

The sixty years crisis

A short history of a huge problem



Part 7 The American Dream
Compiled by Carl Ohlen

When you have gone through this history
please send your feedback to:

carl.ohlen@lacable.se

All photos copyright Carl Ohlen but complete pdf document with text may be
copied and/or forwarded to others

All other material posted by source on Internet according to reference

Content

- The crisis!
- The surprise?
- Gaia – our living planet
- Our common history – and future
- The facts
- The real terrorists
- **The American dream**
- My Home Countries
- The globalization nightmare
- So where do we go from here?
- My own journey

The American Dream

When America was “discovered” by the Europeans it was an original paradise. The Native population of totally a few millions lived as gatherers and hunters but spread throughout the continent. Each native group developed their habits to suit the region where they lived. Just in California there were 300 000 Indians divided in more than 100 groups.

Then the white man arrived. First as religious and political refugees from an intolerant Europe. Then the poor and the starving. And finally they who were looking for gold and fame. America became the dream for millions and millions immigrants escaping from the old, unjust and war infected world of Europe.

It was a new world built on a new continent with as it seemed limitless resources. America became the land of possibilities. Man could basically start from scratch and create the new world. Build roads, houses, cities, skyscrapers anywhere. And just dig for resources or cut timber anywhere. A land of constant growth and increased economical wealth for ever?



The American Paradise

I have visited all American and Canadian national parks from The Rocky mountains and towards the Pacific Ocean. Although it is today controlled by man it is amazing to stand in front of a 5000 year old Bristle

Cone Pine on the slopes of White Mountain and know that this tree started grow at the same time as our civilization exactly at the opposite side of the Northern Hemisphere in Mesopotamia.

"Yo-shay-ma-tee" means in Ahwahneechee Indian language Grizzly bear. This became Yosemite, today still wonderful national park. 1849 the white man found gold in California. 1873 the last Indian "terrorist" was captured. And although the Grizzly bear is on the California flag there are no more Grizzly. If you go from Death Valley to Mount Whitney you will pass through several climate zone with beautiful nature. But you can also go the other direction and be in Las Vegas in a couple of hours....





The nature of Alberta, California, Montana, Utah, Washington, Nevada, Arizona, Hawaii

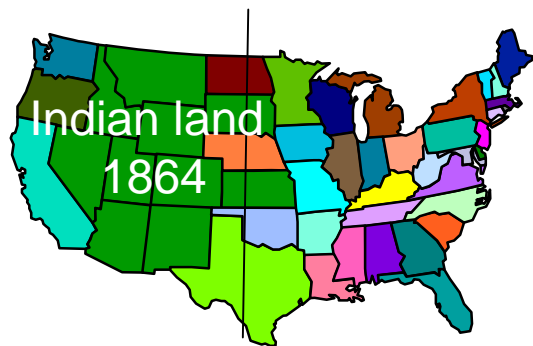
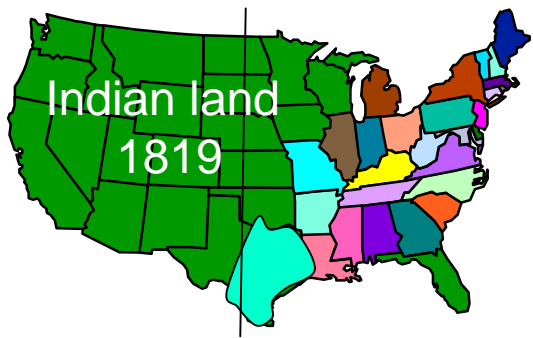
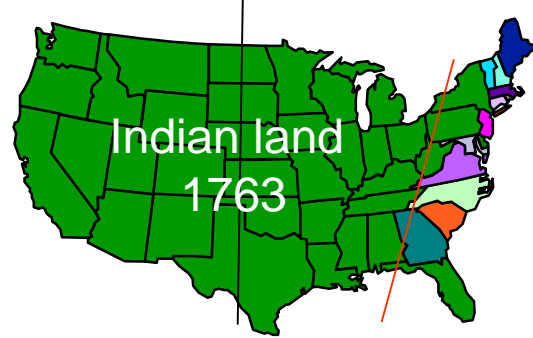


How the west was won

Before the arrival of the Europeans the native population were spread around America in different tribes all adopting their life style to the specific nature from pueblos and farming in the south to wigwams and long houses in the north. When the Europeans arrived their contacts with the natives were relatively peaceful and focused on fur trade.

The British settlers were concentrated in the East near the coast and the French settlers were further north around the Lawrence river. 1763 Britain proclaimed an Indian-European boundary along the Appalachian water shed in the East. When the thirteen original states formed USA a new expansion started towards west. Black slaves from Africa was added to the white Europeans. The first American census 1790 showed about 4 million “non-Indians” of which almost $\frac{1}{4}$ was black slaves. 1819 more than half of USA was still “Indian” land.

