

# THE CULTURE COMPASS

## Orienting for Profit

 | [SchoolOfStolenGeni.us](https://SchoolOfStolenGeni.us)



# SCHOOL OF



**@FARIS**

CO-FOUNDER  
& CHIEF THIEF  
**@GENIUS STEALS**

**PRE-2013**  
Chief Innovation Officer  
@ **MDC Partners**

Chief Digital Officer  
@**McCann NY** /  
@**Naked Comms**

**@ROSIEYAKOB**

CO-FOUNDER  
& CHIEF PRAGMATIST  
**@GENIUS STEALS**

**PRE-2013**  
Strategy Leader  
@ **360i** @ **Cake**  
@ **Saatchi NY**

Teacher  
@ **Miami Ad School**



# ***HOW TO READ THIS REPORT***

This has been written to be a readable expansive exploration. As such topics will be explained in writing, and then examples will highlight some innovations or elements that we believe demonstrate shifts in this axis.

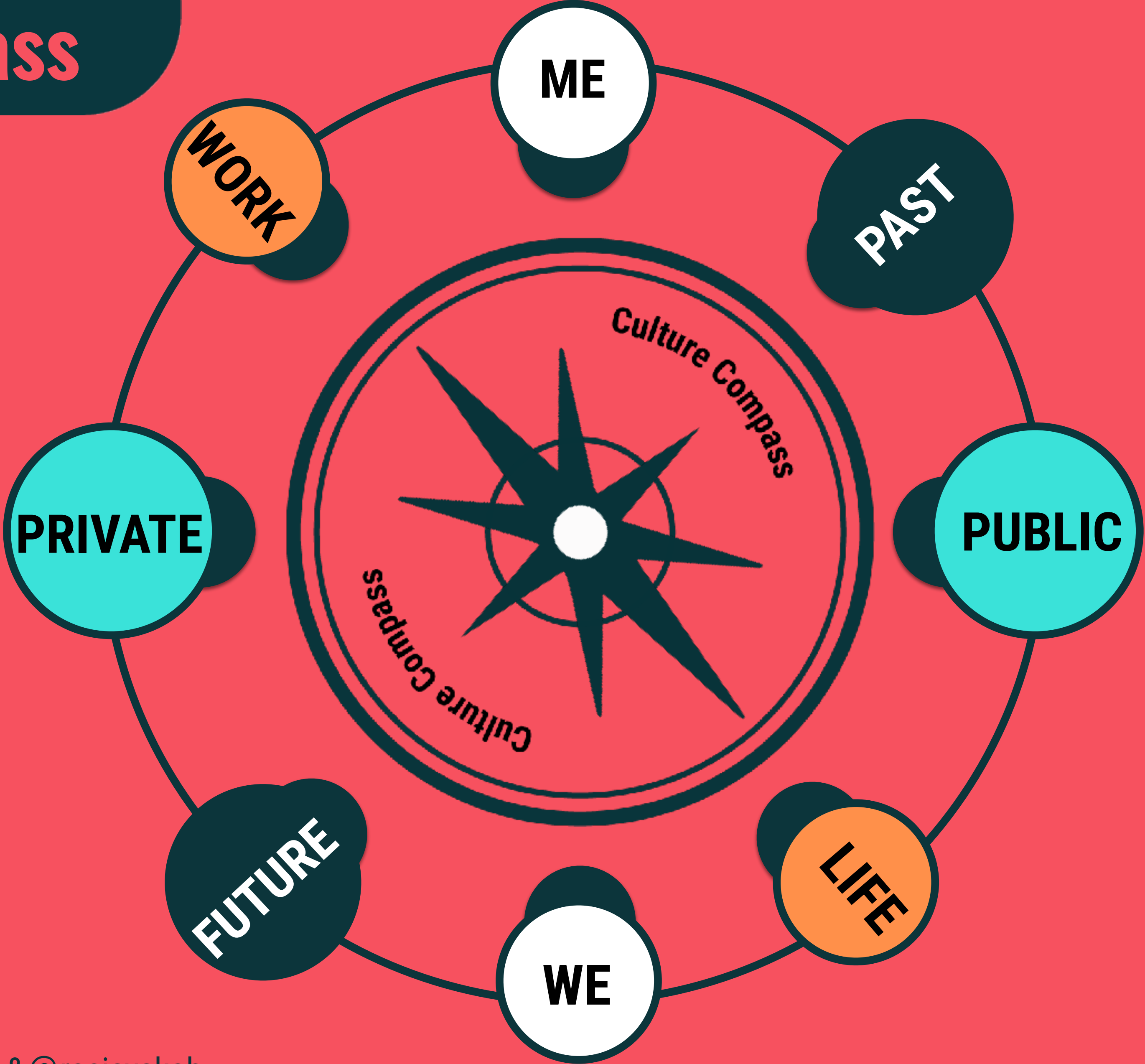
The articles, sites and companies will **be linked from the images**, so you can dive deeper into any topic.

We aren't going to cover every axis, nor is this exhaustive, it's an attempt to look at some interesting things that we believe indicate movements in culture and business opportunities. We'll be releasing a new section each week in April. We'd love to hear what you think, over on Slack.

Rock ON.



# Culture Compass



# ***WHAT IS THE CULTURE COMPASS?***

The Culture Compass is a navigation device for understanding and predicting shifts in culture.

