



BRILL

PERSPECTIVES ON GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT
AND TECHNOLOGY 18 (2019) 205-224

PERSPECTIVES
ON GLOBAL
DEVELOPMENT
AND
TECHNOLOGY
brill.com/pgdt

Overpopulation Discourse: Patriarchy, Racism, and the Specter of Ecofascism

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Abstract

As our current climate crises increase in severity, discussions on solutions have found themselves at the forefront of mainstream media, and talked about by political actors and economic elites. While many of these solutions may seem ethical or even the answer to our ecological problem, we must take a critical look at the root causes in order to understand what actions are necessary. Without this, our discussions fall short, and tend to negatively affect marginalized communities. Family-planning programs aimed at the suppression of certain populations is one example used when discussing how to combat overpopulation in order to alleviate climate change. This superficial, Western, capitalist-driven idea and discussion, laced with sexist and racist undertones, is the discourse we will be analyzing. By employing a critical decolonial and ecofeminist lens, we will critique this discourse, and argue that it's an all-too-common tool of deflection and scapegoating that white environmentalism employs in order to ignore historic power relations. Further, we will illuminate historical roots and trends around the family-planning movement, such as anti-immigrant sentiment, nationalism, and ecofascism.

Keywords

ecofascism – family planning – overpopulation – racism – sexism

1 Introduction

Population growth, decline, and overall changes have been monitored and discussed for years. Notably, in recent times, the topic of population growth has “seen a revival within the climate debate” (Wichterich 2012:23). More specifically, the intersection of population growth and climate change rhetoric has often adopted hegemonic discourses subtly laced with racist and sexist undertones—placing the burden of our climate crisis on the Global South and oftentimes pointing to birth control for women of color in the ‘third world’ as the solution to this problem. These discussions often fail to interrogate the hegemonic power structures that have precipitated the contemporary crises of civilization—including, but not limited to, the ecological crisis, which has featured the rise of global temperatures, desertification, sea-level rise, biodiversity loss, and other extreme climactic events (See Figueroa-Helland and Lindgren 2016; Foster et al. 2010). Among these hegemonic power structures is the economic system of capitalism, which has been accompanied by the Western world’s historical accumulation and dramatic over-consumption of goods and resources—both clear contributors to climate change (Foster et al. 2010; Lawson 2015; Ridgeway and Jaques 2014; Sheppard et al. 2009). This research seeks to critically engage these discussions, which often come from a place of privilege and willful ignorance, by analyzing the discourse of some of the world’s most powerful economic actors with the goal of unraveling this degrading, domineering, and false antidote to the ecological crisis.

2 Decolonial (Eco)feminisms: a Theoretical Framework

To begin, it’s important to clarify that this research does not seek to suggest that conversations about population growth should not be had; rather it aims to point out that these conversations must be had alongside discussions that critically engage the root causes of environmental crises, including, but not limited to: the over-consumption by the Global North; our economic system that has allowed for and perpetuated this consumption; unequal global power relations largely caused by colonization; and the neo-colonial institutions and policies that have sustained these realities. In order to promote this conversation, we will be utilizing ecofeminist and decolonial feminist theories to deconstruct the contemporary debate being held by overwhelmingly white, Western, and affluent environmentalists that frame population control in the Global South as a potential solution for climate change.

The first theory we will deploy is ecofeminism, which is defined by Elizabeth Peredo Beltran (2017) as,

[A] critical theory, a philosophy, and an interpretation of the world that seeks to transform it. It brings together two emerging currents of political theory and practice into one approach that aims to explain and transform the current system of domination and violence by focusing on the critique of patriarchy and the overexploitation of nature and their impacts on society, bodies and nature, all as part of the same phenomenon. (pg. 101)

