Biophysical Limits to Growth: the future of food and energy

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Abstract: The human population has reached a level far in excess of the ability of the planet to sustain it long-term through using synthetic nitrogen. The 'green revolution' was driven by a massive increase in fossil energy in food production; this one-off subsidy from the past is close to its end as the 'easy energy pickings' diminish. To be able to feed the burgeoning population without fossil fuels and keep greenhouse gas emissions at a safe level will require a drastic reduction in livestock for human food and in reduced emissions from transporting and processing food. This required change will have many human and ecological health benefits but puts New Zealand in a challenging position.

The slides from this talk follow.

Further sources of relevant material are available at:

the website of the Better Futures Forum – towards a more resilient Aotearoa: https://bff.org.nz/
a webinar - The Future of Food presented by Mike Joy: https://thebetterbase.com/future-of-food/

the website of the Sustainable Living Trust: http://futurelivingskills.org.nz/

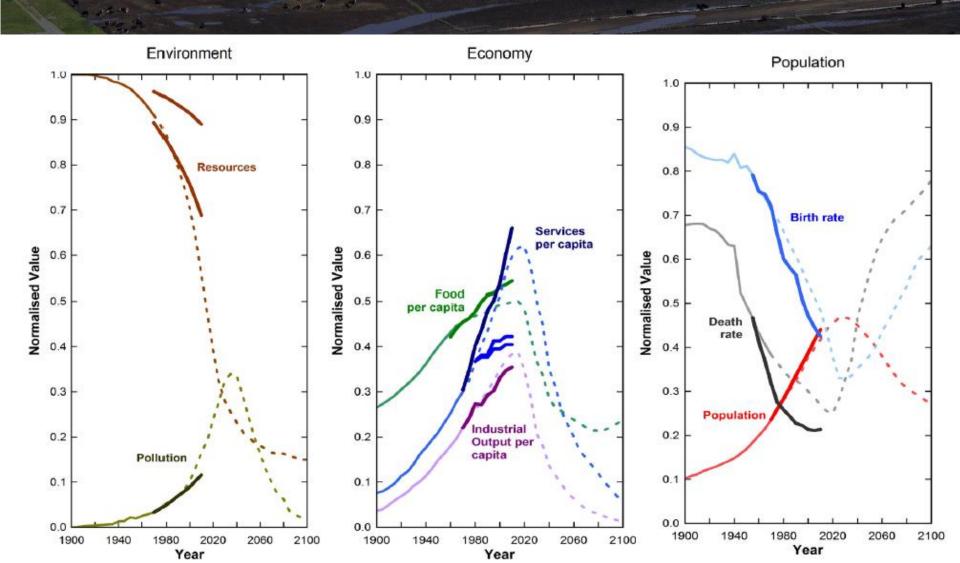
Biophysical limits to growth; the future of food and energy

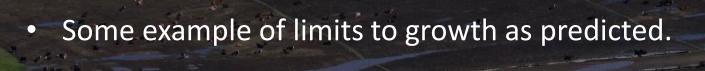
Earth from Mars

Dr Mike Joy - Institute for Governance and Policy studies (IGPS)
Victoria University



Limits to growth (1972) Donella H. Meadows, Dennis L. Meadows, Jørgen Randers, and William W. Behrens - updated 2014 Graham
Turner





- New Zealand and global examples of biophysical realities overshoot of planetary boundaries and warnings in relation to food production
- Understanding energy
- Energy density and its consequences
- The energy transition away from fossil carbon the reality of a renewable energy future where we all live happily ever after



World Scientists' Warning of a Climate Emergency

WILLIAM J. RIPPLE, CHRISTOPHER WOLF, THOMAS M. NEWSOME, PHOEBE BARNARD, WILLIAM R. MOOMAW, AND 11,258 SCIENTIST SIGNATORIES FROM 153 COUNTRIES (LIST IN SUPPLEMENTAL FILE S1)

cientists have a moral obligation to clearly warn humanity of any catastrophic threat and to "tell it like it is." On the basis of this obligation and the graphical indicators presented below, we declare, with more than 11,000 scientist signatories from around the world, clearly and unequivocally that planet Earth is facing a climate emergency.

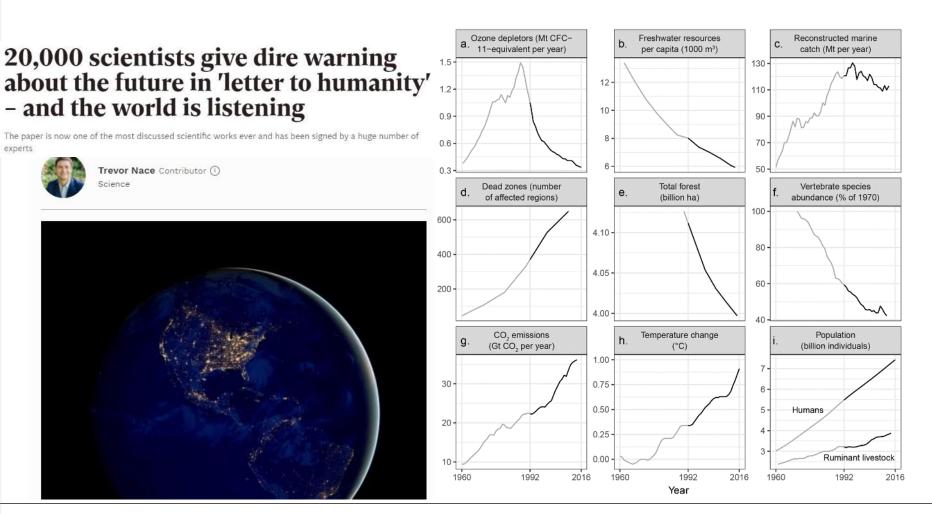
as actual climatic impacts (figure 2). We use only relevant data sets that are clear, understandable, systematically collected for at least the last 5 years, and updated at least annually.

The climate crisis is closely linked to excessive consumption of the wealthy lifestyle. The most affluent countries are mainly responsible for the historical GHG emissions and genera Project website

forest loss in Brazil's Amazon has now started to increase again (figure 1g). Consumption of solar and wind energy has increased 373% per decade, but in 2018, it was still 28 times smaller than fossil fuel consumption (combined gas, coal, oil; figure 1h). As of 2018, approximately 14.0% of global GHG emissions were covered

To view the Alliance of World Scientists website or to sign this article, go to https://scientistswarning. forestry.oregonstate.edu.

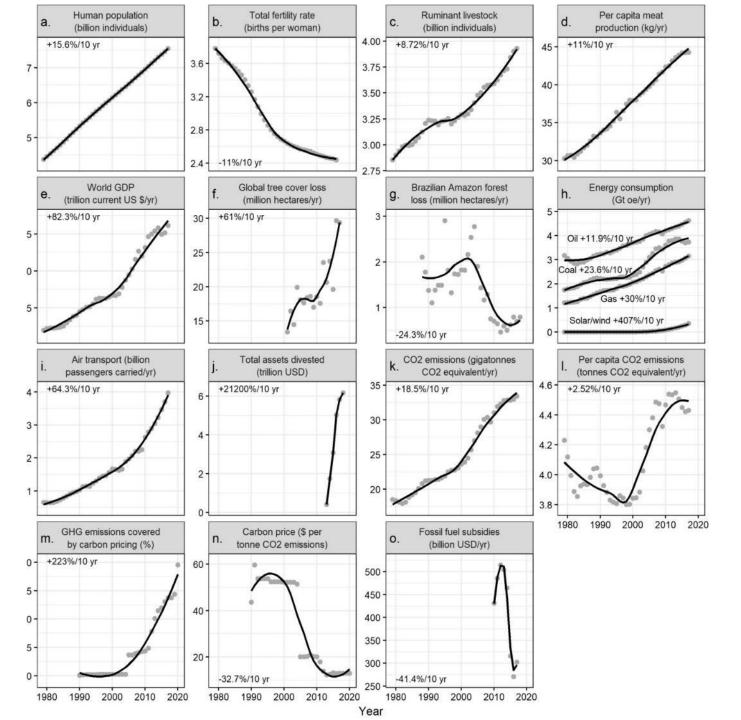
Manifestation of "Limits to growth"



