


Why degrowth is harmful

Miklós Koren


bsky.app/profile/koren.mk

A wide-angle photograph of a rolling green landscape. In the foreground, a grassy hillside is dotted with numerous sheep of various breeds, some standing and some resting. The middle ground features a line of trees and shrubs. The background shows more distant hills under a very bright, hazy sky, suggesting a sunrise or sunset. The overall tone is peaceful and natural.

A summary of the degrowth argument

A summary of the degrowth argument


- 1 An ever-growing economy leads to ever-growing consumption of resources and ever-growing pollution.
- 2 Hitting planetary boundaries will lead to catastrophic consequences.
- 3 Therefore, we need to stop/slow economic growth, focus on well-being instead.



Points of agreement

Points of agreement

- 1 Markets cannot solve everything
- 2 Difficulty of the problem is unprecedented (global threat, threshold effects)
- 3 Little evidence of **decoupling** so far
- 4 Need for radical changes

A wide-angle photograph of a rolling green landscape. In the foreground, a grassy hillside is dotted with numerous sheep of various breeds, some standing and some lying down. The middle ground features a line of trees and shrubs. In the background, more hills are visible under a very bright, hazy sky, suggesting a sunrise or sunset. The overall tone is peaceful and rural.

Can we decouple economic growth from
increasing harm?

Watching a movie in the 1950s




Watching a movie in the 1980s



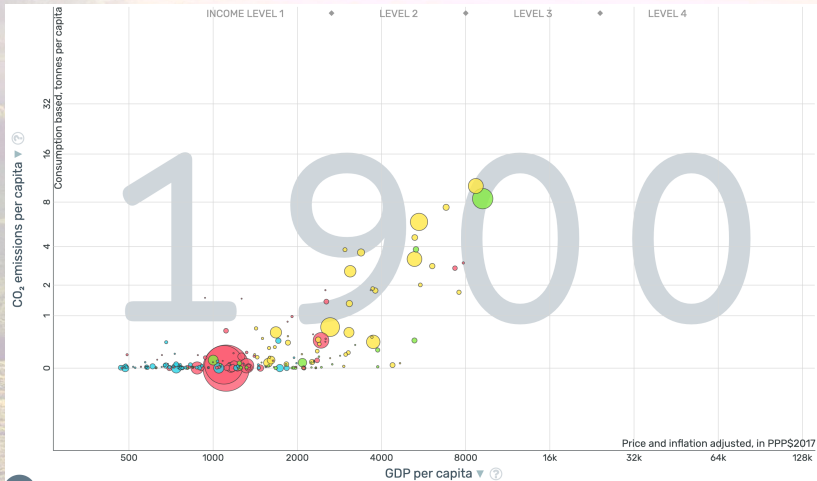
Watching a movie in the 2020s



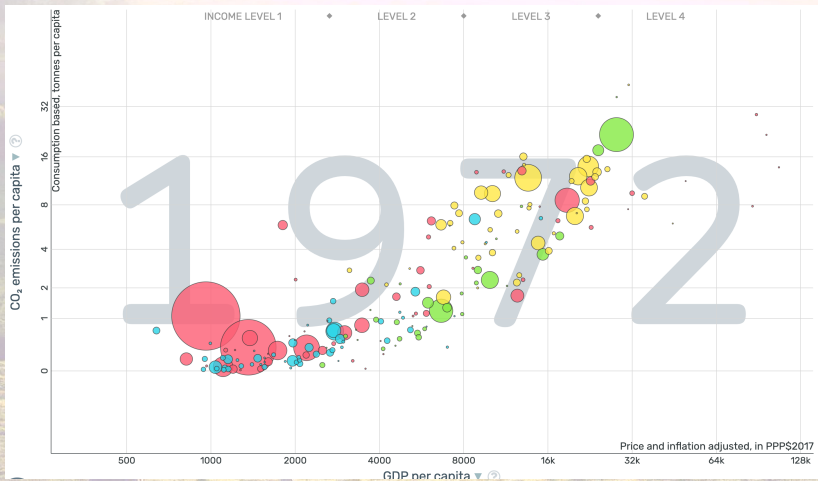
A wide-angle photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground, a grassy hillside slopes upwards, dotted with numerous sheep of various breeds, some grazing and others resting. A dense line of trees and shrubs runs across the middle ground. The background features rolling hills and valleys, partially obscured by a thick, golden-hued haze or mist, suggesting an early morning or late afternoon setting. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and scenic.

