

A better collapse?

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The coming contraction

Ecological over-
reach.
(Too big economy)



Planned
degrowth to a
steady state.
(Soft landing)

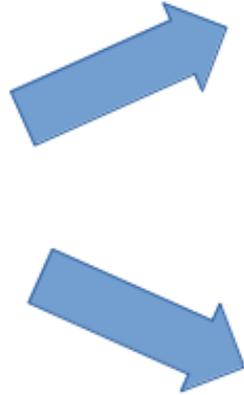


Unplanned
contraction.
(Collapse.
Crash)

The coming contraction

We work for this.

Ecological over-reach.
(Too big economy)



Planned degrowth to a steady state.
(Soft landing)

Unplanned contraction.
(Collapse. Crash)

But is this more likely?

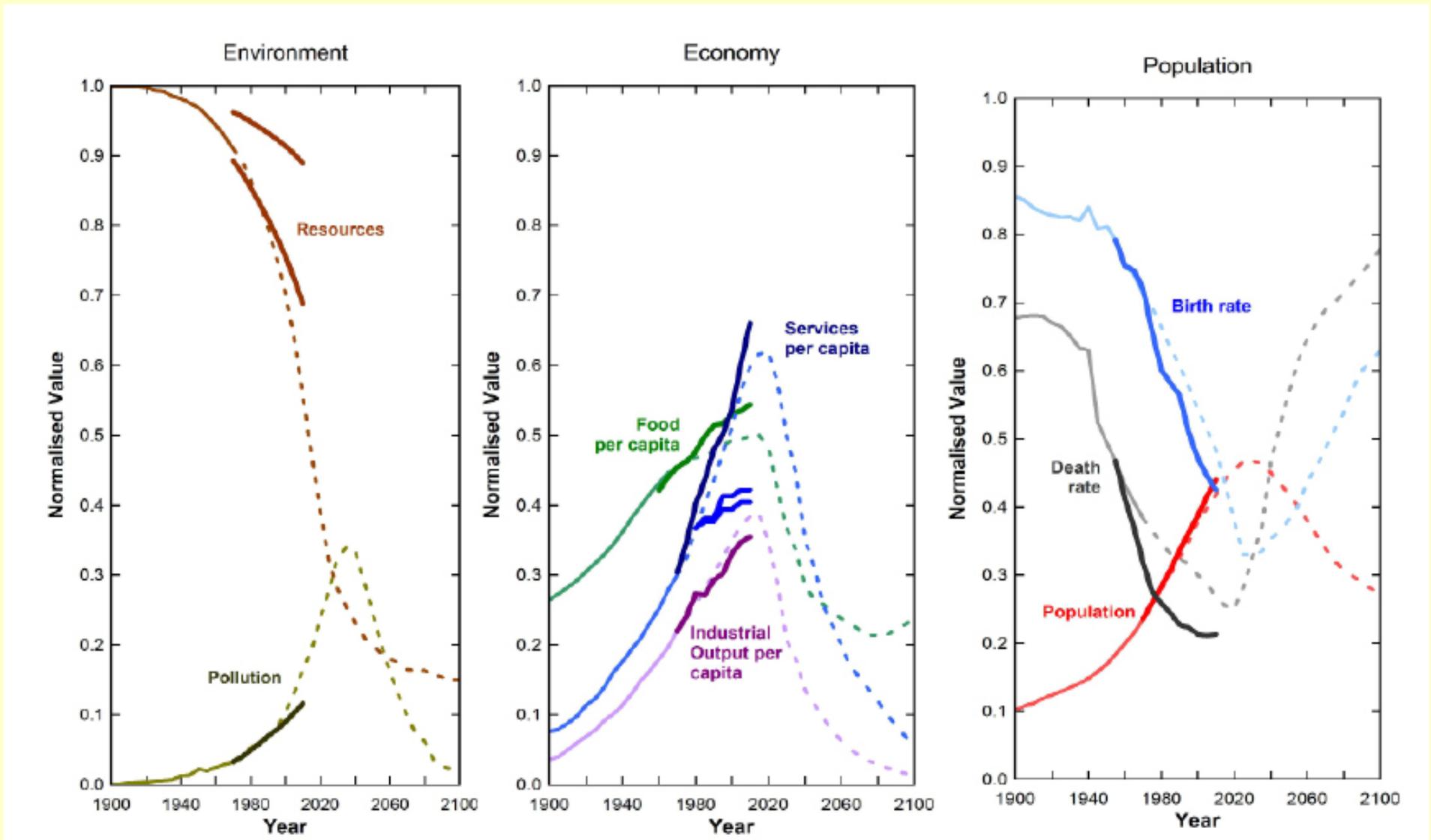
Causes of collapse

One of more of:

