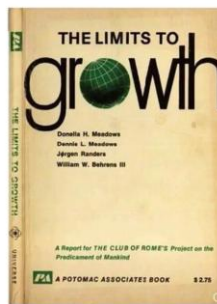


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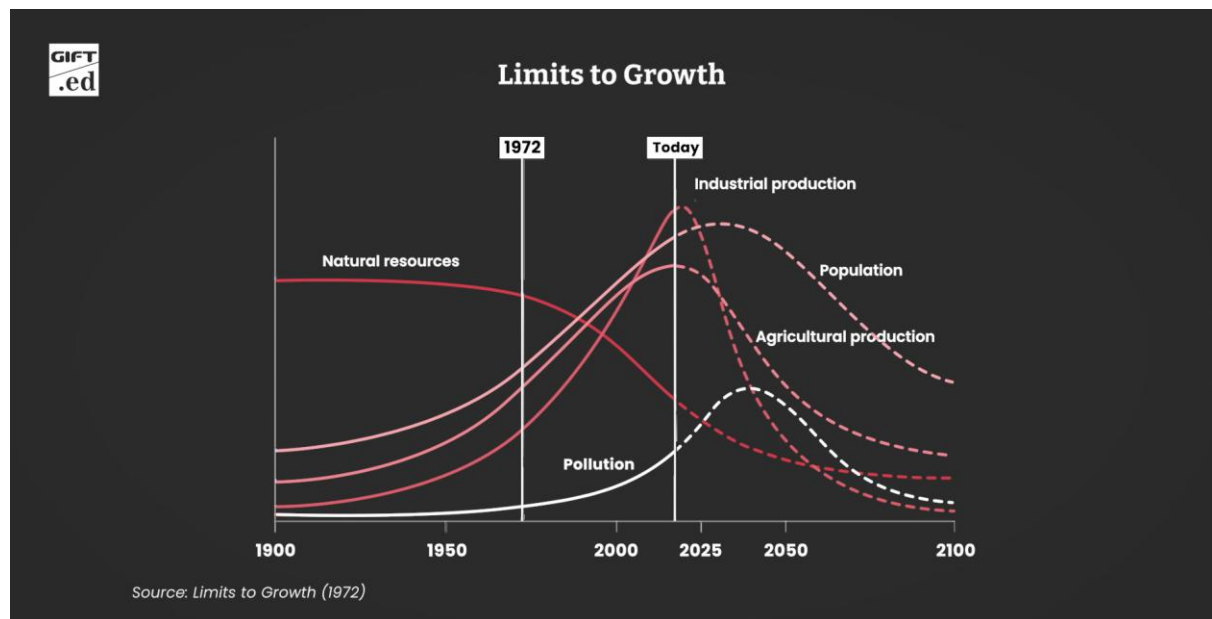
How Pollution Leads to Ungovernable Societies

Elaine Fernandez:

In 1972, Professor Emeritus of Climate Strategy at the BI Norwegian Business School, Jorgen Randers, co-authored the seminal report "Limits to Growth" which predicted that the world would not be able to support civilisation growth beyond the year 2100.