But new waves of immigrants from Ireland, Sweden, Germany, Russia and Italy entered in New York but was sent west as settlers on Indian land. 1864 the Indians still had about $\frac{1}{3}$ of the U.S. land and almost no white man had reached further west than the 100 meridian. After the American civil war about 20 000 soldiers were sent west to fight the Indians. The Buffalos were killed to extinction by the invading white population to reduce Indian food supplies. Instead long horn cattle and sheep was introduced and corn farms covered the land. After the surrender by Geronimo 1886 and the massacre of the Indians of Wounded Knee 1890 the whole continent had been conquered and a new world had been born.



The tower of Babylon

New York became the entrance port and financial center in the New World receiving millions and millions of immigrants. These were then sent to to colonize the west. 1833 Chicago had only 550 inhabitants. 1837 this figure was 4000. The first railroad was built 1847 and 1852 the railroad was connected with New York. 1860 the population had grown to 109 220 and ten years later to 298 977.

After the big fire 1871 not only Chicago was rebuilt but a new city model was created – The sky scraper of steel and glass was born 1879 in Chicago. This also started a contest. First between Chicago and New York; The Chrysler Building, The Empire State Building, John Hancock, World Trade Center. Then the rest of the world from Kuala Lumpur to Dubai. Chicago's "Packing Town" created the meat industry. And refrigeration was the new technology needed. After the second world war Chicago had the largest train station and inland sea port in the world. Today O'Hare is the busiest airport in the world. And then the west bound migration continued to build an even newer model – Los Angeles with freeways and hundreds of suburbs.

1915 the population of USA passed 100 million with 50% living in cities. When Europe was involved in the first world war America built a new world around the auto mobile. From 1914 to 1919 the number of cars increased from 1 711 339 to 7 558 848 in USA. And they were rolling through Indian land. A transformation changed a 10 000 year old culture and land in a moment of time.



Wonderland

In just 50 years America had transformed from a wilderness of nature to the largest industrial nation in the world passing UK in production volumes around 1900. It was nothing but a wonder never before achieved.

But it had a price. The price was the genocide of the original population and nature. And this went very fast. 1900 all “Indians” were either dead or in reservations. The same year 50 millions of wild bison had been killed and only 39 remained – all in Yellowstone. 75% of all forests were gone. The New World had been conquered and the west had been won.



The Golden State

When my Great grand mother Christina was born 1833 most of America was still inhabited by the native “Indian” population. The European immigrants came to the eastern part of the new world and had grown to about 12 million including the African slave population of about 2 million.

1849 and hundred years before I was born, California was included in USA and the gold rush began. 1858 the founder of American Express, John Butterfield, together with William Fargo started the first stage- coach service. “The golden state” increased from a few thousand white to half a million when by grandfather was born 1867. The rest is history seen in thousands of Hollywood movies. 1922 when the last Grizzly bear was shot the populations was 4 million. Today 37 million people lives in the golden state – and increasing.



Christina Ohlen



The desert made green



California came to replay the complete history of civilization but in just a few years. After the gold rush came the cowboys with cattle ranches for millions of cows. 1878 California produced more wheat than any other state. The 700 by 80 kilometer large Central Valley was an open air green house for all thoughts of fruit. The California desert was irrigated from Colorado and Sacramento rivers. The red wood timber became building material in billions of feet. A billion kilo of fish came out of the Pacific. John Steinbeck has described this land of unlimited growth. "Agriculture" became "Agribusines" and exported to the rest of the continent.



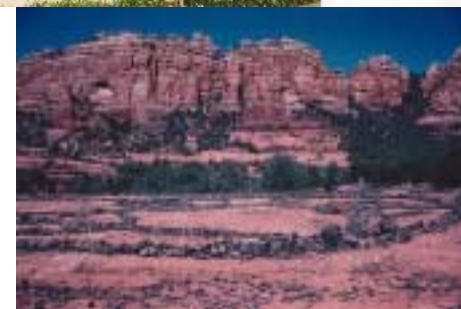
California dreaming

Communication was essential for the remotely located California. The Butterfield and Wells Fargo stage coaches and the Pony Express with Buffalo Bill is real history that became adventure books, TV and film. During the first 14 years, Wells Fargo was robbed 314 times.

The first telegraph came 1861. And 1869 it was possible to go by train from New York to San Francisco. 10 years later Los Angeles was connected and 1887 LA got their own rail road via Santa Fe. The rail road and a few huge land owners controlled most of the land that just a few decade earlier had been free Nature. The largest hotel in the world Del Coronado in San Diego was inaugurated 1889 as the first building in California with electrical light.

And then the black gold = oil was found. The first well was drilled 1865 and at the turn of the the 20th century the largest oil resources were found in the middle of Los Angeles. The new world was built on oil and a German invention – the automobile. From 2000 people 1850 and 10 000 people 1880 LA grew to 300 000 during 1910 and the first million 1920. From 1920 to 1930 the LA population was doubled but number of cars increased five times to almost one million.

California became a new manmade paradise for a new man.



The flying industrialization



In the beginning of the 20th century Los Angeles had the largest electrical tram network in the world. This was soon replaced by freeways and cars. And the trains were replaced by airplanes. The pioneers were Donald Douglas, Glenn Martin, Claude Ryan and the Lockheed brothers. Ryan built "The Spirit of St Louis" for Charles Lindbergh.