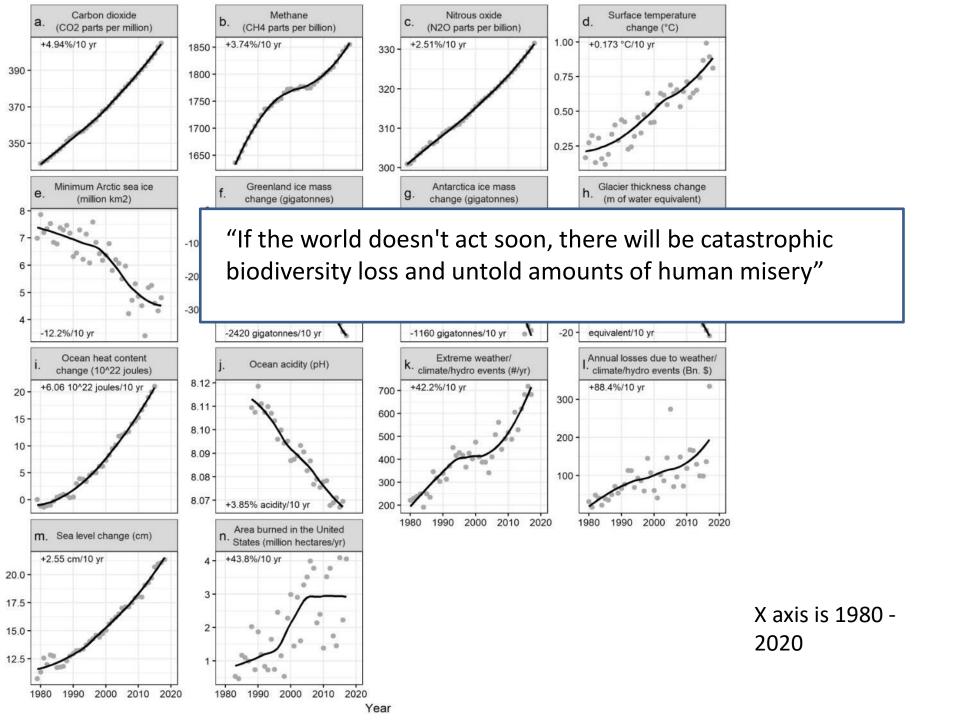
From: World Scientists' Warning to Humanity: A Second Notice

BioScience. 2017;67(12):1026-1028. doi:10.1093/biosci/bix125

BioScience | © The Author(s) 2017. Published by Oxford University Press on behalf of the American Institute of Biological Sciences. All rights reserved. For permissions, please e-mail: journals.permissions@oup.com



X axis is 1980 -2020



The real issues – (not terrorism or the Kardashians)

How do we feed a burgeoning population and maintain the life supporting capacity of the planet given all this on the horizon?:

- All these things are declining amount and quality of land, fossil fuels and EROI, water quality, biodiversity and wild fisheries.
- Increasing impacts of climate change, antibiotic resistance, and much more.
- >80 million extra mouths to feed every year, increasing animal products and fossil fuels derived food in diets and increasing food wastage
- We have a perfect storm imminent as predicted by LTG

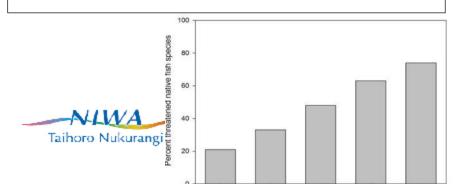
Limits to growth in New Zealand



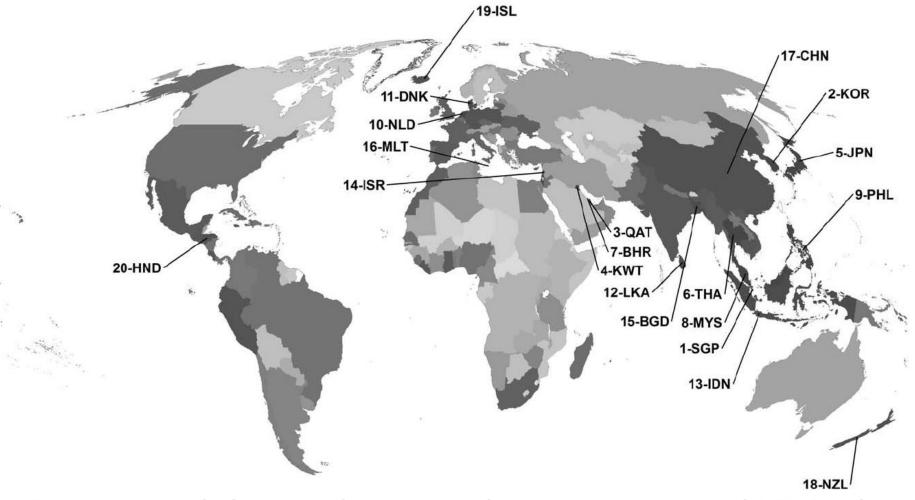
consequences.

Sever

nment.



Manifestation of "Limits to growth"

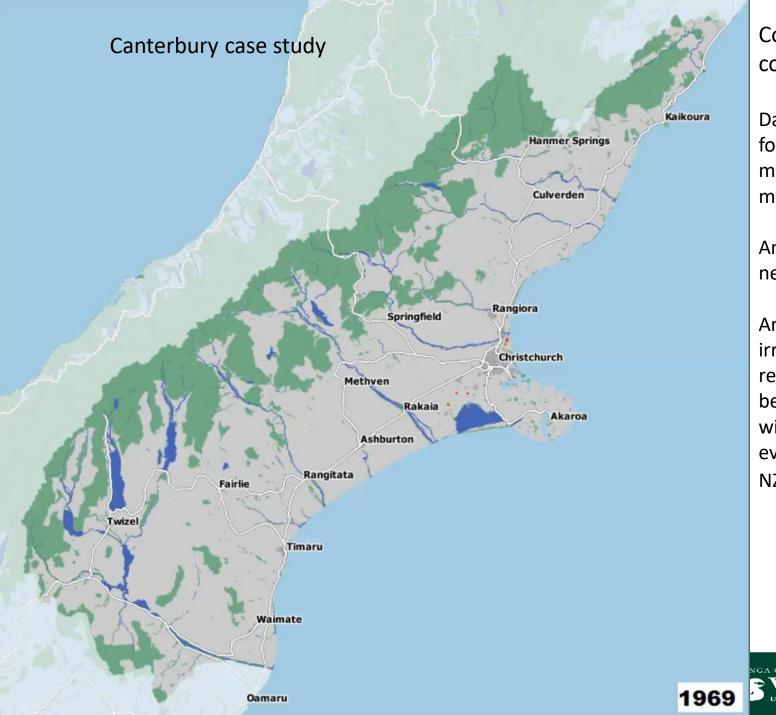


Twenty worst-ranked countries by proportional composite environmental (pENV) rank

OPEN ACCESS Freely available online







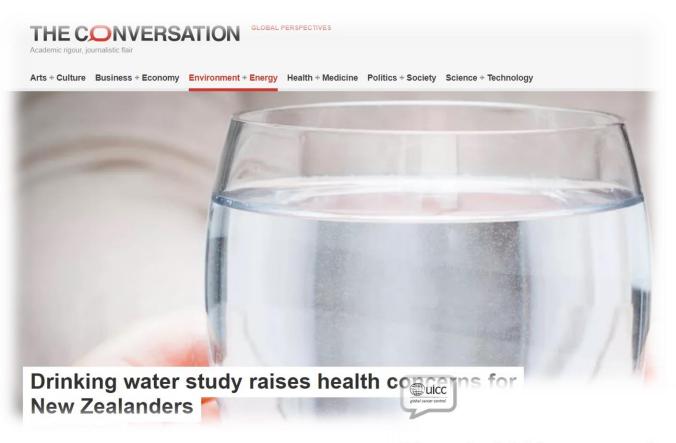
Consents for dairy conversion

Dairy production 60 fold increase from 6 mkg in 1984 to 385 mkg 2016

And the conversions need water lots of it

And the pivot irrigators meant removing the shelter belts in the region with the greatest evapotranspiration in NZ (322 mm/pa)





International Journal of Cancer

Nitrate in drinking water and colorectal cancer risk: A nationwide population-based cohort study

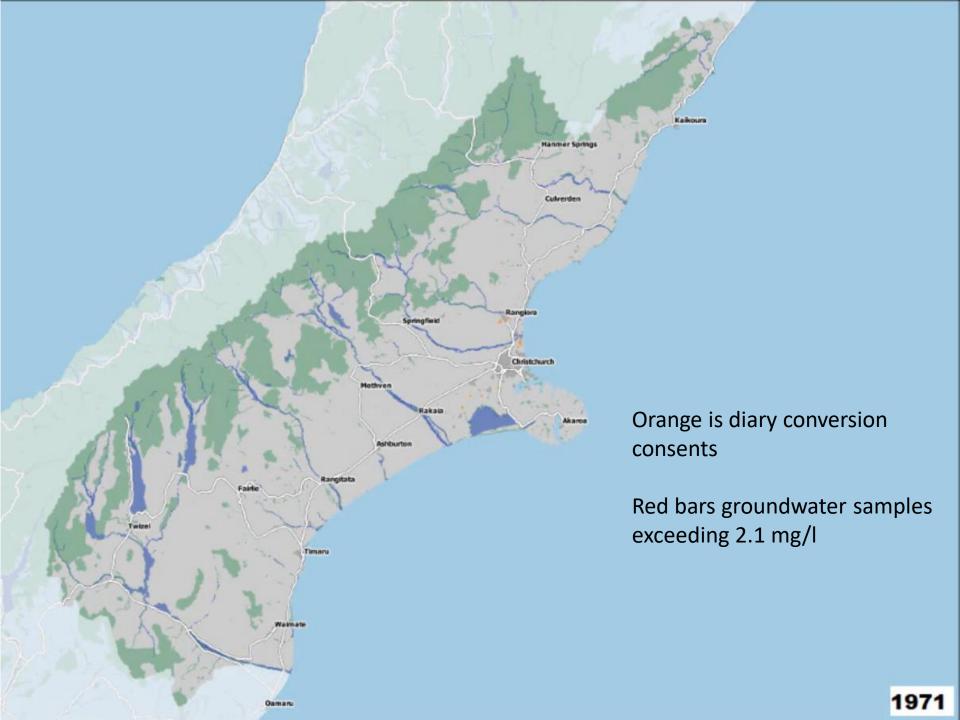
Jörg Schullehner 61,2,3,4, Birgitte Hansen2, Malene Thygesen3,4, Carsten B. Pedersen3,4 and Torben Sigsgaard1

https://theconversation.com/drinking-water-study-rais estimate for Period Research Period Programment of Forestics and Business and Mariness and Social Sciences, Aarhus

