



Collective dissonance and the transition to post-consumerism



Maurie J. Cohen*

Graduate Program in Environmental and Sustainability Policy, New Jersey Institute of Technology, University Heights, Newark, NJ 07102, USA

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Available online 23 July 2013

ABSTRACT

Because of lags realigning common conceptions with evolving extant conditions, macroeconomic transitions typically engender pronounced collective dissonance. The 2007 financial crisis triggered such a process in several Anglo-European countries and large fissures have been opening up in recent years between societal expectations and lived experiences. Historical precedents for this situation can be found, for example, in the waning of British imperialism during the twentieth century and the political restructuring of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe during the 1990s. Indications of a transition from consumerism to post-consumerism are now becoming apparent in the United States and parts of Europe. Impelling this transformation are shifting demographics, technological changes, and new social values. These developments are being expressed in terms of stagnating wages, persistently high unemployment, widening income inequality, sluggish consumer demand, volatile financial markets, contracting middle-class security, and general public malaise. The case of Japan over the past two decades may offer useful insights to inform this nascent transition to a post-consumerist future and to help navigate some of its challenges.

© 2013 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

The countries of the global North have been struggling since 2007 to regain their former economic vitality and a protracted post-crisis aftermath has made salient a “new normal” characterized by stagnating wages, persistently high unemployment, widening income inequality, sluggish consumer demand, volatile financial markets, contracting middle-class security, and general public malaise [1–3]. Viewed against other trends in many of these nations of changing demographics, technological changes, and new social values such developments suggest erosion of several important pillars of the post-World War II consumer society [4–6]. Concomitantly, many long-standing shared assumptions undergirding everyday life remain in place, though they are showing increasing signs of strain.

It is not necessary to delve deeply into the large literature on social constructionism to posit that there exists divergence—sometimes quite profound—between shared mental models of understanding and the corporeal world [7,8]. Conceptions of the socio-environmental context in which our lives play out are assembled from a complex bricolage of lay and tacit knowledge, mimetic duplication, political rhetoric, personal and familial experience, superstition, religious beliefs, and more. Because large buffers typically exist between human activities and the wider surround it is normally possible to tolerate significant discrepancies without incurring perilous risks. In other words, we are fortunate to live in a world that normally allows for wide margins of error. However, as scholars of societal collapse have capably demonstrated, failures to properly conjure sufficiently accurate interpretations of prevailing conditions can sometimes have extremely parlous

* Tel.: +1 609 430 9777.

E-mail address: mcohen@adm.njit.edu.

consequences [9,10]. For example, the unsatisfactory state of contemporary discourse surrounding global climate change is at least partly attributable to poorly articulated feedback loops between human cognition and biophysical reality [11,12].¹

The macroeconomy, because it is an abstract construction and subject to variability over geographic space (and thus difficult to ascertain accurately through personal observation), poses distinct challenges in terms of how people grasp evolving changes in a timely way [13–15]. In addition, statistical indicators regarding, for instance unemployment and economic growth, are embedded in various expert discourses contingent on politically contested definitions. More arduous still, when extant circumstances shift, large breaches can open up between societal expectations and lived experiences and these gaps can, in turn, lead to marked indecisiveness and uncertainty. In short, it takes time for mental conceptions to adjust to new realities.

It appears that disparity between dominant public narratives regarding the macroeconomy and actualized economic conditions in many Anglo-European countries is widening and an expanding pattern of dissonance is taking hold. The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines dissonance as “a lack of agreement or inconsistency between the beliefs one holds or between one’s actions and one’s beliefs.” It is a central concept in psychology and has been operationalized in various allied fields, most notably marketing where it is deployed to explain the anxieties that often accompany the acquisition of goods.²

Dissonance is typically understood to be an individualized condition but the assertion put forth here is that societies can also manifest this conflictive status.³ Some readers may recognize that invoking the notion of *collective* dissonance is not an uncontroversial claim. Over the years, some social scientists have vigorously challenged the validity of this kind of scalar transferability, yet research on political culture continues to bear out the presence of central tendencies at the national (or societal) level (see, e.g. [16,17,110]). This paper reflects on how the current period of economic instability may be contributing to forms of public discord in some of the most severely affected countries. The aim in particular is to consider how the recent period of economic overreach, and the subsequent process of retrenchment, could be contributing to deviation between prevalent expectations surrounding consumption and actual opportunities to consume.

The easing of collective dissonance often occurs gradually, but it can also be resolved abruptly and dramatically.⁴ The point here is that pronounced levels of collective dissonance cannot be maintained indefinitely. Treading on similar ground, the political commentator Lindsey [18] has observed that “when cultural norms and social realities veer off in opposite directions, the results are seldom stable.” With respect to the arguably dire fiscal condition in the United States and the continued willingness of investors to fund the country’s large deficit, historian Ferguson [19] has recently written

Such complacency can persist for a surprising long time—long after the statistical indicators have started flashing red. But one day, a seemingly random piece of bad news—perhaps a negative report by a rating agency—will make the headlines during an otherwise quiet news cycle. Suddenly, it will be not just a few specialists who worry about the sustainability of US fiscal policy but also the public at large, not to mention investors abroad. It is this shift that is crucial, for a complex adaptive system is in big trouble when a critical mass of its constituents loses faith in its viability.

The next section briefly discusses several historical examples in which resounding events have triggered collective dissonance about consumption. The third section describes the emergence of consumerism as the dominant form of societal organization in Anglo-European countries and outlines how current efforts to overcome collective dissonance raise questions about its current durability. The clear irony here is that while rapidly developing nations such as China, India, and Brazil are actively striving to develop their capacities for mass consumption, this macroeconomic model is breaking down in parts of the world where it first took hold. The fourth section focuses specifically on the venerated idea of the “American Dream” and explains how this trope has functioned as an aspirational heuristic in the United States. The fifth section examines the manifestation of collective dissonance in Europe and the sixth section considers the case of Japan. The final section situates the prospect of a post-consumerist future within the history of macroeconomic transitions and reflects on the role of scholarship on this issue.

2. Brief insights from recent and ongoing transitions

The past half century was witnessed several notable macroeconomic transitions and these disruptions have been marked by the opening of large fissures between societal expectations and lived experiences. For instance, the economic plans implemented by the United States and its allies during the aftermath of World War II induced widespread collective dissonance in Germany and Japan [20–22]. For somewhat different reasons, mostly associated with the final stages of imperial decline and the debilitating burdens of two costly wars, the British public went through its own process of aspirational recalibration after 1945 [23–27].