To be clear, ecofeminism draws connections between the exploitation of women and the exploitation of nature through systemic structures such as patriarchy and capitalism. It further critiques hierarchies imposed on societies by dichotomous thinking (eg. man/nature, man/woman, white/non-white, civilized/uncivilized, human/non-human). This dichotomous thought can largely be attributed to Descartes' theories, which deeply influenced the idea that Western man was not only to interpret the world, but to control it—to make themselves “the masters and possessors of nature” (Moore 2016:84). This sense of entitlement and conviction present within Western masculinity played a key role within emergent capitalist civilization (Burriss 1982; Federici 2004; Salleh 2016). It's also important to recognize that this dichotomous thinking was a crucial piece within the development of hegemonic, Western conceptions of rationality, modernity, and developmentalism (See Figueroa-Helland and Lindgren 2016). During the enlightenment period, Western rationality and scientific progress were held atop a pedestal, and often associated with men, while “emotions” were considered irrational and often associated with women. This dichotomous thinking and strictly Western idea of development that required the domination of nature and the “other” also allowed European powers to “rationalize” the colonial atrocities committed by the West—arguing their tactics were justified by labeling indigenous populations as “savages” that must be saved (or tamed) by the civilized West (Smith and LaDuke 2015). Many of these mental dynamics that stem from hegemonic conceptions of modernity, progress, and rationalism continue to be found within the climate change debate today.

Along with critiquing these dualities, ecofeminism further studies and challenges the power dynamics that define the relationships between Western human societies and the Earth. This often-silenced or ignored field of thought has not been accepted or even acknowledged within many mainstream

feminist circles. As Greta Gaard (2011) suggests, mainstream, human-centered feminism is lacking in-depth and critical analysis of these histories and present-day dynamics. Mary Mellor (1997) further elaborates on the theory and states,

Ecofeminism brings together elements of the feminist and green movements, while at the same time offering a challenge to both. It takes from the green movement a concern about the impact of human activities on the non-human world and from feminism the view of humanity as gendered in ways that subordinate, exploit and oppress women. (pg. 1)

Author Christine Bauhardt (2013) points out that within many green movements, the concept of “green growth,” which promotes the idea that capitalist economic growth and environmental consciousness are compatible, is inherently flawed. This is because growth “depends on the further exploration and unchecked exploitation of natural resources” (pg. 362)—again, pointing out an inherent contradiction between environmentalism and capitalism’s cohabitation. Gaard (2015) continues to point out, “environmental health, habitats, livelihoods—have been marginalized in debates that treat climate change as a scientific problem requiring technological and scientific solutions without substantially transforming ideologies and economies of domination, exploitation and colonialism” (pg. 1).

Along with ecofeminist theory, we must also engage decolonial feminist thought as we approach this analysis. Maria Lugones (2010) who coined the term “coloniality of gender” builds upon Anibal Quijano’s (2000) theory of coloniality of power—both of which suggest that colonial legacies persist and materialize within post-colonial states through neo-colonial policies and institutions. Quijano suggests these function through an organizing principle known as the “colonial power matrix,” which encompasses colonialities of power and knowledge in all aspects of social life, including economic systems, sexuality, gender, and political relations. Building and expanding off of Quijano’s work, author Ramón Grosfoguel (2011) asserts that,

Coloniality is not equivalent to colonialism. It is not derivative from, or antecedent to, modernity. Coloniality and modernity constitute two sides of a single coin. The same way as the European industrial revolution was achieved on the shoulders of the coerced forms of labor in the periphery, the new identities, rights, laws, and institutions of modernity such as nation-states, citizenship and democracy were formed in a process of colonial interaction with, and domination/exploitation of, non-Western people. (pg. 12)

Concerning the intersection of decolonial and feminist thought, Lugones (2010) argues that along with this, imposed gender and sexual organizing and hierarchies were created and forced upon indigenous societies. With this, so were gender and sexual relations that existed during colonial times, that have persisted into modernity via coloniality. She states,

Only the civilized are men or women. Indigenous peoples of the Americas and enslaved Africans were classified as not human in species—as animals, uncontrollably sexual and wild. The European, bourgeois, colonial, modern man became a subject/agent, fit for rule, for public life and ruling, a being of civilization, heterosexual, Christian, a being of mind and reason. The European bourgeois woman was not understood as his complement, but as someone who reproduced race and capital through her sexual purity, passivity, and being home-bound in the service of the white, European, bourgeois man. (pg. 743)