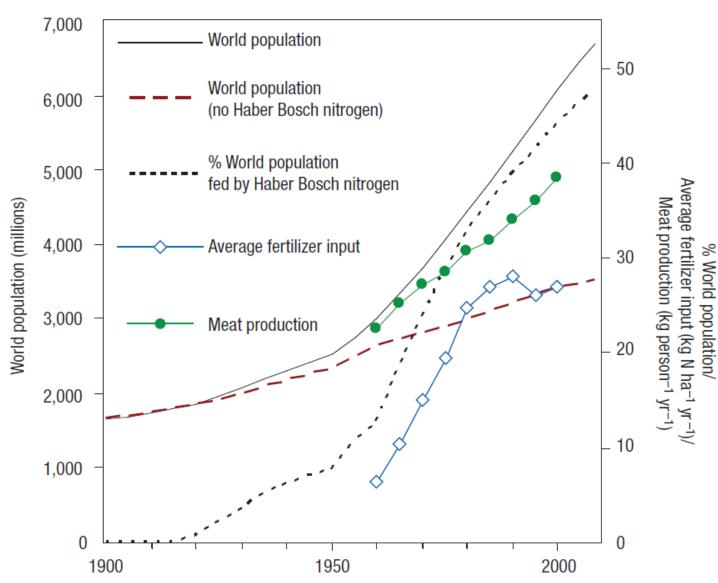


¹ Department of Public Health, Aarhus University, Aarhus, Denmark

² Department of Groundwater and Quaternary Geology Mapping, Geological Survey of Denmark and Greenland, Aarhus, Denmark

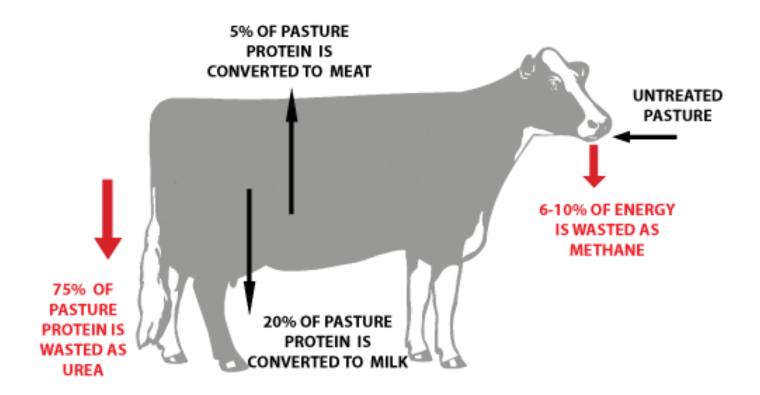


The green (or fossil fuel) revolution?



How a century of ammonia synthesis changed the world

- For every 100 kg of nitrate fertiliser applied to soil, >1 kg ends up in the atmosphere as nitrous oxide (N_2O) , 300 times more potent GHG than CO_2 and N_2O is the most ozone-depleting gas
- Every 100 kg N fertiliser has 5200Mj of embodied energy and produces 1200 kg CO₂e



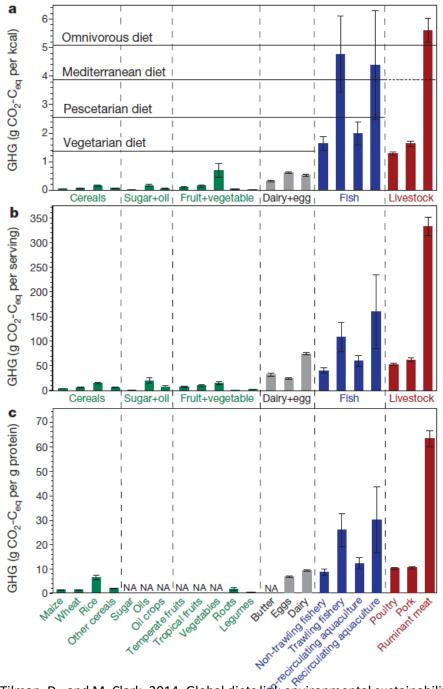
Overdose?

- But ~ 1 billion people have inadequate and insecure diets, while
 2.1 billion people are obese or overweight from the move to
 highly processed foods high in refined sugar, refined fats, oils and
 meats.
 - Food system dependant on fossil energy not just fertiliser industrial food production system now uses more than 10 33
 units of fossil energy to plough, plant, fertilise, harvest,
 transport, refine, package, store/refrigerate, and deliver 1 unit
 of food energy to be eaten by humans.
 - Producing 1 calorie food in USA uses 21 calories of fossil energy

Overdose?

- More and more people dependent on fossil fuels but they are running out EROI down from ~70 to ~ 15 globally the easy stuff is gone
- Once we started eating oil we initiated the massive population increase of humans and the animals we eat (the 'green' revolution)
- As indicator of human dominance of the planet the ratio of humans and our food animals and pets to wild animals?

Worlds land mammals by weight Domesticated livestock & pets 46% Cattle 31% Biomass of humans & livestock 98% vs. wild mammals 2% Humans 21% Smil, V. 2003. The Earth's Biosphere: Evolution, Dynamics, and Change The MIT Press Grapic by Shaun Lee Wild mammals 2% Elephants 0.1%



 What we eat makes a huge difference + animal agriculture is responsible for :

GHG emissions

~ 55 % of the sedimentation of waterways through accelerated erosion

37 % of pesticide use

50 % all antibiotic use

33% of anthropogenic nitrogen and phosphorus to freshwater resources

Tilman, D., and M. Clark. 2014. Global diets link environmental sustainability and human health. Nature 515

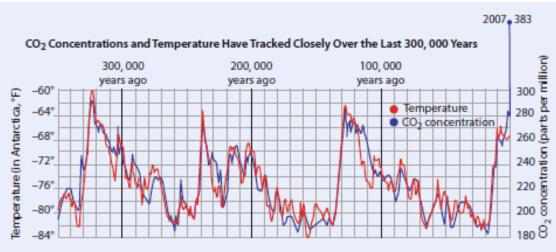
Manifestation of "Limits to growth"

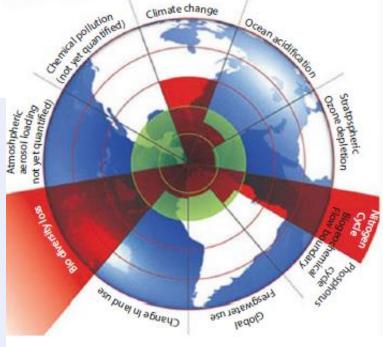
Planetary boundaries; a safe operating space for humanity

Two converging issues:

- Easy fossil fuels gone
- Carbon neutral by 2050

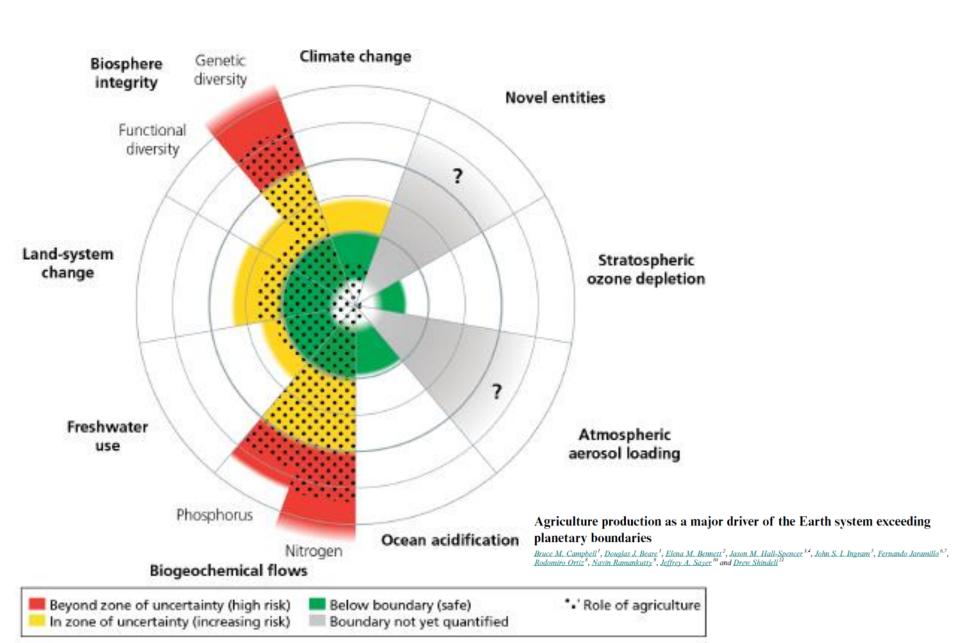
The animal agriculture footprint





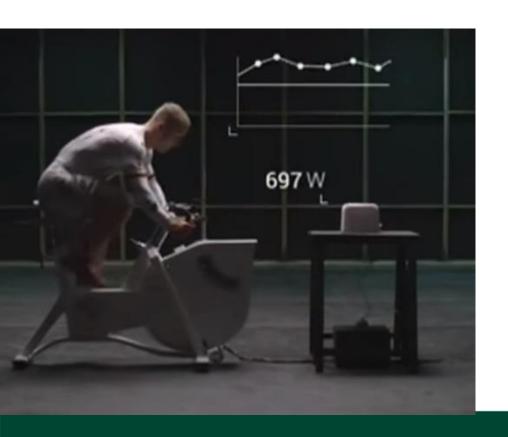


Manifestation of "Limits to growth"



