

Unsustainable Consumption and the Advent of New Values and Lifestyles in the Transition to Post-consumerism

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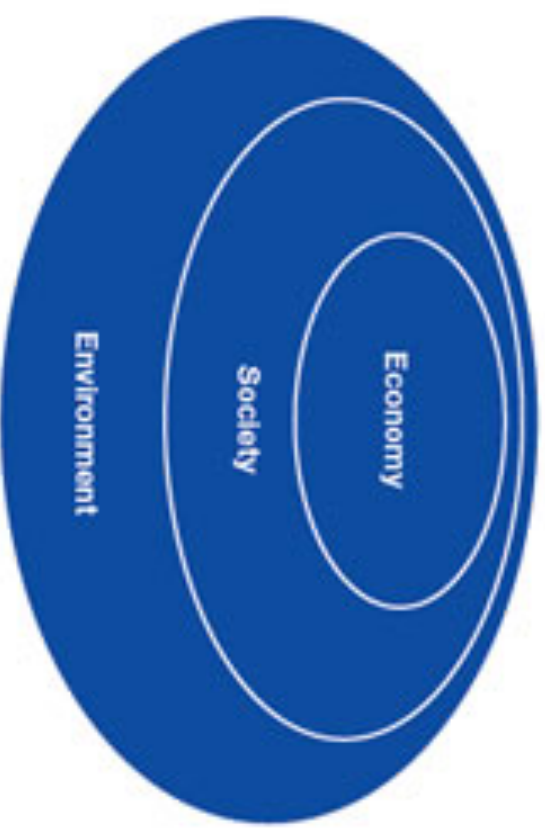
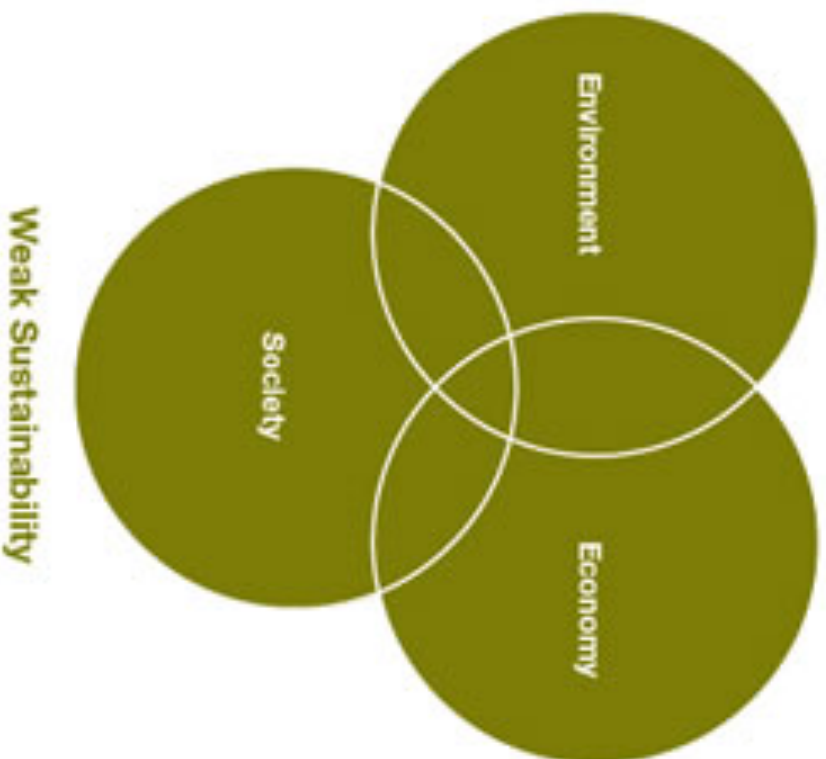
Presentation at the Garrison Institute's Climate, Mind, and Behavior Symposium, June 9-12, 2013

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Weak and Strong Sustainability



Weak Sustainable Consumption

Eco-labeling

Consumer information

Consumer education

Voluntary appeals to *consume differently* (emphasis on institutional procurement rather than households)

Tantamount to “green” consumerism (energy efficiency, materials recycling, “buy local” campaigns)



China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development 中国环境与发展国际合作委员会

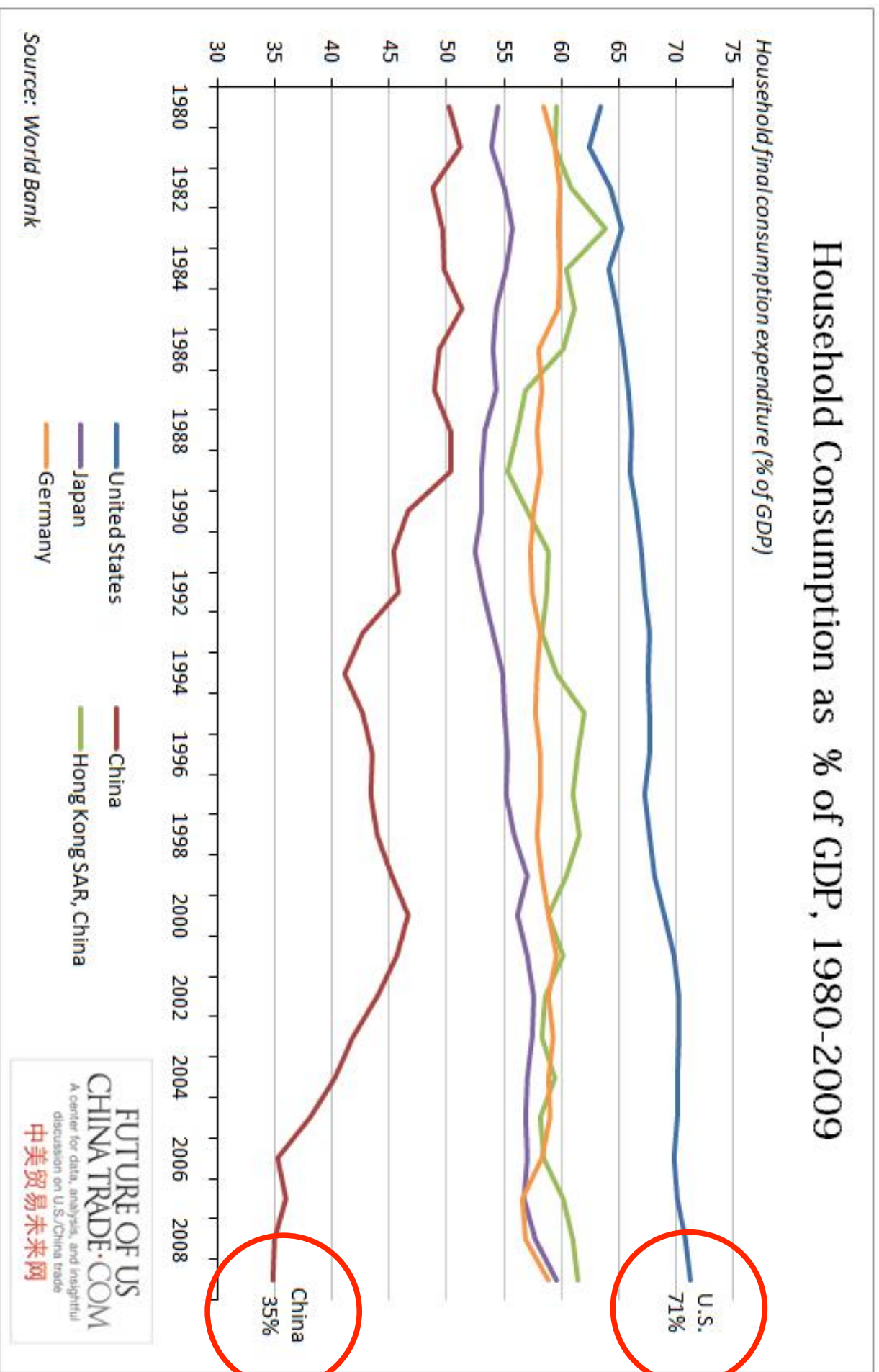


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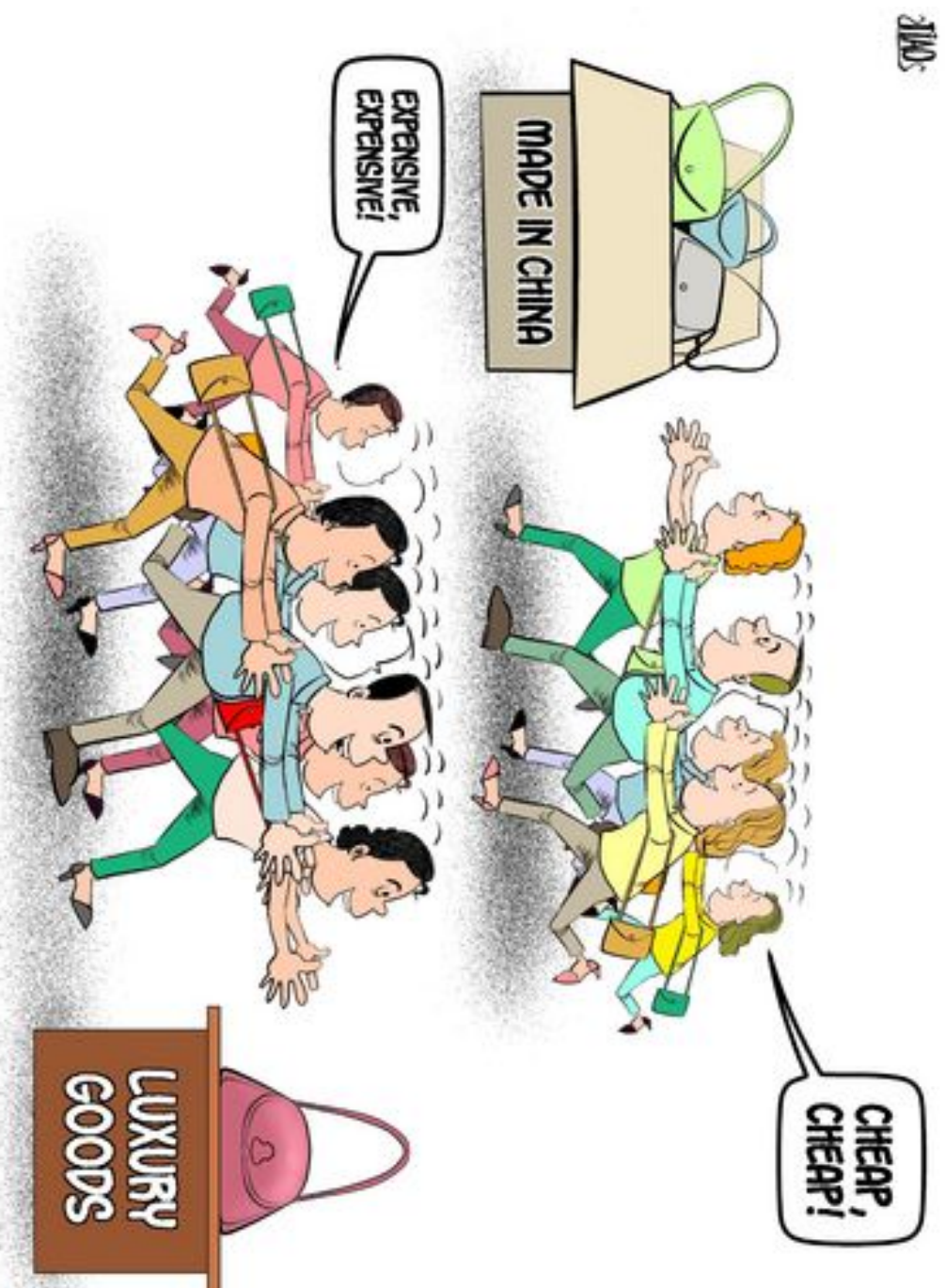
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Household Consumption as % of GDP, 1980-2009



