

# Consumption worlds

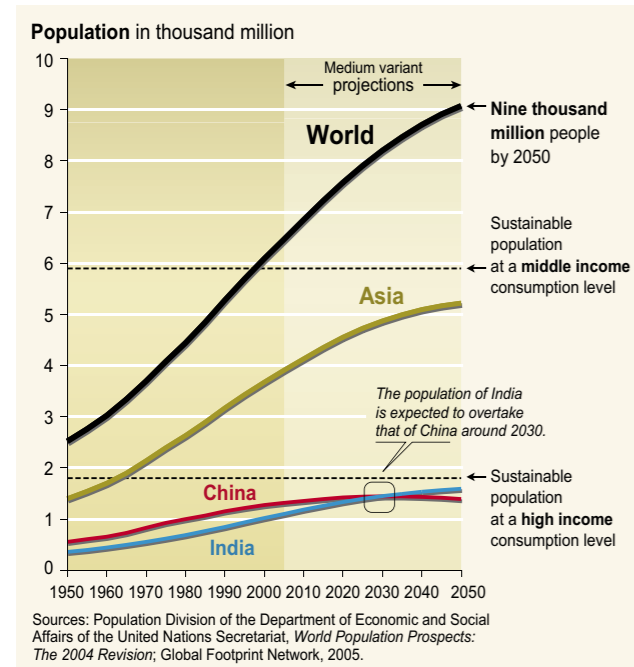
Since the post-war enthusiasm of the 1950s the word “progress” has enjoyed a special aura, for generalising goods that make our life easier. All over the world people can buy goods at increasingly affordable prices. Though this easy materialism enables some people to enjoy greater comfort others seem overwhelmed by the speed with which consumer objects multiply. Very few families have resisted this trend and are still in phase with their culture.

The cost of all these products for the environment is colossal. The goods we accumulate today will pile up as waste tomorrow, and more yet in view of the global trends. Projections tell us that there will be 9 000 million people on Earth by 2050. According to the Global Footprint Network life on Earth would not even be sustainable for 2 000 million people consuming at the same rate as in the richest countries today. Unless we change the way we produce (see pages 12–13) and consume.



ON THE WEB

Global Footprint Network:  
www.footprintnetwork.org  
Population and development in the United Nations system:  
www.un.org/esa/population