Across any number of vectors, culture swings like a pendulum, gaining momentum in one direction before reaching an apogee, only to swing back with ever greater force in the opposite direction. Even before cultures around the world reached the levels of polarization we currently see, things would move in one direction and then swing backwards, sometimes violently.

At the most macro, political level, it's hard not to have noticed how in the USA having its first black president seemed to lead to a lot of racism and the president that followed. In part, this is simply repackaging the idea of mainstream and counter-culture, which by definition exist in counterpoint to each other, shifting over time as some things that are fringe counter-culture get absorbed into the mainstream and monetized and so on.



## CORE CONCEPT: THE PENDULUM EFFECT

1 Also called pendulum law. *Physics*. A law, discovered by Galileo in 1602 that describes the regular, swinging motion of a pendulum by the action of gravity and acquired momentum

2 the theory holding that trends in culture, politics, etc. tend to swing back and forth between the opposite extremes



## FURTHER READING on CULTURAL PENDULA

### Newton's law of cultural change

Why do cultural movements seem to move in the equal and opposite direction to the movements which preceded them? And how can that energy be harnessed accordingly?



Gavin May Oct 11, 2016 · 10 min read



<https://medium.com/@gavinmay/newtons-law-of-cultural-change-4a7eadd10659>

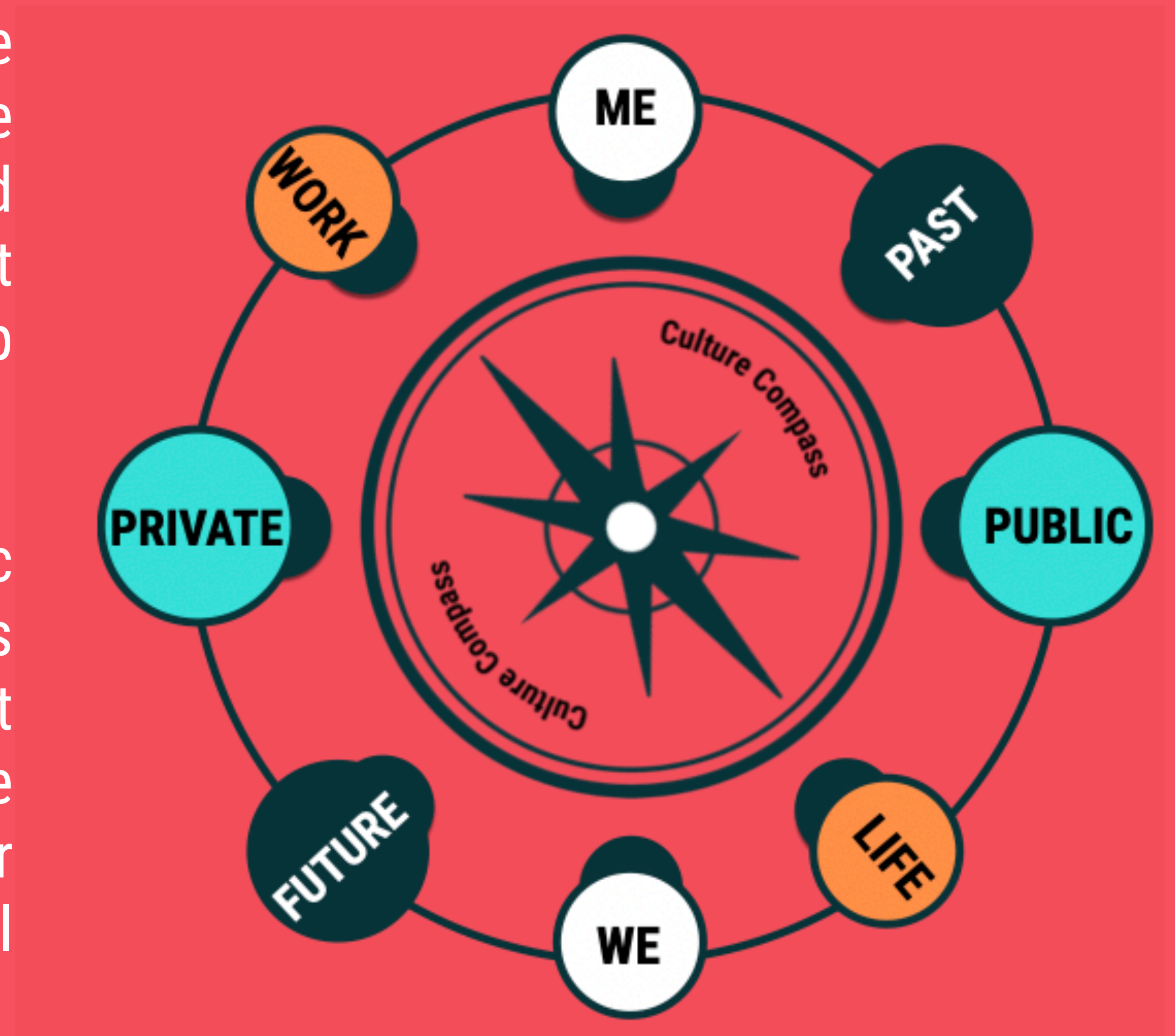
<https://thepatterning.com/2017/02/13/the-nostalgia-pendulum-a-rolling-30-year-cycle-of-pop-culture-trends/>



# Using the Culture Compass to find a holistic view

There isn't just one pendulum moving through culture however, there are many. We have picked a few of the most important ones here but we're sure you could think of some others. That's great. Please do and let us know. This is an abstract tool designed to help thinking and consider what will come next.

