



CENTRE FOR
GREEN GROWTH

Looking to the future with 2020 hindsight: *Was **The Limits to Growth** (1972) right?*

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Was *The Limits to Growth* (1972) right?

Abstract

The Limits to Growth book appeared in 1972 and presented 12 scenarios for global development to the year 2100 – some portraying “global collapse”. What did *Limits* actually say about the future? What has happened since? And what is likely to happen towards 2050? This paper shows that the world has evolved inside the envelope of *Limits* scenarios, and is likely to continue to do so until 2050. The world has chosen a path that resembles the “pollution crisis” scenario in *Limits*. But the chosen path will not lead to global collapse in population or GDP. Instead there will be collapse in general wellbeing, as the world gets increasingly warmer because humanity continuous to postpone strong action on climate change.

Contents

The Limits to Growth scenarios

What future did *Limits* foresee?

Which path did the world chose?

What has happened since 1972?

What is likely to happen to 2050?

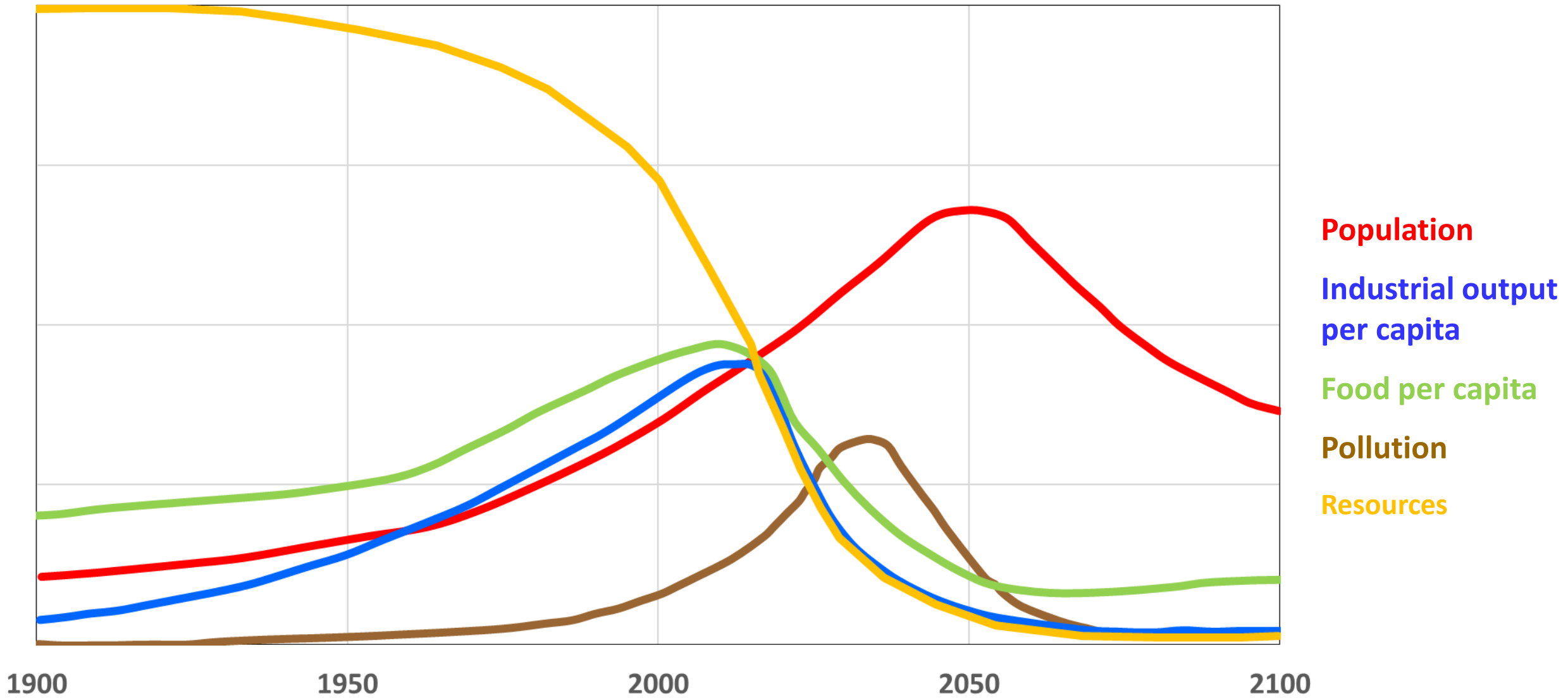
Conclusion: Resembles the pollution scenario from *Limits*