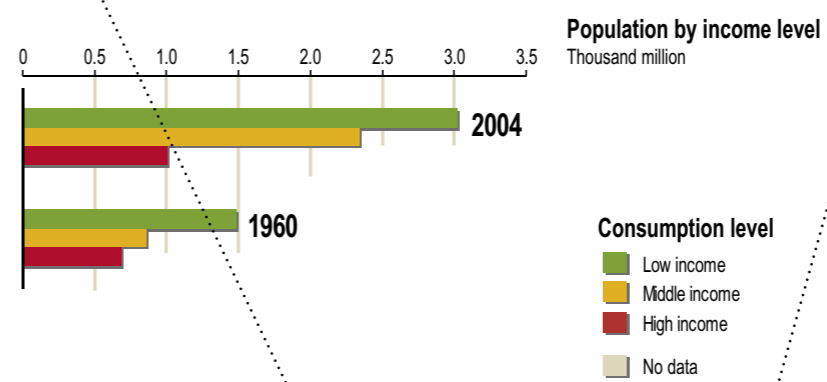
THE HODSON FAMILY, UNITED KINGDOM



THE KAZUO UKITA FAMILY, JAPAN



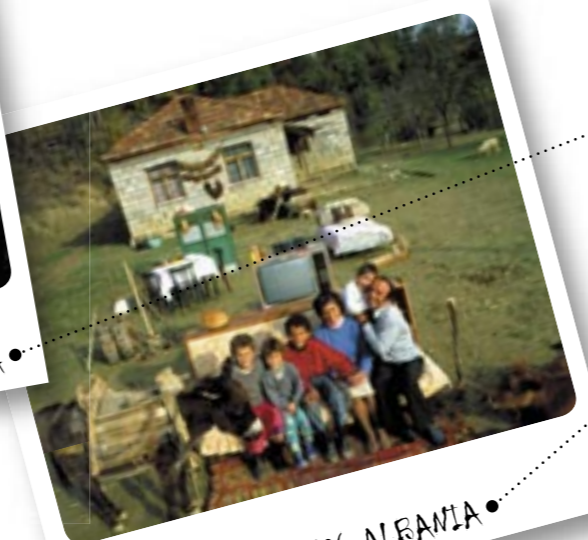
THE DE FRUTOS FAMILY, SPAIN



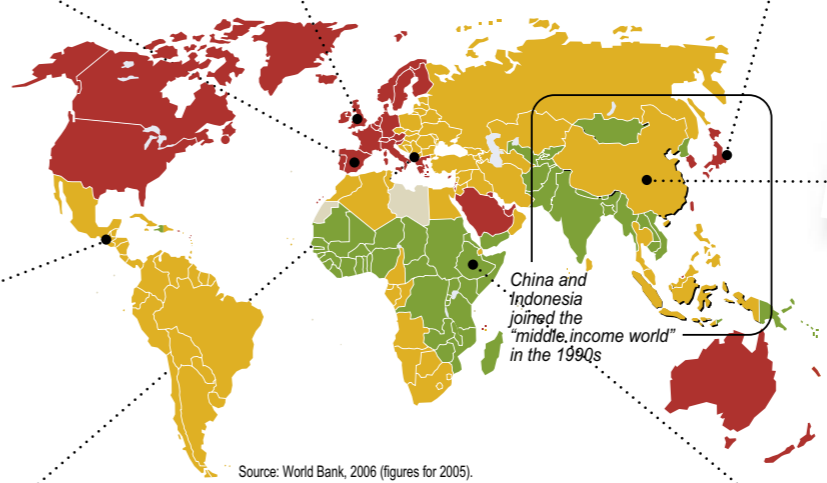
THE WU FAMILY, CHINA



THE CALABAY SICAY FAMILY, GUATEMALA

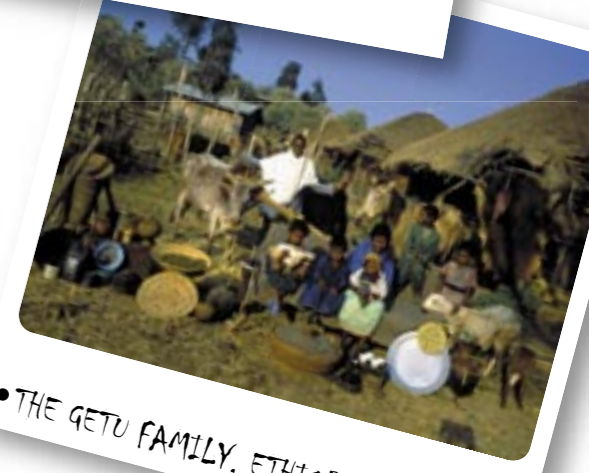


THE CAKONI FAMILY, ALBANIA



Photographs from a project by the American photographer Peter Menzel. In 2001 he took pictures of 30 middle-class families outside their home with all their possessions, in 30 different countries, publishing his findings in *Material World*, see www.menzelphoto.com. The Hodson family was photographed by David Reed/IMPACT.

The rich world consumes more and thus produces more waste. The World Bank classification based on gross national income per capita is an indication of the global consumption level. Over the last two decades the world as a whole did not get any richer but China and Indonesia, two densely populated countries, entered the “middle income world”, as defined by the World Bank. Consumer items are available to a growing number of individuals, particularly in the two countries. If they cannot disconnect economic growth from resource depletion and energy use, they will not be able to enjoy their new-found wealth for very long.



THE GETU FAMILY, ETHIOPIA