

**Klima 5-2012**

## **A Global Forecast for the Next Forty Years**

Av [Ilan Kelman](#)

**Jørgen Randers:**

***2052 – A Global Forecast for the Next Forty Years***

Chelsea Green Publishing

"The future is here now" is often said with respect to climate change. That is, what we expect to happen in the future under climate change is actually happening now. In his new book *2052*, Jørgen Randers tackles the future directly, developing and discussing *A Global Forecast for the Next Forty Years*.

Impressively structured and readable, *2052* is a personal journey into the future through a sustainability lens, drawing on Randers' long experience as a scientist and as an activist regarding environmental topics. It is speculative and creative. But all discussion is based on solid science with the limitations of future forecasting clearly articulated and personal views directly identified as such.

Consequently, the style and discussion come across as logical, open, and honest. As Randers states, he is not trying to be optimistic or pessimistic. Instead, he seeks to provide his reflections and deliberations on his expectations for the future of the Earth.

The forty-year timeframe balances the forty years since Randers co-authored the groundbreaking *The Limits of Growth*. That volume continues to form one basis for debate and action on sustainability, including overcoming its limitations which Randers openly acknowledges.

*2052* is deliberately quite different, seeking to analyse and explain what is likely to happen, rather than what should happen, regarding sustainability and our planet. The forecasting is conducted and presented without disciplinary baggage, nicely combining qualitative and quantitative science from a wide variety of disciplinary and non-disciplinary approaches. The quantitative data used are provided in a spreadsheet on the book's website [2052.info](http://2052.info), also permitting readers to develop their own forecasts for the future.

Interspersed throughout Randers' chapters are "Glimpses" of the future to 2052 by other authors to focus on specialities such as mining, regional political changes, and biological evolution. The glimpses offer powerful and fascinating insights, keeping the book wide-ranging and engaging, but these authors are unfortunately heavily biased towards older men from richer countries. Similarly, the use of gender-neutral language throughout the book would have been preferred.

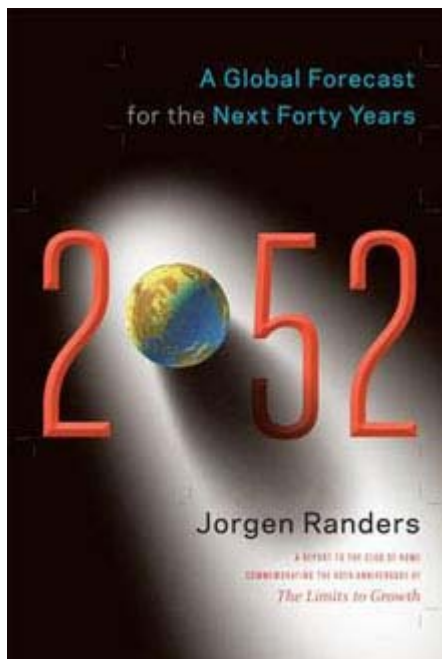
One of *2052*'s powerful aspects is the thoughtful interpretations giving context behind the numbers, e.g. the box asking and answering "What Does It Mean to Cost 1% of GDP" (p. 85). At other times, further questioning of assumptions, such as the climate's stability (p. 40), would have been useful. Dealing with freshwater comparatively briefly (e.g. p. 83 and p. 191) might be fair, but further justification for that decision would have been helpful.

None of that detracts from the well-argued highly important "Pieces of Personal Advice" that Randers uses to collate his analyses and to close the book. They are practical, thoughtful, and inspire the reader to act on the information given.

*2052* is exactly the form of forward-thinking and provocative analysis that is needed for achieving sustainability. It also provides much to dispute and debate. That is the book's point. If the reader disagrees with the visions presented, then they are given the information to create

their own. More importantly, if the reader dislikes the forecasts presented or is worried about them, then the time to start creating a different future is now through our own actions.

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Jorgen Randers has written "2052 – A Global Forecast for the Next Forty Years". Reviewed by Ilan Kelman in Klima 5/2012.