Lugones further argues that the colonization of gender has left a lasting stain that still reveals itself all over the world today—in the form of continued patriarchal and domineering social norms, through the continuation of capitalism and many other structures of power. She suggests that a potential antidote to combating this is employing a decolonial feminism, which consists of the practice of understanding historical legacies of colonialism left in places and communities, abandoning and decolonizing western, hegemonic beliefs, and uplifting subaltern voices instead. She further states,

The decolonial feminist's task begins by her seeing the colonial difference, emphatically resisting her epistemological habit of erasing it. Seeing it, she sees the world anew, and then she requires herself to drop her enchantment with "woman," the universal, and begins to learn about other resisters at the colonial difference. (pg. 753)

With these understandings, we can recognize that decolonial thought realizes how through colonialism and neocolonialism, the subjugation of different genders presents itself in different ways. Raewyn Connell (2014) argues a similar point, highlighting the complexities of the manifestations of new gender and sexual roles that are still seen in post-colonial states today. She states,

Colonization itself was a gendered act, carried out by imperial workforces, overwhelmingly men, drawn from masculinized occupations such as soldiering and long-distance trade. The rape of women of colonized societies was a normal part of conquest. The colonial state was built as

a power structure operated by men, based on continuing force. Brutality was built in to colonial societies. (pg. 556)

It's important to understand that while critiquing colonial legacies is incredibly important, the point of this theoretical discussion is to point out that the legacies of colonialism are still presenting themselves in post-colonial societies and institutions today. Neo-colonialism, a term coined by Kwame Nkrumah (1965), is defined as the continued influence that Western countries have on their previous colonies, through economic, cultural, and military power. White men, attempting to control the reproductive capacities of women in the Global South, through family-planning programs with questionable intentions, is an example of this.

As stated by Kuumba (1993), "The neo-colonial relationship hinges on the exploitation of men's productive forces but rests on the control of both the productive and reproductive forces of oppressed women" (pg. 79). Further, we can see the need for a decolonial, ecofeminist lens in order to attempt to understand the complexities of colonialism, its impacts on communities, cultures, and genders, and how this further exists and lives on through neo-colonial policies today. By understanding and using these theories as a tool and lens it becomes evidently clear that mainstream discussions of overpopulation and climate change are performances of Western, masculinity, coloniality, patriarchy, and white supremacy.

3 Climate Change at the 2014 World Economic Forum: an Analysis

Former presidential candidate and Vice President of the United States, Al Gore, joined the 2014 World Economic Forum, to discuss one of his most frequently talked about issues—climate change. As the author of the popular climate-change novel *An Inconvenient Truth*, and a self-proclaimed environmental activist, he has been an important figure within the US environmental movement. During his panel, Gore warned the audience of Africa's continued growth by stating "Africa is projected to have more people than India and China by mid-century" (World Economic Forum 2014). As previously mentioned, while discussion of population growth and resource-use should be had, framing Africa's population growth within the context of catastrophic climate change with no comparison of resource use to that of the Global North is disingenuous.

Gore continued to discuss the need for depressing the birth rate, specifically in countries of the Global South. He stated, "Depressing the rate of child