Understanding energy

The energy/electricity confusion and our dependence on cheap fossil energy - the concept of energy slaves









Personal fossil fuel energy slaves

- 1 barrel of oil = 1,700 kWh of work
- One human working one day 0.6 kWh
- So 7 years of human work in 1 barrel of oil or 4 years after conversion losses
- @ ~ \$70 per barrel that is < 1cent/hr (think of the economic consequences of this ignored by most economists)
- Or a 60 litre petrol tank full = human working for 4 years
- How many humans to power a small car? = 184
- For the developed countries primary energy use/population = more than 150 slaves per person (working 24/7)

https://carboncounter.wordpress.com/2015/06/01/the-future-of-energy-why-power-density-matters/



 In 2018 the global economy ran on 17 trillion watts of energy 80% of this was from oil which is equivalent to 500 billion human workers (cf 4 billion real workers)

That is 70 for every human on planet,

Q. So why is an ecologist talking about energy?

A. EROI (Energy return on energy invested) aka fitness (Darwin)



What about the future of energy (and our slaves)? What about peak oil?

EROI (Energy return on energy invested)

How much energy is used to capture the fossil energy available

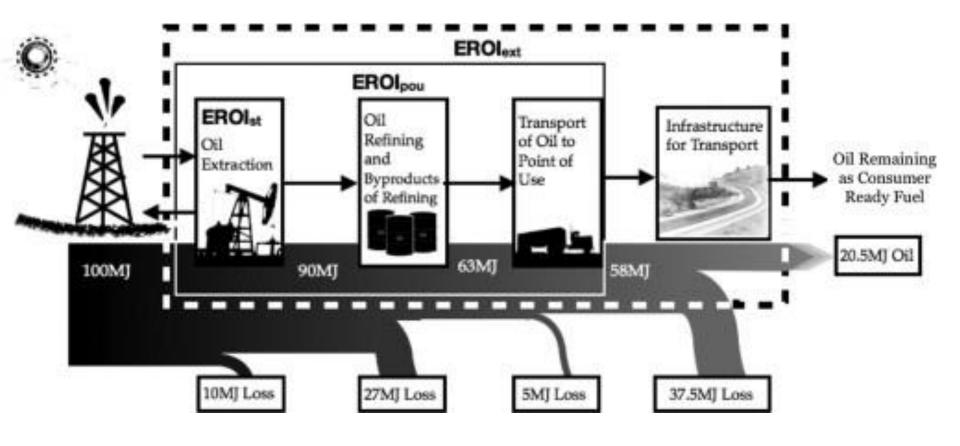
net energy = 1 - EROI

$$EROI = \frac{Energy returned to society}{Energy required to get that energy}$$

The issue we have is that EROI of oil is declining and has major implications

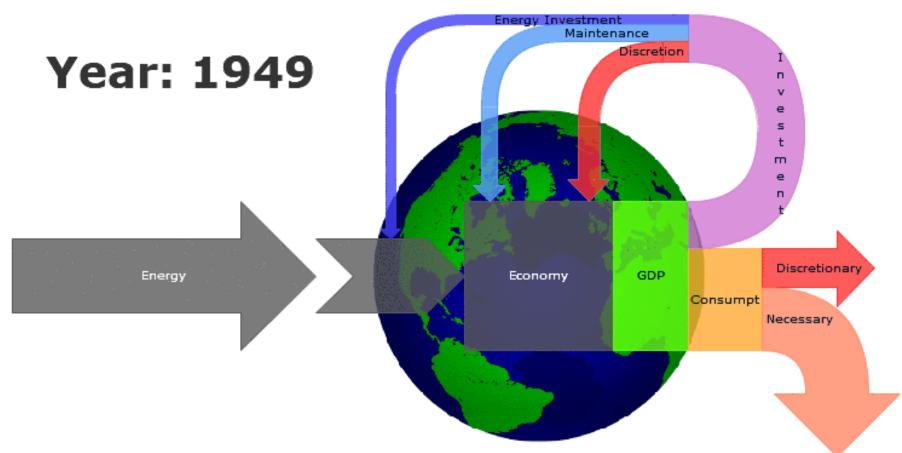


Thermodynamic and other realities of energy conversions



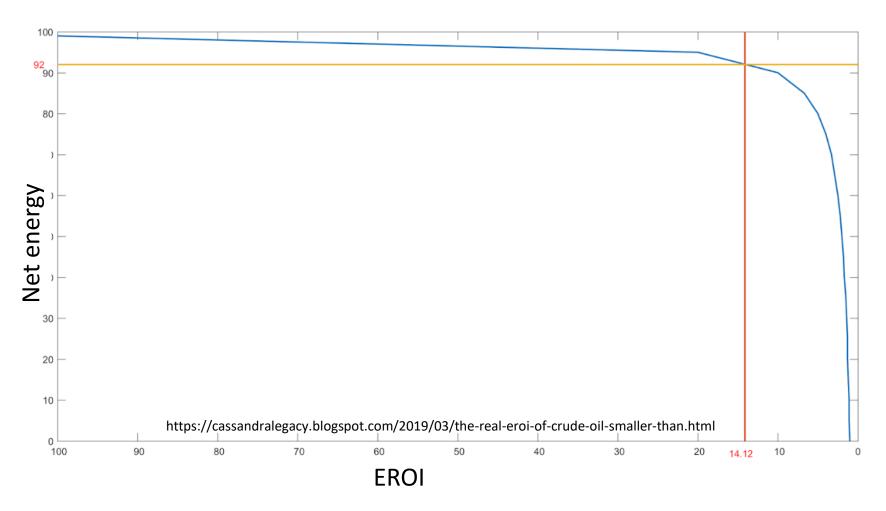


Economic realities of how energy conversion reduces discretionary \$



Energy investment required as a percentage of total global GDP (Hall, C et al, 2012 bit.ly/hlcsmeit)

The consequences - as EROI goes down - the Seneca cliff



(We are now producing and consuming 2-4 barrels of oil for each barrel we find)

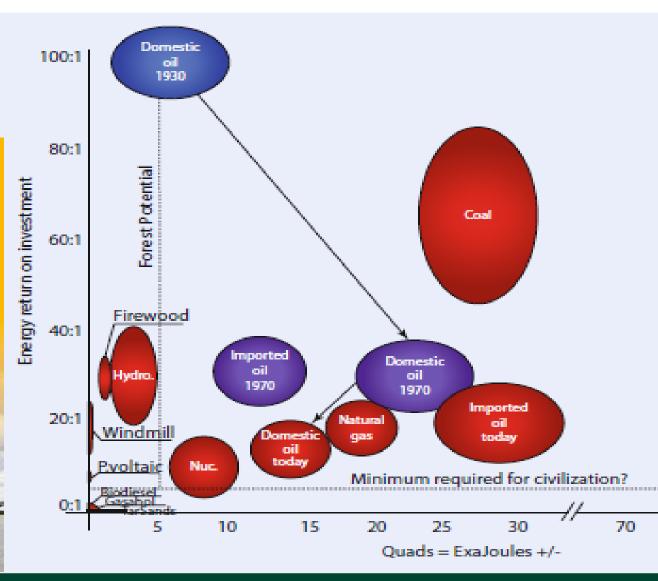
EROI of different energy sources and declines over time

Charles A.S. Hall Kent Klitgaard

Energy and the Wealth of Nations

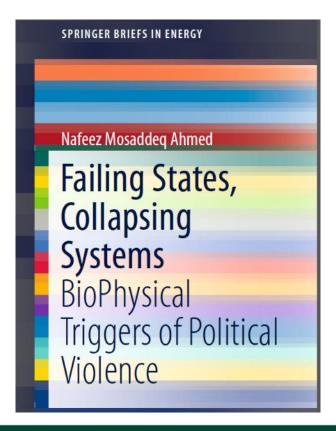
An Introduction to Biophysical Economics







Biophysical economics has many possible implications beyond what we are discussing tonight





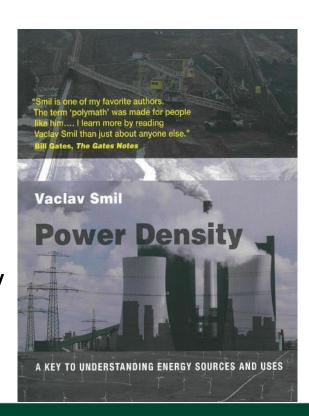


How do we transition to this decarbonised world?