The dissolution of the Soviet Union during the early 1990s affords perhaps the most dramatic example of macroeconomic transition during recent memory, a process that overturned prevailing cultural narratives and created widespread ambiguity

¹ Dissonance should not be confused with denialism which suggests a different social psychological response and stems more from a purposeful rejection of the credibility of certain information.

² Indeed the main objective of some forms of consumer resistance is to actively foster dissonance as a means of encouraging behavior change. See, for example [112].

³ The most famous treatment of this issue is probably Daniel Bell’s book, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* originally published in 1976.

⁴ Malcolm Gladwell’s elaboration on the notion of tipping points offers a complementary treatment to the view presented here. See his book, *The Tipping Point: Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for drawing attention to this connection.

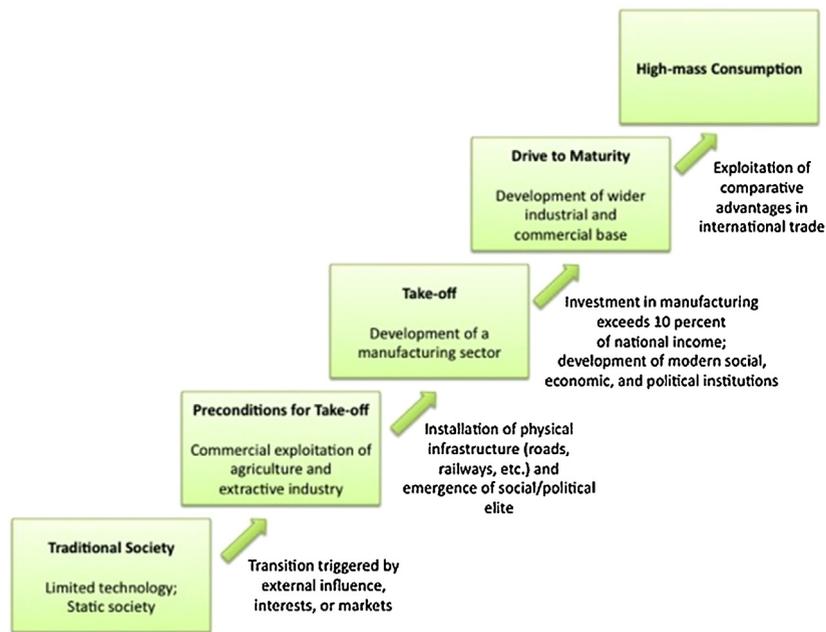


Fig. 1. Rostow's stages of growth model.

[28–32]. Eastern Europe and the Balkans experienced a similar phase of reorganization and it took years for societal expectations and lived experiences to realign, and in some cases pronounced public ambivalence, or indeed resistance, to newly predominant lifeways remains a palpable feature of these countries [33–35]. And these are only some of the upheavals of the last few decades. A more elaborate list would need to include China, Vietnam, South Korea, Chile, Cuba, and numerous others.

While it would be instructive to explore these cases in detail, the more immediate point is that macroeconomic transitions occur more frequently than we might initially acknowledge and these episodes offer insights that may be relevant as we seek to grapple with current challenges. In each of these situations, a preexisting conceptual and institutional framework delineated the boundary conditions for a particular constellation of societal hopes and desires. Either due to war, revolution, or the accumulated weight of internal contradictions, once-prevalent systems of social organization were supplanted by new modes. Because of lag effects, it took time for affected populations to accommodate themselves to newly emergent circumstances and these periods of adjustment were typically quite unsettling. For many people, the experience was roughly analogous to learning to navigate through an unfamiliar city with an outdated map.

There is also an important lesson here for critics of contemporary consumerism in that the relative frequency of macroeconomic transitions suggests that the predominant logic that currently guides Anglo-European countries is not immutable. Though it may at times be difficult to conceive, change is ineluctable and despite the perception that we are tragically locked into lifestyles that are powerfully defined and delineated by consumerist rationales, new avenues will in due course avail themselves. In contrast to the claims of modernization theorists such as Rostow [36], a high mass-consumption society is likely *not* the endpoint of history (see Fig. 1). With this in mind, the following sections consider the possible contours of an approaching post-consumerist era and the role that collective dissonance is playing in creating conducive conditions for such a transition.

3. Consumerism and post-consumerism

It is becoming apparent that the current phase of economic instability in Anglo-European countries is more than an intermittent downturn in the customary capitalist boom-bust cycle, but is rather the start of a more extensive process of macroeconomic reorganization [37,38]. Already in 2008, a prescient correspondent for the Los Angeles affiliate of a major media outlet was prompted to intone, “Is this the end of the consumer society? The evidence is growing that America is undergoing a fundamental economic restructuring. . . [and there is] the possibility that some radical cultural shift is taking place. . . How does America adjust to a zero growth economy? Can we live without all the toys of a hyperconsumer society?” [39].

If we adopt the perspective of the *longue durée*, the dominant mode of macroeconomic organization over the past 250 years has progressed from agrarianism to industrialism to consumerism [19,40–44].⁵ The early consumerist era was

⁵ It is common to characterize this historical process as proceeding from agrarianism to industrialism to servicization (also including financialization). However, with upwards of 70% of gross domestic product in the relevant countries now attributable to consumption and a preponderant share of people deriving their identities from their roles as consumers, it is more appropriate to characterize the current period as being predicated on consumerism.

distinguished by its Fordist model of production and consumption—later subsumed by its Keynesian successor—whereby an ample number of relatively well-paid jobs provided worker-consumers with the income necessary to assimilate growing volumes of mass-manufactured goods ([45] see also [46]). As wages and purchasing power began to stagnate during the late 1970s, this virtuous cycle started to dissipate [47–49]. However, the deregulation of the financial sector and the subsequent revolution in banking injected unprecedented amounts of credit into consumer markets [50,51]. This infusion provided the resources necessary to maintain (and in many respects extend) consumer lifestyles and to feed a period of robust consumption-driven economic growth.⁶ The process of expansion continued in several ebb-and-flow iterations until 2007 when efforts to increase purchasing capacity through ever-more inventive techniques came crashing down in a wave of worthless credit-default swaps, impenetrable derivative deals, and various other financial innovations of dubious integrity [52,53].

