from the expected authorities, and the problems we face are extraordinary, there are ways we could slow down the

crisis to a manageable pace, there are choices about the values that dictate our decisions, and politics are important.

Australian environmental sociologist Sheila Newman edits and contributes several chapters to this fully revised and updated second edition of *The Final Energy Crisis*. This volume includes chapters from a diverse, international mix of authors and experts with a combination of centuries of experience all over the world in different aspects of the energy issue. Published in mid-2008 as crude oil prices were approaching \$150 US per barrel and concern about "peak oil" was cresting, this book is no less relevant in 2009, when the global economic-financial meltdown has displaced oil and food prices as the crisis of the moment. After all, the topic it broaches - how (or how not) to navigate the treacherous and turbulent waters of energy policy towards the secure harbor of a sustainable energy, economic, and environmental future - is timeless. As M. King Hubbert observed years ago, placed into the context of not just geologic time but even much shorter human history, the fossil fuel era that has defined our lives for many generations - and triggered the explosive growth of human populations, economic production and consumption - is quite transient. It is a mere blip when graphed even on the relatively short 10,000-yr. span of civilized *Homo sapiens*' presence on earth. As we approach the latter half of this fossil fuel era, the challenges humanity faces are daunting indeed, and this book pulls no punches. Two chapters by physicist Ross McCluney, Ph.D., Principal Research Scientist at the Florida Solar Energy Center, underscore both the opportunities and limitations of renewable, "green" sources such as solar, wind, geothermal, tidal, and wave energy. While these need to be developed with gusto, as the Obama administration realizes, in contrast to its clueless predecessor, they are no panacea or silver bullet. It would be a mistake to count on the flow-limited, intermittent renewables to be able to seamlessly replace dwindling, stock-limited oil and other fossil fuels, which they cannot match - at least at present - for versatility, reliability, transportability or energy density (quality). The reformist environmentalist establishment seems to have pinned all its hopes on these renewables, while shunning all things nuclear and turning away from the politically unpalatable subject of limits to population and economic growth on earth. Yet if indicators such as the Ecological Footprint are correct, there are already too many human beings on earth consuming too much energy and too many resources and generating too much waste, including climate-changing carbon dioxide. This book represents a serious effort to diagnose the grim but not hopeless energy predicament we find ourselves in. It offers qualified hope for the "patient," and our "host" the earth, but not without breakthroughs in our willingness to sacrifice, innovate, and cooperate. Leon Kolankiewicz, Environmental planner and natural resources

scientistAuthor, "Population Growth - The Neglected Dimension of America's Persistent Energy/Environmental Problems"

Few books about the energy crisis are as up-to-date as this one is and few are as packed with insights. That's a combination that can't be beat as I see it.

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