Author link

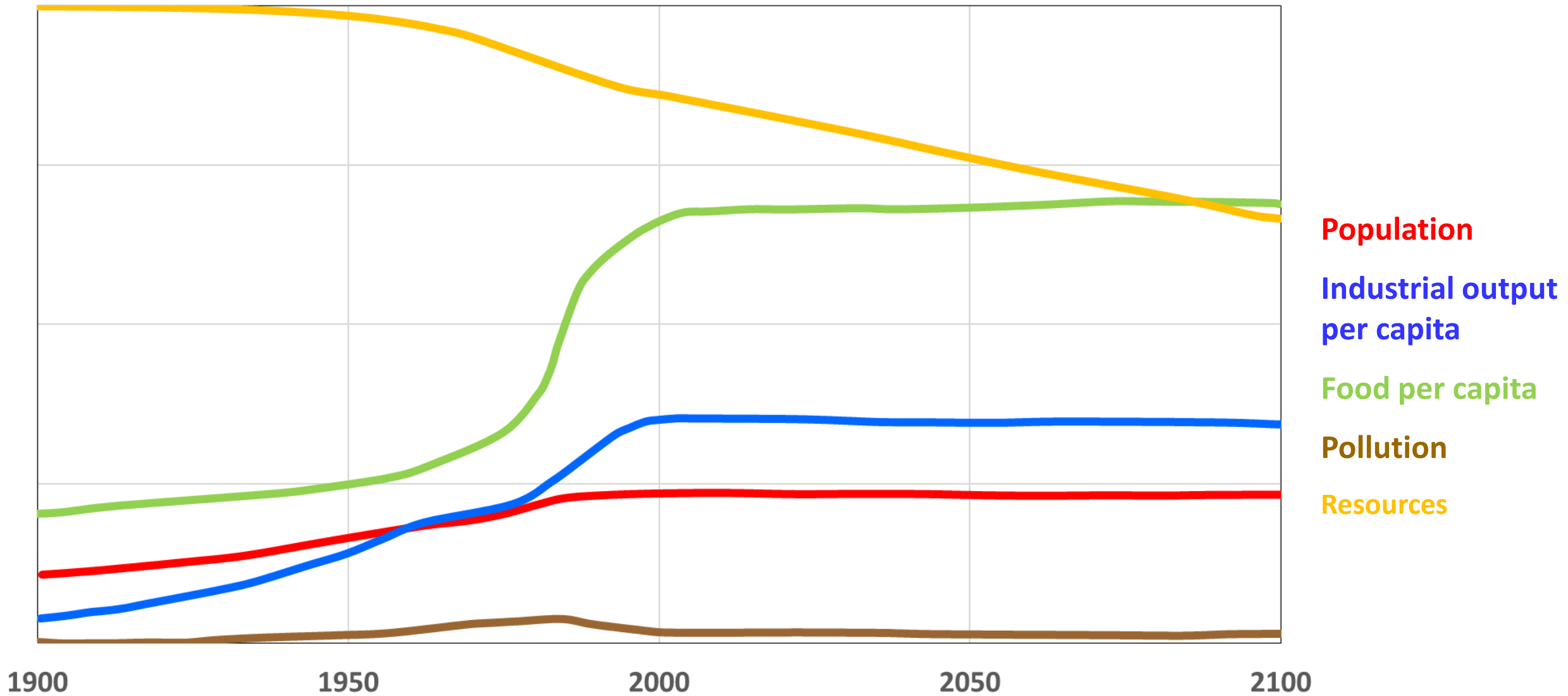
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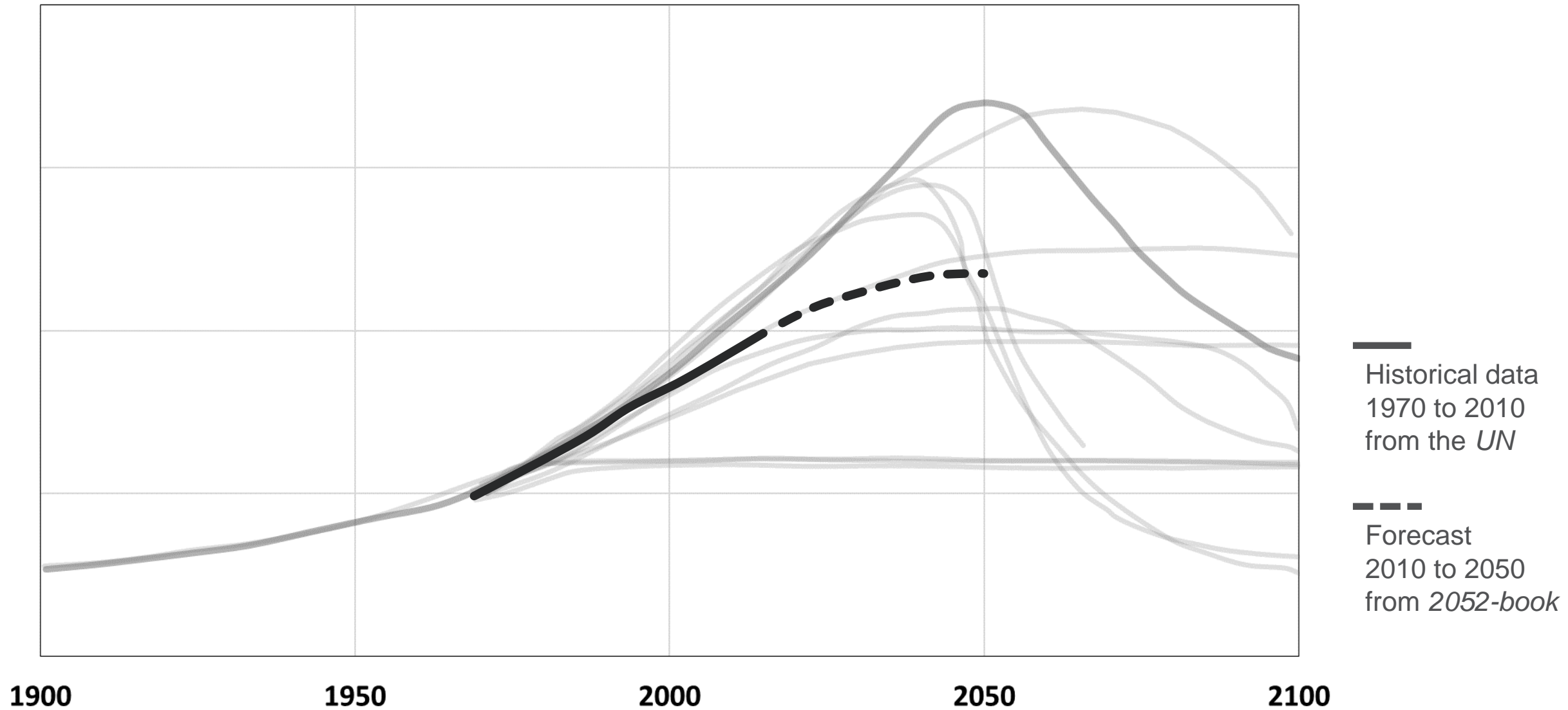
A pessimistic run from *Limits* - Resource crisis