By putting them together we get a more holistic sense of what is happening because it's not as simple as a single axis and it's not as simple as just swinging backwards and forwards, driven by some invisible force, or the push and pull for power between the two broad political viewpoints we call left and right.





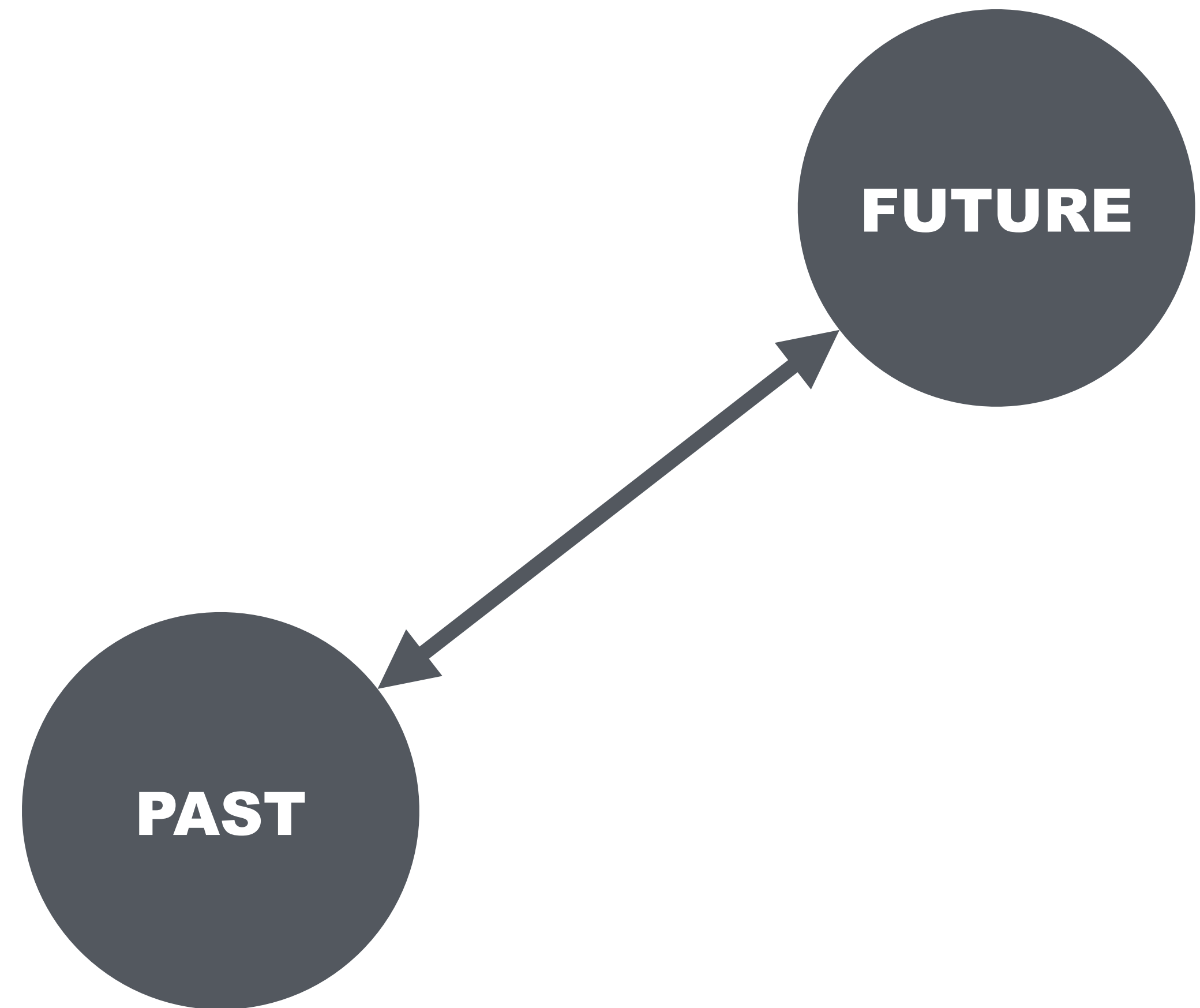
## Cultures have orientations around certain ideas.

One is the idea of the **Past vs Future**, which broadly maps onto these two poles:

**Conservatism:** seeks to preserve tradition (“commitment to traditional values and ideas with opposition to change or innovation”)