Biomass coal hydrocarbons

Can we move to a world without fossil fuels that looks a lot like today?

The crucial issue to understand is power density





The transition to a decarbonised world

Energy density of different energy options

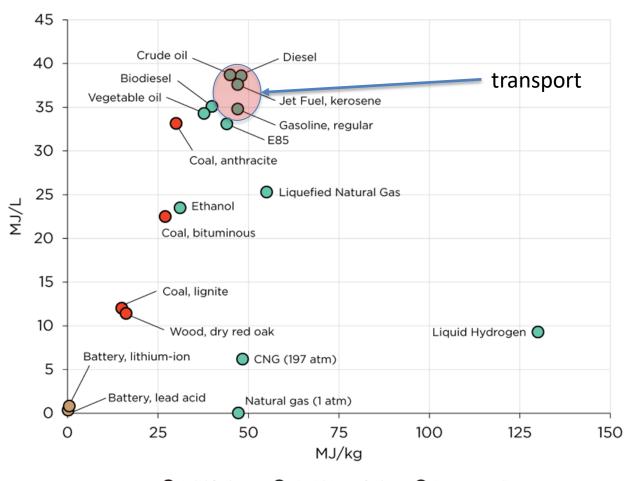


Figure 1.3. Volumetric and gravimetric density of fuels and storage media. Solid fuels Liquid & gas fuels Storage media Sources: Coal: Tadeusz Patzek and Gregory Croft, "A Global Coal Production Forecast with Multi-Hubbert Cycle Analysis," Energy 35 (2010): 3111. Natural gas. Crude oil and wood. Batteries and additional batteries. All others: Charles Hall and Kent Klitgaard, Energy and the Wealth of Nations: Understanding the Biophysical Economy (New York: Springer, 2012).

How is our transition to a decarbonised world coming along?

Where we are now

Energy use fossil vs renewable (per capita)

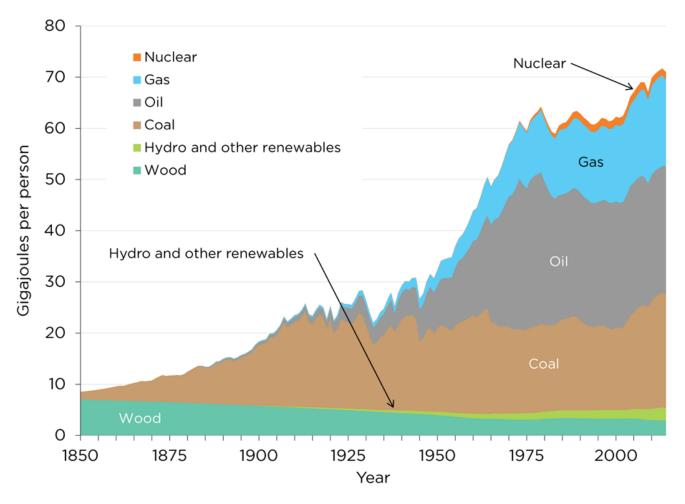


Figure 2.1. World per capita primary energy consumption per year by fuel type, 1850–2014. Primary electricity converted by direct equivalent method.

Source: Data compiled by J. David Hughes from Arnulf Grubler, "Technology and Global Change: Data Appendix," (1998), and BP, Statistical Review of World Energy, (annual).

The transition to a decarbonised world

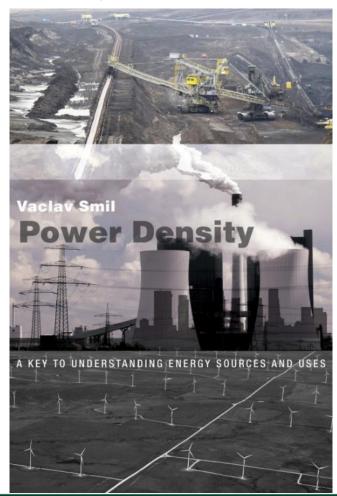
Energy density comparisons using a common currency

Power density = energy flux per time per unit of horizontal surface

Watts per square meter

 W/m^2

Can be used to evaluate and compare all energy fluxes in nature and society.





The transition to a decarbonised world a reality check

Example: Britain consumes energy at a rate of about 5000 watts per person, popn. density

= 250 people km² 1.25 watts m²

The options:

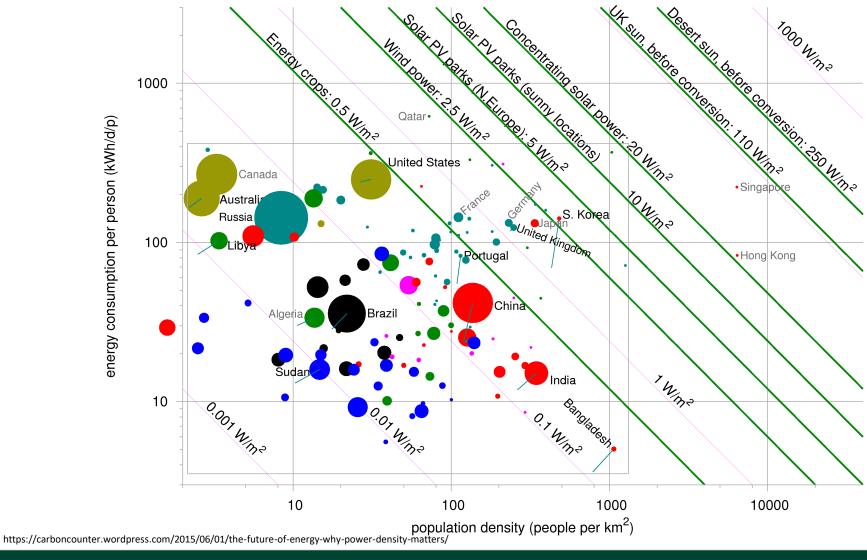
- Hydro; the gravitational potential energy of rainfall in the Scottish highlands has a raw power per unit area of roughly 0.24 watts/M²
- Biofuel; energy crops in Europe deliver about 0.5 watts/M²
- Wind; wind farms deliver roughly 2.5 watts/M²
- Solar; solar photovoltaic farms in Bavaria, Germany, and Vermont, USA, deliver 4 watts/M²

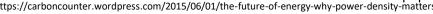
Average for a mixture of renewables ~ 1.25 watts/M² ---- see the problem?

MacKay, D. J. C. (2013). "Solar energy in the context of energy use, energy transportation and energy storage." <u>Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society a-Mathematical Physical and Engineering Sciences</u> **371.**

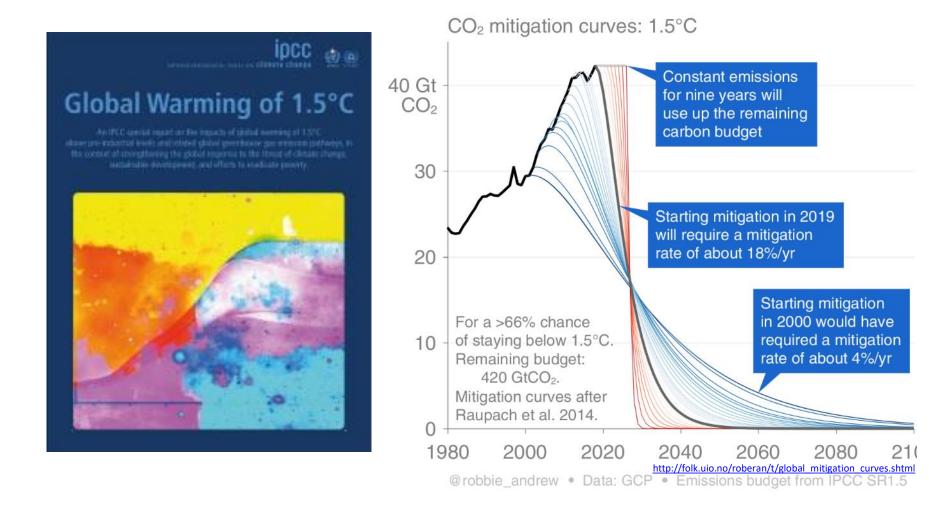


The transition to a decarbonised world









Only 250 gigatons of fossil carbon can be removed from geological deposits by the end of the century. That means a 10% annual reduction in oil production until the sustainable level of 10 million barrels per day is reached in about 2050