From Export Production to Domestic Consumption





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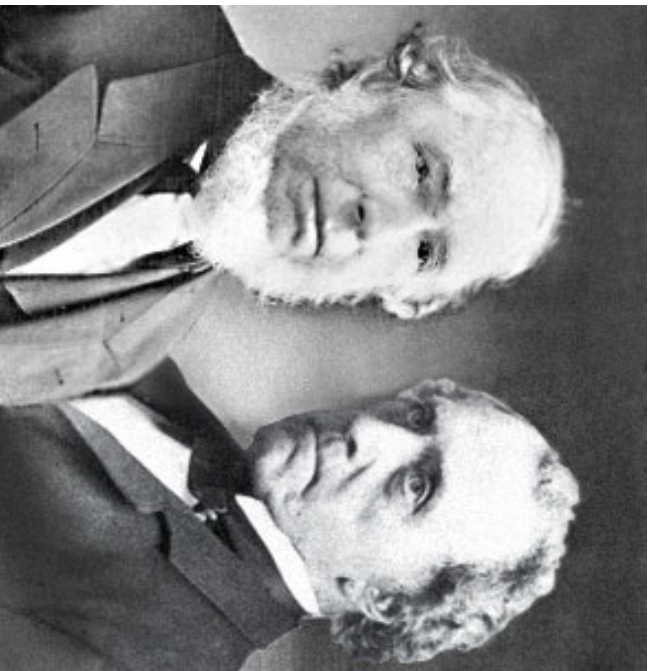
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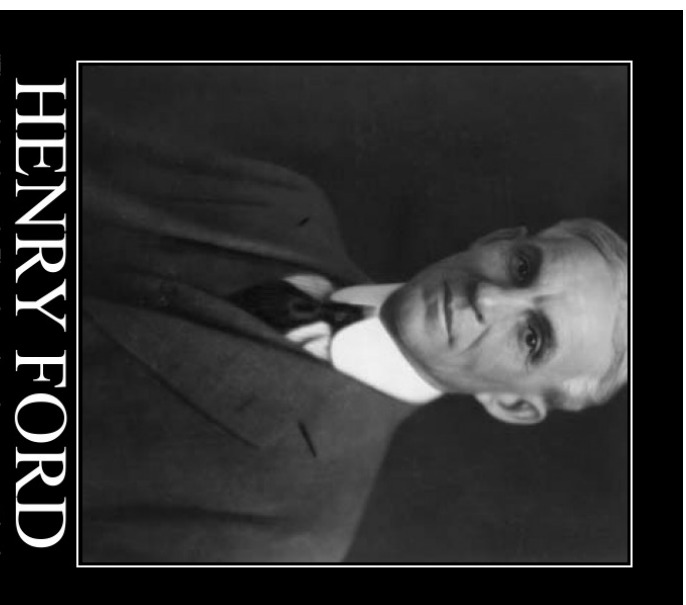
The Triumph of Consumer Society =



Entrepreneurial Tenacity +



William Proctor & James Gamble



Insatiability of American Consumer Demand +



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Advertising

"The neatest Christmas gift of all!," says Donald Reagan

You can't bow! It... You can't bow! It... You can bow! It... You can't bow! It... You can bow! It...

The new revolutionary collar on Van Heusen Century shirts **won't wrinkle... ever!**

THE NEW REVOLUTIONARY COLLAR ON VAN HEUSEN CENTURY SHIRTS—GIVEN BY FORKLAND

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Van Heusen Century shirts

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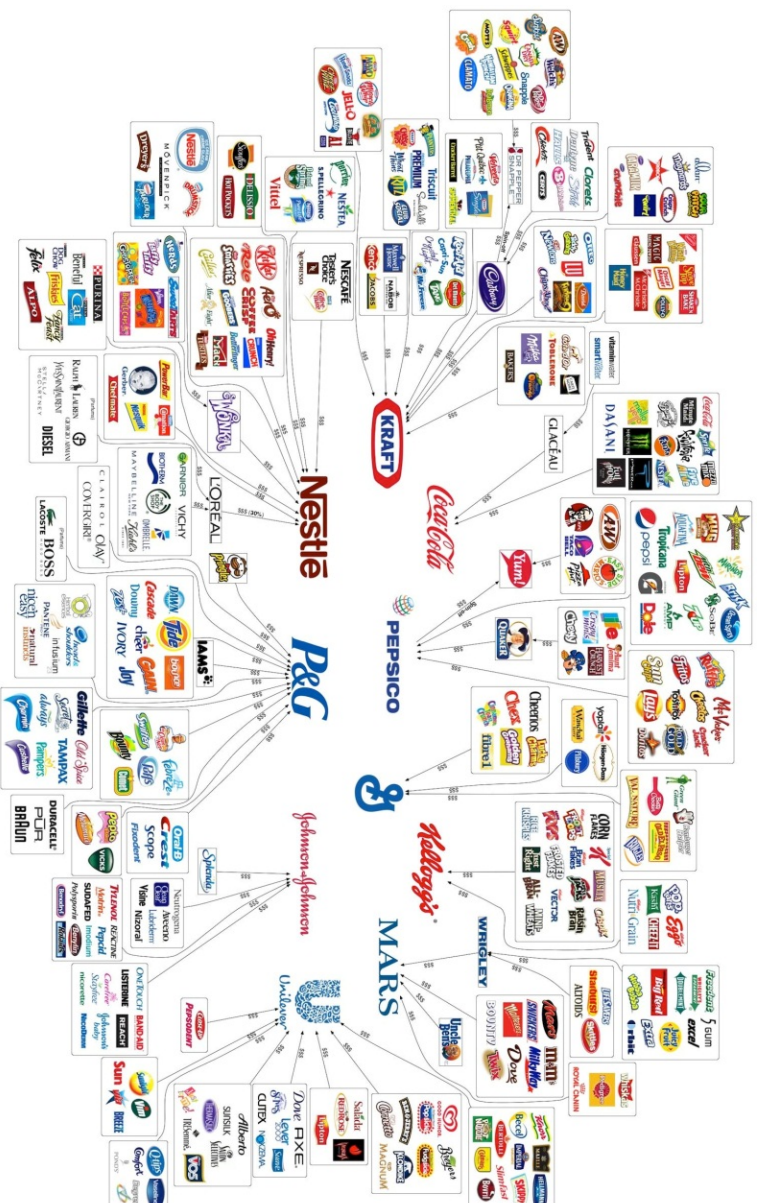
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We Really (!) Do Live in a Consumer Society



Consumer Society (n): a community in which the buying and selling of mass-produced goods and services is promoted through mass media and is the dominant economic activity.

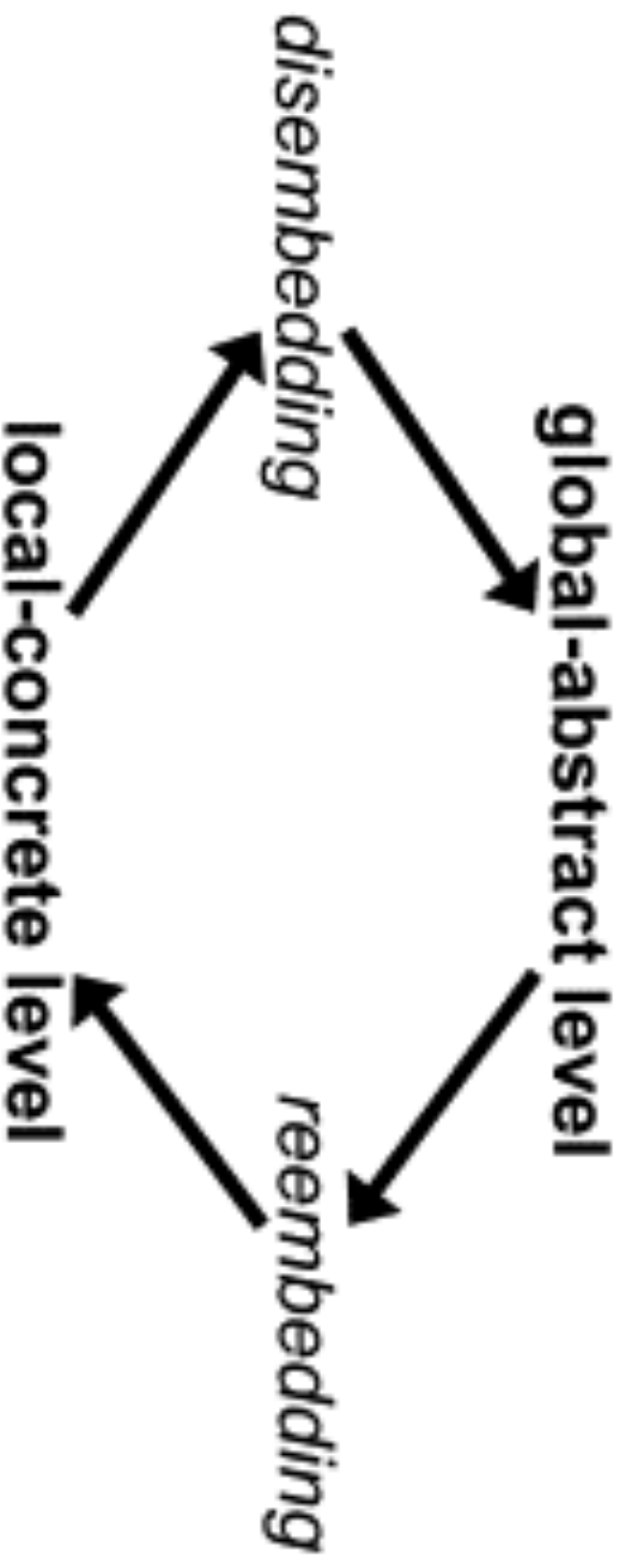


What are the Underlying Drivers of Consumer Society?

- **Disembedding (Giddens/Granovetter)**
- **Atomization/Societal Fragmentation (Smith)**
- **Pseudo-Individualization (Adorno)**
- **Commodification (Marx)**
- **Marketization (Hayek/Friedman)**

Disembedding (Giddens/Granovetter)

Refers to how contemporary social practices are no longer primarily defined by their grounding in local contexts. Social practices become stretched over time and space and become guided by impersonal and abstract factors.



Atomization/Societal Fragmentation (Smith)

Reduction of a preexisting collectivity or community into smaller and distinct units.



Pseudo-Individualization (Adorno)

The phenomenon by which false needs and differentiations are created and satisfied to give an impression of individualized expression.



Commodification (Marx)

The transformation of goods and services, as well as ideas or other entities that normally may not be considered goods, into a commodities.