mortality, educating girls, empowering women and making fertility management ubiquitously available ... is crucial to the future shape of human civilization." Clearly, while ideas such as female empowerment and education should occur alongside conversations of environmental justice, it's vital to consider the means through which people such as Gore, want to facilitate this. Following his statement, he immediately praised fellow panelist, Bill Gates, and his organization, The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which has put forth much effort in the Global South to implement family-planning programs, specifically in Africa's poorest regions (Ibid.). For the remainder of the discussions, this multi-billionaire repeatedly emphasized the benefit of reducing certain populations, and alluded to this being one option to assist in alleviating our current climate crises. He maintains that the populations that should be "suppressed" are those of poor, Global South countries, and makes no mention of Western populations.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which has a large portion of its efforts invested specifically in family-planning programs, presents itself as a non-profit serving women in impoverished countries. However, its website offers an arguably vague and one-sided view of the plans they are implementing. Their literature states that their program "increases educational and economic opportunities for women and leads to healthier families and communities" (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation 2018). However, the website then offers very little research to back this statement, and avoids defining terms such as "development" or elaborating on what they consider as improvement of their target population's conditions. Further, they state "less than 20 percent of women in Sub-Saharan Africa and barely one-third of women in South Asia use modern contraceptives" (Ibid.). Once again, failure to define the term "modern" or acknowledge other contraceptive methods used by the local and indigenous populations prior to colonization, imperialism, and continued Western influence is a clear display of their Western ideologies surrounding modernity.

The Foundation makes a clear effort to frame itself within economic terms by priding itself for being "one of the most cost-effective investments a country can make in its future"—attempting to appeal to Western notions of development and progress (Ibid.). They elaborate further; "Every dollar spent on family planning can save governments up to 6 dollars, that can be spent on improving health, housing, water, sanitation, and other public service" (Ibid.). Unsurprisingly, once again, there is no research, are no studies, nor economic formulas/equations cited that support these figures. It's evident that this is a plan centered around economic impact and not around the well-being of communities and cultures—especially well-being within the context of their

traditional worldviews, philosophies, and epistemologies. The Foundation falls short when it comes to publicizing testimonies or interviews of people or communities that have used this family planning, or benefited from the Foundation, as they only publish short quotes and excerpts from people receiving benefits (Ibid.).

While these surface level issues are relatively easy to spot when approached with a critical eye, both Gates' and Gore's remarks on population control, climate change, and suppressing birthrates, should be viewed through the scrutiny of ecofeminist and decolonial feminist lenses. Through these frameworks, the idea, organizations, and conversations discussed above begin to reveal their inherently racist, sexist, capitalist, and imperialist undertones that, in fact, underpin many crises that such organizations are claiming to attempt to solve.

Gore and Gates fail to discuss the issues with our contemporary economic systems that survive off of continual growth and resource depletion—which have, in large part, created and exacerbated the ecologic crisis that we are facing today (Ahmed 2010, 2011; Figueroa-Helland and Lindgren 2016; George 2010; Harvey 2014; Houtart 2010). As pointed out by Greta Gaard (2015),

The ecological consequences of climate change—rising sea levels, melting ice sheets and receding glaciers, vanishing coral reefs, extreme weather events (i.e., hurricanes, floods, droughts, wildfires, heat waves), accelerated species migrations or extinctions, the spread of insect-borne diseases—are already evident. Produced by the planet's most developed countries—with China, the U.S., Russia and India leading the way in highest emissions, and the U.S., Australia, Canada, and Saudi Arabia leading with highest per capita emissions. (pg. 9)

Of course, both Gates and Gore have reaped enormous personal and economic benefit from Western systems and structures, specifically capitalism. Therefore, critiquing or changing the economic or socio-political orders of the world, or further, being honest with their audiences that they are a part of the elite circles that are exacerbating the crisis at an alarming rate, would very directly hurt their interests—economic or otherwise.

Malthusian theory states that population grows exponentially while agriculture and food production grow at significantly slower rates, meaning that, eventually, population growth would exceed the carrying capacity of the Earth. Thomas Malthus (1798) argued, in sum, that to avoid exceeding the Earth's

carrying capacity, society should assist in suppressing the rate at which people in poverty procreated. While many aspects of Malthus' theory have since been proven incorrect, there is still neo-Malthusian thought in which the importance of individualism and capitalism are the priority, and growth of the poor should be handled by large-scale birth control and family-planning efforts. Such policies would supposedly prevent conflicts between the wealthy and the poor, and should be promoted throughout society.