Douglas and Lockheed founded the worlds largest airplane industry supplying both the air force and the civilian market. Between 1936 to 1945 more than 10 000 DC3 were built. Lockheed, - Tri-Star was the first jumbo jet later followed by Boeing 747 and Douglas DC-10. Los Angeles had six International Airports and numerous municipal and military airports.



The cars, the airplanes and the industrialization created the Los Angeles smog and also here California were ahead with restrictions to limit pollution. This resulted in polluting industries and power plants moving to other states and California changed again to a post industrial society and a new dream.

The virtual industry

Between 1907 and 1919 a new industry developed – Movies. Four out of five films in the world were produced in Hollywood. By independent filmmakers who escaped from New York. Paramount, Fox, MGM and Universal became more than film producers. They produced dreams for a whole world. A new culture with an unprecedented influence of the new man. A process that accelerated when movies became television. Hollywood could create their own reality. Define what was good and bad. The white "terrorists" who devastated the California nature and slaughtered the native "Indians" and animals became our heroes. History was re-written. Actors and actresses became our new leaders who owned the "beauty, truth and goodness". Reality and dream mixed with Ronald Reagan and Schwarzenegger, reality shows and politicians showing off their "brands".



Venice beach



Parade of the roses



Muscle beach



Disneyland



Universal Studios



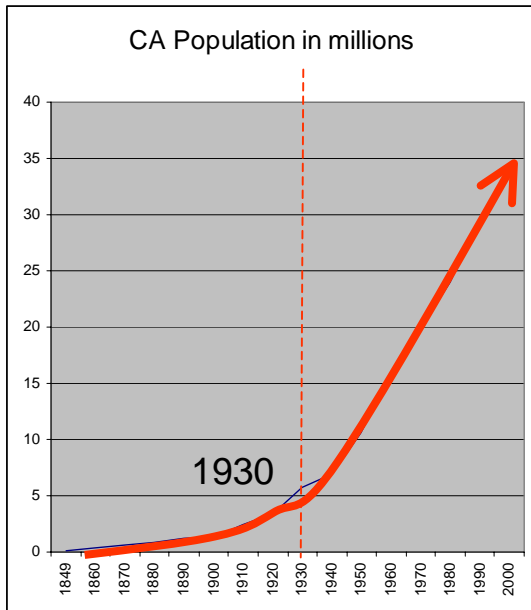
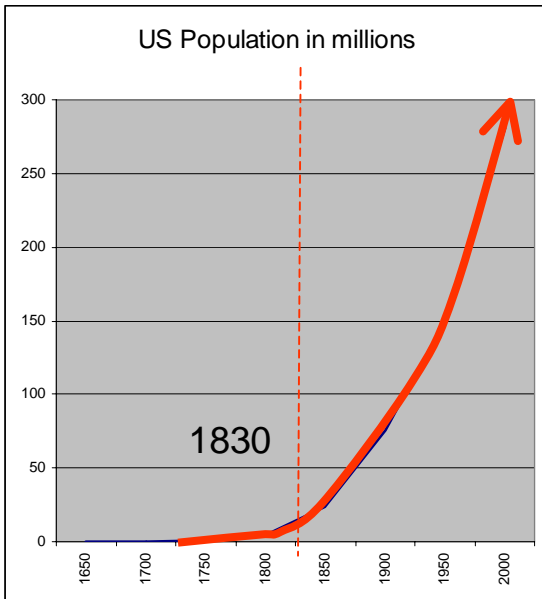
Sea world

An exponential growth

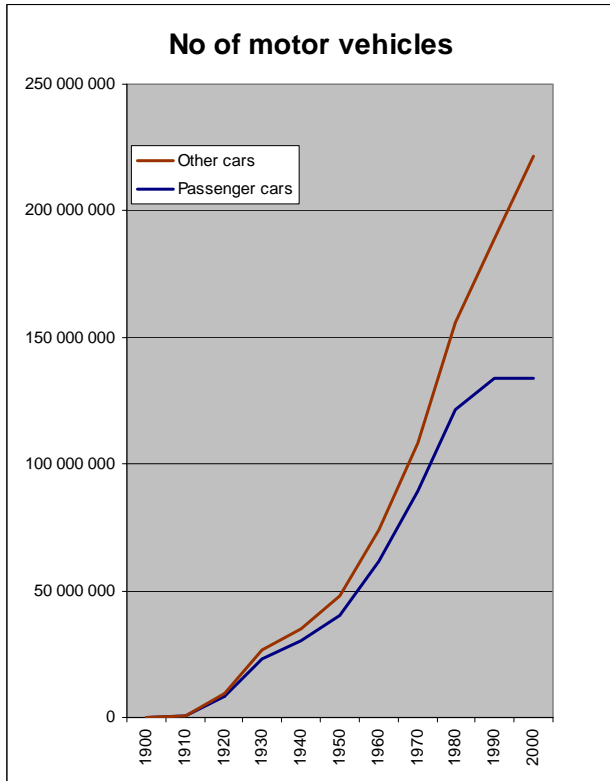
In two hundred years from 1749 to 1949 when I was born the US population increased from one million to 150 million, or 150 times. From 1949 until today the US population doubled to 300 million. Never before had such an expansion happened. This growth demanded more growth. The whole model was based on growth. The society, the economy, the industry, the experts where designed for growth.