Marketization (Hayek/Friedman)

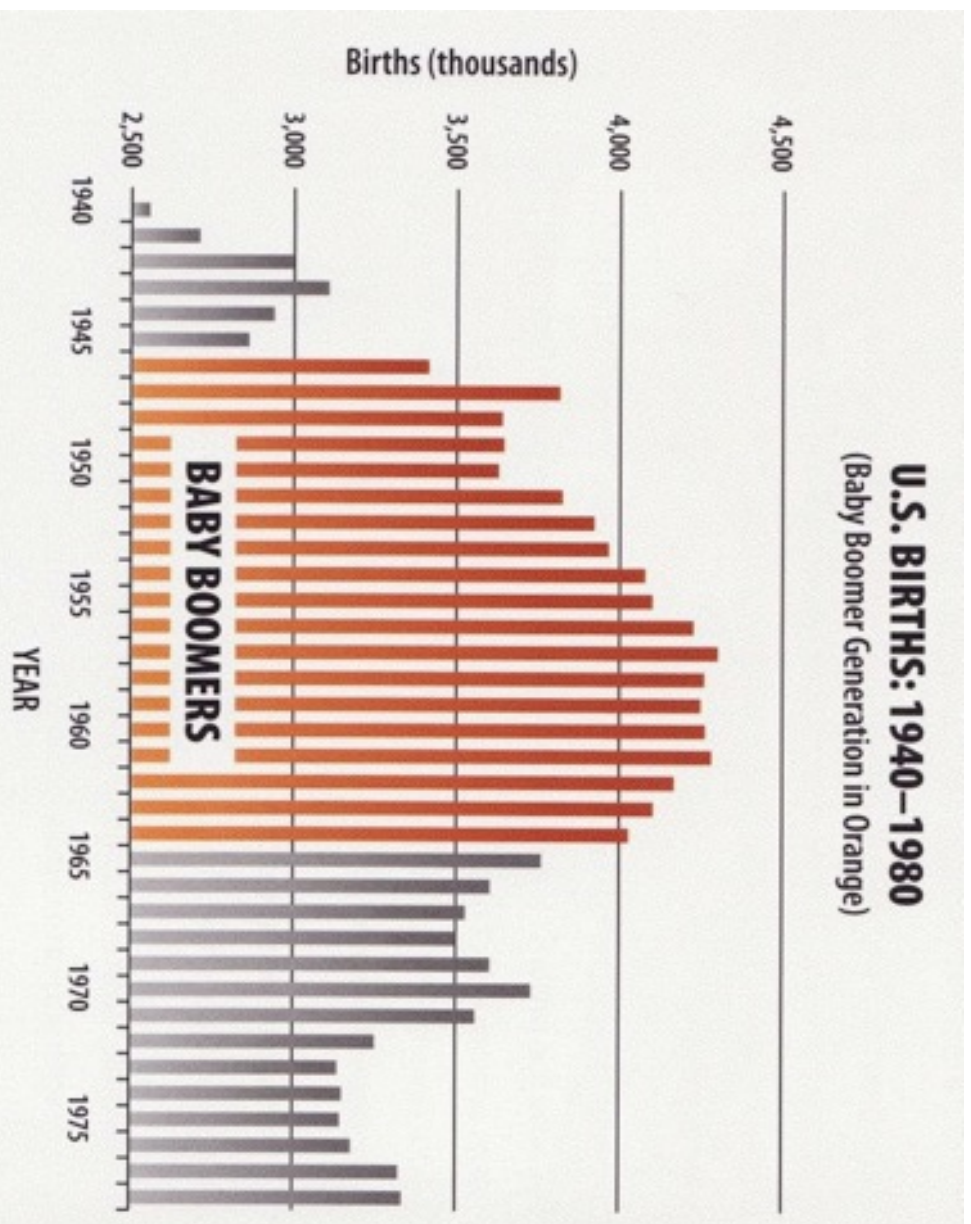
The act or process of entering into, participating in, or introducing a free market economy for the transaction of goods and services.



Pre-determinants of Post-1945 American Consumer Society

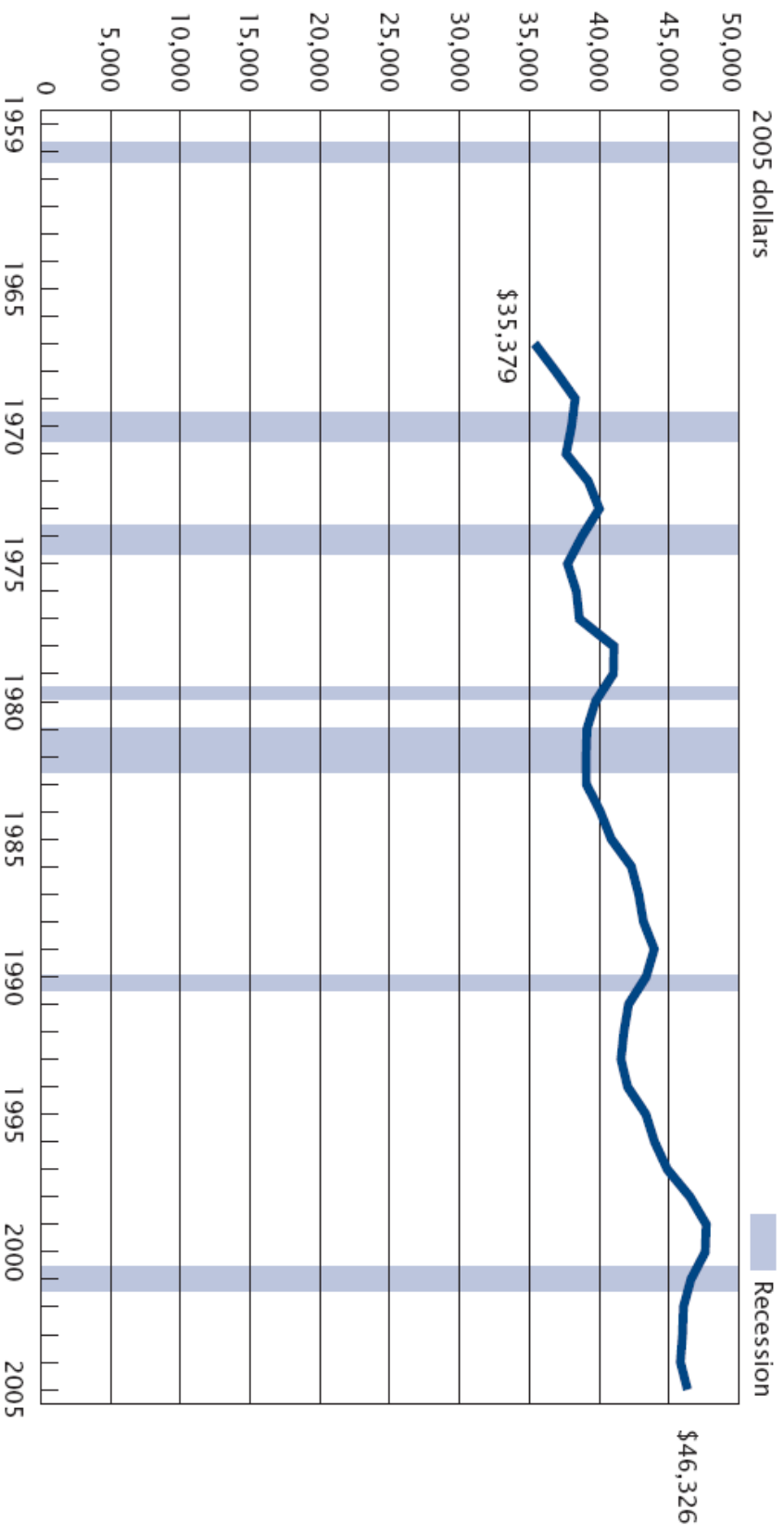
- **Demographics**
- **Economics**
- **Politics**
- **Environment & Natural Resources**

