

Forums for a Future¹

The Millennial Challenge

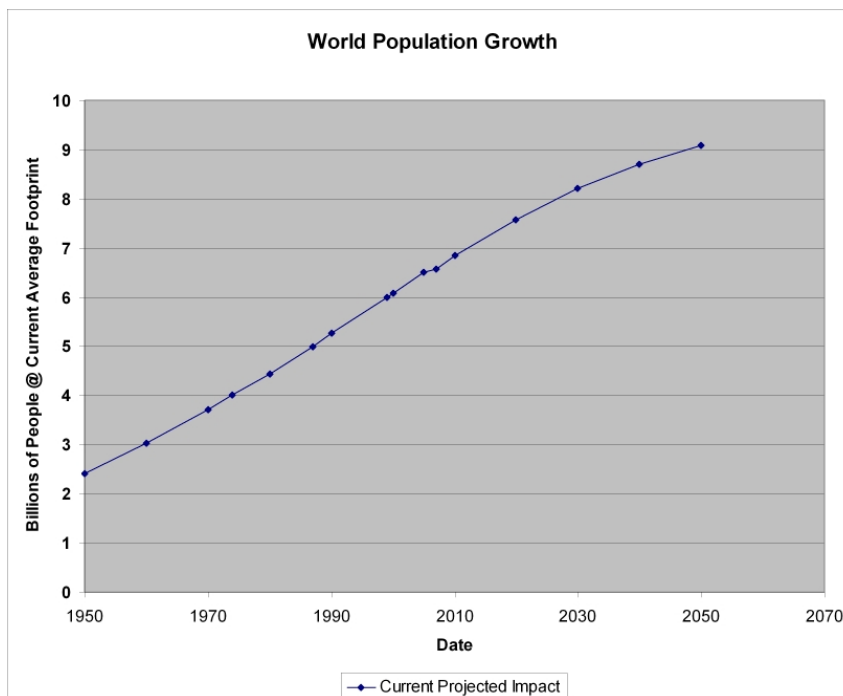
Podcast #33

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Abstract: The key concept in today's podcast is that the dominate cultural beliefs of the Modern Era have led to economic and political policies that have produced climate change, threatening the capacity of the planet to sustain human life. Immediate fundamental changes in the civic control of the institutions of wealth and power are essential. But, there is a trans-generational communications gap between the new Millennials and the Boomers who form a demographic wall between the Millennials and their future. A joint effort is required between the current Establishment and the youth of today who share a single future. This is the Millennial Challenge.

Key Concept: trans-generational, communication gap, climate change, civic control, Millennials, Boomers, wealth, power

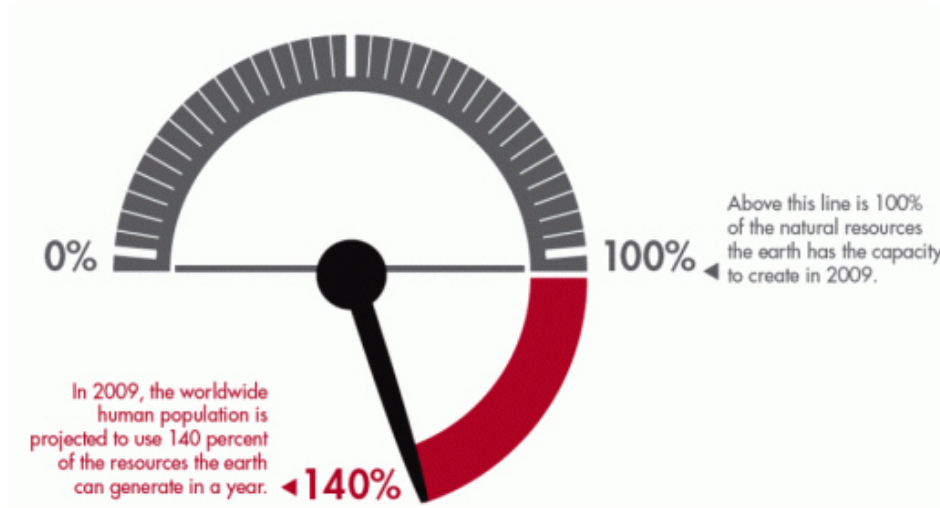
It took over 100,000 years for the population of the earth to reach 2 billion people. In less than the next 100 years it reached 7 billion.



This remarkable growth was achieved through the products of science and technology cumulating in the modern era, in particular modern achievements in health, industrialization, agriculture, transportation and communication.