In one hundred years from 1849 to 1949 the American population in California increased from 80 000 to 10 millions or 125 times. From 1949 until today the population has increased from 10 to 37 million or almost four times.

And the growth continuous with legal and illegal immigration USA is still the dream for many. The population is expected to grow from 298 million year 2005 to 395 million 2050! A growth that will require more cars, more freeways, more air conditioned houses, more shopping centers, more beef, more corn, more gadgets, more everything that is part of the American way of life....And more energy!...And more pollution!



The Americans on the move



When Henry Ford started the mass production of the automobile this became equal to the American dream and the concept of freedom. Almost anyone could afford their own car and almost everyone could go anywhere from New York to Los Angeles.

The new American lifestyle became interlinked with the car and the American economical growth became interlinked with the car industry. What is good for General Motors and Ford is good for USA. Steel, oil and car industry dominated the new world.

1920 there were 8 million cars and 1950 this had grown five times to 80 million. The magic year of 1969 with Woodstock, man on the moon, the Jumbo jet and the first microprocessor more than 100 million cars were rolling through USA. 1995 this had become 200 million.

Number of cars had an exponential growth even after number of conventional passenger cars started to level out. The reason was that the Americans now could afford more than one car, van, SUV, mobile home....



My own American dream

One branch of my family, five brothers emigrated to America in the beginning of the 20th century. Two brothers came back to visit and I was as a young boy listening to their great stories about everything that was bigger and better over there. When Television arrived 1959 my dreams were confirmed by watching Bonanza, Rawhide, I love Lucy and Perry Mason.

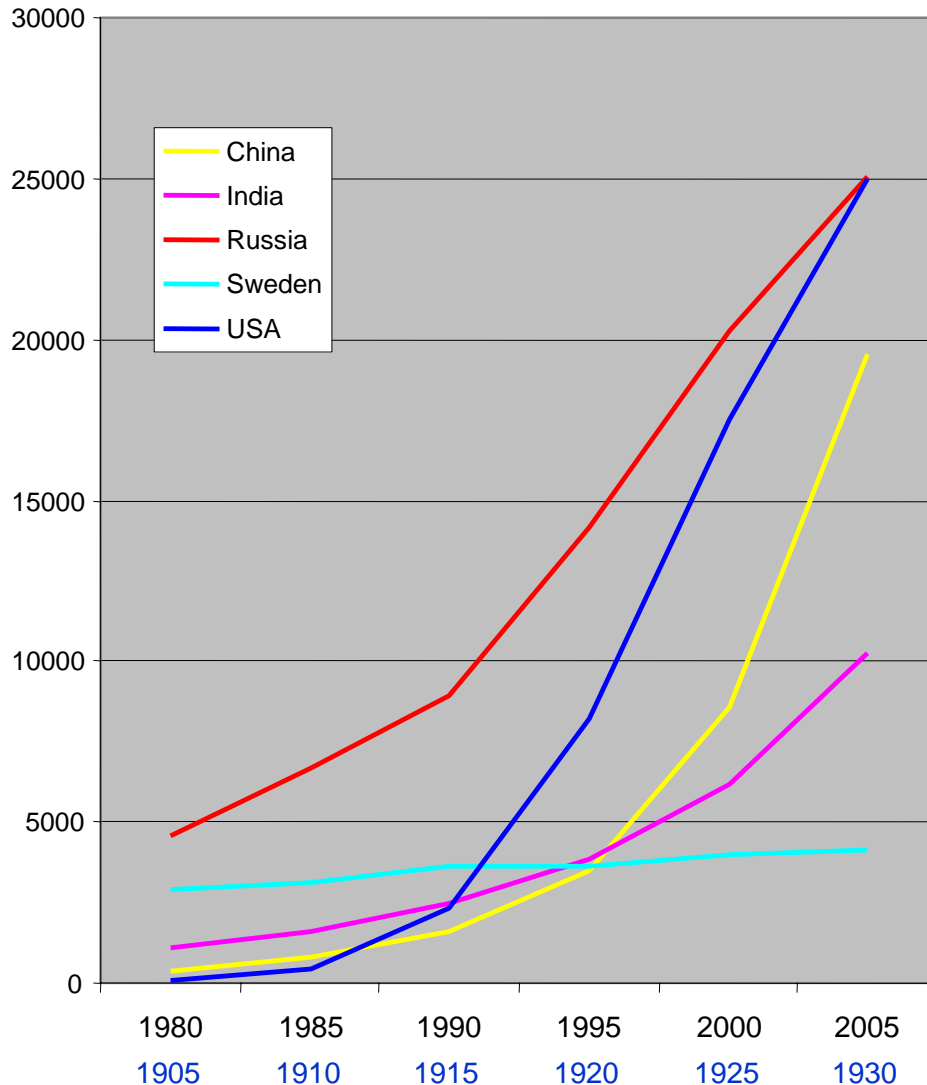
1969 I went for the first time to visit my relatives and experienced New York and Chicago as something unbelievable. 1986 to 1989 I lived in California not far away from Disneyland, not far from Hollywood, not far from New Port Beach, not far from Big Bear. I worked sometimes in Las Vegas, Reno, San Francisco, San Diego. I went on vacation to Hawaii and Sedona. I could even experience beautiful nature in Yosemite, the Pacific Ocean, the desert.