Demographics: Favorable Population Profile

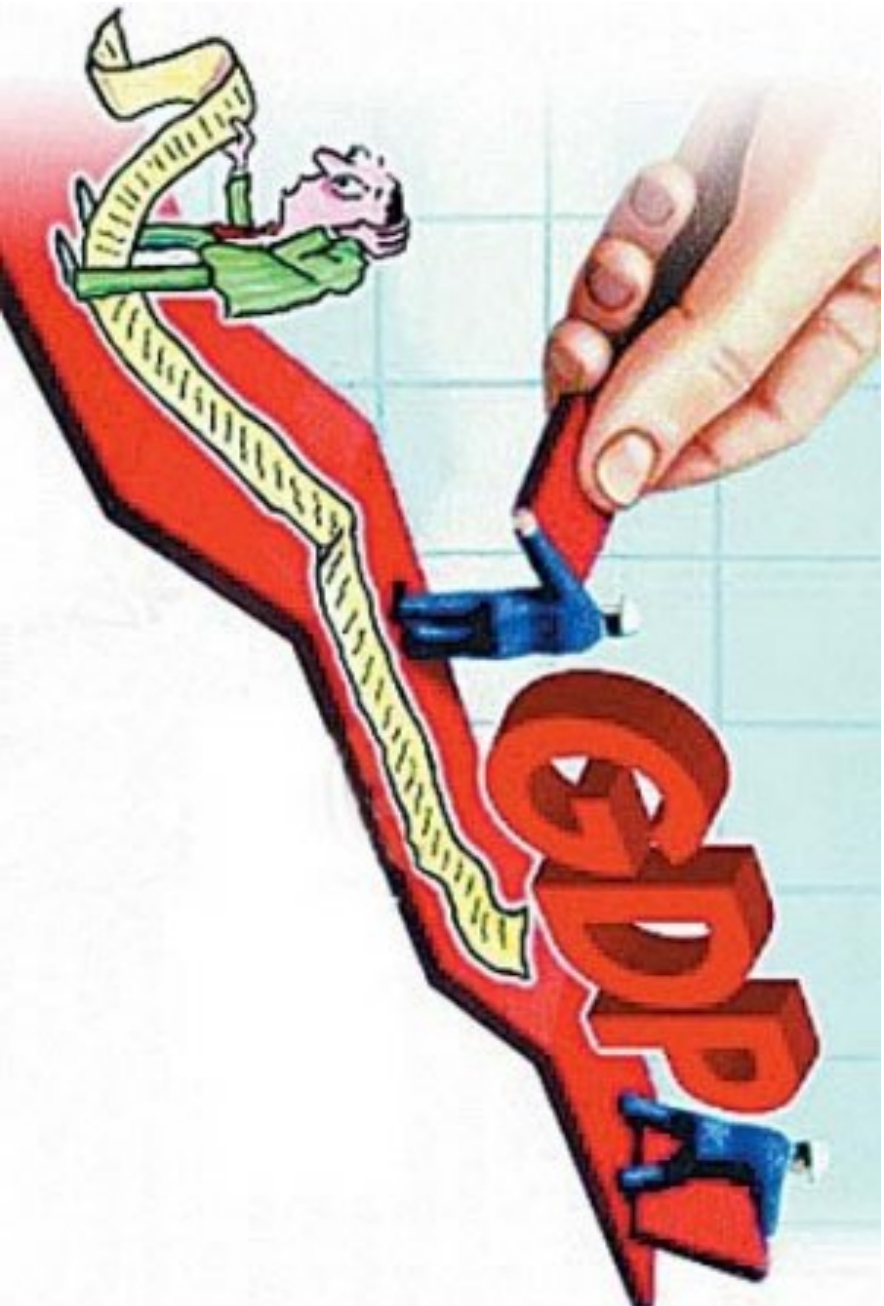


Economics: Rising Median Household Income

Real Median Household Income: 1967 to 2005



Politics: Bipartisan Consensus on Economic Growth



Environment & Natural Resources: Ample Supplies



Governmental Activism and Creation of American Consumer Society

Social Security



Governmental Activism and Creation of American Consumer Society

Government Mortgage Guarantees



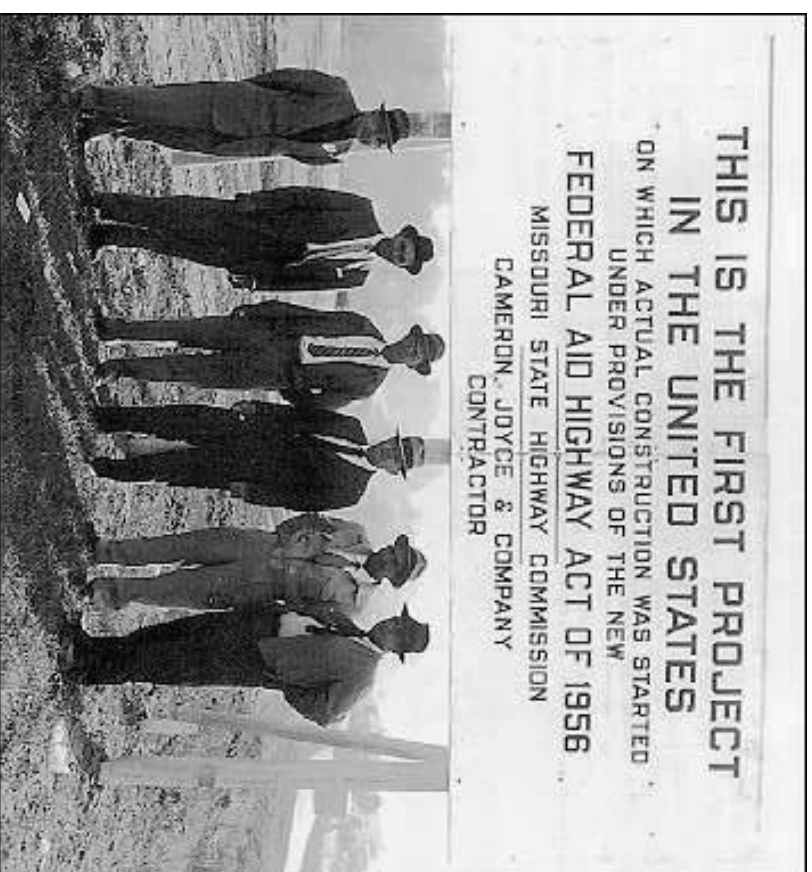
Governmental Activism and Creation of American Consumer Society

Mortgage Interest Deduction



Governmental Activism and Creation of American Consumer Society

Interstate Highway Construction



Governmental Activism and Creation of American Consumer Society

It has taken a tremendous amount of political work to create—and then maintain—the policy infrastructure that supports consumer society.



Are We Seeing a Reversal?

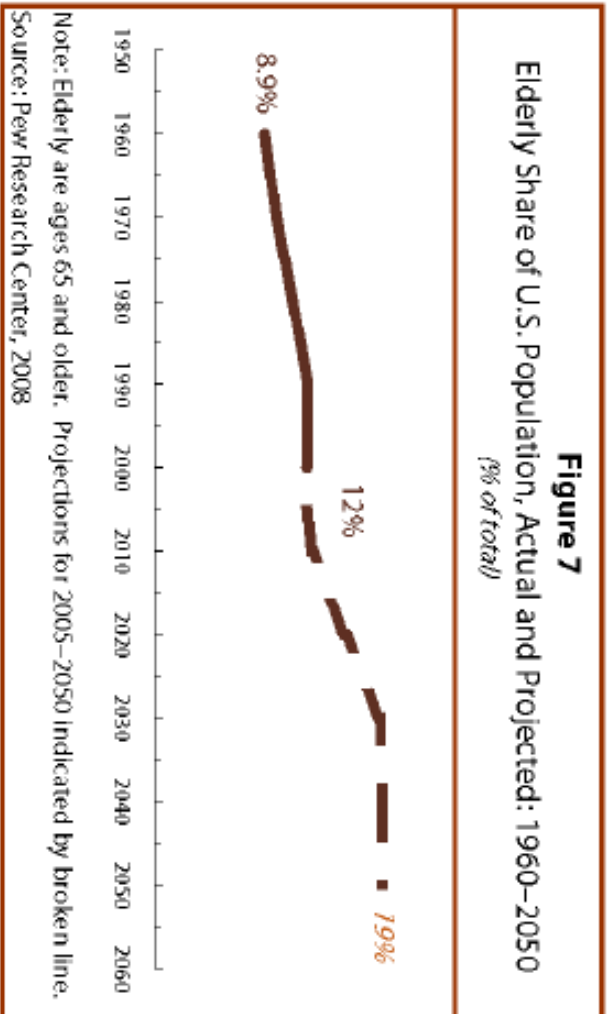
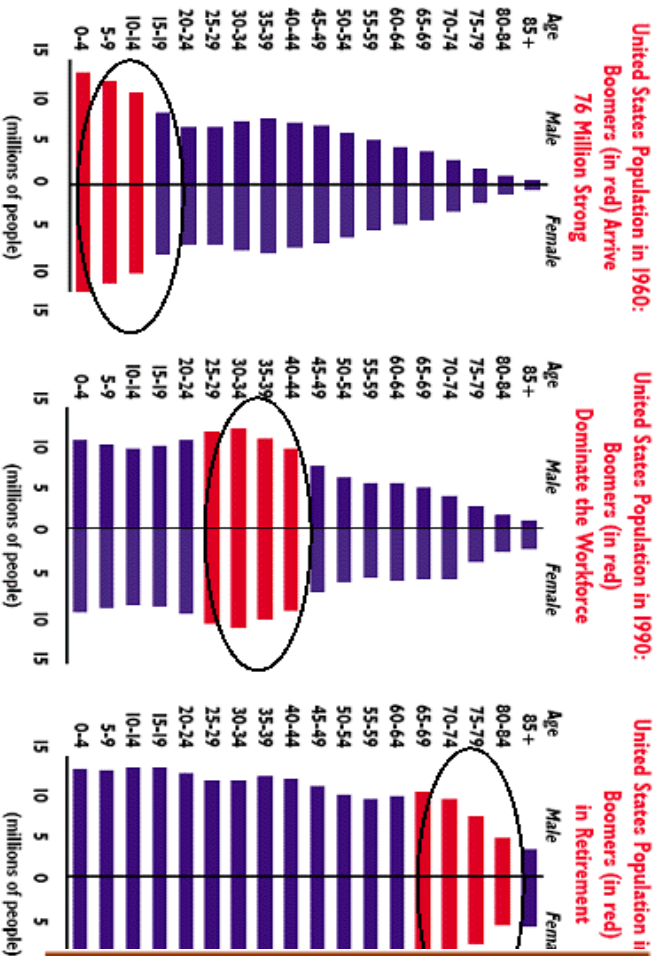


Can a Consumer Society Persist in the Absence of a Middle Class?