WORLD ENERGY CONSUMPTION AND MIX 1800 - 2018

BASED UPON DATA FROM BP STATISTICAL REVIEW 2019 (1965 - 2018), PRE 1965 FROM SMIL, BIOMASS SINCE 1900 FROM FERNANDES

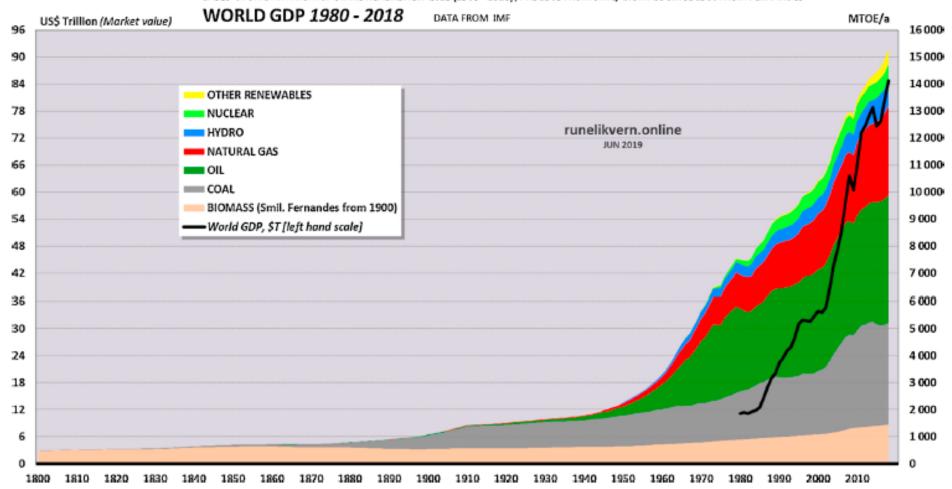
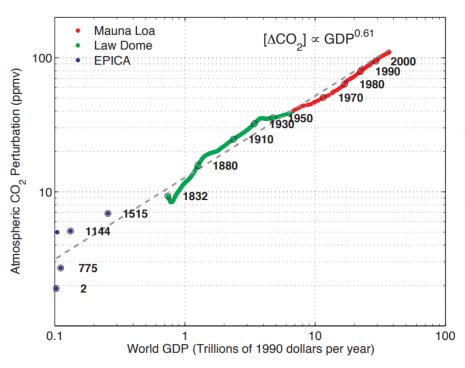
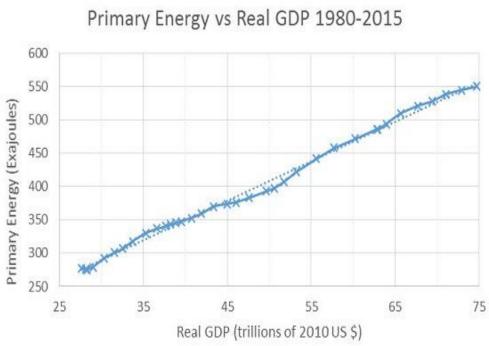


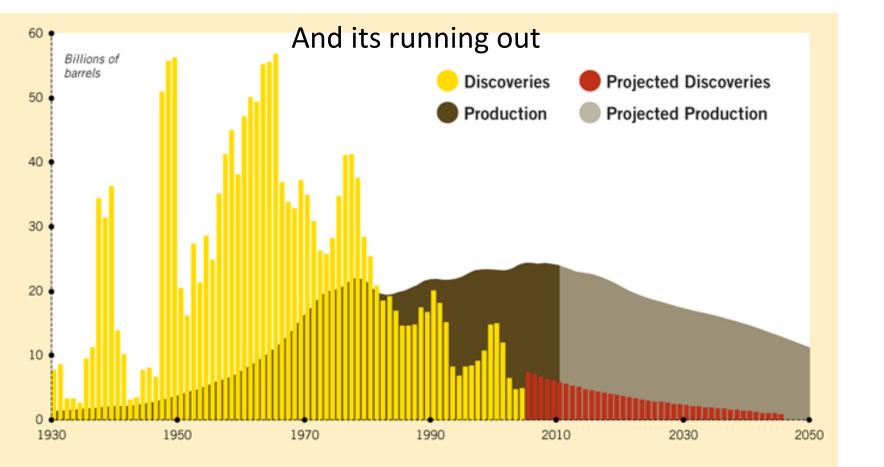
Fig. 3. Global energy mix 1800-2018 (Source: BP, 2019, Likvern 2019).

OK great the solution ~ 10% reduction every year ... here is our dilemma

The fossil Energy - GDP - carbon linkage So imagine -10% p/a GDP







THE REALITIES OF DECLINE: CONVENTIONAL OIL

Discoveries of conventional oil peaked in the 1960s and have since slowed to a trickle. Thus it is widely expected that production of conventional oil will soon enter terminal decline—indeed, production has essentially leveled off since 2005. Production of unconventional oil (including tar sands and shale oil) is still on the rise, but it too will eventually hit its peak, as will coal and natural gas.

DATA: ASPO, EXXONMOBIL



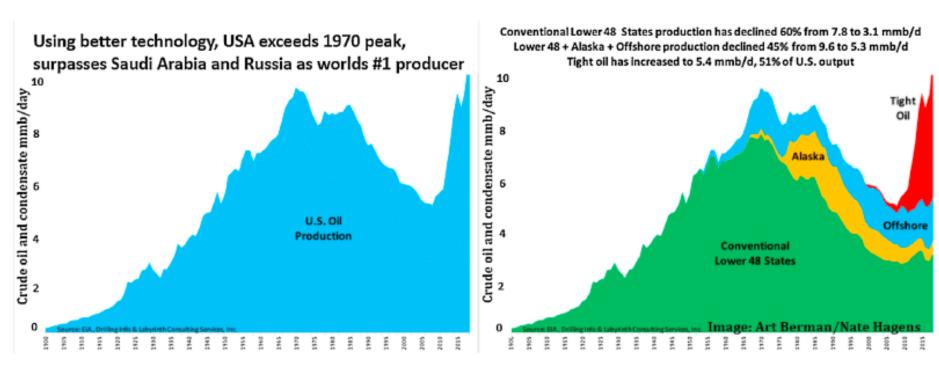


Fig. 4. U.S.A. Oil Production. 1900-2018.



Either way change like we have never see is coming, and we can carry on as we are and see what happens or we can manage the change.

What do we see?



The Uninhabitable Earth

A STORY OF THE FUTURE

David Wallace-Wells



The Big Build: How Auckland Airport's \$5 billion spend-up will change the way we travel

4 Apr, 2019 5:00am

 Cognitive dissonance seems to be the norm, helped by many myths suggesting that we can carry on with business as usual by switching to renewable energy



- That switch is just not even vaguely possible. But even IPCC reports are based on as yet unproven mitigations "magic" like CCS as well as tree planting, as well as 'renewable energy' myths like hydrogen.
- Over hyped 'options' like electric vehicles and tree planting and sales people dependent on BAU pushing more consumption, crucial they keep the truth buried

Reality check mitigation (trees)

- Trees for sequestration using the average rate of sequestration by pine trees in NZ to take up our gross emissions for one year (2017) we would need 12.5 million ha of trees (half of NZ total area) or roughly 8.8 billion trees.
- Plant a tree to mitigate flight to Singapore? CO₂ per person for that flight is 2.35 tonnes = the annual sequestration of 0.5 Ha native trees
- Trees globally If we planted the whole planet that could possibly be planted in trees we could according to the latest research could over many decades of growing store up to 205 Gigatons of carbon what we emit in 5.5 years of the 2018 gross emissions of 37.1 Gt

Reality check renewable

Photo-voltaic panels give 5 – 30% of rated of output and **Wind turbines** give 10 -45% of rated output

Crucially all renewable options depend on fossil fuels for construction, maintenance and installation – renewable is not made by renewable. Most option require the same suite of rare metals as evs and all possible fossil replacements

Carbon capture and storage (CCS) for coal uses 25 – 45% of the energy created

Reality check renewable

- The 29,000 wind turbines and 1.6 million PV systems provide only 3.1% of Germany's energy needs and have cost well over 100 billion Euros so far and likely another 450 billion Euros over the next two decades.
- Hydrogen is an energy transfer medium not a source, huge problems with storage and high pressure heavy tanks, leakage and energy loss in process, if made from gas no reduction in GHG emissions