- ☠ Accelerating global warming (positive feedback): regions uninhabitable, much reduced food production, severe weather events.
- ☠ Financial crash due to reducing return on investment in energy and raw materials.
- ☠ War, including Weapons of Mass Destruction.
- ☠ New pathogens – human epidemics, crop failure, biomass dieback.
- ☠ Other planetary boundaries crossed: nitrogen and phosphorous cycles, biosphere integrity, land system change.
- ☠ Unknown unknowns.

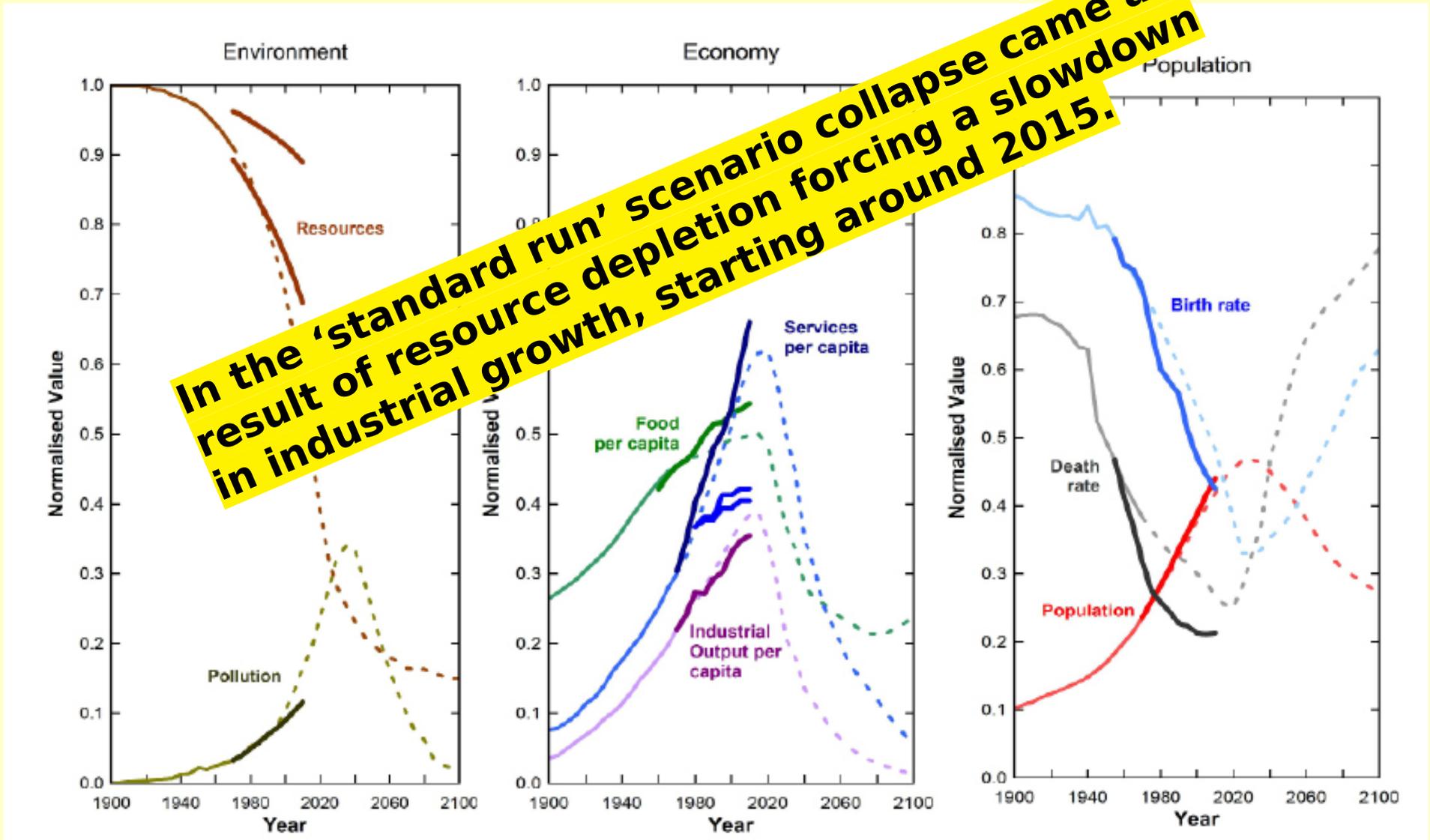
Actual data broadly in line with Limits to Growth (1974) Business as Usual “Standard Run”