Is there evidence of decoupling?

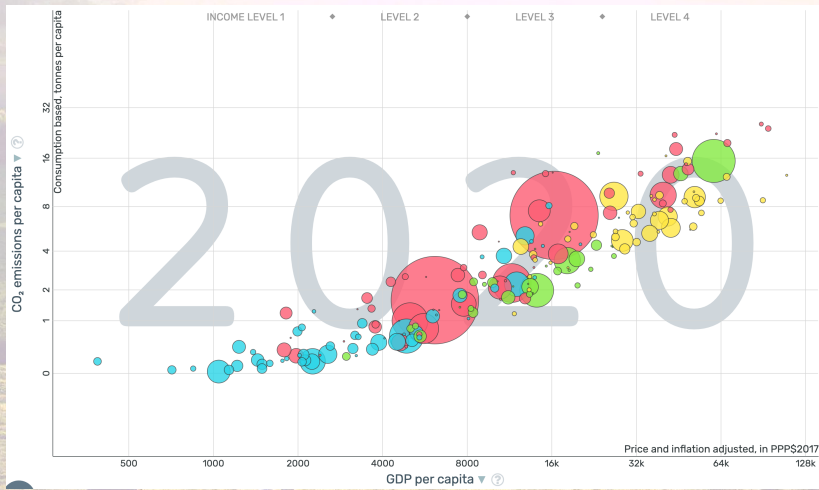
CO₂ emissions highly correlated with GDP per capita (gapminder.org)




CO₂ emissions highly correlated with GDP per capita (gapminder.org)



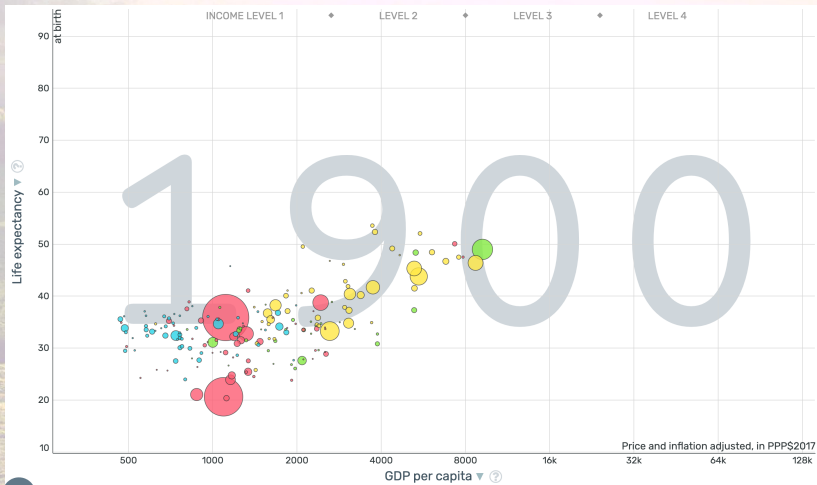
CO₂ emissions highly correlated with GDP per capita (gapminder.org)