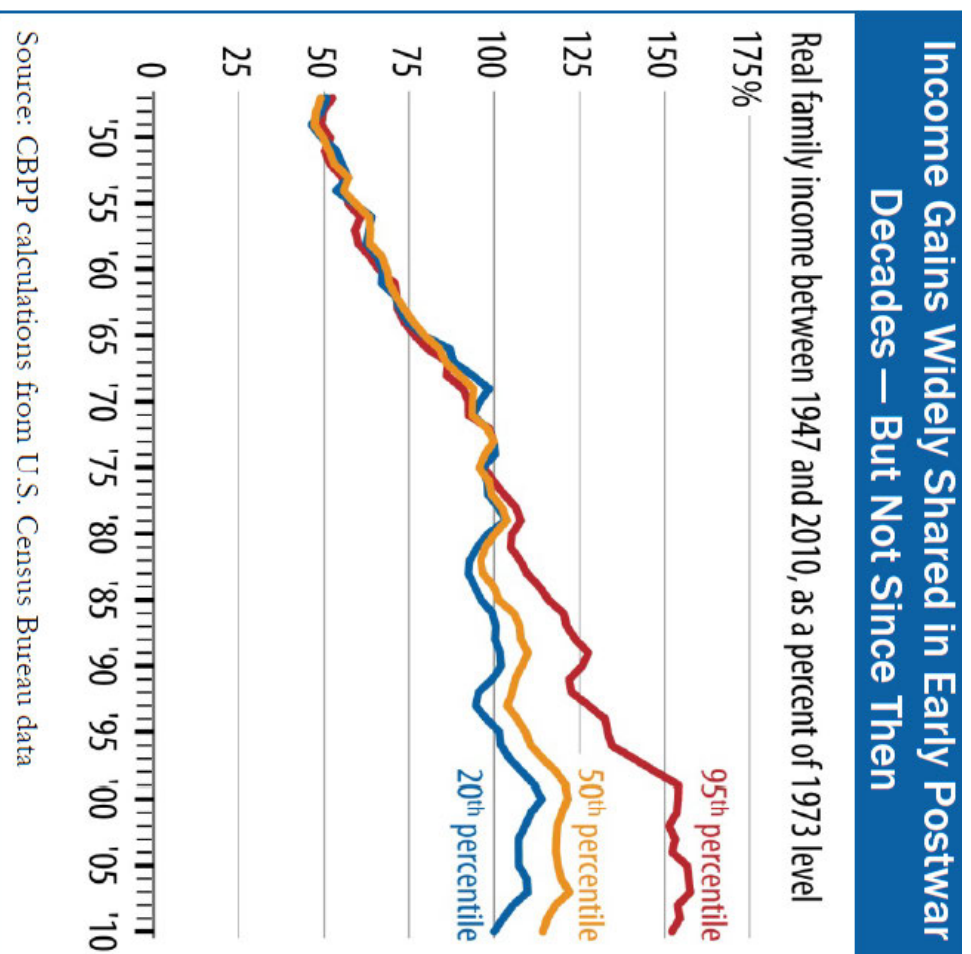


Demographics: Aging of the Baby Boomers

The Baby Boomers and the U.S. Population in 1960, 1990, 2030

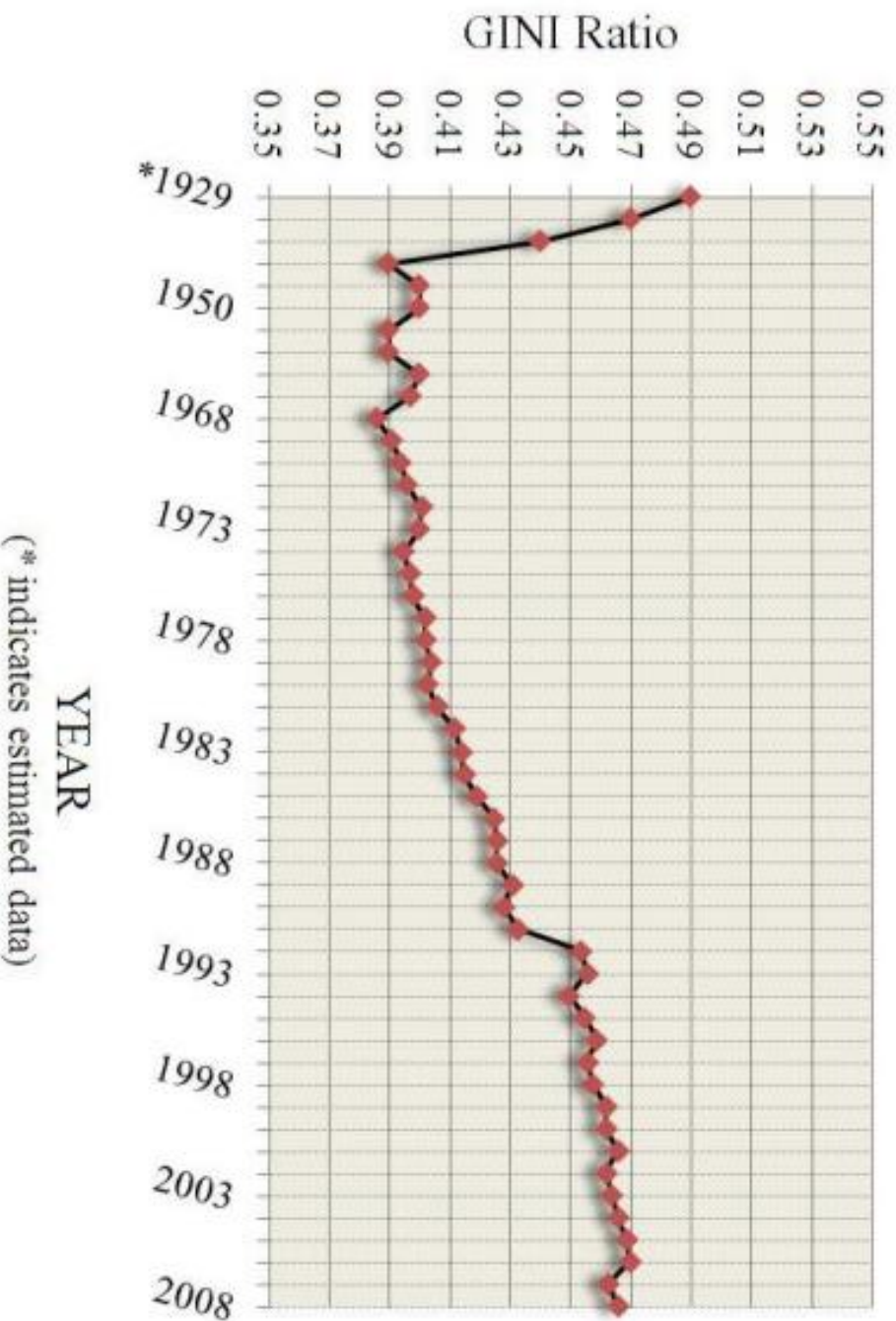


Economics: Stagnating Income for Most Consumers

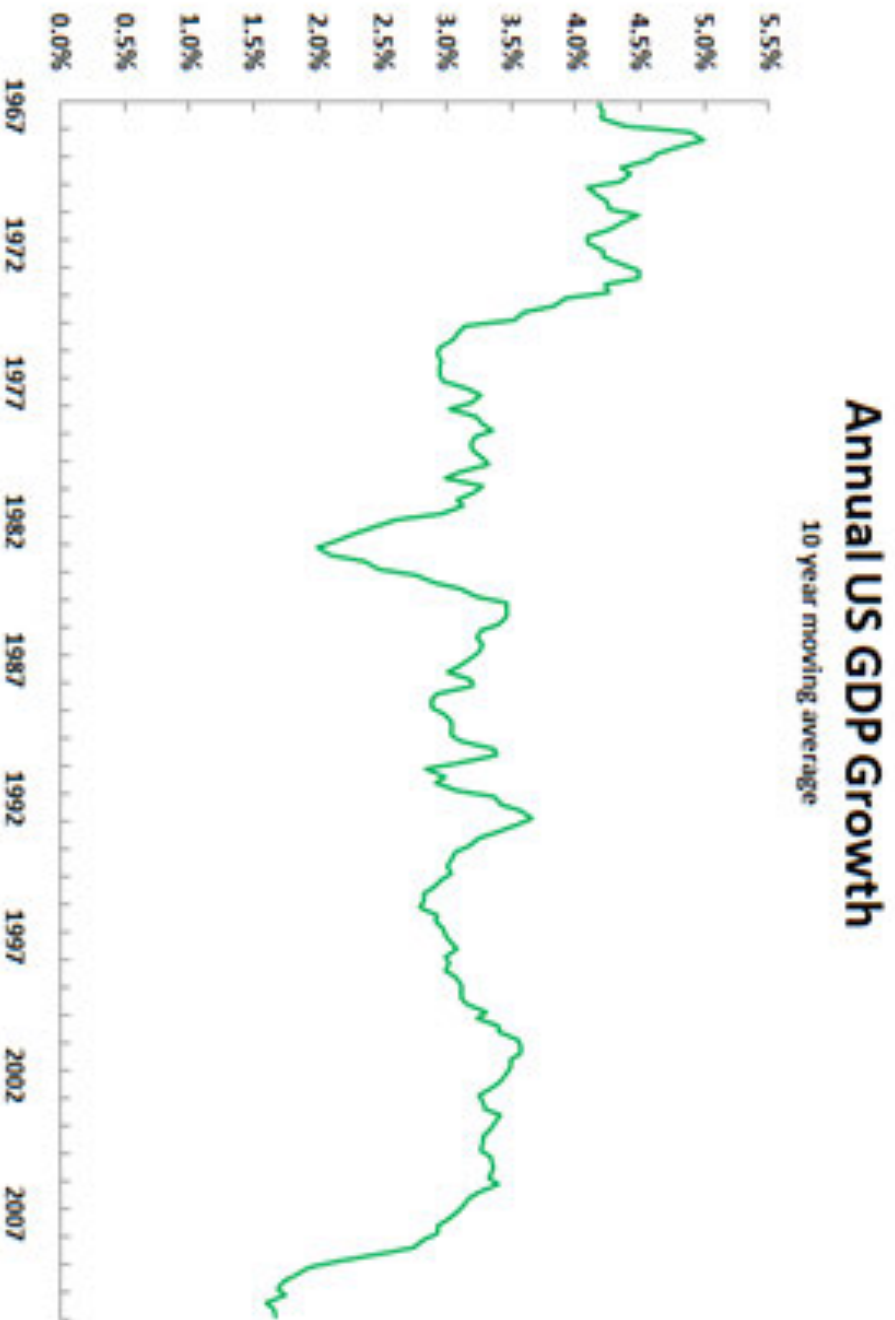


Economics: Increasing Income Inequality

Gini Coefficient of Income Inequality for the United States, 1929–2008



Economics: Slowing of Growth



Source: Calculated from Bureau of Economic Analysis NIPA Table 1.1.3

Politics: Political Paralysis and Dysfunction



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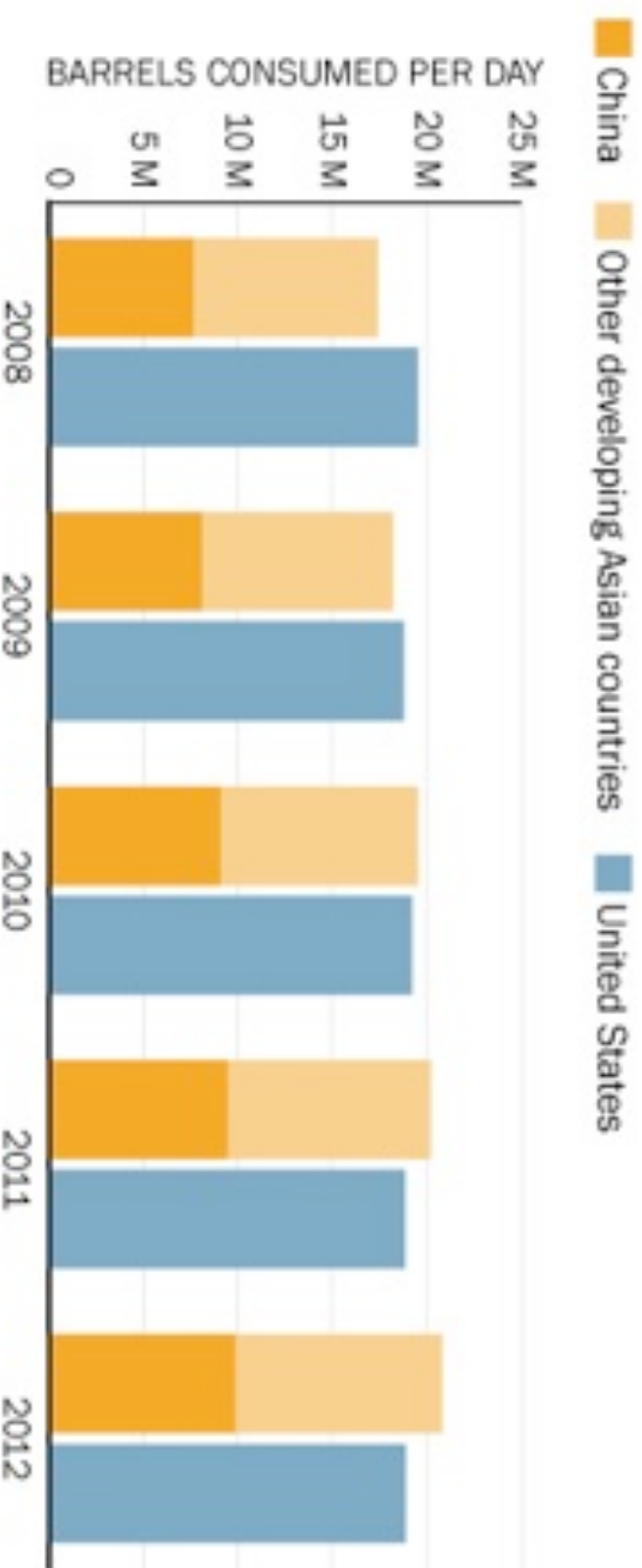
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Environment & Natural Resources: Increasing Scarcity

DEMAND FOR OIL

For the first time, more oil was consumed daily in 2010 by China and other developing Asian countries than by the United States.



