

# TOP TRENDS



Just One Way Ticket via Flickr

The Sathorn Unique Tower in Bangkok, meant to be a luxury condominium complex, was a victim of both political drama and financial crisis. The 49-story building was never completed, and now stands as a symbol of decline.

# Self-Sustainability

## Individuals, countries take future into their hands

Take a trip around the world.

If you live outside one of those cities of wealth, take a walk around the block.

What do you see?



On the global scene, from Canada to Chile, Venezuela to Russia, Nigeria to Norway, and South Africa to China, countries large and small and rich and poor — all bountiful with exportable raw materials — are in economic decline as commodity prices hit new lows, and supply for what they sell far outstrips demand.

In down-and-out cities, towns and villages around the world, while the causes of economic decline vary, the sights and scenes are similar: decaying cities, abandoned malls, empty factories, rotted infrastruc-

**On an unseasonably cold day in January, a homeless person tries to stay warm at the entrance of a subway station near the White House in Washington.**

REUTERS / Kevin Lamarque



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ture, declining living standards, a shrinking middle class, a widening gap between rich and poor, growing poverty, legions of homeless and floods of migrants desperate for better lives fill the streets.

The global recession we had forecast, for many nations, will devolve into depression. How long will the downturn last? Which nations will suffer the most? Which will thrive? It depends on who seizes new opportunities to grow and prosper, and which ones hold onto the past and attempt to rebuild failed systems and outdated structures.

### IT'S ANCIENT HISTORY

Trends are born, they grow, mature, reach old age and then die. Among the two dying megatrends that dominated life on earth and whose time has come and gone are industrialization and globalization.

The great globalization trend has peaked. As evidenced by the financial destabilization rattling equity and commodity markets of both developed nations and emerging markets, countries that attempt to build and sustain their economies by relying on other nations to buy what they sell — be it finished goods or natural resources — are failing... and will continue to fail.

While few nations possess all the natural resources necessary to fuel every aspect of an economy, in this new millennium, advanced fabricated elements will replace old standards and a new science/technology-dominated economic paradigm will replace the centuries-old Industrial Age model that's quickly dying. (For example, see "Breeding Robots," page 30.)

Indeed, in this new age of leading-edge technologies, scientific advances, substitute materials, artificial intelligence and imminent energy breakthroughs, countries with large enough populations and ample and/or unique natural resources will rely on the human creative spirit to power their economies.

### NATIONALLY MADE, HOMETOWN BRAND

In the coming months and years, currency wars will intensify, trade wars will expand and geopolitical unrest will escalate.

Governments that go to war on any or all of these fronts will sacrifice precious human and financial resources in costly losing battles. Some may recover

and others will further decline — all while those with trend vision that avoided the path to destruction will create prosperous futures, financial security and more enlightened societies.

Nations that devote their energies to lift the human spirit of their citizens will design and build self-sustaining economies by manufacturing products they need and growing the food they eat.

While prospering by trading within their own borders, thus keeping their cash from going overseas, a new advancement and expansion of the "buy local trend" currently associated with mostly food/drink and local crafts will emerge.

Beyond the Made-in-XYZ label, fostering national pride and economic patriotism, a new untapped trend of hometown-made manufactured goods not only will elevate local self-esteem and generate jobs, it will create a new trend in local-brand recognition that will upstage multinationals and break the chains. In doing so, self-sustaining nations will shift away from consumer societies and evolve into quality-product communities. **T**

## TREND FORECAST

*During this transition phase, in which self-sustainability has yet to hit the government radar or mainstream, individuals and their families —*



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**More people will choose to go back to the land and grow their own food.**

*whether earning less in jobs that don't pay living wages or wanting to break their corporate shackles — will take life into their own hands and become more self-sustainable.*

*From aging boomers to middle-agers and millennials, getting off the grid and voluntary simplicity will be hot trends. As urban areas become increasingly overcrowded and overpriced, the back-to-the-land trend will grow as more choose to grow their own and make what they drink. Advancements in technology and emerging free-energy breakthroughs will rapidly accelerate the off-the-grid trend.*

*Throughout much of the world, as major cities have rapidly grown — along with their cost of living — prices in "the country" have declined. Thus, for those wishing to cash in on the self-sustainability trend, the price in the boondocks may be right.*