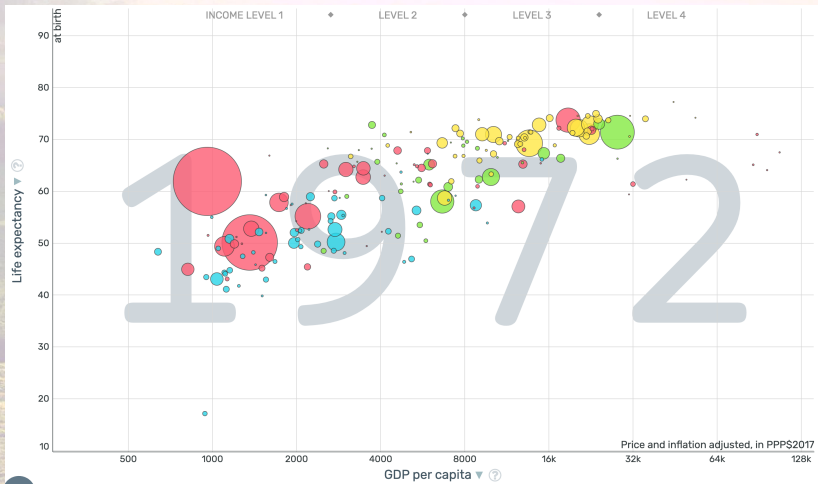


Desirable outcomes also strongly coupled with
economic growth

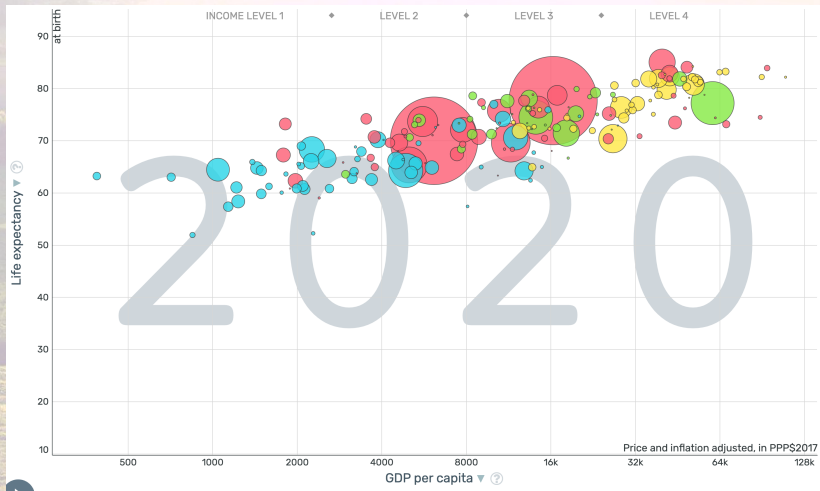
Life expectancy highly correlated with GDP per capita (gapminder.org)




Life expectancy highly correlated with GDP per capita (gapminder.org)



Life expectancy highly correlated with GDP per capita (gapminder.org)





The dual decoupling

The dual decoupling

Past data shows that economic growth is strongly correlated with both pollution and well-being.



The dual decoupling

Past data shows that economic growth is strongly correlated with both pollution and well-being.

In the degrowth argument,

Pollution

The future will be like the past.

The dual decoupling

Past data shows that economic growth is strongly correlated with both pollution and well-being.


In the degrowth argument,

Pollution

The future will be like the past.

Well-being

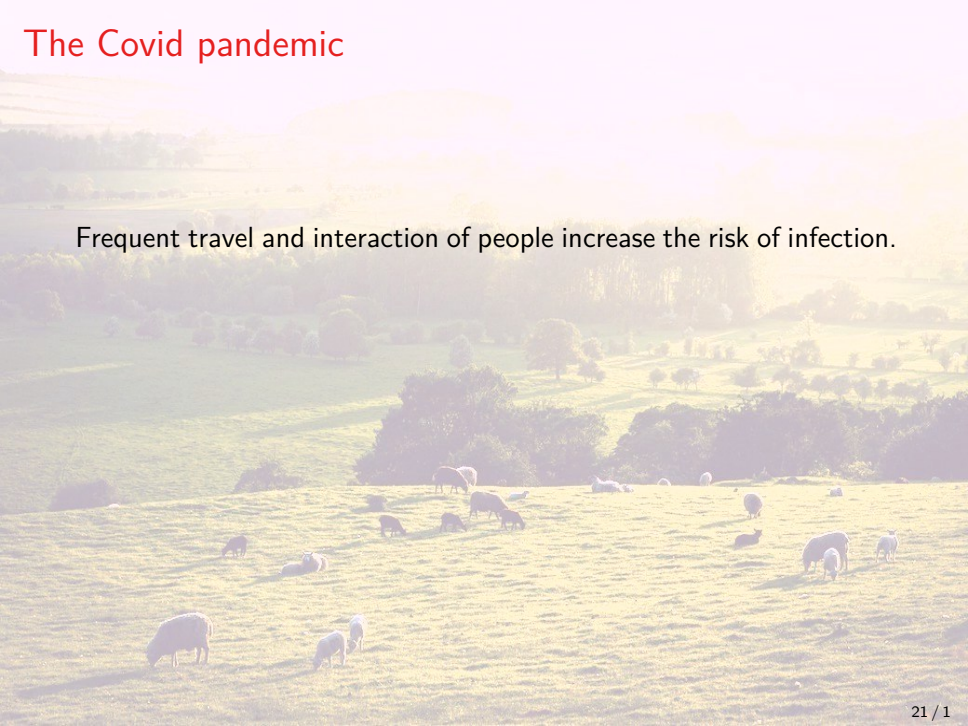
This time it's different.