In the aftermath of this implosion, analysts observed several intriguing trends (some which appear with hindsight to actually have been set in train prior to the financial collapse). In particular, certain leading consumption indicators had been trending downward for some time. For instance, the personal automobile—as a source of manufacturing employment, a stimulus for household expenditure, an artifact of emotional attachment, a means of status communication, and a catalyst for materialist lifestyles—has long been entwined with the growth of consumer societies. After decades of expanding automobility, several nations appear now to be reaching the point of “peak car” exemplified by declining vehicle-fleet size, vehicle miles traveled, and licensed drivers (within the younger age cohorts) [54–56]. The reasons for this situation are complex and doubtless vary across countries, but we can speculate that they derive from a combination of more volatile commodity prices (especially oil), increasing automobile operating costs, expanding and revitalizing public transportation systems, reurbanizing metropolitan populations, untenable congestion levels, sociodemographic shifts, and widening income inequality ([57] see also [58]). More provocatively, Goodall [59] has recently suggested on the basis of material flow data that the UK has reached a historic pinnacle that he describes as “peak stuff.”

While little more than an intriguing contention at this point, this work opens up some interesting avenues for further investigation.⁷ Are these developments harbingers that the consumerist era of continually growing volumes of resource throughputs is coming to a close? We will not know with any confidence until we have achieved some historical distance through an observation by [60] merits attention.

The simple truth is that the elements that permitted hyperconsumption to flourish (near-full employment, easy credit, plentiful natural resource) are not coming back anytime soon, if at all. The employment sector is in upheaval, with many job categories obsolete. Easy credit has all but evaporated, and the world's burgeoning middle classes will only intensify the pressure on our increasingly scarce resources. So even if the consumer masses wanted to go back to mindless excess, they could not.

A growing number of observers are beginning to grasp this situation and the debate on post-consumerism has been joined (see e.g. [61,62] see also [2,3]). Moreover, the current wave of austerity policies being implemented in most Anglo-European countries is liable to hasten this transition by stifling purchasing power. This development imposes an ironic and perhaps unexpected twist on efforts to transcend currently ecologically untenable modes of consumption [63–65]. Reductions in material and energy throughput are being triggered by poverty rather than affluence.

Post-consumerism under these circumstances is being propelled through the growing popularity of peer-to-peer provisioning networks, alternative agro-food arrangements, community-energy schemes, worker-owner cooperatives, and planning initiatives to facilitate less resource intensive lifestyles. However, these insurgent activities, like most social experiments, are cutting against the organizational logic of disabled, but still intact, socio-technical systems in areas of energy consumption, food provisioning, and mobility. It will require a major undertaking to successfully scale up these innovations to a level where they might begin to challenge dominant social institutions and practices.

Somewhat more optimistically, there are indications that the business community is similarly coming to recognize that fewer consumer dollars will be available for it to capture and that the era of unchecked goods acquisition is disintegrating [60,66]. Recent years have seen increasing attention being devoted to the formation of novel business models predicated on, for instance, “mindful spending” and “collaborative consumption” [67,68]. For their part, prominent business strategists are encouraging companies to embrace “shared value” and policies to encourage well-being as part of efforts to rehabilitate consumer capitalism [69]. It is nonetheless important to keep these developments in perspective. The marketing industry is quite adept at appropriating consumer disaffection to sell the next generation of products [70,71].

4. The American dream in retrospect and prospect

The evocative term the “American Dream” was coined by James Truslow Adams in his 1931 book *The Epic of America* to highlight public resilience in the face of severe dislocation during the early years of the Great Depression. Contemporary usage has veered from this original intent and the expression now typically connotes aspirations pertaining to economic

⁶ See [113] for a provocative defense of this strategy.

⁷ The dynamics surrounding homeownership—a critically important driver and crucible for consumption in the United States—also appear to be changing. As of April 2012, only 62% of Americans owned a home (down from 73% as recently as 2007 [114]).

opportunity, consumer freedom, financial security, happiness, employment satisfaction, homeownership, and wealth [72]. While there has always been disparity between the American Dream as an aspirational heuristic and its realization, the fit over time has been sufficiently close to preserve the legitimacy of the basic idea. As of 2010, according to opinion polls, a striking 67% of the public in the United States had confidence in being able to attain it [73].⁸ This level of resolve is perhaps surprising given the actual status of the central tenets of the contemporary American Dream. A recent synopsis by Borosage and van den Heuvel [108] captures the essence.

Every element of the dream is imperiled. Wages for the 70% of Americans without a college education have declined dramatically over the past forty years, although CEO salaries and corporate profits soared. Corporations continue to ship good jobs abroad, while the few jobs created at home are disproportionately in the low-wage service sector. One in four homes is underwater, devastating what has been the largest single asset for most middle-class families. Healthcare costs are soaring, with nearly 50 million uninsured. Half of all Americans have no retirement plan at work, pensions are disappearing and even Social Security and Medicare are targeted for cuts. College debt now exceeds credit card debt, with defaults rising and more and more students priced out of higher education.

Throughout the post-World War II period, the suburban house has been at the heart of the American Dream ([74,75]; see also [76]). Less readily conceded is that this residential model—and by extension consumer society more generally—has received over the decades very large subsidies specifically targeted at relatively wealthy (middle class and above) homeowners. These inducements have been delivered primarily through the tax deductibility of mortgage interest and the provision of federal guarantees on home loans.⁹ There is though in the new age of austerity a discursive turn occurring in which the claim is advanced that such generous treatment may no longer be affordable (estimated to cost \$100 billion annually) [77,78]. Notably, the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform waded into these turbulent waters in 2010.¹⁰ Despite being attacked from both sides of the political aisle, the issue of how best to reform mortgage lending is on the table in the United States and will likely continue to attract the attention of pragmatic policy makers especially now that homeowners appear more inclined to exercise their strategic default option [79,80] (Vigeland, 2011). According to a 2010 survey by Harris Interactive, nearly half of mortgage holders in the United States would consider defaulting if they found themselves living in a house that was worth less than their outstanding loan.¹¹

The precariousness of the American Dream is also attributable to the income dynamics affecting the country's imperiled middle class which is fissuring between, on one hand, a relatively small cadre of extremely affluent consumers and, on the other hand, a far more sizeable group of people engaged in basic household provisioning. It is therefore unsurprising that incipient social movements on both sides of the political spectrum are using the growing elusiveness of the American Dream as a springboard [81,82]. Within this general framing, the tendency of some constituencies to endorse policies that exacerbate their economic marginalization has prompted a lively debate on whether certain subpopulations in the United States have lost the ability to discern their political interests [83–85].

