



# RETROSUBURBIA

THE DOWNSHIFTER'S GUIDE TO A RESILIENT FUTURE

## CHAPTER 1: KEY CHALLENGES AND RETROSUBURBAN RESPONSES

### QUESTIONS:

- What things do you look forward to in an energy descent future? What things might you find difficult?
- Discuss the three challenges: climate change, financial bubble and peak oil. What is everyone's understanding of these concepts (this is likely to differ a bit from person to person)? How vulnerable do you feel to each?
- What is your definition of 'suburbia'? Does it differ from other group member's definitions and/or how it is explained in the book?
- Discuss Holmgren's assumptions (pp 22–23) – do any members of the group strongly disagree with any of them? Does everyone understand what is meant by each of them?
- In the past, what assumptions about the future have you made that turned out to be wrong? Why?
- What is your understanding of permaculture?
- What 'commons' spaces do you use or have you used in the past? What commons exist in your local neighbourhood? How might you make greater use of them?

### ACTIVITIES:

- Read '[Futures framework](#)' and discuss
- Obtain a copy of Alexander et al's *A Pattern Language* and choose one pattern each to read aloud to the group (concentrate on patterns outside the home – about the first 100 patterns – patterns inside the home can be discussed later).
- Read a story or watch a movie set in an energy descent future (or think of one you have already seen/read). What assumptions are made? Are there any assumptions in common with the Holmgren ones? How realistic do you think this future is? (Some examples include: *The Hunger Games* young adult novels; the *Mad Max* movies; Starhawk's *The Fifth Sacred Thing*; *Into the Ruins* journal of energy descent short stories; and anthologies edited by John Michael Greer)