So I would lie if I do not say that this was an outstanding and fantastic time of my life. I had everything and I could do anything. And I burned a lot of fossil fuel.....



So what is wrong with my American car?

Thousands of cars



To be honest. I love cars. I love fast cars and I love American big cars ever since I drove my girlfriends Ford Cougar with 328 horse powers when I was in North America 1969.

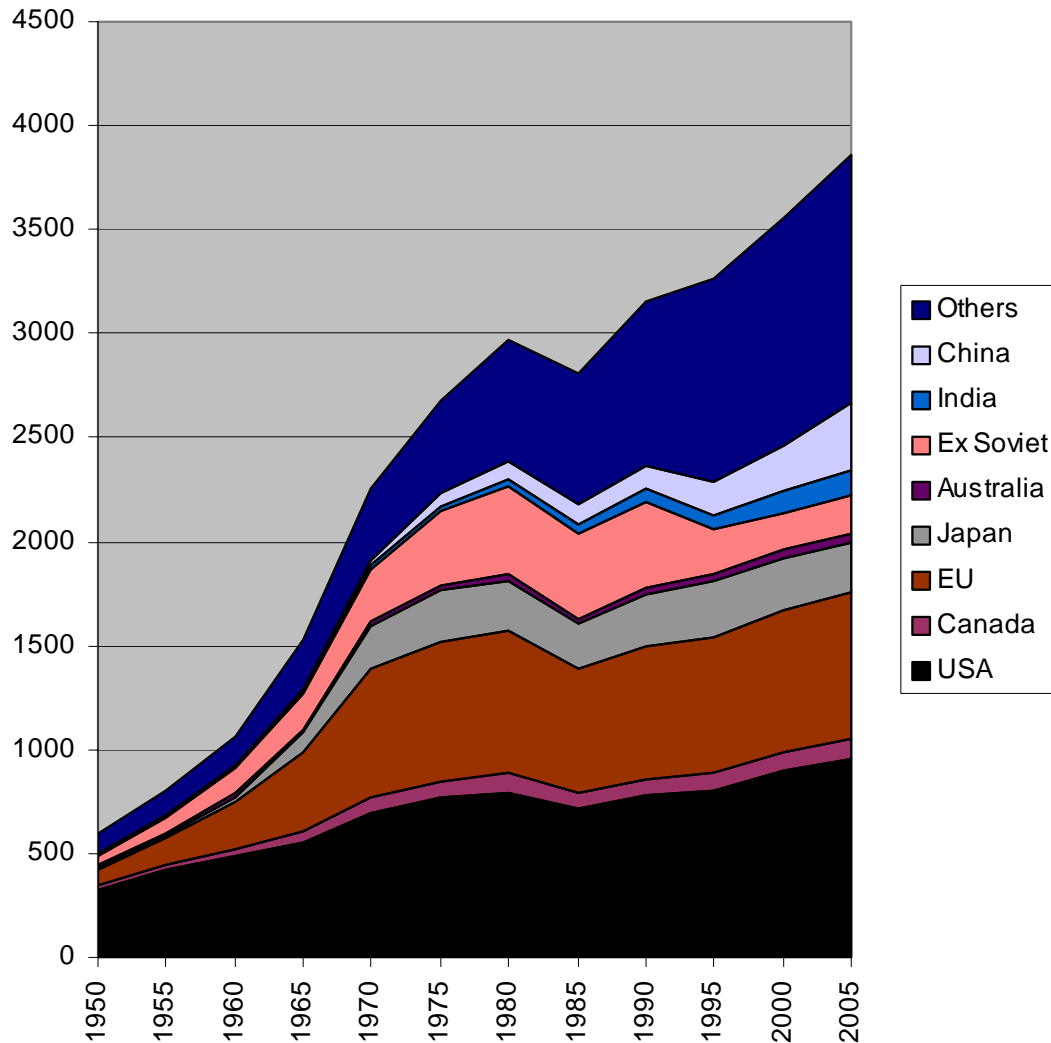
And I am not alone. Almost all males love cars. They are part of our manhood. The bigger and faster the more sex appeal. (So what did we do before the car?)

I visit in my work the “emerging” economies of Russia, India and China. And what is emerging is big cars.

The number of cars in Russia has now just reached the number of cars in USA....1930.

So what is wrong with my Russian car?