SOURCE: INTERNATIONAL ENERGY AGENCY, U.S. ENERGY INFORMATION ADMINISTRATION

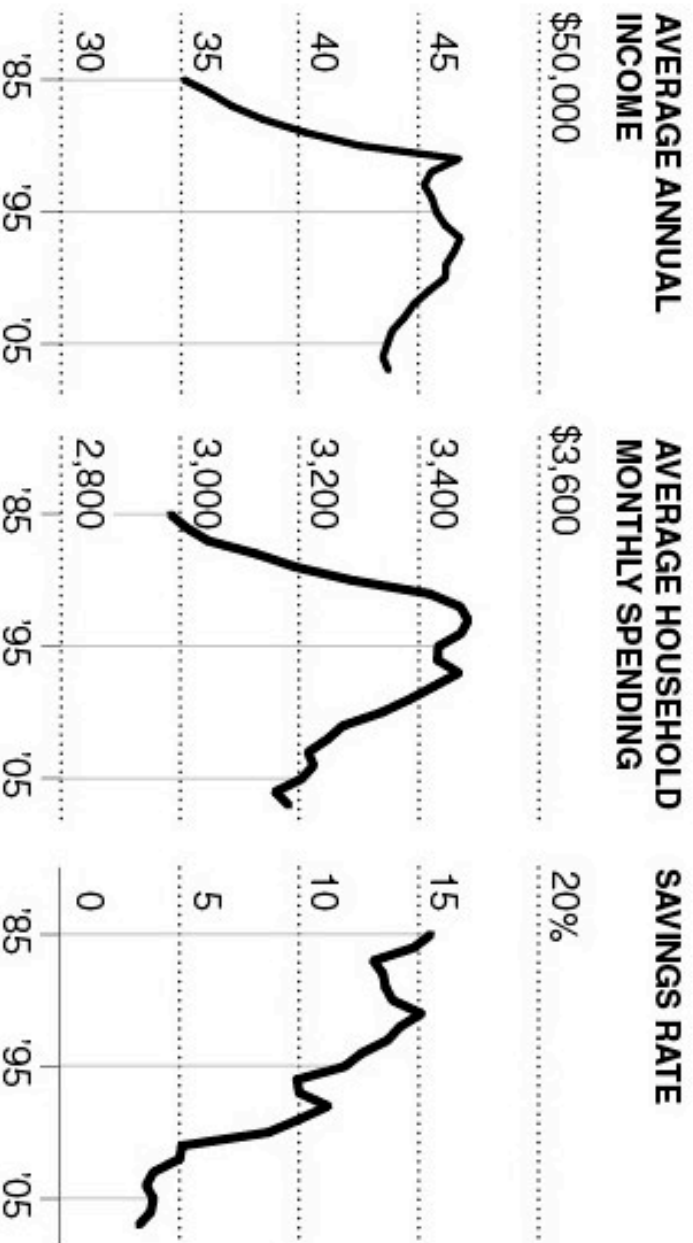
KRISTEN LONG – POLITICO

Boutique Consumerism vs. Survival Consumerism



In Japan, Neither Spending Nor Saving

Even since its Lost Decade of the 1990s, Japan has had little domestic demand. Average wages have fallen, and consumers are hesitant to spend.



Note: Figures not adjusted for inflation.

Sources: Japan National Tax Agency; Japan Cabinet Office; Japan Ministry of Internal Affairs

THE NEW YORK TIMES

POST-CONSUMER

AVOID PACKAGING CULTURED
FAIR-TRADE
UPGRADEABILITY
NON-MATERIALISTIC
BUY FROM LOCAL STORES
BUY FROM CHARITY SHOPS
SUSTAINABLE WATER CONSUMPTION
IGNORE ADVERTISING
MAKE DO AND MEND
QUALITY OVER QUANTITY
LIFE EXPERIENCE
SUSTAINABLE HAPPINESS
CONSCIOUS SHOPPER
POWER OF THE INDIVIDUAL
CITIZEN RENAISSANCE
VEGETARIAN SUPER CHEF
HUMANISM
ECO CARS
RECYCLING
DON'T SMOKE
EDUCATED TRAVELING



Mainstays of Post-WWII American Consumer Society

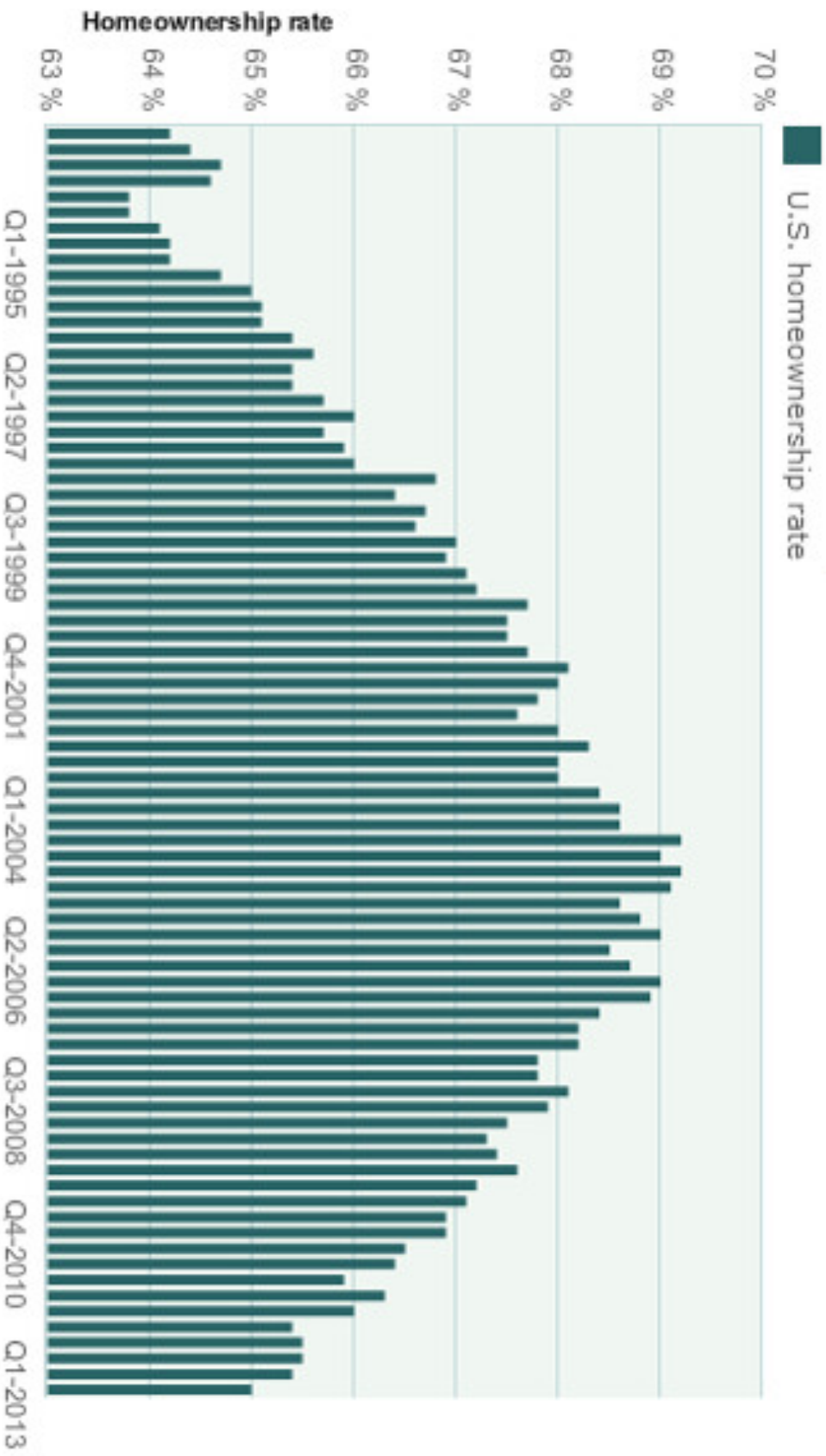


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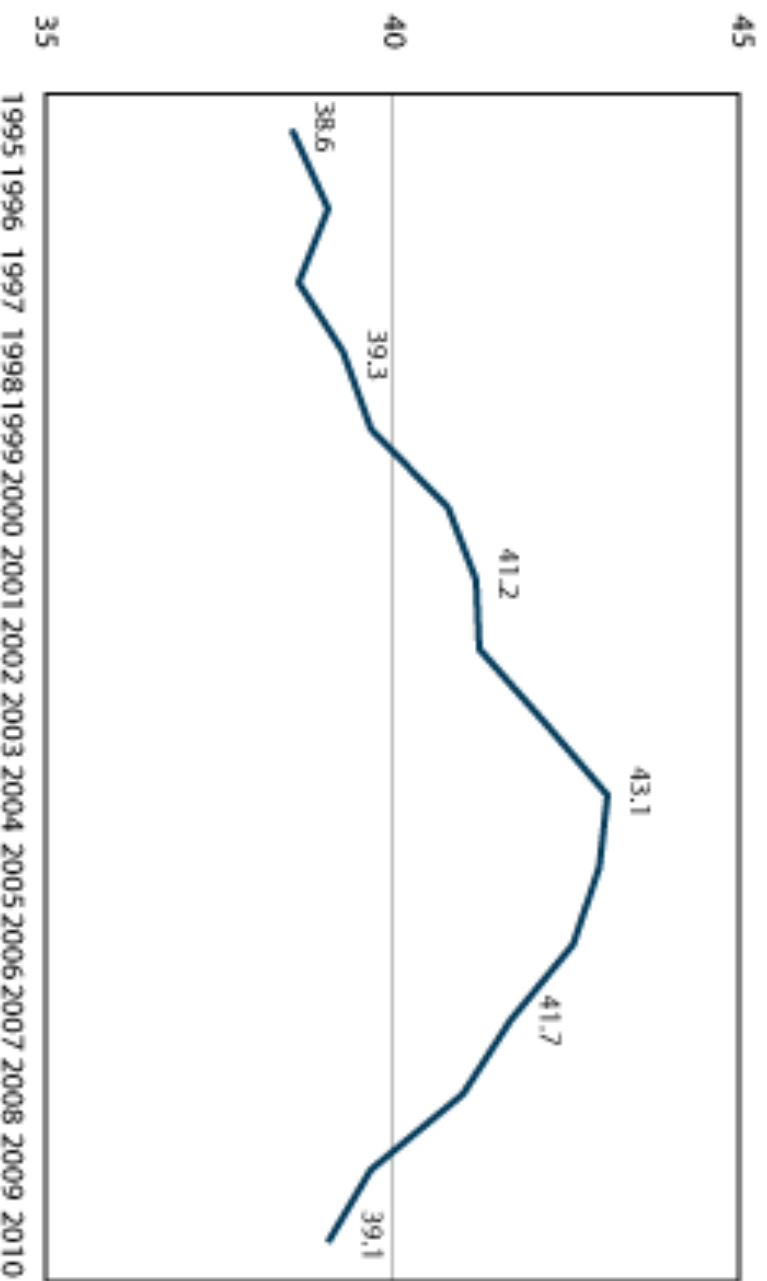
Homeownership rate lowest since 1995