Dotted lines: LtG Standard Run. Solid lines: actual data.



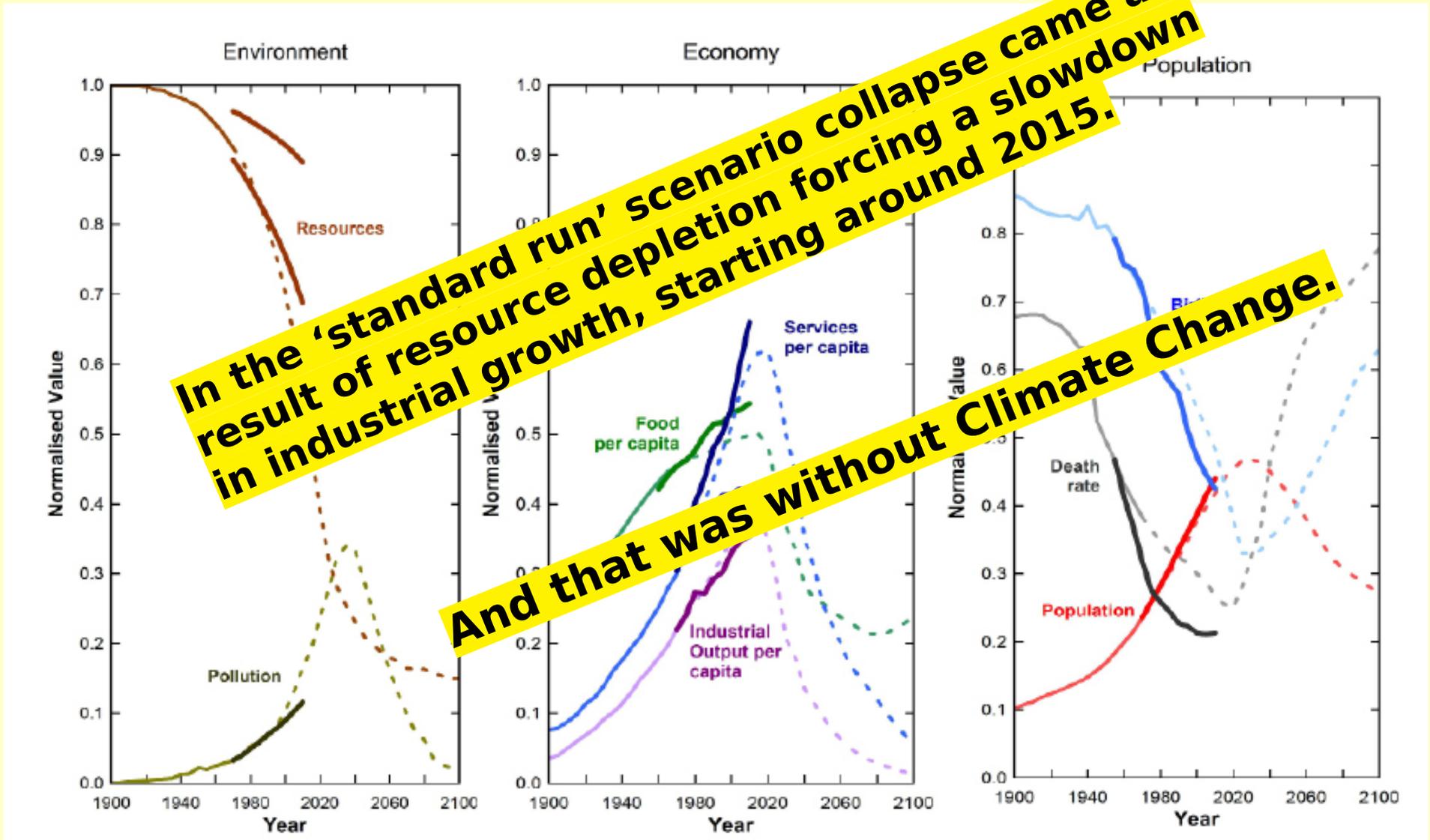
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Impact on cities