Oil consumption Mil. Ton

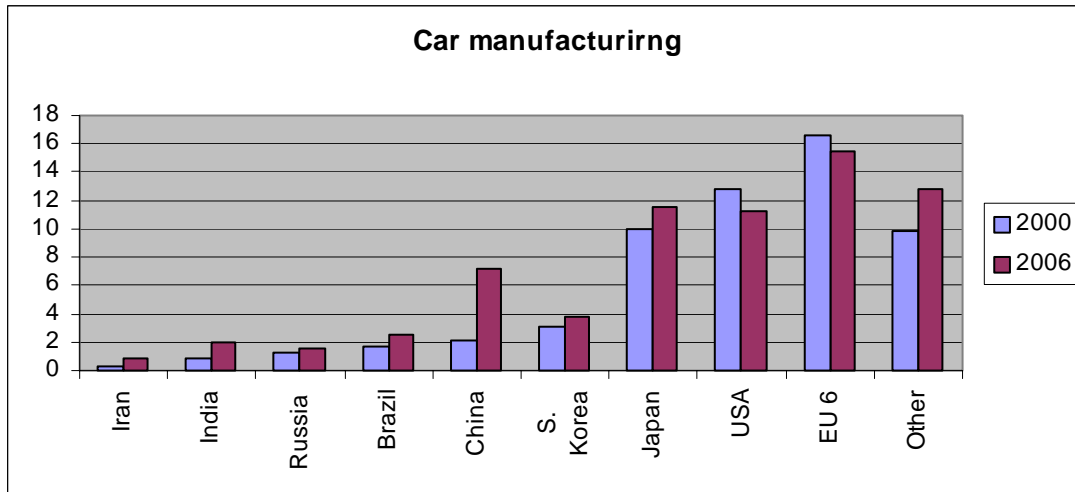
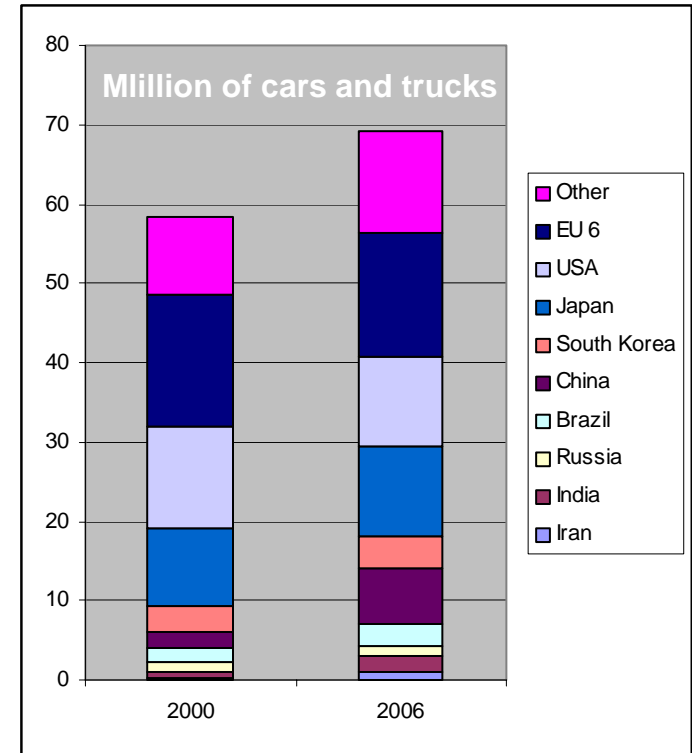
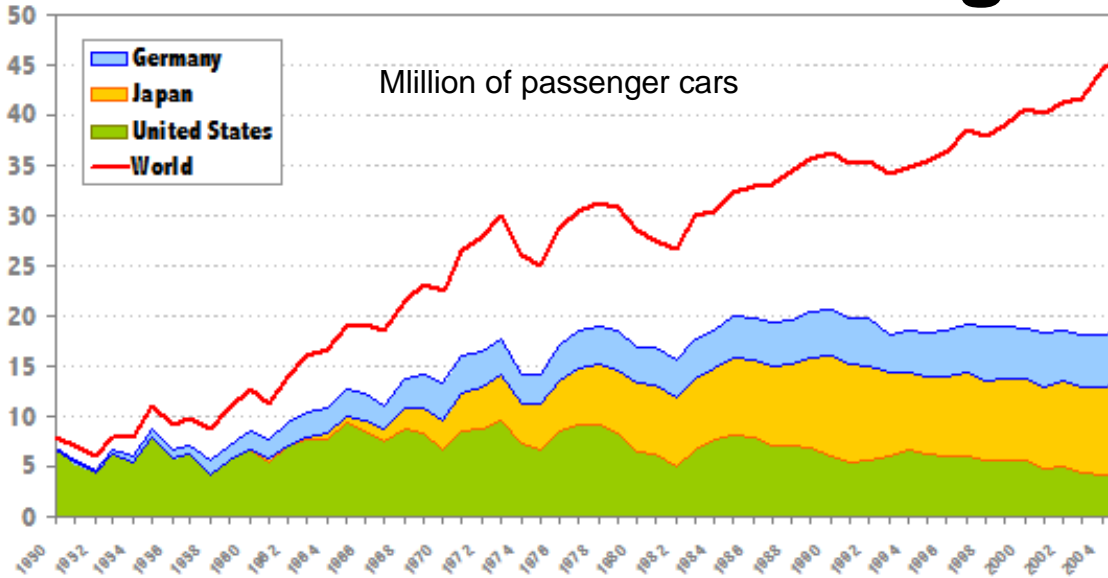


America won the cold war. But it was not with nuclear weapons. And it was not with democratic freedom. It was with cars. America could produce cars for everyone. Soviet Union could not.

The fall of the Iron Curtain saved us however or better delayed the crisis. It was the reduction of consumption of fossil fuel due to the break down of the industries in the Eastern block that delayed the global warming a bit.