Source : U.S. Census Bureau

Generation Rent

Homeownership rate among Americans under age 35



Source: Harvard University, Lifecourse Associates

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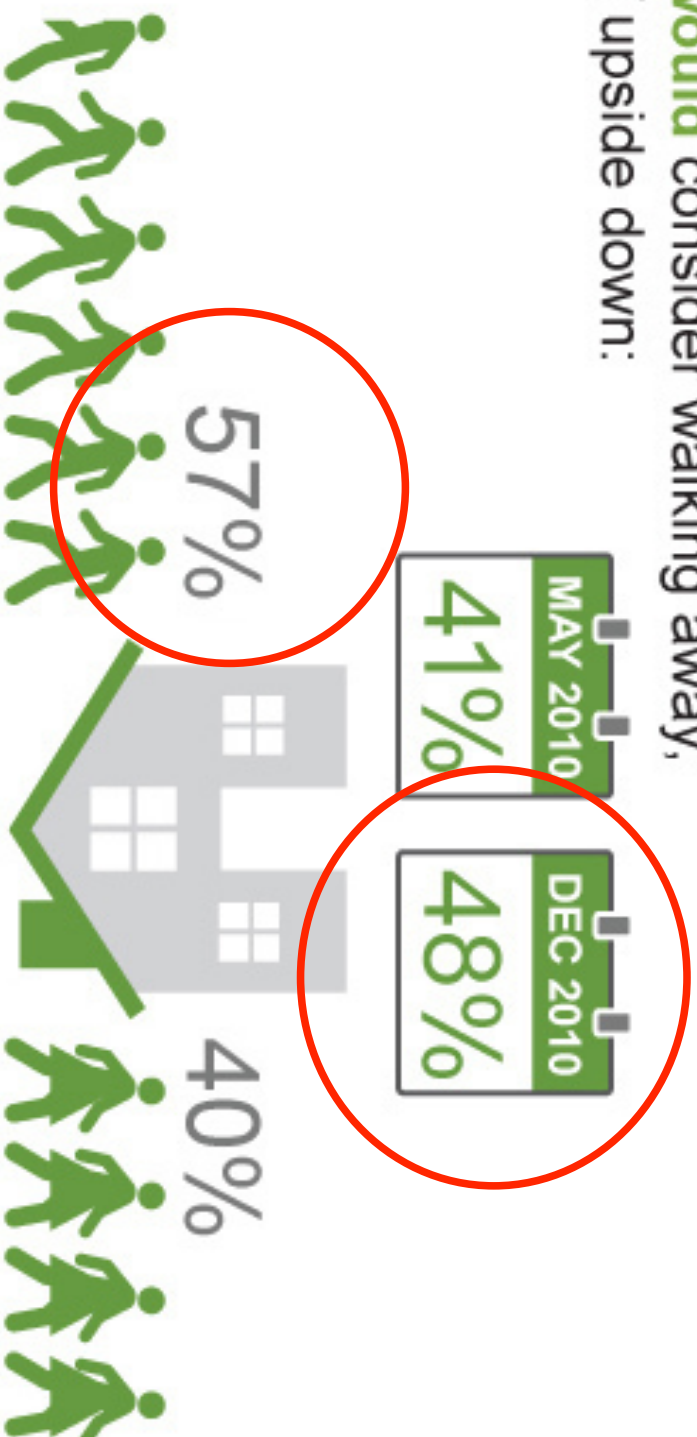
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Strategic Mortgage Default... Then



Strategic Mortgage Default...and Now

Homeowners with mortgages who **would** consider walking away, if upside down:



More men than women **WOULD** walk away

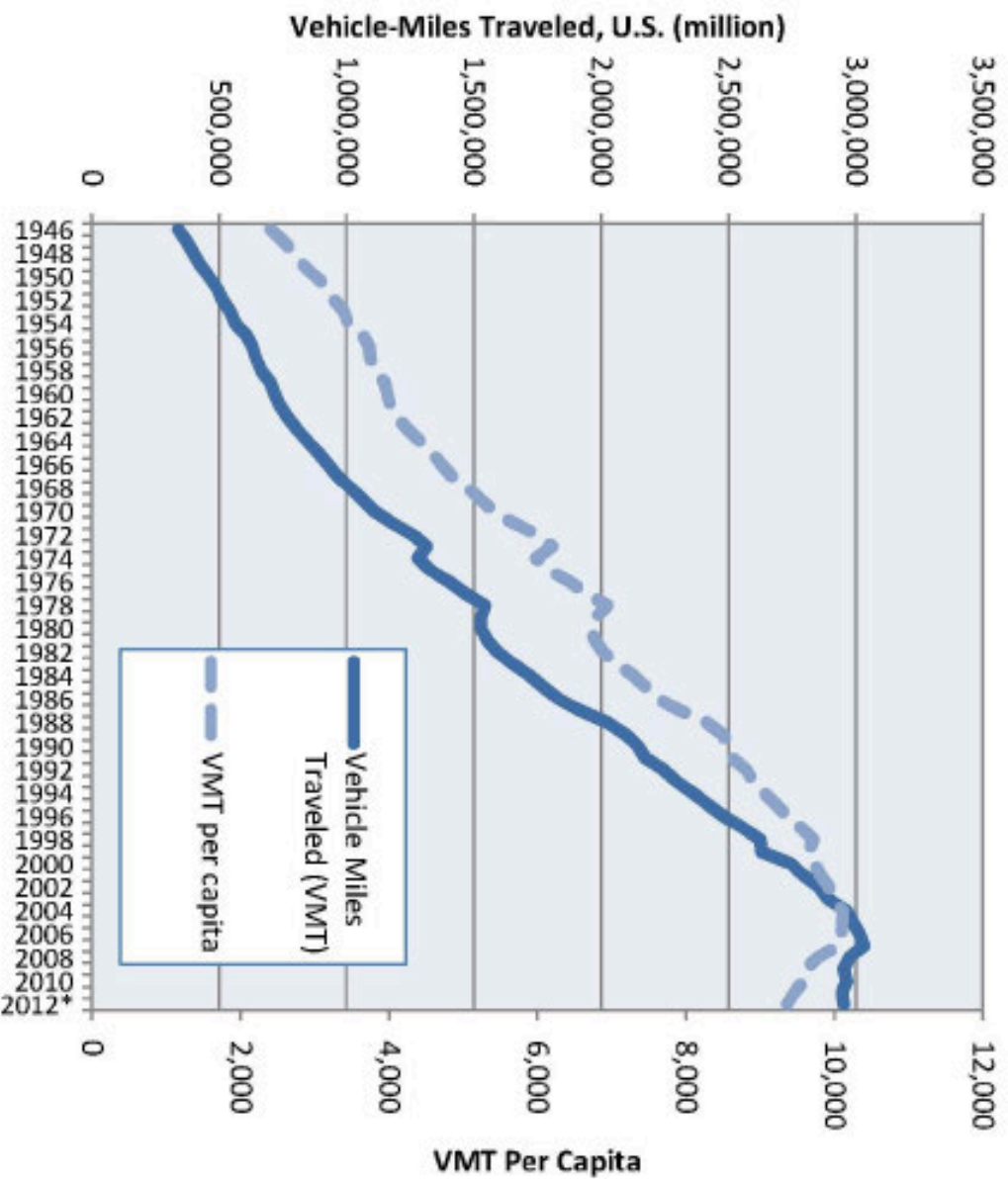


Data from a study conducted by Harris Interactive, November 2-4, 2010, commissioned by Trulia and RealtyTrac.

Is it the Beginning of the End of the Road for the Car?



The Advent of “Peak Car”

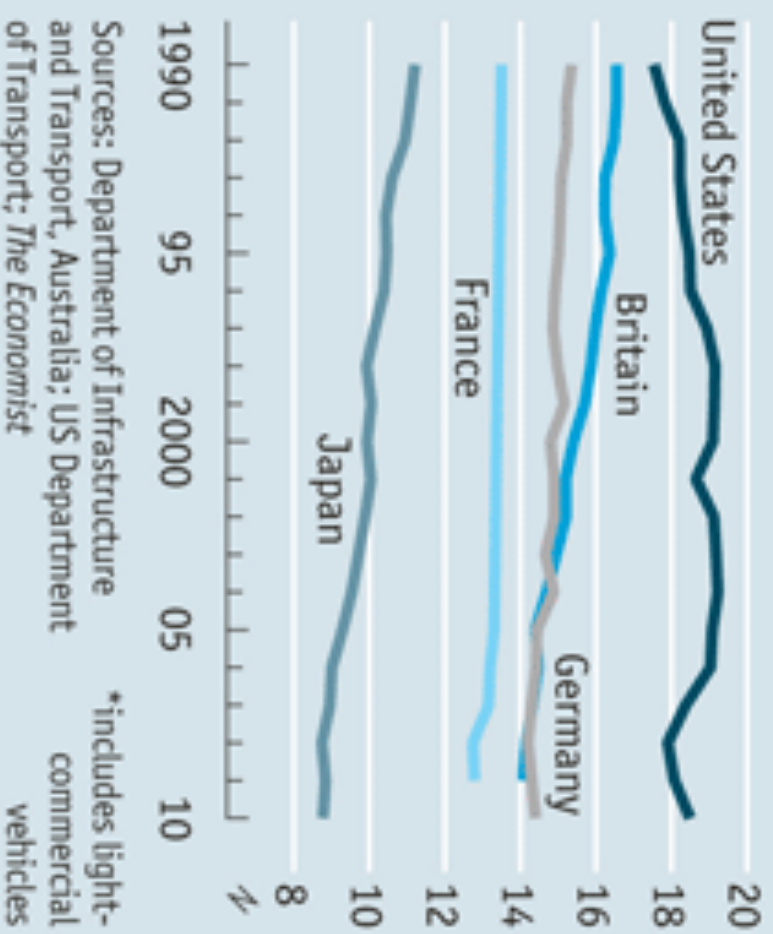


The Advent of “Peak Car”