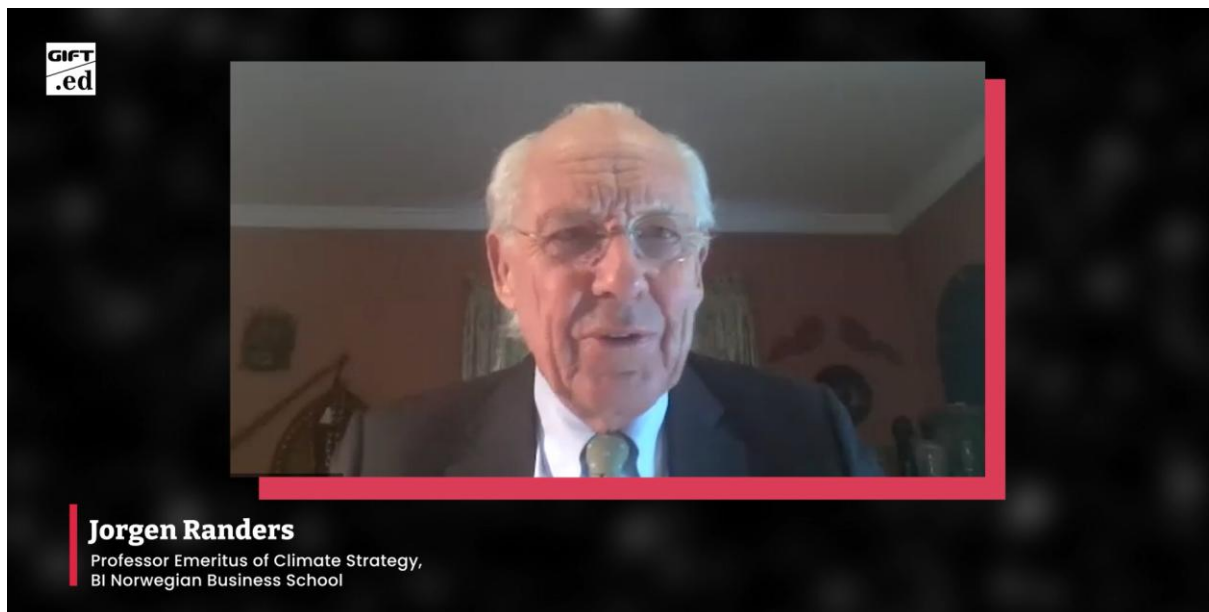
This was one of the first international efforts to question whether "growth at all costs" was a sustainable approach to global economic development. It determined that there were 5 limits to growth on Earth: population, agricultural production, natural resources, industrial production and pollution.



While the unprecedented industrial growth, urbanisation and ever-increasing global population we've witnessed since then have yet to result in resource or societal collapse, they've fuelled a major existential threat: pollution.

Fifty years on from the publication of "The Limits to Growth", you'll hear from Professor Randers about the impacts that unchecked pollution will have on the environment, geopolitics and sustainable development of our civilisation as a whole.

Professor Jorgen Randers:



So, what has happened over the last 50 years is that humanity has continued to grow physically, both in population size and in the resources used, and in the emissions of pollutants and CO₂. The most important learning from the last 50 years is that it has shown that the real problem is climate emissions.

So we are facing a pollution problem. So what will happen is fairly obvious as we continue emitting too much CO₂, the temperature is going to increase, and gradually over the next couple of generations, and we will experience damage as a consequence of this, first of all, extreme weather, then the bleaching of the coral reefs and the shift in agricultural productivity as a consequence of extreme weather, droughts, forest fires, et cetera.

And gradually over time, this will lead to a decline in average wellbeing. The incomes are likely to continue to go up, but the negative side effects of deteriorating nature is going to influence the wellbeing of people. And when the wellbeing starts to decline, then you get social unrest basically, which makes it difficult for governments to do anything about the underlying problems.

My feeling is that the next 60 years, unless we do something dramatic, it will be a gradually deteriorating climate, and then we will see social collapses in vulnerable nations. So essentially national breakdowns of the type of Somalia, Afghanistan, those types of countries that move into being unrulable, so that even if the government wanted to do something about the underlying problem, they no longer can.

But I do not believe in a major global environmental collapse where suddenly one day you open the door and it is plus six degrees centigrade outside and everything disappears. I don't think that's what's going to happen. It's just going to get worse and worse and worse and worse, very gradually. And then suddenly we will get social crisis, not environmental crisis.

Elaine Fernandez:

As Professor Randers puts it, the changes resulting from CO2 pollution are gradual and often difficult to spot within a single lifetime. But rising temperatures and extreme weather will nonetheless culminate in serious challenges for humans, the likes of which we have not encountered in recorded history.

Just in 2023 alone, we've seen unparalleled widespread extreme weather events, like wildfires in Canada and the Hawaiian island of Maui, or Cyclone Mocha striking Myanmar and Bangladesh, resulting in widescale damage to property, loss of livelihoods, and adverse impacts on health and wellbeing. And as societal wellbeing continues to deteriorate, social unrest will rise, making it harder for governments to enact the necessary policies for sustainable development.