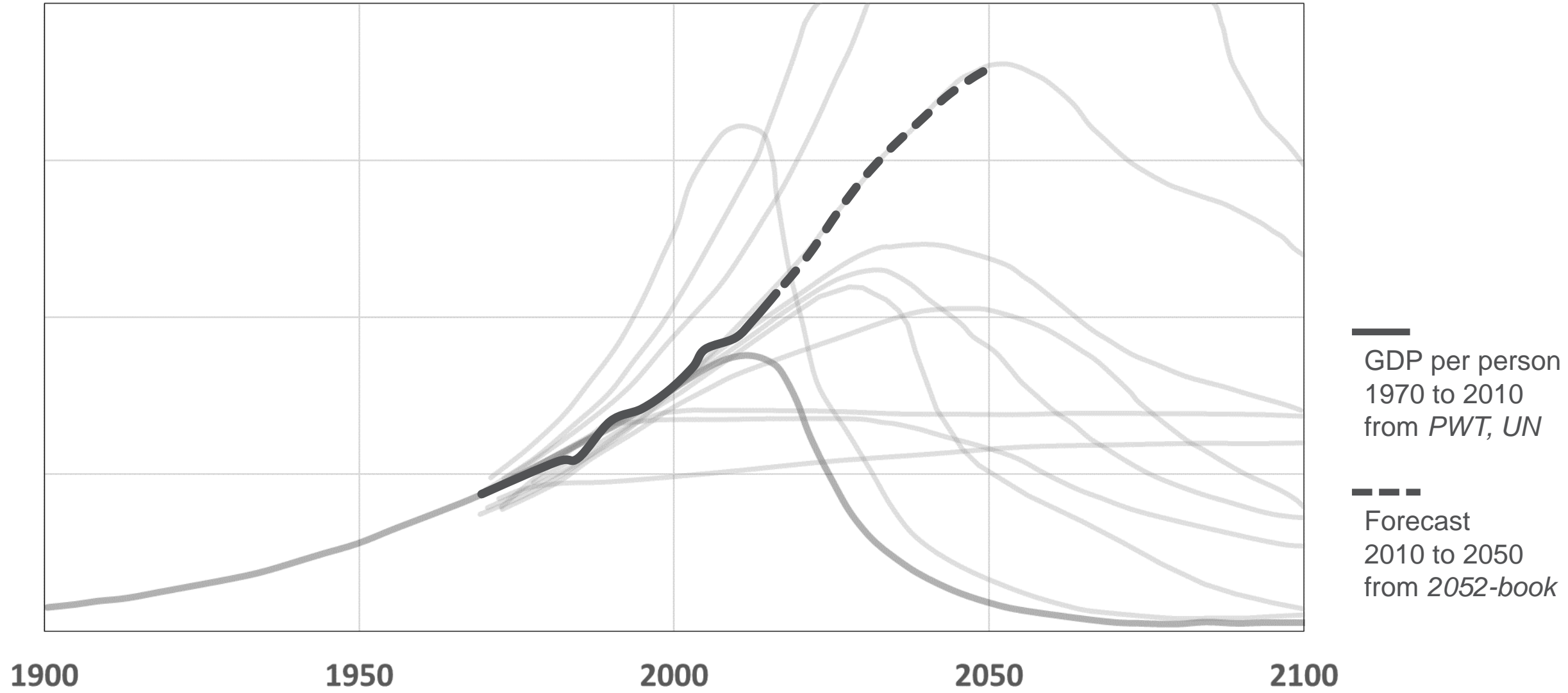
An optimistic run from *Limits* - Stabilized world