*and*

**Progressivism:** seeks change for the sake of equality (“support for or advocacy of social reform”).



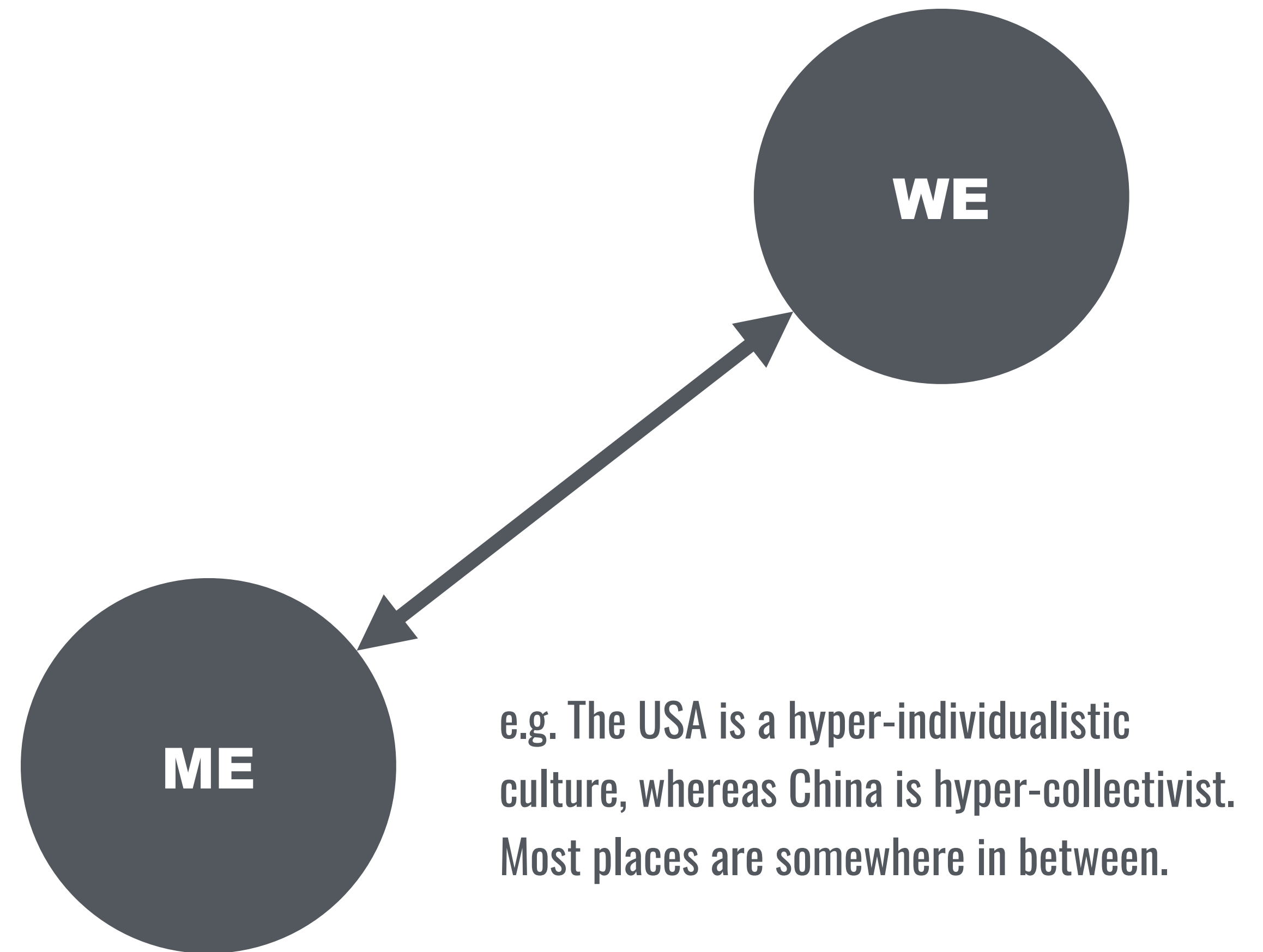
## Cultures have orientations around certain ideas.

Another important one is what we are calling Me vs We, which broadly maps onto

**Individualism:** favouring freedom of action for individuals over collective

*and*

**Collectivism:** the practice or principle of giving a group priority over each individual in it.



***Often, there are pendulum swings between two forces.***

It's not that either are better, or worse, but rather that societies need aspects of both. However, they tend to orient heavily towards one for a time, which leads to the resurgence of the other, thanks to counter-culture. Highly individualistic societies struggle with the collective actions needed to control pandemics, but they also tend to create incentive conditions for people and businesses to take certain kinds of risks, and so on. Makes sense, right? **So, here's the idea:**

**Whenever a new innovation changes the dynamics of a category, or when massive exogenous events like pandemics force changes across categories, a **renegotiation takes places along these axes.****

# WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY A RENEGOTIATION?

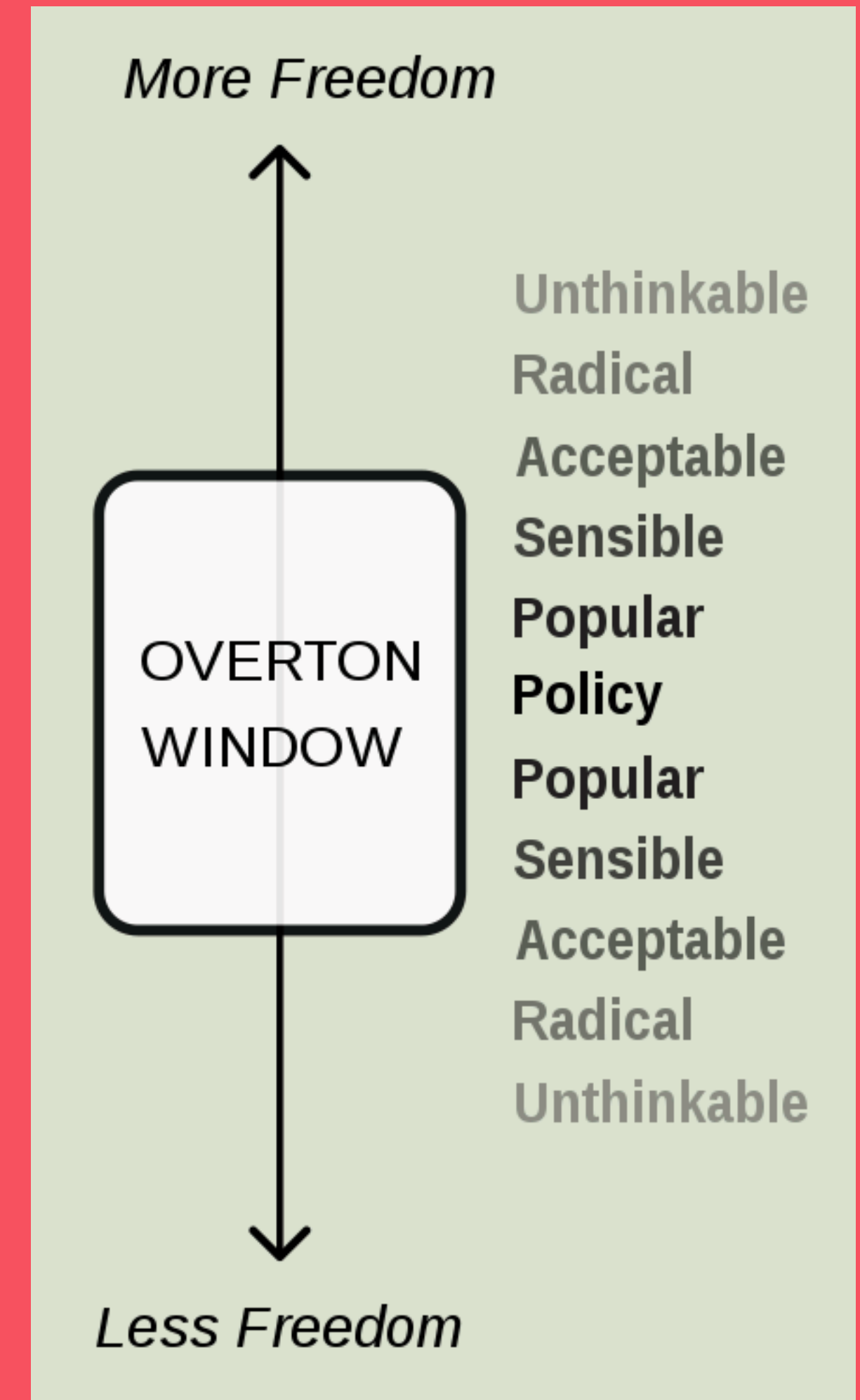
Good question. Let me answer it by talking about something else for a second.

The Overton Window is the range of acceptable discourse at any moment of time in culture. Originally it referred to the range of policies that were politically acceptable to the mainstream population at a given time, but the meaning has broadened. This happens. It basically refers to what we consider acceptable versus extreme, in lots of ways. Especially about politics and what we should and shouldn't say in polite society, which change all the time.

“Overton described a spectrum from “more free” to “less free” with regard to government intervention, oriented vertically on an axis, to avoid comparison with the left/right political spectrum. As the spectrum moves or expands, an idea at a given location may become more or less politically acceptable.

Shifting the Overton Window involves proponents of policies outside the window persuading the public to expand the window. Proponents of current policies, or similar ones within the window, seek to convince people that policies outside it should be deemed unacceptable.” - Wikipedia

## CLICK TO READ



## CORE CONCEPT: OVERTON WINDOW OF CULTURE

“It just explains how ideas come in and out of fashion, the same way that gravity explains why something falls to the earth. I can use gravity to drop an anvil on your head, but that would be wrong. I could also use gravity to throw you a life preserver; that would be good.”

Joseph G. Lehman, Overton’s boss at a Think Tank and popularizer of the term



# ***SO...WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY A RENEGOTIATION?***

When something big happens, or a challenger brand creates an innovation so powerful the entire market has to follow suit, it forces a movement along one of the Culture Compass axes, as ideas that were previously outside of the Overton Window become more acceptable and then normal. Such renegotiations will usually follow classic adoption curve dynamics in their spread through culture. But ultimately the Window moves because there has been a collective renegotiation about what is acceptable and appropriate to the mainstream, and what ideas are considered extreme or fringe.

Christmas was a social, public event until the Victorian era, when it began to shift into the home, becoming a private, family occasion.

Consider how Facebook started as a private network, locked to your university, but became a 'public by default' platform, because \$. Consider how Venmo makes your transactions public by default, and how Public, the share trading app, takes that one step further, turning trades, and gains and losses, into the stream of a social network. That which was Private becomes Public, as it were - that seems to be another important area that is being renegotiated. Uber made private driving public. Airbnb made private homes available to the public.



The rest of this deck highlights some interesting examples of these renegotiations that we have been tracking and thinking about.

These renegotiations are always ongoing, accelerated by the aforementioned interventions, and the shifts themselves create opportunities as what is social becomes private, or vice versa, for some parts of the population.

To capitalize on these shifts, companies also orient themselves to the context they find themselves in. Companies also have certain axes they tend to orient their thinking and behavior around. For example, depending on their point in their lifecycle and contextual factors, they tend to either focus on investing to grow, or cutting costs for profitability.



A company can sell or deliver its product or service in your home, or outside it. This renegotiation is in flux due to commerce, delivery and the pandemic. At the same time, work can either be done at home, or not at home, which is also going through a rather radical renegotiation.