In the face of this roiling turmoil, there seems to be conspicuous inability to accept that the credit-fueled days prior to the Great Recession are unlikely to return [4,61]. With few realistic prospects of reversing wage stagnation or regaining access to free-flowing consumer credit, attention has turned instead to cutting taxes as the best alternative for supplementing personal incomes. The primary problem with this strategy is that household consumption is not inseparable from public investment. For example, the utility of the personal automobile declines when governments lack sufficient resources to maintain the roadways. More generally, the institutions that facilitated upward mobility in prior decades—most notably labor unions—are being systematically hollowed out. What is remarkable and compelling is that some of the most historically marginalized groups in the United States—African-Americans, Hispanics, and other immigrants—retain the greatest confidence in the American Dream [73,86].

There is nonetheless a point at which short-term accommodation to challenging economic circumstances elides into the status quo. For example, a tendency exists to presume that recent university graduates (members of so-called Generation Y) are simply biding their time until the employment situation improves. But what happens if a return to robust job growth takes a decade or longer to achieve and in the meantime provisional arrangements of, say, living at home with parents, become normalized and the social stigma surrounding such practices is relaxed?¹² It is plausible that the ability to avoid onerous housing payments and to enjoy a more streamlined lifestyle will gradually gain acceptance as part of the tradeoff of being able to engage in more creative and fulfilling—but less financially remunerative—activities.

⁸ The Center for the Study of the American Dream at Xavier University monitors public sentiments associated with the American Dream on an ongoing basis. See <http://www.xavier.edu/americanadream>.

⁹ Homeowners in the United States are able to annually deduct interest payments on mortgages valued up to \$1 million and on home equity loans up to \$100,000. Heavily subsidized highway construction has also played an important role in the development of suburban landscapes to encourage consumption-driven lifestyles.

¹⁰ The Committee's report was released at the end of 2010, but actually failed to secure formal endorsement of the required supermajority of its membership.

¹¹ See <http://info.trulia.com/index.php?s=32055&item=106125>.

¹² See also "Room for Debate" at <http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2011/12/26/the-whole-family-under-one-roof/extended-families-depends-on-the-country>.

One manifestation of the uncertain current and future status of the American Dream, both as an aspirational pursuit and an attainable objective, is a vigorous debate taking place around American exceptionalism vs. American decline.¹³ Books and articles published over just the last few years on this subject could fill a library (see, e.g. [87,88]). This is not the place to weigh in on this ideologically charged controversy, but instead the aim is to make a somewhat more subtle point. Both sides of this dispute may be misreading the evidence. The assertion here is that it is less a matter of renewed vigor or irrecoverable demise that is at issue and more a case of fundamental macroeconomic realignment, one where familiar organizational logics are being upended.

5. A pending transition to post-consumerism in Europe?

European publics do not subscribe to equivalent synthesizing cultural narratives predicated on economic opportunity, material accumulation, financial independence, and libertarian freedom as is the case in the United States. The closest approximations to a “European Dream” are founded—somewhat incongruously—on imperial or colonial nostalgia [89] and a combination of social democracy and trans-European confederation [90,91]. However, these aspirations are now actively being challenged in a wide arc of countries—most notably Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Greece, Hungary, and the UK—due to the imposition of harsh austerity policies designed to curtail public expenditures, to prevent further deterioration of bond ratings, and (for countries in the euro zone) to preserve the common currency. Requisite belt-tightening has led in recent years to pronounced unemployment (especially among youth), civil disturbances, and governmental collapse. The standard view is that aggressive cuts will reduce outsized budgets, restore investor confidence, and set the stage for a period of renewed economic growth. While some headway has been made on the first two objectives, as time goes on it becomes more apparent that growth, at least in the conventional sense, is not going to return as assuredly as proponents of this strategy have hoped. It may be the case, for better or worse, that much of Europe will be looking at low growth (or conceivably degrowth) for the foreseeable future.

Given widening realization of this phenomenon, there are indications that ordinary people in the most severely affected countries are beginning to face up to these new and evolving circumstances. Amidst all of the disillusionment, fiscal rectitude, and efforts to reanimate traditional forms of consumer spending, numerous grassroots social innovations are being pursued (see [92] for a useful review). It is admittedly difficult to assemble these inchoate developments into a complete and definitive picture, but even so they merit careful attention. In the interests of space, let us take up just two countries at opposite ends of the continent.

In the UK, a sharp critique of prevailing economic policies, prompted by widening income inequality and stringent austerity measures, has gained considerable ground over the last few years. This appraisal is not random or directionless, but rather is being shaped by an active politics of energy and climate change that includes planning for a low-carbon transition and awareness that the North Sea oil bonanza is winding down. By one count (conducted in 2005), more than 500 community renewable energy projects were at different stages of development and the government’s Low Carbon Community Challenge attracted over several hundred expressions of interest [93]. With respect to agro-food systems, numerous local organizations in Manchester and elsewhere are working at the interface of food security and environmental justice to develop alternative networks for food provisioning [94].¹⁴ Though difficult to grasp in full scope and complexity, these activities need to be interpreted against the background of the UK’s diminishing role in European political affairs. This changing relationship is due in large part to the extraordinary lengths that Prime Minister David Cameron has gone to insulate London-based financial firms from new European bank regulations.

Turning attention to Greece, we find a society that is locked into an extremely debilitating downward economic spiral without an end in sight. Suffering from a large public debt burden and precluded under current arrangements from pursuing currency devaluation, the government has been sharply reducing wages and public expenditures. European negotiators have been compelling bondholders to take “haircuts” in exchange for assurances that remaining debt payments will be made. Unemployment is spiking dangerously upward, more than 25% of Greek businesses have been forced into bankruptcy since 2009, and Chinese companies are buying up the country’s infrastructure at fire-sale prices. Offsetting this grim situation, anecdotal evidence suggests more positively that a growing cadre of youth is reclaiming disused or neglected family farms and the number of innovative—many Internet based—barter networks is proliferating. Another interesting development is that the country’s historically low level of female labor-force participation is changing as Greek women increasingly become the primary source of household income.

It though must be admitted that these nascent activities in both the UK and Greece represent only one dimension of a putative European macroeconomic transition [95]. Survey data, as well as more visible signs of public rage, suggest that interethnic hostilities are escalating and gaining more visible expression. In addition, recurrent political difficulties in Belgium and urgent calls for Scottish succession suggest that we may see the early stages of active efforts to redraw the European political map. Unstable governments in Greece and Italy exacerbate uncertainty and the youth unemployment problem—more than 50% in Spain and an estimated 5.5 million in the whole of the euro zone—poses enormous challenges.