But now these countries are coming back on track. And so is China the most capitalistic state of all states. And all wants new cars, and new roads, and new parking, and new shopping malls.

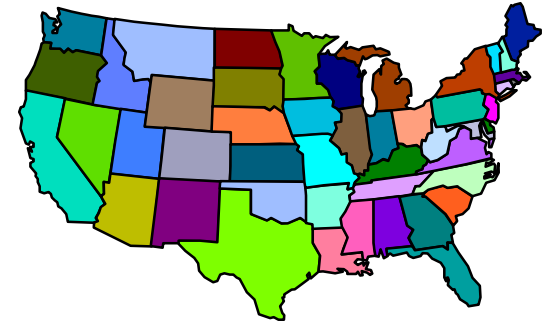
Car manufacturing in the world



1950 USA produced 80% of all the passenger cars in the world. 2005 this figure was less than 10% with Germany & Japan but now also Korea and China emerging as large manufacturers. However if production of commercial vehicles is added (trucks etc.) U.S. and Japan are on the same level with about 11 million vehicles produced per year.

Imagine if everyone wants their own car like in America. This means that we have to increase car production twenty times (20 TIMES!)

The American Model



The American model was and is based on continuous growth. A constant flow of new and young immigrants entering the work force and the consumer market. Hungry to realize their American Dream. Hungry to eat meat. Hungry to make money. During the last 150 years you can see how this wave is moving state by state from the east towards the west. The center of gravity moving from New York and Philadelphia to Chicago and Houston to Los Angeles and Seattle.

More people needs more roads, more skyscrapers, more food and more energy. As long as this expansion continues - As long as there is enough natural resources - As long as the nature accept the increased pollutions levels - This model will produce an exceptional economical growth.

But the nature does not!

