

Life in the future from an anthropologists perspective



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Life in the future/from an anthropologist's perspective. For centuries Western Societies have enjoyed the many benefits of one of the earth's most useful resources: oil and there was a period of international instability while adjustment to a world without oil took place. As supplies dwindled, people wondered if advanced civilization would survive. Now that the supplies of oil have completely dried up, advanced societies have learned to live without it, and use alternative resources for most of their daily needs. The cities of America now rely on renewable bio-fuels for heat and local transport, and rural areas have switched from mainly agricultural production to at least 70% biofuel production in most cases. The country is not self-sufficient in electricity for communications and manufacturing and this has resulted in close ties between North and South America through the new All Americas International Energy Partnership. In the daily lives of citizens two major changes have occurred relatively quickly over the last 50 years: long distance travel has become rare, because of its prohibitive cost and international travel has almost completely ceased. Citizens value their virtual reality vacations and generally live most of their lives within 50 miles of their place of birth. The rise of the Wiccan faith is evident in community farm churches, and children attend mother earth classes on two days out of six, in order to learn the skills of homestead food production. Communes have replaced the traditional family unit, and procreation is strictly controlled due to the limitations of food production. In some rural areas the use of cash and credit has almost disappeared, and a digital barter system takes its place. In short, therefore, advanced civilization has survived the disappearance of oil

but it has changed. People report greater social cohesion within established communes, but there is a growing “drifter” class who cannot or will not join with others and this causes on-going social justice dilemmas which the state seems unable to resolve in any way other than repressive incarceration policies. Inequalities between northern and southern halves of the globe have largely remained, one unexpected benefit of the disappearance of oil is that the wealthy developed nations have had to learn to manage with fewer resources and remain largely within their own national boundaries.

Globalization was fuelled, it seems, by oil, and human society shows every sign of retrenching into a patchwork of nation states again. References Peoples, James and Bailey, Garrick. *Humanity: An introduction to Cultural Anthropology*. (Wadsworth: Cengage Learning, 2011).