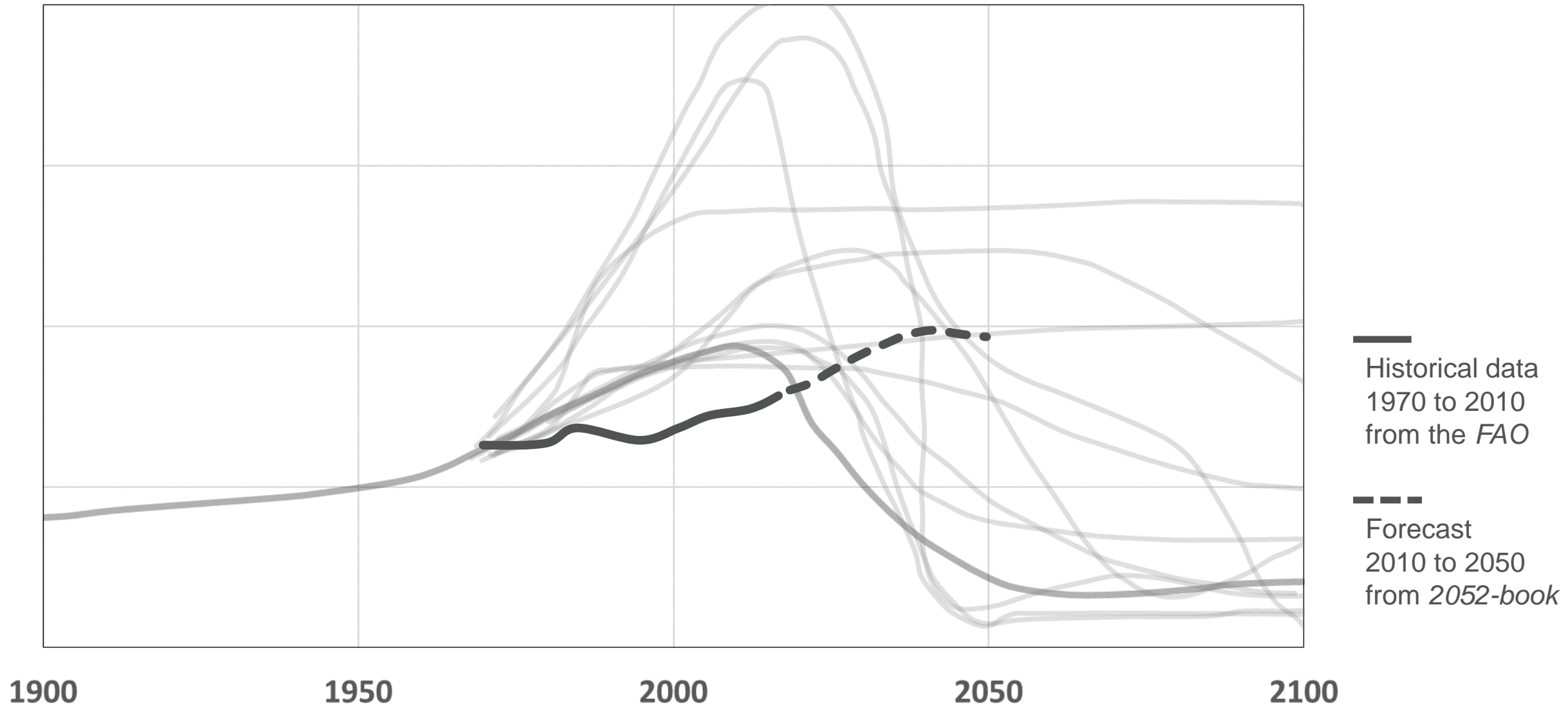
12 scenarios from *Limits* - Population