¹³ The website of the journal *Foreign Policy* maintains a regularly updated blog entitled “Decline Watch.” See http://blog.foreignpolicy.com/category/topic/decline_watch.

¹⁴ See [115,116] for different perspectives of the political landscape.

Across the continent's southern tier, suicides have dramatically increased and already low birth rates are falling further, both signs of serious societal distress [96,97]. At the same time, Germany has used the crisis to consolidate its control of several important European institutions and to exploit a weakened euro to bolster its own economic competitiveness. These developments are creating angst among neighboring publics that are inescapably trapped in downwardly trending living standards. The resounding, and perhaps understandable, political answer to this array of unsettling problems may very well in the end be to deploy the conventional toolkit and to aggressively kickstart economic growth. The real dilemma will come when such an approach fails to have appreciable effect. This seems to be precisely the point where Japan is at the moment.

6. Japanese post-consumerism?

For more than two decades, Japan has been portrayed as the “sick man” of the international economy, a country overwhelmed by public debt, “zombie” banks, “hollowed out” industries, and anemic economic growth.¹⁵ According to this view, the Japanese never recovered from the twin collapses of their real estate and stock market bubbles of the late 1980s and early 1990s and a succession of ineffectual governments failed to pull the country from its torpor (see, e.g. [98]). Gross domestic product (GDP) peaked in Japan in 1995 at approximately US\$5 trillion and has since fluctuated between stagnation and decline. Because of lapsing demand, consumer prices have until recently been in a vicious deflationary spiral. The country's population is shrinking, its median age is increasing (the highest in the world at 44.8 years), and there is consternation about how to respond to rising Chinese hegemony in Asia. Japan's leading industrial firms are—especially in the wake of the triple disaster of earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear meltdown of 2011—reconfiguring their supply chains and moving jobs to lower wage nations. The dominant understanding among economists and others is that Japan bumbled its way through the 1990s and 2000s and meekly surrendered its role as the world's second largest economy in 2010. It is only now in the wake of the election of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe that the Japanese finance ministry has embarked on a frenzy of state activism—including doubling the money supply—that the country has started to make some lurching steps toward reinvigorating itself.

But have the “lost decades” really been so bad? Is conventional wisdom correct, or is something else perhaps going on? In fact, a growing circle of observers has advanced a contrarian interpretation and this work may also have wider relevance [99–102]. Of critical importance here is whether Japan is simply the leading edge of an expansive macroeconomic transition toward post-consumerism that is only now beginning to express itself in demonstrable form on a wider geographic scale.

Despite occasional outbursts of nationalistic fervor, most indications suggest that the Japanese are taking their diminished status in stride and at the same time asking penetrating questions about topics typically beyond the pale in other countries.¹⁶ For instance, economist Hama [103]—sometimes characterized as a Japanese version of the prominent American Nobel laureate Paul Krugman—has written that a modified understanding of so-called Japanization “could be all about affluence, maturity, refinement, and leisureliness. It could be all about being grown up. A grown up economy that is the envy of the rest of the world. That could be Japan's position in today's scheme of things.”¹⁷

Though it may be hard to fathom from a distance, a swelling number of accounts suggest that the sensibilities described above are reasserting themselves among Japanese consumers and their acclaimed enthusiasm for luxury goods is fading. Moreover, automobiles of all makes and models have become especially prominent targets for disavowal among youth and the term “kuruma banare” (meaning literally “to walk away from the car” but more commonly translated as “demotorization”) has been formulated to capture this trend ([57,104]; see also [105,106]). With the passage of time, we may find that the prevalent interpretation about Japan has been precisely backwards. In a post-consumerist world of scarce resources and impinging biophysical limits, the country's traditionally high savings rates, equitable income distribution, and modest material consumption relative to GDP are likely to become envied—and perhaps emulated—qualities.

7. Conclusion

Contemporary discussions of macroeconomic transitions tend to treat processes of societal transformation in largely incontrovertible and inexorable terms. To take one prominent example, the notion of “creative destruction” as put forward by Schumpeter [107] suggests that periodic reinvention is ultimately a source of human betterment. This idea is anchored in an Enlightenment discourse of continual improvement and the prevailing view is that change is tantamount to progress.

There is though no getting around the fact that the sequential transitions from agrarianism to industrialism to consumerism were wrenching and often bewildering for people caught up in their throes. Laws were rewritten, new infrastructures were built, and familiar routines were torn asunder. One need only read the work of nineteenth century political economists (as well as their muckraking counterparts) to gain an appreciation of the turmoil caused by the riotous shift from an agricultural to an industrial system of production. The more recent process of deindustrialization that began in

¹⁵ Conservative commentators in the United States seem to have an especially sharp axe to grind regarding Japan. See, for example [111,117].

¹⁶ Kazuko Aso, the director of a Tokyo artists' cooperative and lead organizer for an exhibit on display in Washington, DC, recently wrote, “This disaster put an end to the era of the post-war prosperity; the time for chasing economic success and materialistic prosperity is over. The disaster has reminded us... we can never conquer nature; we must live with it” (quoted in [118]).

¹⁷ The resemblance between Hama and Krugman is from Gross [109].

the second half of the twentieth century was (and continues to be) similarly disruptive. The abandoned hulks that still stand in many former industrial districts, and the dispirited people that often occupy proximate areas, are evidence of both the disarray that accompanies new modes of macroeconomic organization and the inevitable incompleteness of any transition.

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries produced various policy initiatives to accommodate first the shift to industrialism and then the move to global consumerism. For example, sanitarians and public health officials were strong proponents of the early automobile as a way to rid densely packed cities of the drawbacks of horse-drawn transportation and to disperse urban populations (to reduce the spread of disease). They also championed land-use planning—and zoning in particular—because it offered a way to relocate polluting industrial facilities away from residential districts. The construction of large public housing complexes in deindustrializing cities was another well-intentioned, but ultimately unsatisfactory, intervention because it tended to concentrate poverty in places without adequate employment opportunities and to disregard complex system dynamics. As discussed above, the mass infusion of credit into the consumer economy represented yet another policy measure that was designed to correct one problem—namely to enable people to assimilate surplus production during a period of wage stagnation—but proved economically catastrophic in the end.

Evidence is beginning to accumulate that the nominally wealthy countries of the world are approaching the brink of a macroeconomic transition from consumerism to post-consumerism. It is befitting to acknowledge that such changes take place within the context of complex adaptive systems and we are truly novices in anticipating such transformations. Experiences from the past provide some instructive guidance, but each transition poses unique challenges and expresses itself in different ways depending on the conditions that pertain in particular locales. This is thus a call for caution as we move forward. The *weltanschauung* of consumerism is deeply embedded in contemporary society and it has for many decades provided—and in most respects continues to do so—the conduits for people in affluent societies to make their way in the world. As such, it would be both unwise to underestimate its tenacious hold or to expect straightforward transformation to an alternative.