- More than half the world population lives in cities.
- Cities are highly dependent on global supply chains, concentrated energy, systems for clean water, sewage and waste disposal, emergency and security services.....
- Cities are particularly vulnerable to food system disruptions, flooding, intense heat....

So what do we do?

Current degrowth strategies focus on positive policy and practice frameworks for an intentional transition.

Politics, Campaigns, Theory:

Trying to influence socio-political and economic aims, macroeconomic policy, distribution, financial systems, measurement,

Building alternatives:

Piloting more local solutions: co-operatives, food systems, local / regional economic and financial initiatives, co-housing,

Politics, Campaigns, Theory:

Under

Planned
degrowth to a
steady state.
(Soft landing)

IS

Campaign for and promote policies that could reduce material flows (resource & energy use, emissions), increase equality, restore ecosystem health.
So systems globally and locally shift into stewardship mode, averting catastrophe with social justice.

But under

Unplanned
contraction.
(Collapse.
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BECOMES

Campaign for and promote policies that adapt to radically reduce material flows, combat increasing inequality, work with natural forces and changes to restore ecosystem health.
So systems locally shift into emergency-stewardship mode, mitigating catastrophic impacts, ecologically, economically and socially.

Building alternatives:

Under

Planned
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IS

Devise and implement projects that demonstrate how to reduce material flows (resource & energy use, emissions), increase equality, restore ecosystem health.
Puts things in place that reduce risk of catastrophe while improving ecological and social well-being.

But under

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BECOMES

Devise and implement projects that are robust in the face of reduced material flows (resource & energy use, emissions), provide resilience for the most vulnerable, preserve local ecosystem health.
Puts things in place that enable better chances for people and natural systems under conditions of ecosystem catastrophe.

But often, the two modes involve similar actions.

While localisation and related strategies are probably inadequate as *solutions within the context of global capitalism*, they do take on an urgent relevance *in the context of capitalism's ugly collapse*.

A “better collapse” for Northern, post-industrial towns

Intensive use of land close to urban areas: poorly utilised farm land and intra-urban gardens, parks, and former industrial areas once they have been assessed for toxic residues.

Technology conversion to modes requiring low energy and low material demands.

People work more locally as longer commutes become too costly, impractical, and possibly dangerous.

People downsize their housing as heating costs rise, leading to greater population density and reduced energy demand.

Out of town shopping centres become disused as what retail is left is situated in localities. As supply chains for mass-produced goods fragment and collapse, people establish tool and equipment libraries, and exchange products from local workshops.

A “better collapse” for Northern, post-industrial towns

An explosion of recovered and new craft and artisan know-how: skill sharing and co-learning.

As fiscal support for human services collapses, co-operatives are set up combining residual government support with mutual aid and local insurance schemes, linked to complementary or substitute currencies and community financial institutions.

A basic range of medicines is produced locally, combining a resurgence of medical herbalism with scientific expertise and personnel from the former multinationally dominated pharmaceutical and chemical industries.

Law and order becomes highly problematic but the more successful communities reorganise their fire service, police forces and local military into people's militias, combining public order and civil defence functions.