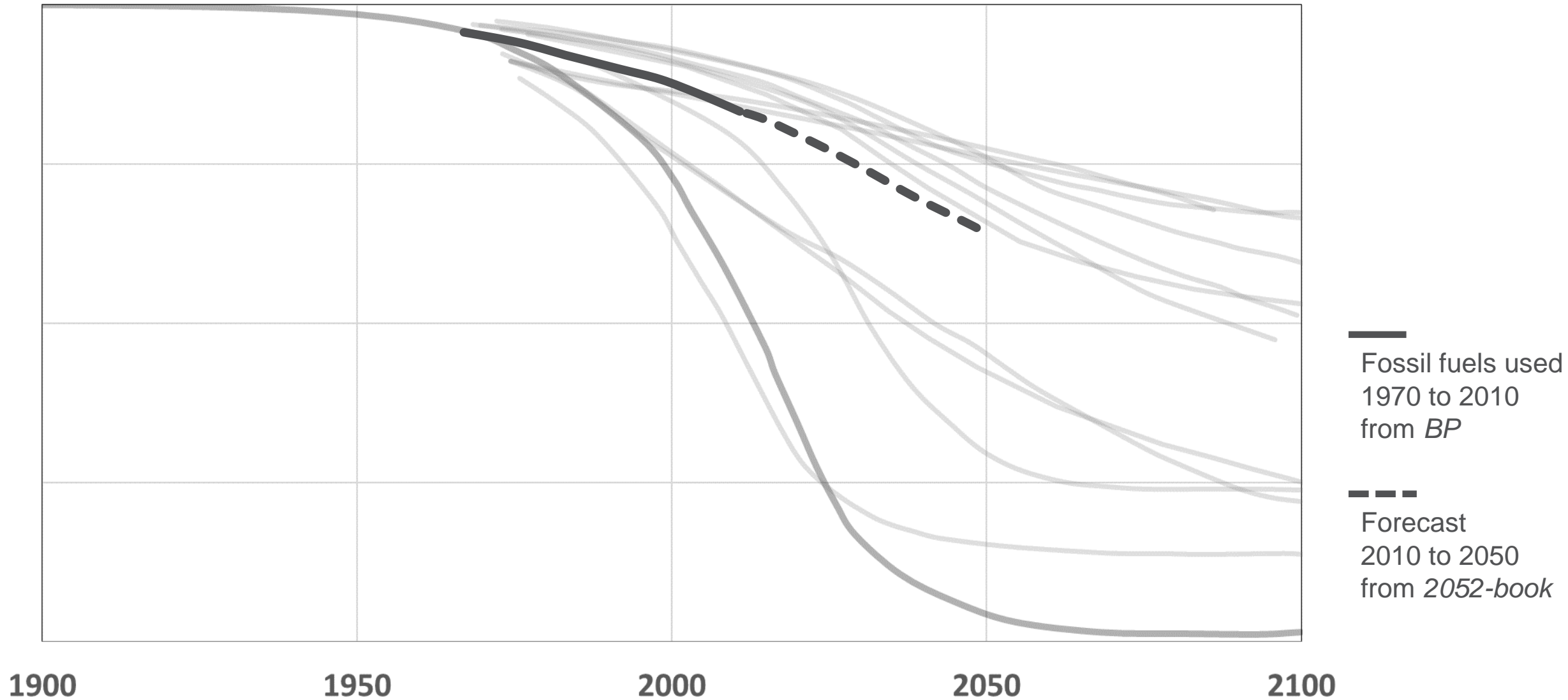
12 scenarios from *Limits* - Industrial output per capita