Having said this, the cautionary observation that we are unlikely to be able to do everything should not be interpreted as a call to do nothing. Perhaps most importantly, we cannot let ourselves fall into romanticized traps. As we seek to catch a glimmer of fragmentary expressions of post-consumerism, it is critical to remain forward looking and cognizant that efforts to reinvent an idyllic past are bound to disappoint. Post-consumerism is unlikely to be effectively premised on lifestyles grounded in either urban or rural repeasantization.¹⁸ Neither will it be based on the perpetuation of costly middle-class perquisites carried forward from the twentieth century. At the same time, there are not many truly new ideas in the world and we need to gather up the threads of the past and carry them forward. The logic of a post-consumerist future will accordingly entail clever combinations of urban agriculture, individual and communal provisioning, labor reskilling, infrastructural retrofitting, low-carbon technologies, carbon rationing, and hyperconnected modes of social interaction. We will need to be patient as agile minds struggle to assemble these elements into workable configurations and for collective dissonance to recede.

In the meantime, it is incumbent on scholars and others who are concerned with the future to formulate imaginaries that can begin to reveal the outlines that post-consumerist lifestyles might take. It is useful to recall that the onset of industrialization was preceded by a long period dating back to the Middle Ages in which proto-industrialists sought to bring an incipient industrialism into view. Likewise, both far-sighted companies and marketing visionaries did much to anticipate (and to actively create) the current consumerist era. Similar engagement will be necessary to supplant the fraying consumerist age with a viable successor.

References

- [1] J. Schor, *Plenitude: The New Economics of True Wealth*, Penguin, New York, 2010.
- [2] A. Etzioni, Spent: America After Consumerism. *The New Republic*, 2009 17 June (available at <http://www.tnr.com/article/spent>).
- [3] A. Etzioni, The new normal, *Sociological Forum* 26 (4) (2011) 779–789.
- [4] M. Ivanova, Consumerism and the crisis: wither the American dream? *Critical Sociology* 37 (3) (2011) 329–350.
- [5] G. Irvin, Inequality and recession in Britain and the USA, *Development and Change* 42 (1) (2011) 154–182.
- [6] M. Mullard, Explanations of the financial meltdown and the present recession, *Political Quarterly* 82 (2) (2011) 204–221.
- [7] P. Berger, T. Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, Anchor Books, Garden City, NY, 1966.
- [8] J. Hannigan, *Environmental Sociology: A Social Constructivist Perspective*, Routledge, New York, 1995.
- [9] J. Tainter, *The Collapse of Complex Societies*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1988.
- [10] J. Diamond, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*, Penguin, New York, 2005.
- [11] S. Stoll-Kleemann, T. O'Riordan, C. Jaeger, The psychology of denial concerning climate mitigation measures: evidence from Swiss focus groups, *Global Environmental Change* 11 (2) (2011) 107–117.
- [12] S. Madhavan, R. Barrass, Unsustainable development: could it be a Ponzi scheme? *Sapiens* 4 (1) (2011) (available at <http://sapiens.revues.org/1083>).
- [13] D. McCloskey, Economics as rhetoric, in: M. Gergen, K. Gergen (Eds.), *Social Construction: A Reader*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, 2003, pp. 20–22.
- [14] H. Waitzkin, R. Jasso-Aguilar, A. Landwehr, C. Mountain, Global trade, public health, and health services: stakeholder's constructions of key issues, *Social Science and Medicine* 61 (5) (2005) 893–906.
- [15] V. Storr, The social construction of the market, *Society* 47 (3) (2010) 200–206.
- [16] G. Almond, S. Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1963.
- [17] R. Inglehart, *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1990.
- [18] B. Lindsey, *The Age of Abundance: How Prosperity Transformed America's Politics and Culture*, HarperCollins, New York, 2007.
- [19] N. Ferguson, *Civilization: The West and the Rest*, Penguin, New York, 2011.

¹⁸ See [119,120] for discussions of the conflicting tendencies inherent in rerepresentation.