Reality check EVs



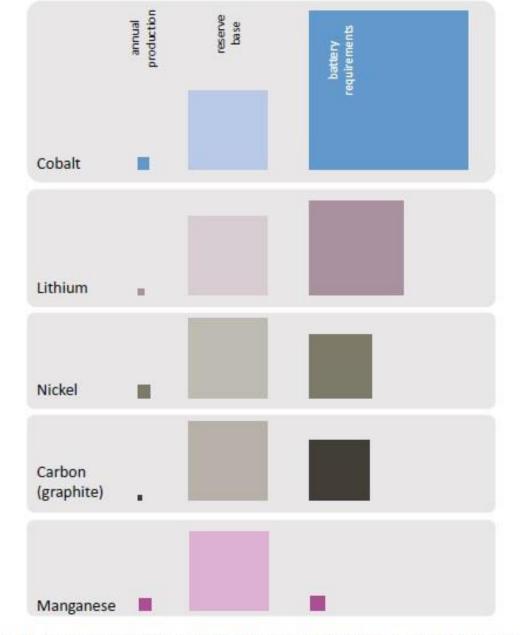
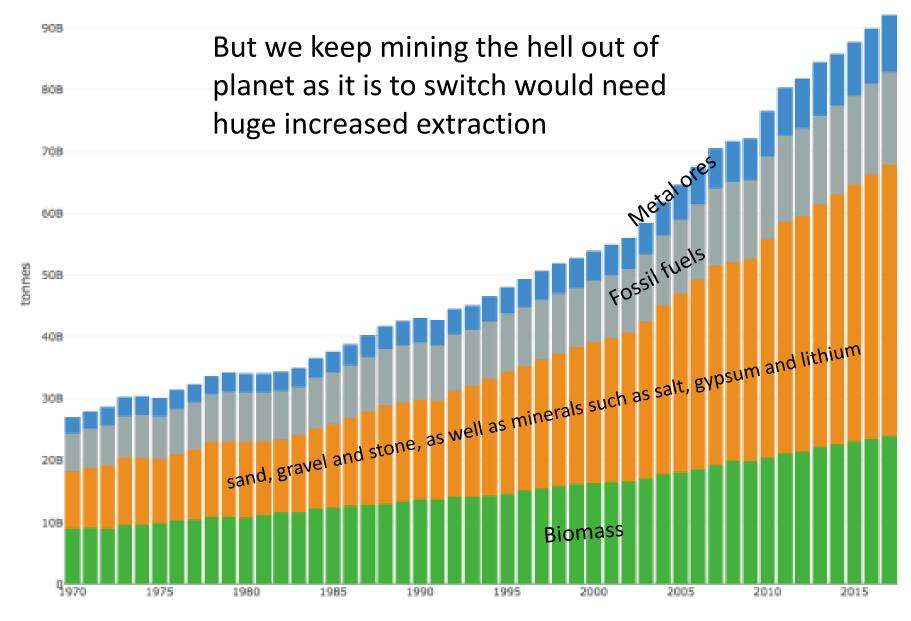
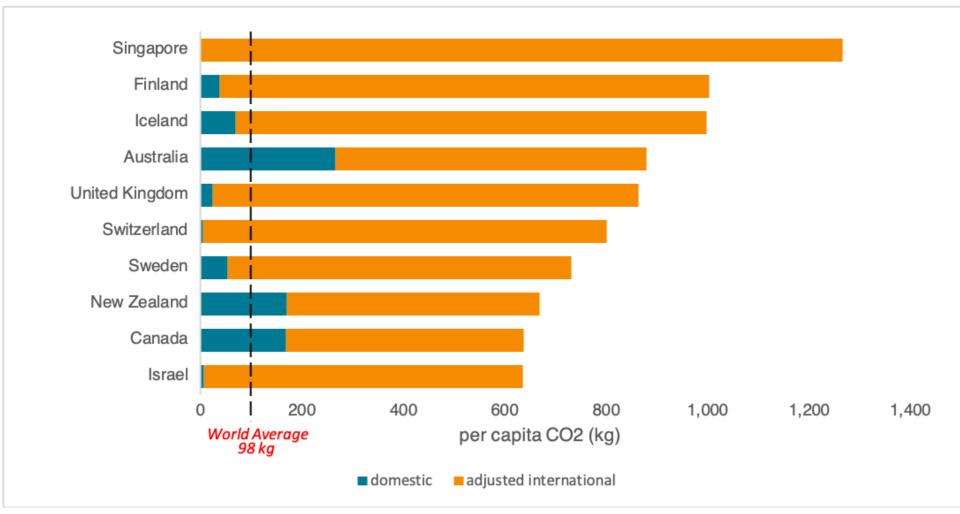


Fig. 9.1 Illustration of battery elemental material requirements to manufacture 142 TWh of NMC-111 batteries, and annual production of materials, scaled relative to reserves in 2018. Production and reserve data from USGS (2019). USGS gives manganese as gross ore weight, for which we assume 48% manganese content from Cannon et al. (2017). Battery unit requirements from Olivetti et al. (2017, table 1)



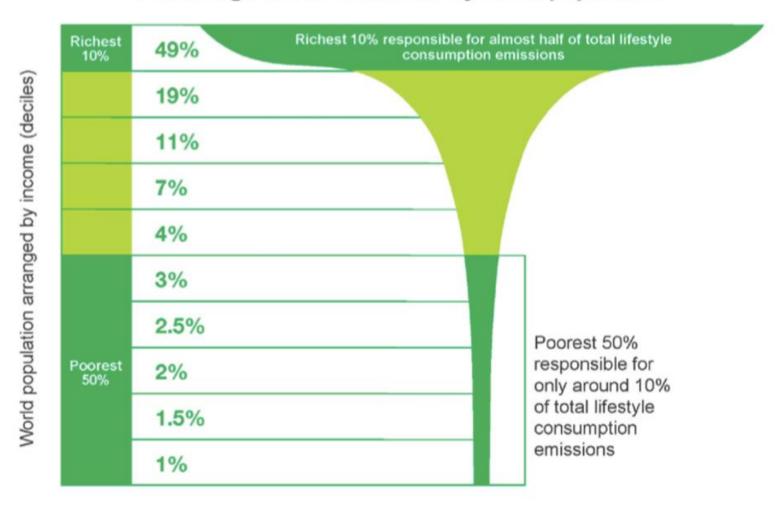
Reality check - Flying and tourism?



https://theicct.org/blog/staff/not-every-tonne-of-aviation-CO2

A JUST TRANSITION?

Percentage of CO₂ emissions by world population



Source: Oxfam

The future

We need:

- 1. Simpler lifestyles, much less production and consumption, much less concern with luxury, affluence, possessions and wealth.
- 2. Small, highly self-sufficient local economies, largely independent of the global economy.
- 3. More cooperative and participatory ways, enabling people in small communities to take control of their own development.

The future

- 4. A new economy, one not driven by profit or market forces, and a zero-growth or steady-state overall economy, which produces much less than the present economy.
- 5. Agriculture that is diverse and sustainable, immediate transition from monoculture to permaculture. Close all nutrient and mineral loops and end synthetic fertiliser production, no production animals on any land where food can be produced for humans
- 6. All remaining fossil energy used for renewable energy and sustainable life systems no more wastage

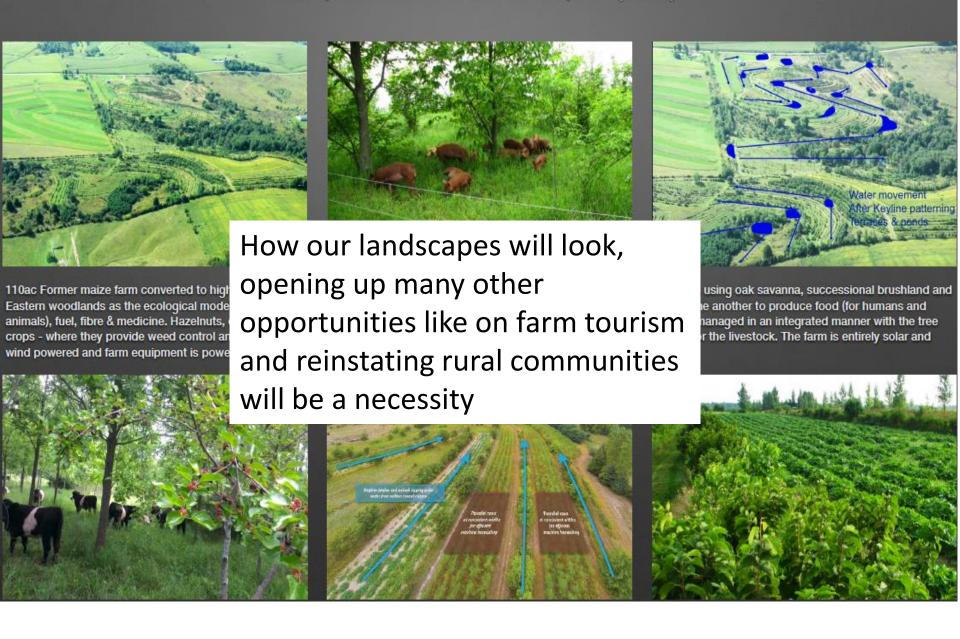


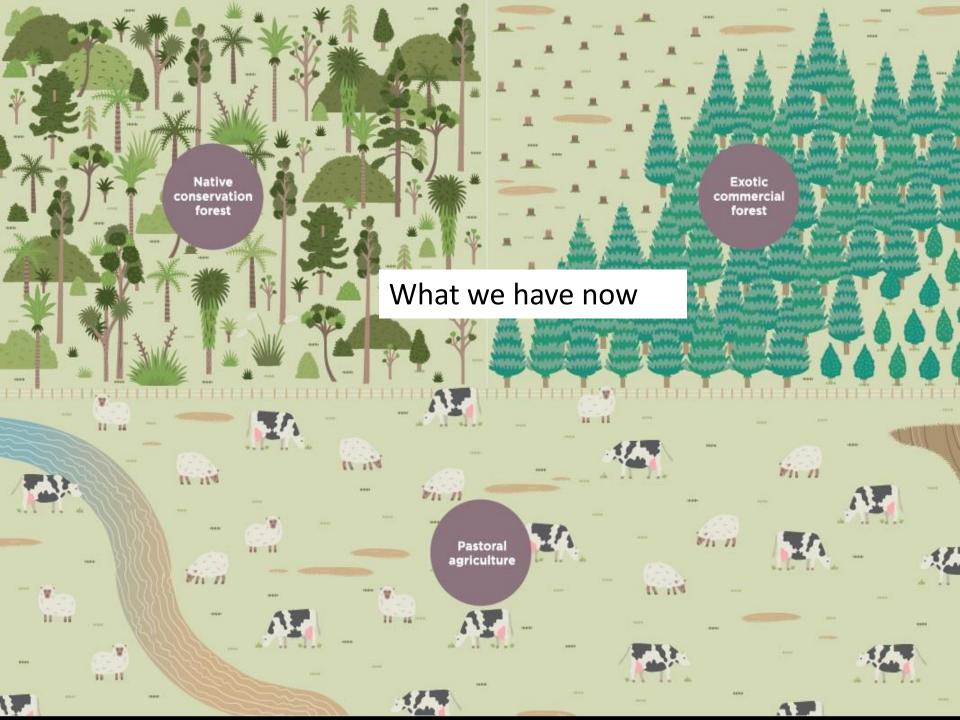
There is a better way to produce food: regenerative farming