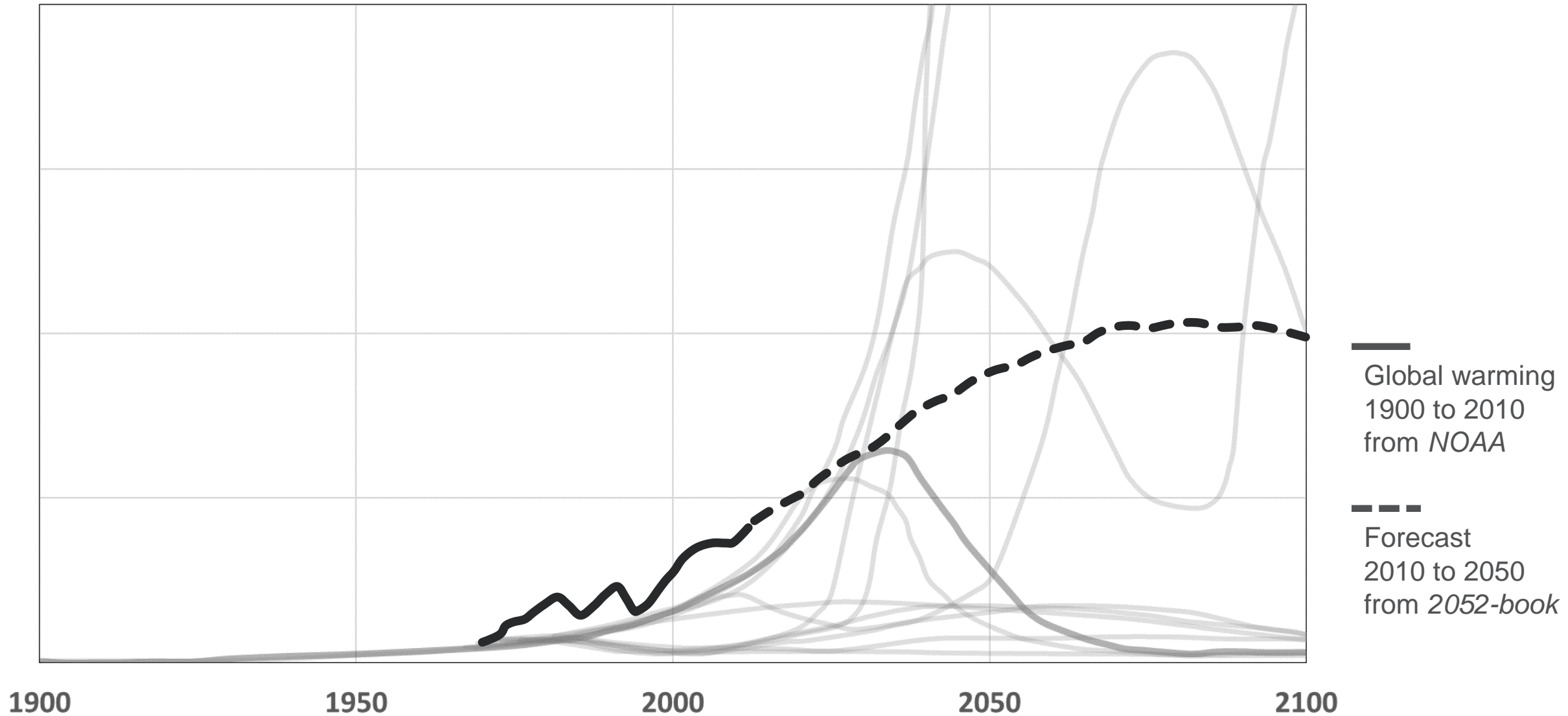
12 scenarios from *Limits* - Food per capita