No particular place to go

1

Average kilometres travelled per car*, '000

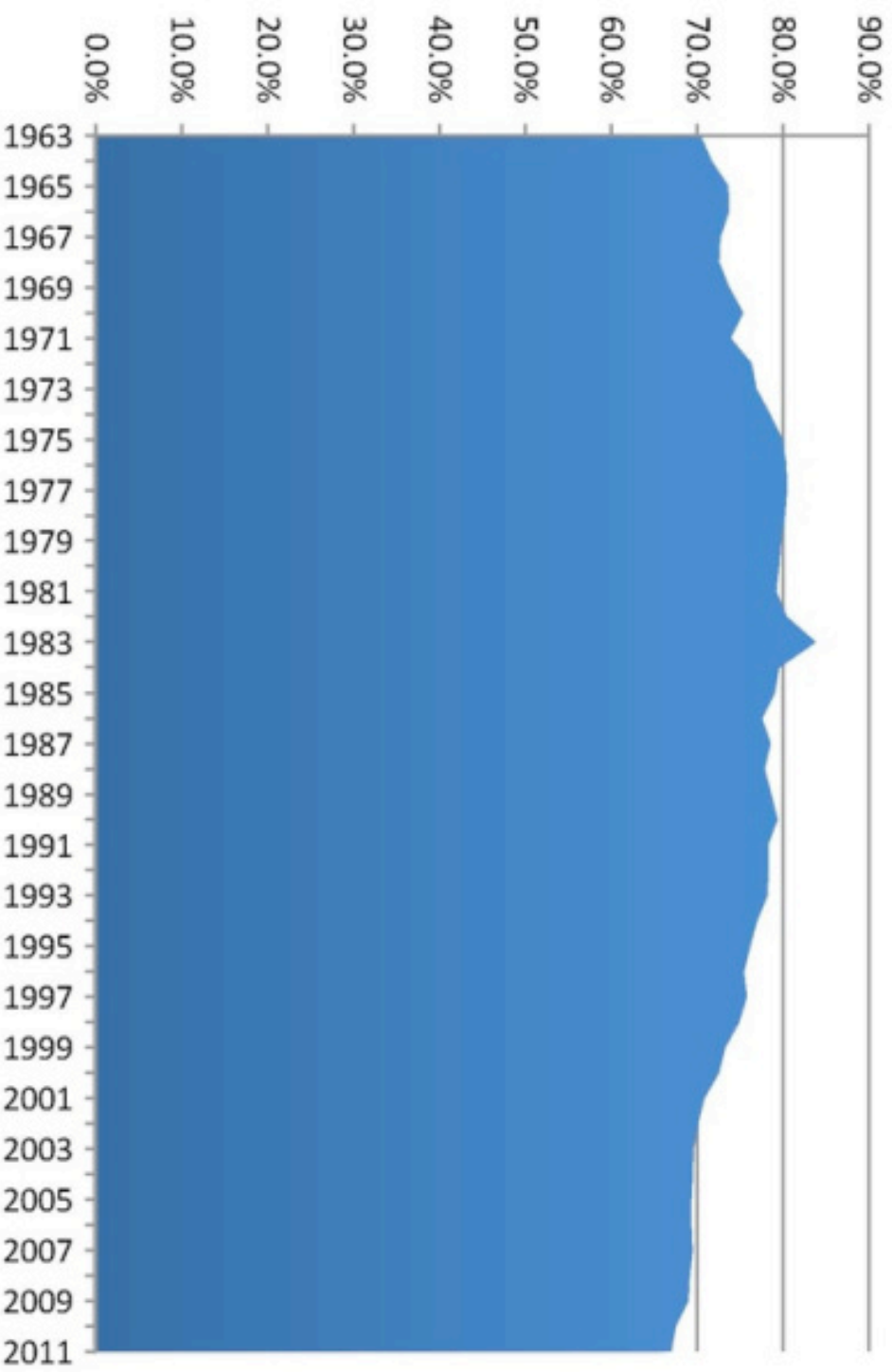


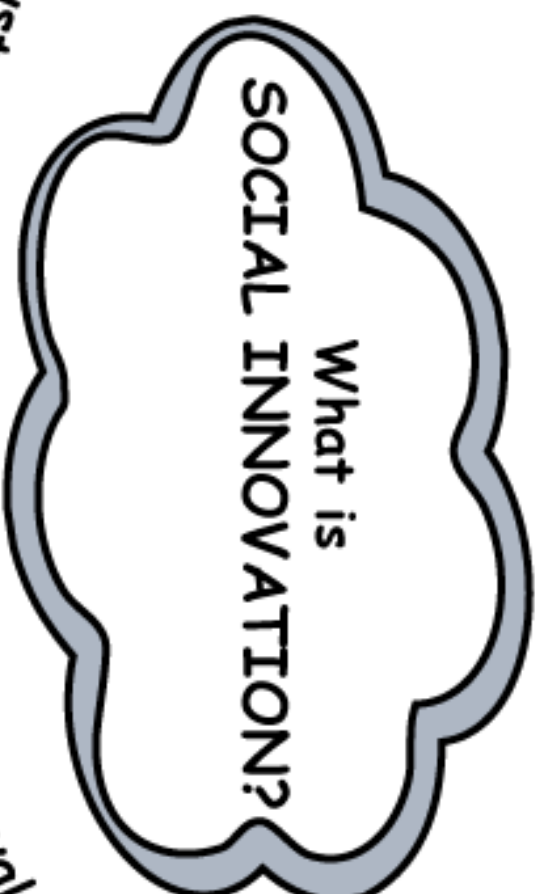
Sources: Department of Infrastructure and Transport, Australia; US Department of Transport; *The Economist*

*includes light-commercial vehicles

Generation Y and the Automobile

Percentage of 16-24 year olds with driver's licenses





Are more sustainable

Are more fair

Are more effective



Bring value to society

Are novel solutions

Are more efficient

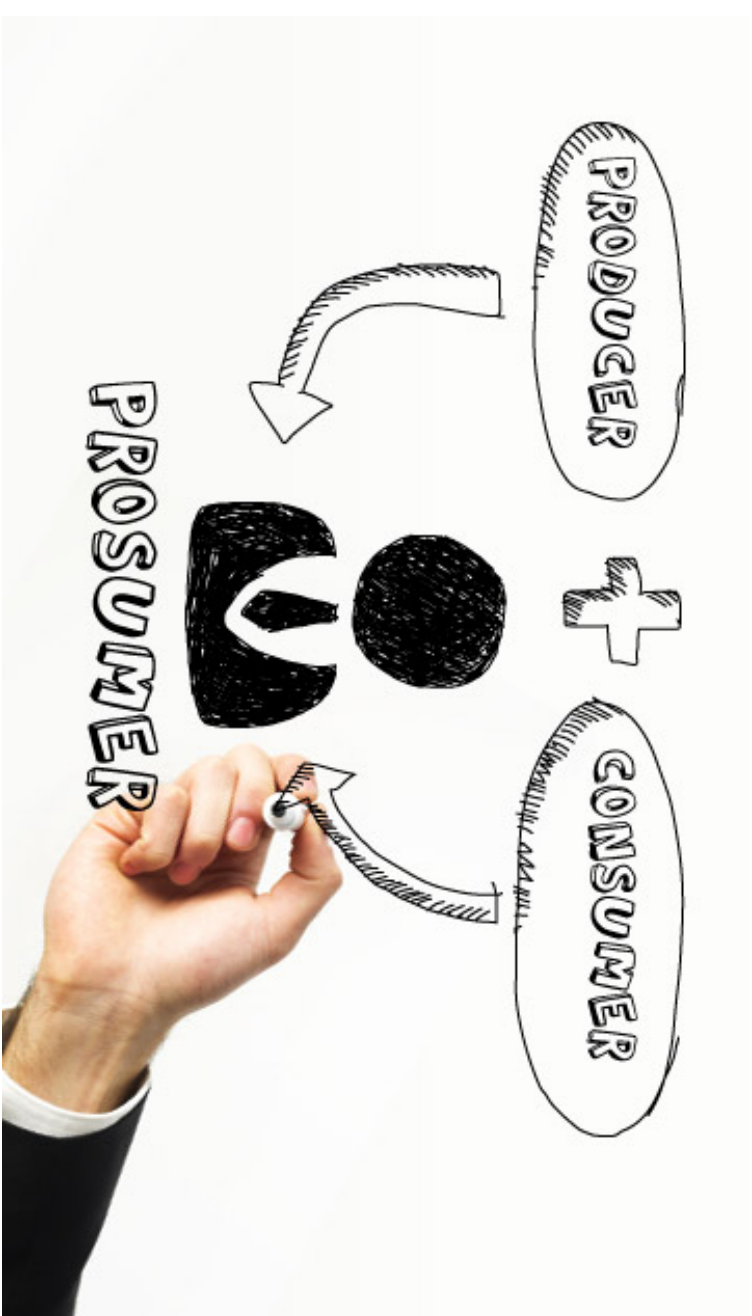
Growing Local Living Economies:

**A Grassroots Approach
to Economic Development**

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Peer-to-Peer and Collaborative Consumption Provisioning Networks



Unconsumption

WE HAVE CONSUMED OVER A THIRD OF OUR PLANET'S NATURAL RESOURCES IN THE LAST FIFTY YEARS.

I refuse to contribute to this legacy.

I am not a consumer, I believe in people over possessions.

I AM A human being. The things I do own, will never own me.

I am not against things, in fact things are so sacred I think they ought to be shared.

BUT THE BEST THINGS IN LIFE AREN'T THINGS.

I am part of a movement underway where we believe it's possible to own less, and live more.

Our belongings will never trump our belonging to one another.

WE BELIEVE THERE'S ENOUGH IN THE WORLD FOR EVERYBODY'S NEED, BUT NOT FOR EVERYBODY'S GREED.

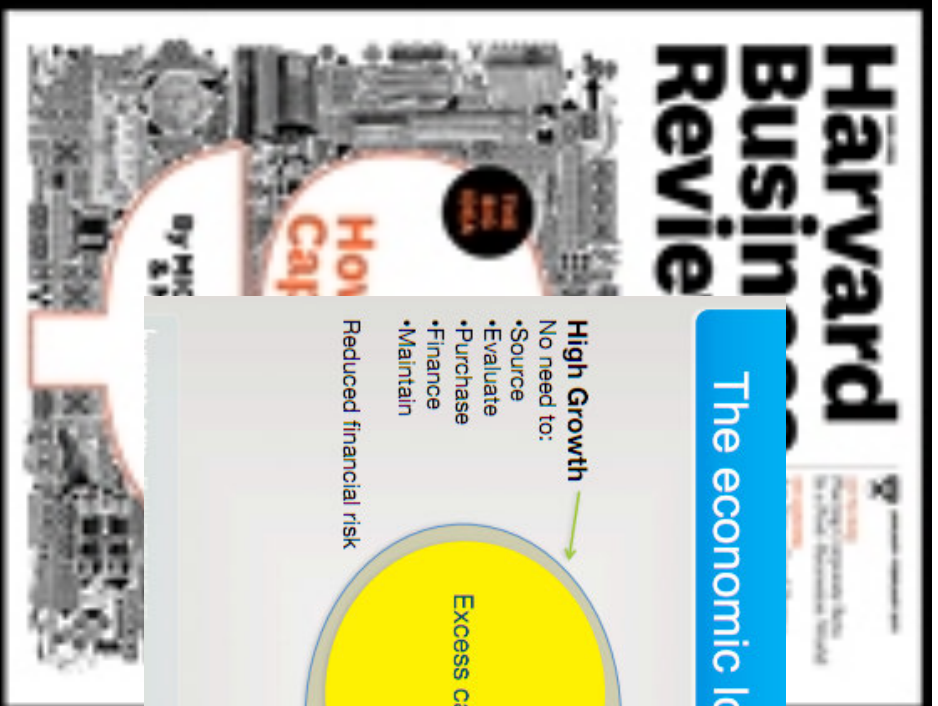
We dream that one day 'not owning' things will be cooler than owning them.

We believe sharing can be the new shopping, borrow can be the new buy, and that joy is found in what we create and give away.

WE WILL LEAVE THIS WORLD BETTER THAN THE WAY WE FOUND IT.



New Business Models

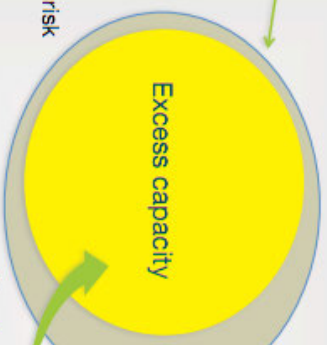


The economic logic

High Growth
No need to:

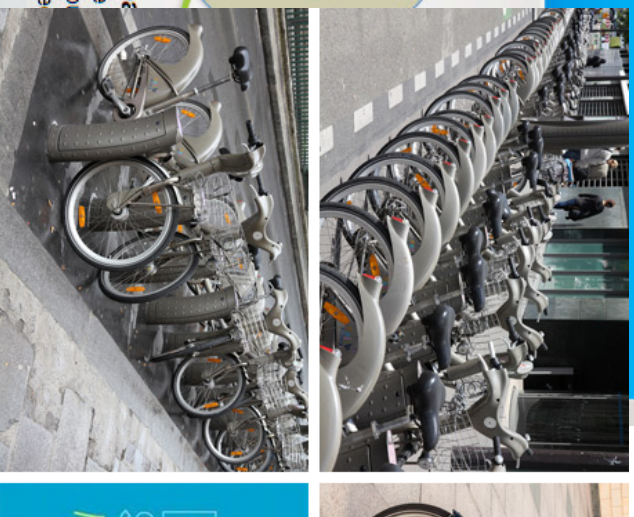
- Source
- Evaluate
- Purchase
- Finance
- Maintain

Reduced financial risk



Scale

- Online
- Distrib
- Create



Toward a Post-Consumerist Future?