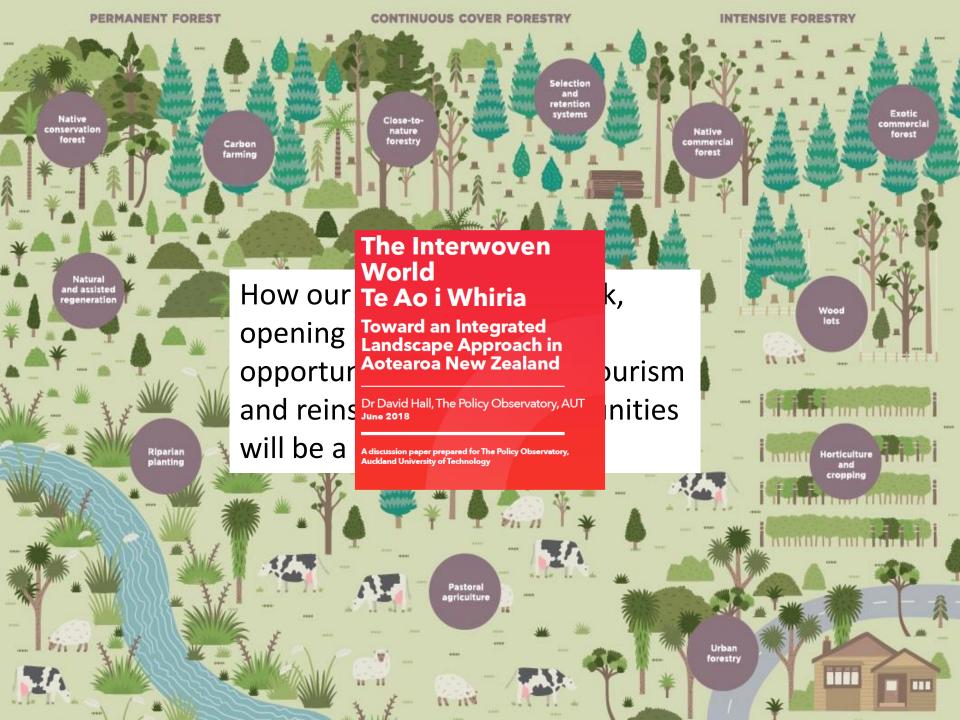
- high-input ag (NZ BAU) is in a negative <u>spiral</u> of land use intensification and <u>environmental degradation</u> based on privatisation of profits and socialisation of <u>costs</u>.
- Urgently needed is a move to innovative agricultural systems
 like regenerative agriculture, agroecology, agro-forestry,
 climate-smart agriculture, conservation agriculture and
 building all these on indigenous and traditional knowledge.
- Make NZ a global <u>leader</u> in sustainable food production instead of a follower in a race to the bottom.

Conventional* (industrial input- output approach)			Regenerative agriculture approach			
Technique	Results		Technique		Results	
Tillage	loss of topsoil, and soils structure, water holding capacity, compaction, loss of fungi and microbes, erosion		No tillage	Low/no disturbance, increase in OM and water holding and exchangeable nutrient pool		
Set stocked grazing	Compaction and erosio	Reger	າ ag = closing		sed nutrient cycling, rooting depth, diversity organisms, better soils structure,	
Syntnetic fortiliser	shallow rooting depth.		ent loops, no fos lerived fertilser,	SSII	ation, water infiltration and retention, ed soil organic matter & CO2	
Irrigation	Salinisation, nutrient fluwaterways and aquifers financial cost, aquifer a depletion	no/lov			stored in landscape on farm, groundwater ge, returning natural hydrology	
Grazing (monoculture)					sed soil biodiversity, photosynthesis and growth, rooting depth and soil structure	
monoculture	Reduction in biodiversit of habitat structure facilincreased pathogen/pes	How it works in nature		·e	ed species richness, habitat diversity and ebs, disrupting pest/pathogen cycles,	
		st levels	behind cows, agroforestry/silvopasture)	better	animal welfare/diet/health and ctivity	
			Pasture cropping/cover cropping	soil hea	e pasture outcompetes weeds ad preserves ealth and structure = higher productivity. erosion control, nutrient cycling and ure retention	

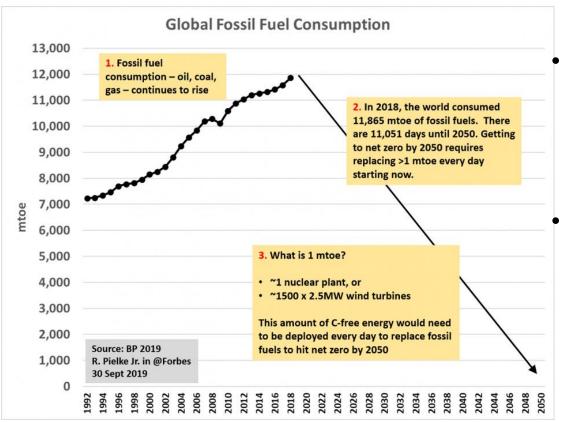
Example: New Forest Farm, WI (USA)







Reality check – why we have to act now



In 2018 the world consumed 11,743 mega-tonnes of oil equivalent (mtoe) fossil fuel

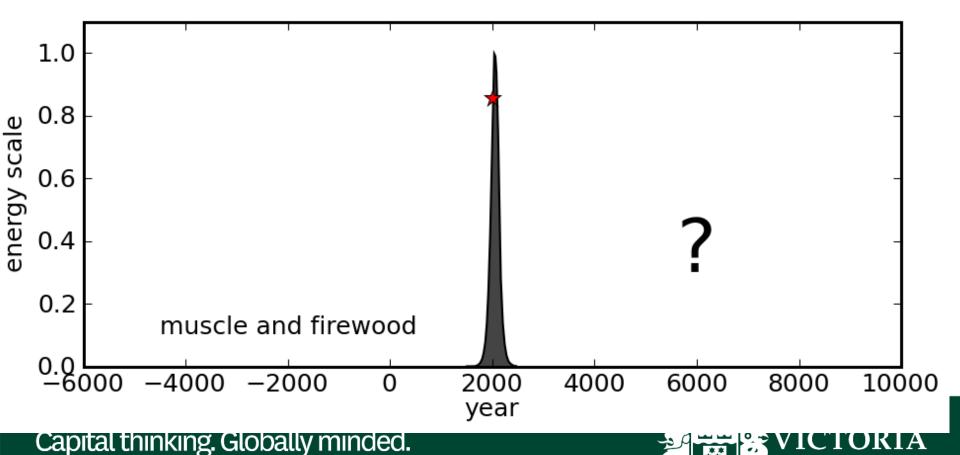
So to reach net-zero carbon by 2050 (~11,000 days) we need to replace about 1 mtoe every day from now until 2050

Thus, we would need to build 1500 2.5 mw wind turbines (covering 777 km²) every day from now until 2050, or 1 large nuclear power plant per day!

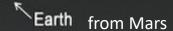
https://www.forbes.com/sites/rogerpielke/2019/09/30/net-zero-carbon-dioxide-emissions-by-2050-requires-a-new-nuclear-power-plant-every-day/?fbclid=lwAR0arZXkUCKU_QndkmlTYvQ04clCJyG_axZ70_6EswVcgu6xsCR_0X8_lml#1c3eb84135f7



 We are dependent for everything that makes our modern existence including food either directly of indirectly on fossil fuels but that is almost over, 10% reduction p/a or catastrophe



 "The real problem of humanity: we have Palaeolithic emotions; medieval institutions; and god like technology" – E.O. Wilson

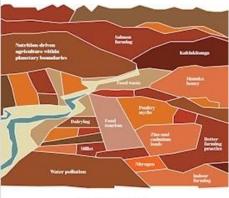


 "not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until its faced" – James Baldwin



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Contributors: Mike Joy, Tina Ngata, Nick D. Kim, Vanessa Hammond, Paul Tapsell and Alison Dewes, Peter Fraser, Kyleisha Foote, Catherine Knight, Steven Carden and Phil McKenzie, Chris Perley





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Activism is my rent for living on this planet

(Alice Walker)