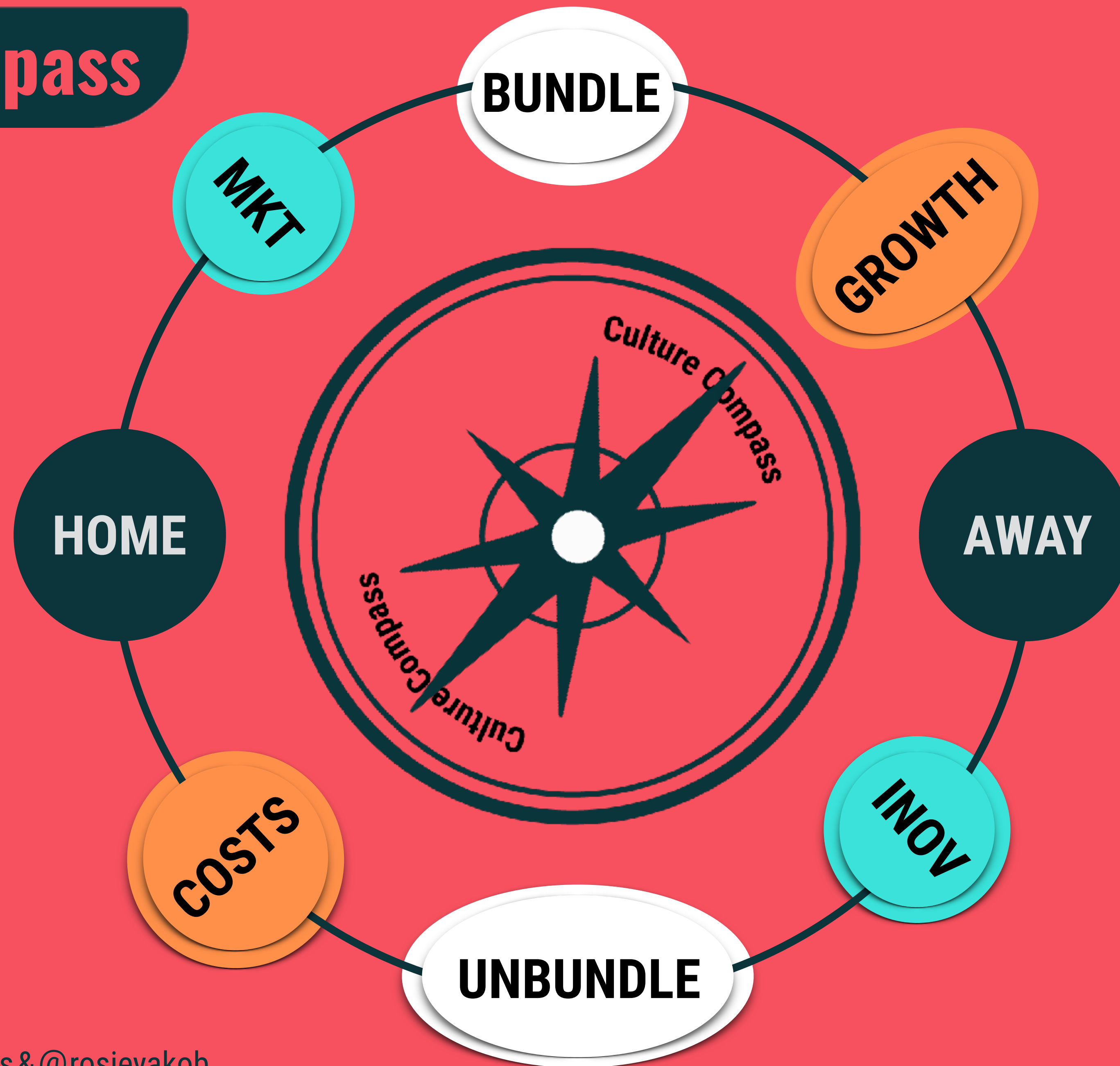


So we made a Commerce Compass too, looking at business orientations.





# Commerce Compass



# ***WHAT IS THE COMMERCE COMPASS?***

The Commerce Compass maps orientation of business as they look to capitalize on opportunities created or exposed by the movements in culture.

The only two ways that companies can grow are:

**Marketing:** sell more things to more people for more money

Or

**Innovation:** find new things to sell

We'll look at the other axes later in the deck.



Part 4

Home



Away

4



# HOME VS AWAY

Where work is done by default depends on the kind of work of course, but the pandemic has accelerated a longer term renegotiation, driven by lots of things, especially digital tools and the incredible rise of rise estate prices in major cities. Where do we watch movies? Where do we work out? Where are gigs held?

Are we working from home or living at work? This expression became common during 2020 and highlights the shifts occurring in what we consider normal here.

Upon first reading this I thought it was a clever, cute and ironic quip. But I read it again and saw it as a sardonic commentary on a current situation. Then the third reading revealed the ugly truth that it's a knowing insight into the terrible doom of life in the modern era.

**White Owl** @white\_owly

We have shifted from making the office more homey to making the home more officey.