A wide-angle photograph of a rolling green landscape. In the foreground, a grassy hillside is dotted with numerous sheep of various breeds, some standing and some lying down. The middle ground features a line of trees and shrubs. The background shows more hills under a very bright, hazy sky, suggesting a sunrise or sunset. The overall tone is warm and slightly desaturated.

A case of a global, catastrophic event

The Covid pandemic

Frequent travel and interaction of people increase the risk of infection.

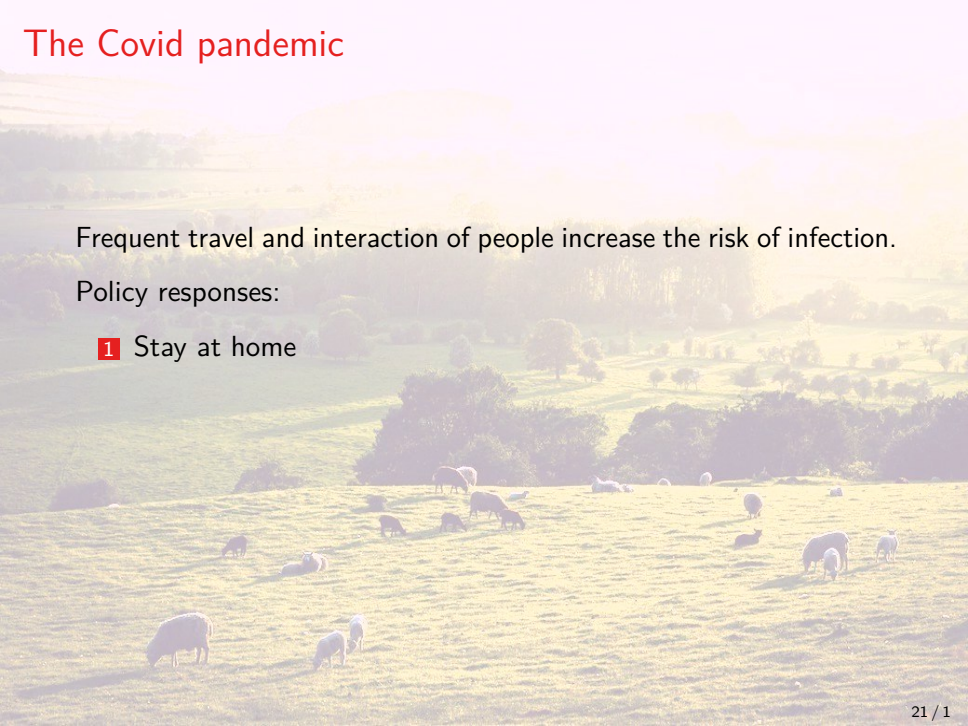


The Covid pandemic

Frequent travel and interaction of people increase the risk of infection.

Policy responses:

- 1 Stay at home



The Covid pandemic

Frequent travel and interaction of people increase the risk of infection.

Policy responses:

- 1 Stay at home
- 2 Wear a mask

The Covid pandemic

Frequent travel and interaction of people increase the risk of infection.

Policy responses:

- 1 Stay at home
- 2 Wear a mask
- 3 Get tested

The Covid pandemic

Frequent travel and interaction of people increase the risk of infection.

Policy responses:

- 1 Stay at home
- 2 Wear a mask
- 3 Get tested
- 4 Get vaccinated




Conclusion

Conclusion

Stop bashing economic growth.

Focus on harm reduction.



Credits

Credits

Photos by Illiya Vjestica, Cesira Alvarado, Bruno Guerrero, and Mahrous Houses on Unsplash.