Limits to Growth, The Encyclopedia Article

Limits to Growth, The

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Limits to Growth, The

The Limits to Growth, written in 1972 by a team of researchers from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), presented the results of a study in which a **computer model** attempted to predict the fate of society. The model studied the interrelationships between the world's population, agricultural production, natural resources, industrial production, and pollution. The results of the modeling effort were generally pessimistic, indicating a depletion of natural resources accompanied by a rapid decline in human population. The team argued that technological innovation could not halt the pending collapse. Instead, imposed limits to population growth and limits to investment in industrialization were the only solutions.

The Limits to Growth sold four million copies and brought notoriety to the research team. However, the study was criticized by other scholars and computer modelers who said that **fatalistic** assumptions had been programmed into the model, thus predetermining the pessimistic outcome. The team leaders stood behind their study, although they admitted a negative, Malthusian view of society's future. The book's findings were rejected by those who believed that technology would solve all problems, but they served to reinforce the views of **neo-Malthusians**. Its greater contribution was the innovative use of computers to model complex social, economic, and ecological systems for purposes of environmental policy analysis.

Bibliography

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