- [20] M. Mayo, J. Rimer, H. Kerkham (Eds.), *War, Occupation, and Creativity: Japan and East Asia, 1920–1960*, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 2001.
- [21] D. Geppert (Ed.), *The Postwar Challenge: Cultural, Social, and Political Change in Western Europe, 1945–58*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2003.
- [22] R. Kage, *Civic Engagement in Postwar Japan: The Revival of a Defeated Society*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2011.
- [23] C. Barnett, *The Collapse of British Power*, Eyre Methuen, London, 1972.
- [24] D. Marsh (Ed.), *Postwar British Politics in Perspective*, Blackwell, Malden, MA, 1999.
- [25] B. Conekin, F. Mort, C. Waters, *Moments of Modernity: Reconstructing Britain 1945–1964*, New York University Press, New York, 1999.
- [26] P. Hennessy, *Having it so Good: Britain in the Fifties*, Penguin, New York, 2007.
- [27] P. Addison, *No Turning Back: The Peacetime Revolutions of Post-War Britain*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2010.
- [28] A. Tsygankov, The culture of economic security: national identity and politico-economic ideas in the post-Soviet world, *International Politics* 39 (2) (2002) 153–173.
- [29] M. Kaser, The economic and social impact of systemic transition in Central Asia and Azerbaijan, *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology* 2 (3–4) (2003) 459–474.
- [30] P. Abbott, C. Wallace, Explaining economic and social transformations in post-Soviet Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus: the social quality approach, *European Societies* 12 (5) (2010) 653–674.
- [31] P. Abbott, C. Wallace, R. Sapsford, Surviving the transformation: social quality in Central Asia and the Caucasus, *Journal of Happiness Studies* 12 (2) (2011) 199–223.
- [32] V. Popov, Russia: austerity and deficit reduction in historical and comparative perspective, *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 36 (1) (2012) 313–334.
- [33] P. Mitra, M. Selowsky, Lessons from a decade of transition in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, *Finance and Development* 39 (2) (2002) 48–51.
- [34] A. Galasinska, M. Krzyzanowski (Eds.), *Discourse and Transformation in Central and Eastern Europe*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2008.
- [35] P. Albinsson, M. Wolf, D. Kopf, Anti-consumption in East Germany: consumer resistance to hyperconsumption, *Journal of Consumer Behavior* 9 (6) (2010) 412–425.
- [36] W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1960.
- [37] S. King, *When the Money Runs Out: The End of Western Affluence*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 2013.
- [38] M. Pettis, *The Great Rebalancing: Trade, Conflict, and the Perilous Road Ahead for the World Economy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 2013.
- [39] R. Kaye, *Is This the End of the Consumer Society*, 2008 NBCLA.com. 12 November (available at <http://www.nbcla.com/news/local/Is-This-the-End-of-the-Consumer-Society.html>).
- [40] J. Galbraith, *The Affluent Society*, Houghton Mifflin, New York, 1958.
- [41] D. Landes, *The Unbound Prometheus: Technological Change and Industrial Development in Western Europe*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1969.
- [42] D. Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting*, Basic Books, New York, 1973.
- [43] F. Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th–18th Century*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1992.
- [44] K. Kumar, *From Post-Industrial to Post-modern Society: New Theories of the Contemporary World*, 2nd ed., Blackwell, Malden, MA, 2005.
- [45] L. Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*, Vintage, New York, 2003.
- [46] C. Freeland, Getting by Without the Middle Class, *The New York Times*, 2011 9 June.
- [47] A. Lipietz, *Mirages and Miracles: The Crises of Global Fordism*, Verso, London, 1987.
- [48] A. Anim, *Post-Fordism: A Reader*, Blackwell, Cambridge, MA, 1994.
- [49] J. Gibson-Graham, *The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It): A Feminist Critique of Political Economy*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2006.
- [50] L. Calder, *Financing the American Dream: A Cultural History of Consumer Credit*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1999.
- [51] C. Geisst, *Collateral Damaged: The Marketing of Consumer Debt in America*, Bloomberg Press, New York, 2009.
- [52] C. Reinhart, K. Rogoff, *This Time is Different: Eight Centuries of Financial Folly*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 2009.
- [53] M. Lewis, *The Big Short: Inside the Doomsday Machine*, W.W. Norton, New York, 2010.
- [54] R. Puentes, A. Tomer, *The Road...Less Traveled: An Analysis of Vehicle Miles Traveled Trends in the U.S.* Washington, DC, Brookings Institution, 2008 (available at http://www.brookings.edu/reports/2008/1216_transportation_tomer_puentes.aspx).
- [55] P. Goodwin, *What About Peak Car: Heresy or Revelation?* *Local Transport Today*, 2010 June (available at http://www.transportxtra.com/magazines/local_transport_today/opinion/?id=23221).
- [56] P. Newman, J. Kenworthy, Peak car use: understanding the demise of automobile dependence, *World Transport Policy and Practice* 17 (2) (2011) 31–42.
- [57] M. Cohen, The future of automobile society: a socio-technical transitions perspective, *Technology Analysis & Strategic Management* 24 (4) (2012) 377–390.
- [58] F. Geels, R. Kemp, G. Dudley, G. Lyons (Eds.), *Automobility in Transition? A Socio-Technical Analysis of Sustainable Transport*, Routledge, New York, 2011.
- [59] C. Goodall, *Peak Stuff: Did the UK Reach a Maximum Use of Material Resources in the Early Part of the Last Decade?* 2011 (available at http://www.carboncommentary.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Peak_Stuff_17.10.11.pdf).
- [60] A. Benett, A. O'Reilly, *Consumed: Rethinking Business in the Era of Mindful Spending*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2010.
- [61] T. Edsell, *The Age of Austerity: How Scarcity Will Remake American Politics*, Doubleday, New York, 2012.
- [62] R. Gordon, *Is U.S. Economic Growth Over? Faltering Innovation Confronts the Six Headwinds*, NBER Working Paper 18315, National Bureau of Economic Growth, Cambridge, MA, 2012.
- [63] L. Reisch, I. Røpke, *The Ecological Economics of Consumption*, Edward Elgar, Northampton, MA, 2005.
- [64] G. Seyfang, *The New Economics of Sustainable Consumption: Seeds of Change*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2011.
- [65] M. Cohen, H. Brown, P. Vergragt (Eds.), *Innovations in Sustainable Consumption: New Economics, Socio-technical Transitions, and Social Practices*, Edward Elgar, Northampton, MA, 2013.
- [66] J. Gerzema, M. D'Antonio, *Spend Shift: How the Post-Crisis Values Revolution is Changing the Way We Buy, Sell, and Live*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 2010.
- [67] R. Botsman, R. Rogers, *What's Mine is Yours: The Rise of Collaborative Consumption*, Harper Business, New York, 2010.
- [68] T. Hsieh, *Delivering Happiness: A Path to Profits, Passion, and Purpose*, Business Plus, New York, 2010.
- [69] M. Porter, M. Kramer, *Creating shared value*, *Harvard Business Review* 89 (1–2) (2011) 62–77.
- [70] H. Strasser, *Myths and Realities of Business Environmentalism: Good Works, Good Business or Greenwash?* Edward Elgar, Northampton, MA, 2011.
- [71] D. Owen, *The Conundrum: How Scientific Innovation, Increased Efficiency, and Good Intentions Can Make Our Energy and Climate Problems Worse*, Riverhead, New York, 2011.
- [72] J. Cullen, *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea that Shaped a Nation*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2004.
- [73] C. Good, *American Dream or Decline?* *The Atlantic*, 2010 15 May (available at <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2010/03/american-dream-in-decline/37472>).
- [74] K. Kruse, T. Sugrue (Eds.), *The New Suburban History*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2006.
- [75] M. Anderson, *The discursive regime of the American Dream and the new suburban frontier: the case of Kendall County, Illinois*, *Urban Geography* 31 (8) (2010) 1080–1099.
- [76] A. Duany, *Suburban Nation: The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream*, rev. ed., North Point Press, New York, 2010.
- [77] J. Landis, K. McClure, *Rethinking federal housing policy*, *Journal of the American Planning Association* 76 (3) (2010) 319–348.
- [78] D. Ventry, *The accidental deduction: a history and critique of the tax subsidy for mortgage interest*, *Law and Contemporary Problems* 73 (1) (2010) 233–284.
- [79] L. Ellis, *Eight policy lessons from the US housing meltdown*, *Housing Studies* 26 (7–8) (2011) 1215–1230.
- [80] T. Wilkinson-Ryan, *Breaching the mortgage contract: the behavioral economics of strategic default*, *Vanderbilt Law Review* 64 (5) (2011) 1547–1583.
- [81] I. Marovic, *The movement of homo sapiens against homo sapiens to save homo sapiens*, *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism* 23 (1) (2012) 19–23.
- [82] G. Dorrien, *The Undeserving and the Common Good*, *The Huffington Post*, 2012 April 10 (available at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/gary-dorrien/tea-party-republicans_b_1414629.html).
- [83] T. Frank, *What's the Matter with Kansas? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America*, Metropolitan Books, New York, 2004.

