



Old Maps, New Terrain: Rethinking population in an era of climate change

May 27-29, 2016

Hampshire College, Amherst MA

Friday, May 27

Session 1: Old Maps, New Terrain introductions and discussion

10 am – 12 pm

Betsy Hartmann, Diana Ojeda, Sarojini, Jade Sasser, and Anne Hendrixson

What political questions and challenges led us to hold this meeting? How will we approach this co-inquiry into the issues raised here?

Session 2: Mapping the Population (Control) Landscape

1 – 4 pm

Kalpana Wilson, Zakiya Luna, Mohan Rao, Jade Sasser and Anne Hendrixson

The population landscape is shifting. In some ways, the global population panic is over and policy discourses reflect a more nuanced consideration of gender as well as demographic trends. For instance, the 2015 UN Sustainable Development Goals discuss rural to urban migration as a major factor in sustainable development, rather than overall global population growth rates. As here, trends like age distribution and urbanization are at the center of many policy discussions.

However, neo-Malthusian thinking continues to shape current population theories and policies. Neo-Malthusian rhetoric is powerfully present in climate change, conservation, ethno/religious /nationalist, public health, migration, security, and resource scarcity discourses. In these rubrics, family planning and contraception are often promoted as a technical fix for social, economic, and environmental problems as well as a means to liberate women.

In a sense neo-Malthusianism serves as ideological glue, helping to bind these discourses together, thereby normalizing, naturalizing and liberalizing notions such as climate conflict and conservation-related displacement and dispossession. Reflecting these developments, population control strategies are also shifting with the creation of new actors and alliances and bold new strategies. In some cases neo-Malthusian thinking incorporates and responds to the population landscape changes in sophisticated, and still problematic, ways. This can make challenging it and population control strategies even more difficult, especially when such challenges are dismissed as relating to a pre-Cairo time frame or playing into the hands of the anti-abortion movement.

In this session, we aim to examine the shifting population landscape and current neo-Malthusian population narratives. How can we more comprehensively define population control to understand its many effects? How does population control manifest in this new landscape?



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Saturday, May 28

Session 3: The Political Economy of Today's Population Control Industry

10 am – 12 pm

Rajani Bhatia, Marion Stevens, Shahina Parvin, Etobssie Wako, Claudia Rivera and Sarojini

Population control is enacted in and through multiple means including family planning, sex selection, prisons, welfare, closed and restricted borders, land grabs, and even war. This session focuses on the current iteration of population control in relation to reproduction, health, and family planning. A new population industry has emerged which includes many familiar players and some newer ones, like the Gates and Clinton Foundations that combine the power of their money with sophisticated public relations strategies. Private/public family planning partnerships are promoting the mass dissemination of long-acting reversible contraceptives like Jadelle (Norplant II) and also shorter-term injectables like Depo-Provera. They are employing targets: FP2020 aims to get 120 million new users on modern contraception by the year 2020. Sterilization abuses continue, fueled by the resurgence in targets. In this session we ask, what is the political economy landscape of big pharma/contraception, the aid industry, health policy, new reproductive technologies, the anti-abortion movement and philanthrocapitalism? What does it mean for the raced, classed and gendered embodiment of population control?

At the same time, progressive feminist resistance to population control is not as robust as it once was. Cooption, professionalization, de-funding, political repression, and the existence of other pressing priorities are some of the reasons why. What does this mean for resistance to the new population control industry?

Session 4: Charting the Landscape of Climate Change and Militarized Development

1 – 2:30 pm

Speakers: Larry Lohman, Awino Okech, Libby Lunstrum, and Betsy Hartmann

Neo-Malthusianism influences the framing of climate change in a number of inter-related ways. That family planning will both mitigate climate change and help women adapt to it is now a common claim of the population-environment lobby. Neo-Malthusian models of population and resource scarcity also undergird security narratives about the threats posed by so-called climate conflict and climate refugees. These narratives contribute to the militarization of climate change through promoting greater military control of disaster relief, development aid, conservation and climate adaptation, and border enforcement. They also serve to legitimize further U.S. intervention in Africa. Meanwhile, certain notions of the Anthropocene and impending climate apocalypse mask the role of political economy in the climate crisis and incite Malthusian fears, even on the left. How do we foreground political economy and challenge these problematic politics? How do we forge stronger progressive links between reproductive justice, climate justice, and anti-war movements in our own countries and internationally?



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Session 5: Mapping the Political Landscape of Dispossession

2:45 – 4:30 pm

Alejandro Camargo, Khushi Kabir, Diana Ojeda, Martha Pskowski, and
Kiran Asher

In this session we intend to discuss various processes and dynamics of dispossession in the face of climate crisis, and their articulations with violence and inequality in different geographical sites. In particular, we would like to address the classed, gendered and racialized effects of climate change mitigation and adaptation projects on local resource access and control. In taking seriously the practices and narratives of climate change and their effects across distance and difference, we hope to push forward a more nuanced and politically enabling analysis of environmental crises.

Some of the questions that will guide our conversation are:

- What is the current landscape of climate change policies and interventions? What are their differential effects over livelihoods and life projects?
- What forms of land and water grabbing are being carried out in the name of environmental conservation and climate change mitigation/adaptation? Can we speak of “climatic dispossession”?
- How to better understand these forms of dispossession and their connections to capital accumulation and the display of biopolitical power?
- What kinds of subjects and spaces result from them?
- How are these modes of dispossession connected to local communities’ enclosure, displacement, migration and confinement?
- How are they being negotiated, contested, subverted and resisted?
- What are the cartographies of state intervention and abandonment in relation to climate change policies across geographical sites?



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Sunday, May 29

Session 6: Anticipatory Visions for the Future

10 am – 12 pm

Wendy Harcourt, Rosalind Pineda Ofreneo, Tanya Fields, Jacqui Patterson and Jade Sasser

Activism and advocacy have two goals: creating change in the present, and laying the foundation for alternative futures. They are necessarily future-driven projects, in that they anticipate possible futures and work to create them today. Even as population control is reasserted and expanded into new forms, anti-population control actors continually create new forms of critical engagement and resistance. From community based, grassroots efforts to social media campaigns, policy advocacy, and activist-scholar collaborations at local, national, and transnational scales, diverse actors are forging alliances and engaging multiple strategies to build decolonized, socially just futures. This session addresses the future-building strategies found in key social justice movements and activist scholarship, including those focused on gender, environment, climate change, food, anti-poverty, and reproductive freedom.

- What are the key strategies for resisting population control across multiple scales, locations, and contexts?
- How can we forge collaborative, intersectional alliances to create alternative, anti-population control futures?
- What resources do we have at our disposal? What resources do we need? How can we better link actions and strategies across sectors and communities?