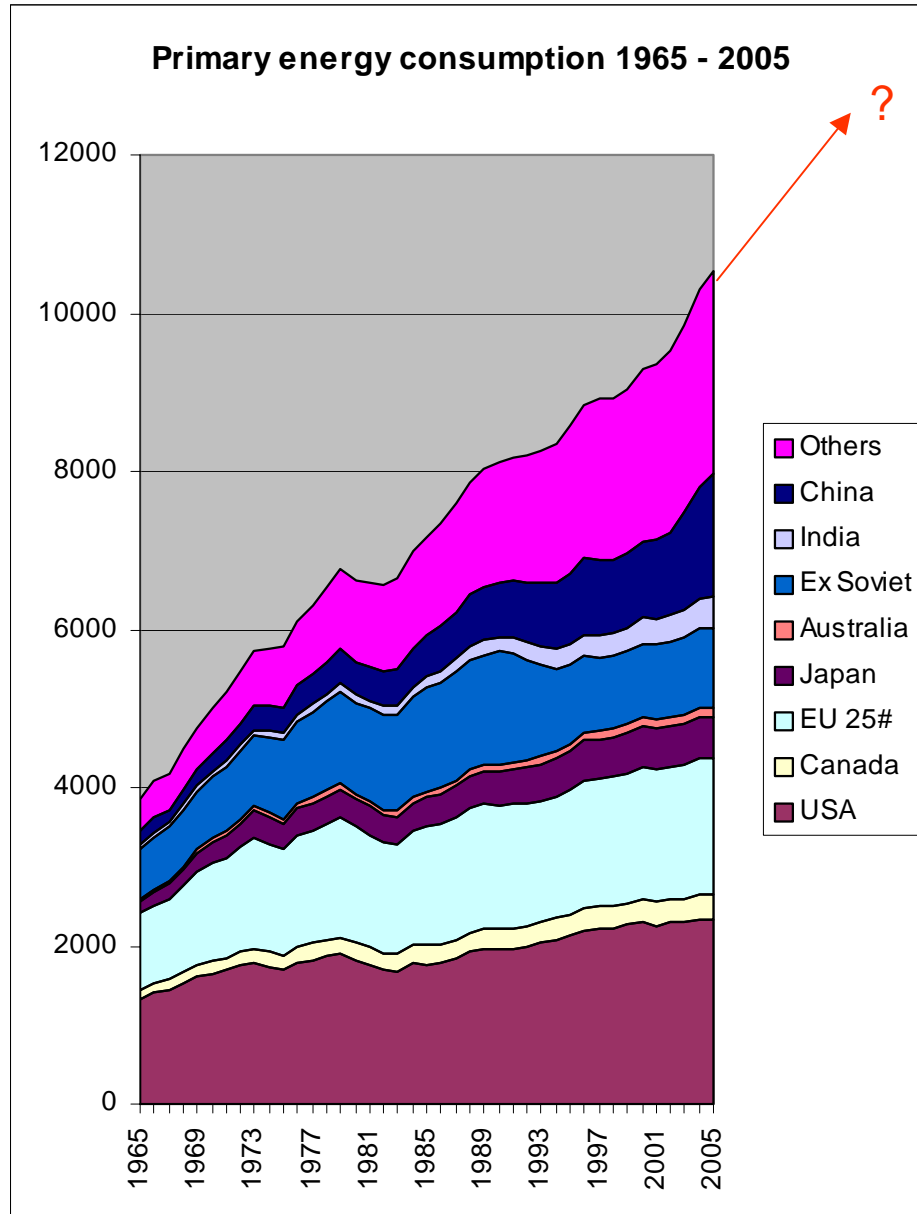


The Texas Model



Texas is the largest state in USA after California. They are similar in many ways. They were both invaded and taken from the Indians and Mexicans. The climate, the agribusiness, the need for irrigation and the large cities Houston, Dallas, San Antonio and Austin mirroring Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego and Sacramento are giving a similar life style. They both have large oil resources. Texas is the largest meat and cotton producer but California is best on fruit and vegetables. But there is one major difference. Texas consume twice as much fossil fuel per capita as California. Texas became and is the oil capital of the world. Texas has always been and is governed by rich and white men. And with the strong connection between the oil industry and the political “industry” including the Bush dynasty it has been the oil that has governed the world events to make those rich and powerful men even richer and more powerful.

So what is wrong with my American dream



It is very simple. Our world can not afford the American dream. Not even USA can afford the American dream.

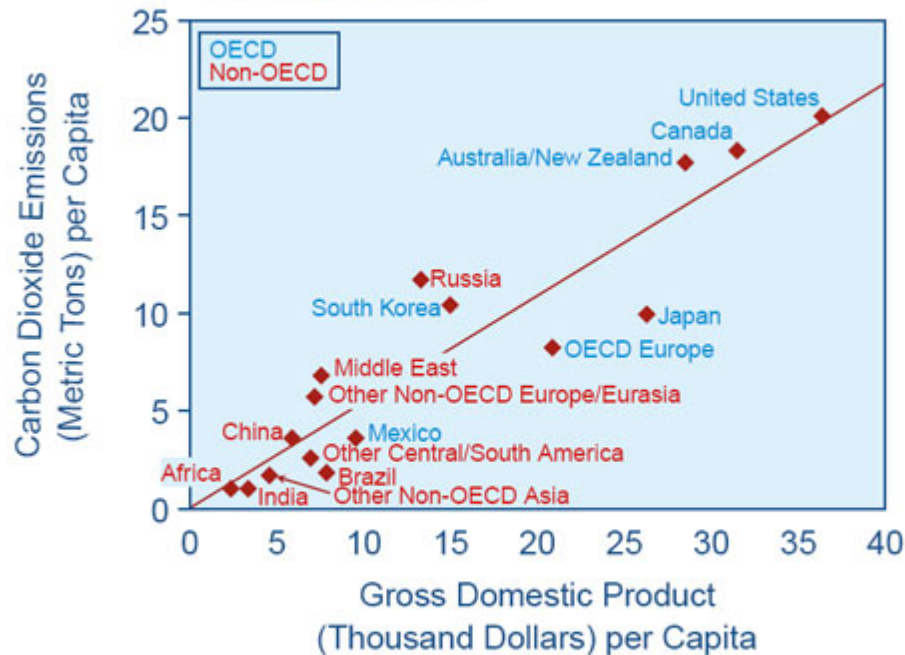
There are no limitless resources to allow endless consumption for ever and ever. The bucket is full. It is spilling over. And it is not so easy that we can just change oil for something else or assume that technology will save us.

Believe me this cannot be done. I know this because I work with this as my profession. And it is only one of the problems. We are consuming our earth and our common future.

Our generation, or better the part of our generation that has been lucky to be born rich in a rich part of the world has had a great time. Now this free ride is over. It is payback time!

We just cannot afford the American dream

Figure 85. Carbon Dioxide Emissions and Gross Domestic Product per Capita by Region, 2004



Source: Derived from Energy Information Administration, *International Energy Annual 2004* (May-July 2006), web site www.eia.doe.gov/iea.

The high consumption pattern of North America and Australia has created a very high material standard of living but also enormous amount of waste including CO₂. Our earth cannot afford 10 billion cars and networks of freeways and parking places. Our world can not afford a model which is based on more and more consumption of throw away “things” instead of efficiency and conservation.

New York New York

The unsustainable American lifestyle is still the dream for many outside America. Who does not love New York?

People from all over the world is drawn to the big apple both to live and as tourists. Especially now when the US dollar is low and the shopping is cheap.

Thousand of people from Europe and Latin America is actually flying on shopping vacation to New York to buy things “Made in China”. So the needed mind change is not limited to Americans – it is a global mind change.





The only non Americanized country left until...





”Give peace a chance”

From United Kingdom and the British Empire to United States and the American Empire to United Nations and our common future?

The only true globalization we have is the global effects of our pollution. We cannot hide from carbon dioxide and other emissions to our atmosphere. And we cannot avoid toxins and chemicals infecting our oceans. But even worse is the long term effects of nuclear waste and genetic modification affecting the very basic building blocks of life itself.

United Nation was formed after the devastating second world war to work for peace in the world. Sometimes successful and sometimes not but UN is today our only way towards a common future. The other way is war. A war between nations over diminishing resources. Mass migration due to the effects of global warming. But the worst is our present third world war against nature itself. The present crisis cannot be solved by only scientific, political and economical measures but will require us human beings to revise our basic attitude towards life and what is the meaning of life.