- [84] J. Wisman, J. Smith, Legitimizing inequality: fooling most of the people all of the time, *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 70 (4) (2011) 974–1013.
- [85] D. Graeber, Value, politics, and democracy in the United States, *Current Sociology* 59 (2) (2011) 186–199.
- [86] M. Ford, Five Myths About the American Dream, *The Washington Post*, 2011 6 January.
- [87] M. Panzner, *When Giants Fall: An Economic Roadmap for the End of the American Era*, Wiley, Hoboken, NJ, 2009.
- [88] B. Ackerman, *The Decline and Fall of the American Republic*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 2010.
- [89] P. Gilroy, *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture*, Routledge, New York, 2004.
- [90] W. Schwimmer, *The European Dream*, Continuum, New York, 2004.
- [91] J. Rifkin, *The European Dream: How Europe's Vision of the Future is Quietly Eclipsing the American Dream*, Penguin, New York, 2004.
- [92] A. Exner, C. Lauk, Social innovations for economic degrowth, *Solutions* 3 (4) (2012) (available at <http://www.thesolutionsjournal.com/print/1143>).
- [93] S. Hielscher, G. Seyfang, A. Smith, Grassroots innovations for sustainable energy: growing alternative consumption practices through civil society movements? in: M. Cohen, H. Szejnwald Brown, P. Vergragt (Eds.), *Innovations in Sustainable Consumption: New Economics, Socio-technical Transitions, and Social Practices*, Edward Elgar, Northampton, MA, 2012, pp. 133–158.
- [94] K. Psarikidou, B. Szerszynski, Growing the social: alternative agrofood networks and social sustainability in the urban ethical landscape, *Sustainability: Science, Practice, and Policy* 8 (1) (2012) (available at <http://sspp.proquest.com/archives/vol8iss1/1008-042.psarikidou.html>).
- [95] W. Laqueur, *After the Fall: The End of the European Dram and the Decline of a Continent*, Macmillan, New York, 2012.
- [96] B. Cooper, Economic recession and mental health: an overview, *Neuropsychiatrie* 25 (3) (2011) 113–117.
- [97] R. Catalano, S. Goldman-Mellor, K. Saxton, C. Margerison-Zilko, M. Subbaraman, K. Lewinn, E. Anderson, The health effects of economic decline, *Annual Review of Public Health* 32 (2011) 431–450.
- [98] S. Carpenter, *Why Japan Can't Reform: Inside the System*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2008.
- [99] N. Kato, Japan and the Ancient are of Shrugging, *The New York Times*, 2010 21 August.
- [100] R. Kelts, What's Wrong with Being No. 2? *Adbusters*, 2010 6 December (available at <http://www.adbusters.org/magazine/93/whats-wrong-being-no-2.html>).
- [101] F. Weil, The Surprising Wealth and Success of Japan, *The Atlantic*, 2010 2 December (available at <http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2010/12/the-surprising-wealth-and-success-of-japan/67302>).
- [102] C. Chandler, H. Chhor, B. Salsberg (Eds.), *Reimagining Japan: The Quest for a Future that Works*, VIZ Media, San Francisco, 2011.
- [103] N. Hama, Japanization Needn't be an Economic Curse Word, *The Japan Times*, 2012 28 November.
- [104] Y. Kageyama, Cars no Longer Coveted by Young, *The Japan Times*, 2009 4 January (available at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20090104f3.html>).
- [105] G. McCormack, *The Emptiness of Japanese Affluence*, rev. ed., M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, NY, 2001.
- [106] S. Garon, P. MacLachlan (Eds.), *The Ambivalent Consumer: Questioning Consumption in East Asia and the West*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 2006.
- [107] J. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, 5th ed., Allen & Unwin, London, 1976.
- [108] R. Borosage, K. van den Heuvel, The American dream: can a movement save it? *The Nation* 293 (15) (2011) 11–15.
- [109] D. Gross, If Paul Krugman Were a Woman, *Slate*, 2009 1 July (available at http://www.slate.com/articles/business/moneybox/2009/07/if_paul_krugman_were_a_woman.html).
- [110] A. Inkeles, *National Character: A Psychosocial Perspective*, Transaction Books, New Brunswick, NJ, 1997.
- [111] A. Randazzo, M. Flynn, A. Summers, Turning Japanese, *Reason* 41 (3) (2009) 20–28.
- [112] J. Sandlin, J. Callahan, Deviance, dissonance, and détournement: culture jammers use of emotion in consumer resistance, *Journal of Consumer Culture* 9 (1) (2009) 79–115.
- [113] J. Livingston, *Against Thrift: Why Consumer Culture is Good for the Economy, the Environment, and Your Soul*, Basic Books, New York, 2011.
- [114] D. Jacobs, U.S. Homeownership Hits Decade Low, *Gallup Economy*, 2012 (available at <http://www.gallup.com/poll/154124/u.s.-homeownership-hits-decade-low.aspx>) (last accessed January 14, 2013).
- [115] D. Grimshaw, J. Rubery, The end of the UK's liberal collectivist social model? The implications of the coalition government's policy during the austerity crisis, *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 36 (1) (2012) 105–126.
- [116] M. Sawyer, The tragedy of the UK fiscal policy in the aftermath of the financial crisis, *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 36 (1) (2012) 205–221.
- [117] D. Scissors, J. Foster, Two Lost Decades? Why Japan's Economy is Still Stumbling and How the U.S. Can Stay Upright, *Heritage Foundation*, 2009 WebMemo #2307 (available at <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2009/02/two-lost-decades-why-japans-economy-is-still-stumbling-and-how-the-us-can-stay-upright>).
- [118] F. Hiatt, A Year After the Disaster of 3/11, Japan Looks Inward, *The Washington Post*, 2012 8 March.
- [119] C. Melhuish, Home-working: the new peasantry or a regeneration impetus for cities? *Architectural Review* 1369 (2011) 29–30.
- [120] A. Corrado, New peasantries and alternative agro-food networks: the cases of Réseau Semences Paysannes, *Research in Rural Sociology and Development* 16 (2010) 17–30.