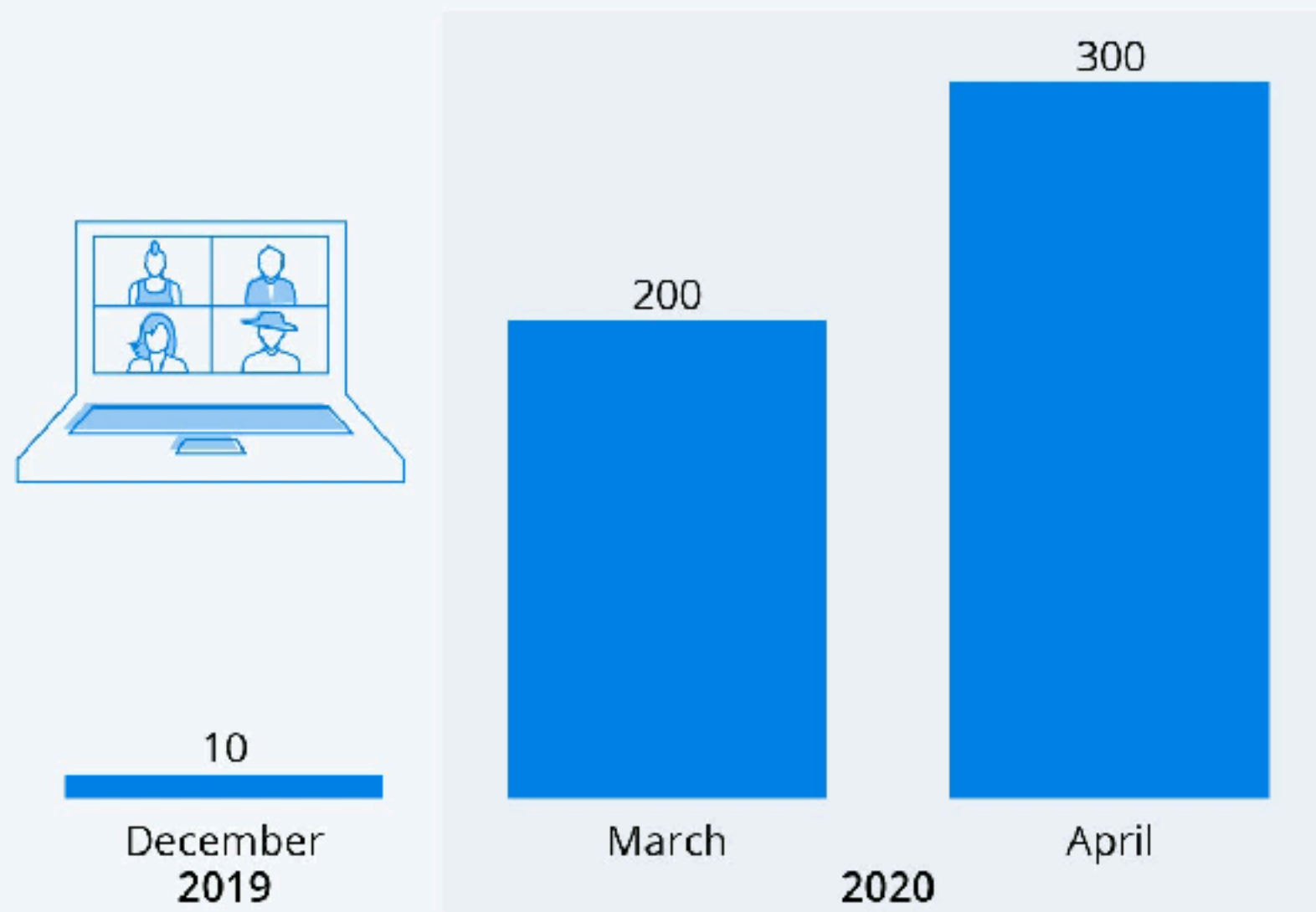
11:07am · 18 Mar 2021 · Twitter for iPad

# 'My Boss Wants Us On Zoom All Day Long'

By Alison Green

## Zoom Grows Exponentially

Number of daily users in Zoom meetings (in millions)



Sources: The Verge, Zoom



statista

# 'Zoom fatigue' is taxing the brain. Here's why that happens.

Video calls seemed an elegant solution to remote work, but they wear on the psyche in complicated ways.

The suspension of many diversions outside the home kept us tethered to our home offices. And, working from home often means longer work days. On average, we've added ~50 minutes to our work days, while working from home.

We also have a new phenomenon: We see ourselves as we're conversing with others... And we don't always like what we see. It's opened up a new path in for brands and retailers who want to help people with how they present themselves working from home.



**MATERIAL WORLD**

## Americans Got Tired of Looking Bad on Zoom

The pandemic's at-home workers are discovering what internet influencers have long known: If you want to be taken seriously, get good lighting.

**AMANDA MULL** NOVEMBER 19, 2020

We are obsessed with mmhmm, a presentation software that makes you look like you know what you're doing. Rather than presenting slides as a stamp-sized thumbnail in the top corner, you can present over your slides, or with them on your shoulder. They've really upped their game, and this days we use mmhmm for almost all of our presentations.



**Funner Zooming**



A collage of five Zoom video call windows featuring actors from the TV show 'Friends'. The windows are arranged in a grid: top-left (Joey Tribbiani), top-center (Joey Tribbiani), top-right (Joey Tribbiani), bottom-left (Joey Tribbiani), and bottom-right (Joey Tribbiani).