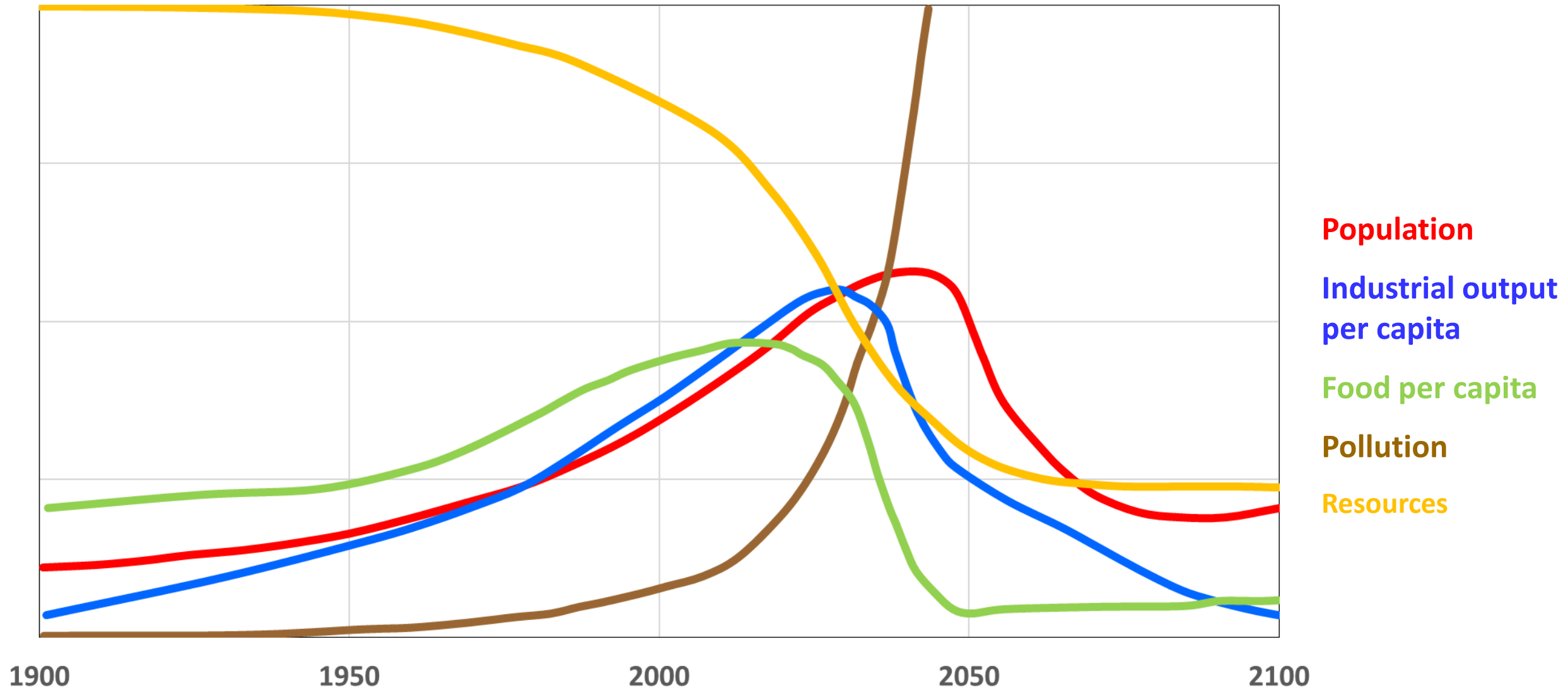
12 scenarios from *Limits* - Resources



12 scenarios from *Limits* - Pollution



Another pessimistic run from *Limits* - Pollution crisis



It is time to do something!



**Phase out
fossil fuels
by 2050!**