In the United States 2% of the population feeds the remaining 98%. The agricultural revolution alone freed many workers to engage in other economic activities, resulting in unprecedented increases in our standard of living.³

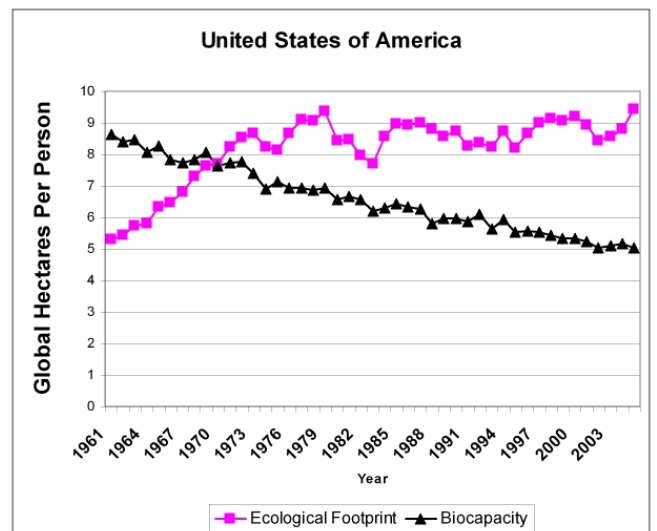
However, the very economic, political and social structures that created our Modern Era, now threaten to destroy it. Our economic growth has dramatically reduced the carrying capacity of the planet to support the human



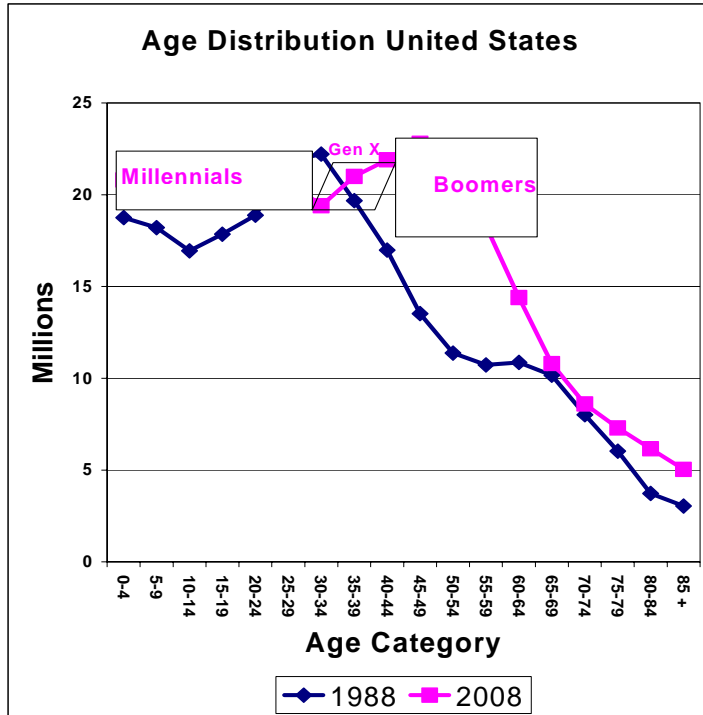
population, for which climate change is the poster child. In 1985 we first started to consume more resources and create more waste than the planet could produce or absorb in one year, creating an exponential decline in the life-sustaining capacity of the planet and entering the “Age of Global Warming.”

The US has 5 global hectares of biological capacity per person but each person consumes nearly 10 each year. This two-fold difference is our annual ecological deficit. Over the past 50 years this deficit is responsible for a huge cumulative ecological debit to the rest of the planet and its population.

These past excess have also created huge national fiscal deficits that no longer can be offset through the unlimited growth of the past 200 years. The continued reduction in biological capacity of the planet imposes a natural cap on the rate of human consumption and economic growth.



These annual environmental and fiscal deficits -- and their cumulative environmental and economic debt -- are the legacies the Millennials will inherit from the Boomers. With a cap on growth imposed by nature, eliminating the deficits and reversing the debit can only be achieved by a reduction of past excesses through a decline in the Millennials standard of living as the price for surviving in the 21st Century, but without an existing world political order sufficient for navigating these issues.



The solution has to be a joint effort between the Millennials and the Boomers, who form a demographic wall between the Millennials and their future. For the first time in human history two generations share a common fate. Yet, over the past decade the nature of communication has changed more dramatically than over the previous 400 years. Bridging the generational digital communication gap is the Millennial Challenge.

The task is no less than The Boomers and Millennials mutually rejecting the status quo, and fully engaging in a civic dialogue to fundamentally restructure our current political, social and economic institutions. The stark reality is that the environmental and

fiscal deficits that enabled the false prosperity of the Modern Era are not sustainable, and if not reversed within the next several decades will be lethal.

“Those of us alive today are the first generation to know that we live in the Age of Global Warming. We may also be the last generation to have any chance of doing something about it. Our forebears had the excuse of ignorance. Our descendants will have the excuse of helplessness. We have no excuse.”⁴

¹ This essay is based on an audio and video podcast by Professor Renner entitled “**Forums for a Future**.” Text, audio and video copies of the material may be accessed from his website at www.kerenner.com. The direct link for subscribing to the video series from iTunes is:

<http://phobos.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewPodcast?id=289289719>

² Professor Renner may be reached at erenner@cas.usf.edu. The podcast series is also available through the University of South Florida at:

https://my.usf.edu/webapps/lobj-podcast-bb_bb60/feed/IDH3400.004S10/podcast.xml

³ The 20th Century Transformation of US Agriculture and Farm Policy, Electronic Information Bulletin Number 3, June 2005, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service.

⁴ Antholis & Talbott, *Fast Forward*, Brooking Inst., 2010.