# The Best Movie and TV Show Cast Reunions Filmed During Quarantine

The ZOOM life has also lent itself to new opportunities. Josh Gad is credited for being the first to bring movie and cast reunions to the ZOOM format. It's something that is much harder to make happen when you try to bring actors all over the world together. But our familiarity with ZOOM, and the creative constraints of the pandemic, offered a new opportunity.



# Lil Nas X's Roblox concert was attended 33 million times

It's not just limited to cast reunions. More generally, new media creates new opportunities.



## Roblox files to go public

The unicorn gaming company joins Airbnb, DoorDash and Affirm in targeting an IPO before the end of the year

Spa X Home is a spa experience designed for you to create, deliver, and experience for yourself, from within your home. Using ZOOM, and Google Slides, we created an apple cider toner, a face mask, participated in a meditation, and learned how to self-massage our stress away.

# SPA X HOME

## ATTEND THE NEXT SPA X HOME

Global Community Event

Open to all

[SIGN UP](#)

## HOST YOUR OWN, PRIVATE VIRTUAL SPA EVENT

- Birthday party
- Baby shower
  - Reunion
- Friends spa night
- Community / fan engagement
- Team building / virtual offsite

[FIND OUT MORE](#)



# Make Your Own Shake Shack Burger With DIY ShackBurger Kit

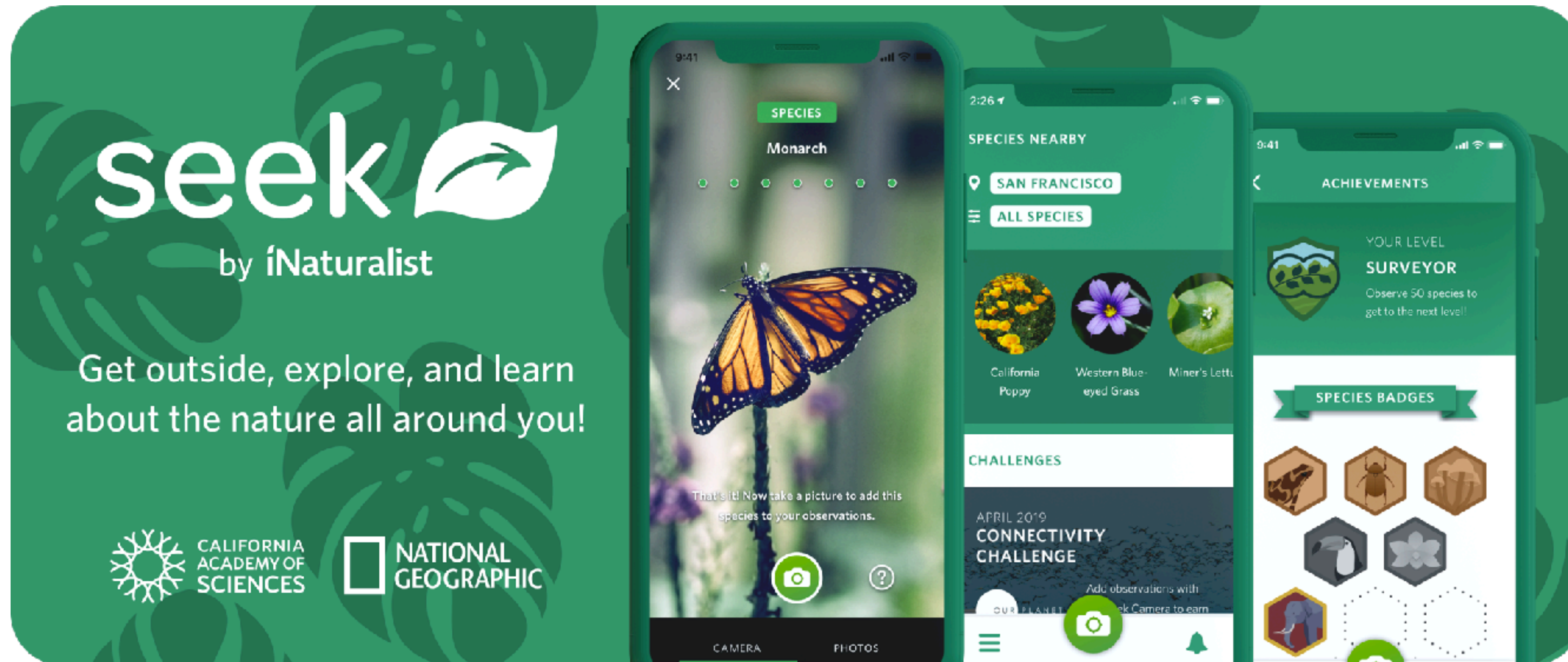
Items are prepared fresh and shipped from the restaurant chain's shop.

Because we were leaving our houses less, restaurants had to innovate, too. We saw delivery service use skyrocket, but we also saw brands getting creative in how consumers received their food. Beyond DoorDash/Seamless/Deliveroo, brands like Shake Shack put together DIY kits.



## Seek helps you identify flora and fauna all around you

Seek is an app that helps you identify flora and fauna all around you. It's like Pokemon Go for nature. It helps turn your backyard into an experience, giving you a chance to trade your work world for something a bit more wondrous.



# Thanks

GET IN TOUCH

[hello@geniussteals.co](mailto:hello@geniussteals.co)

SUBSCRIBE

[geniussteals.co/subscribe](https://geniussteals.co/subscribe)