We must be critical in analyzing movements that utilize such rhetoric. Neo-Malthusian thought isn't anything new, in fact, according to Denise Horne (2013),

Margaret Sanger's early efforts to legalize birth control methods developed from a connection between controlling 'unfit' offspring and post-WWII American fears of growing populations in the developing world. By 1952, the Population Council (headed by John D. Rockefeller III) made a direct link between population control and preserving the world's resources. The Draper Committee (established by President Eisenhower to study US aid, including military aid), reported to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations that the 'population problem' was the greatest obstacle to the world's progress, and recommended that aid to developing countries be tied to population control programs. (pg. 1)

Both Gore and Gates are subtle embodiments of neo-Malthusian thought as they fail to critique capitalism, seek to profit from the very system that has caused the ecological crisis, and further perpetuate the control of women's reproductive health and child bearing capabilities.

Whether driven by fear of conflict, or the loss of personal wealth, these elites who find themselves at the forefront of mainstream environmentalist debates are examples of living coloniality. To put the burden of responsibility and blame on women of color in the Global South perpetuates the ideas of Global North dominance, white supremacy, and patriarchy. Blaming these communities and requiring them to change, instead of critically engaging the over-consumptive people of the developed states, is an ignorant expression of capitalist-driven technocrats placing the blame on anyone but themselves. This neocolonial, neo-Malthusian, ideology being used to force underdeveloped countries into adopting Global North health care and policies should be looked at with a critical eye and considered alongside the implementation of similar proposals in the past.

4 Questionable Motives: Family Planning in a Historical and Contemporary Context

Again, we don't intend to argue that discussions about population, family planning, and access to health care are topics that shouldn't be addressed. However, they must be discussed within the context of past family-planning programs implemented in the Global South that were promoted and funded by outside countries.

A great example of this is the family-planning program in Peru that initially began in the late twentieth century, with a similar mission statement to that of the Bill and Melinda Gates Family Planning Program—providing health care to marginalized communities, helping alleviate poverty, etc. Unlike the Gates Foundation's family planning, the state of Peru was at the forefront of this movement, with its Ministry of Health changing laws and policies around health care to accommodate the family planning movement (Gribble et al. 2016). However, this came with financial backing from many sources outside of Peru, with the US Agency for International Development (USAID) being one of the movement's top donors (USAID 2016b). The neo-imperialist institution of USAID itself has been known to coerce many post-colonial states into population-control plans that claim to help fight poverty, hunger, etc., while seeking to liberalize states and push the Global North's hegemonic agenda (Horne 2013).

The stated goal of the family-planning movement in Peru was said to be extending access to reproductive healthcare to rural, underserved, and marginalized populations. It “led to a fivefold increase in modern contraceptive use between 1970 and 2015, which reduced unintended pregnancies and decreased the average number of births per woman and coincided with dramatic improvements in maternal and child survival.” Further, the “USAID developed an evidence-based process involving multiple stakeholders to reach underserved indigenous populations, which resulted in doubling their participation in family planning sessions” (USAID 2016b). As it becomes clear through this thought, that USAID isn't concerned with empowering women, as Horne (2013) further states, “Positive results are measured in terms of population reduction, not in terms of increasing empowerment for women” (pg. 1).

This intentional targeting of indigenous women should not be viewed as a gracious act by the family-planning movement, but rather the continuation of the ethnocidal colonial project and its attempt to “remove” the indigenous populations from within the state. This clearly materialized in Peru.

By late 1996 ... reports of abuse in the program began to come to light. All told, approximately 290,000 people were sterilized, the vast majority (270,000) Indigenous (Andean) or Native (Amazonian) women. According to state reports, at least 10,000 of these were forced—new investigations by scholars and journalists indicate the number may be much higher.

STAVIG 2017

These acts can no longer be seen as acts of kindness, attempting to provide health care for all. The institutions that are funding and backing policies like this are perpetuating (neo)colonial genocide, further reinforcing the ideas of white supremacy and western hegemony through the intentional act of killing cultures that are providing alternatives. The goal here is clearly not to empower women through access to reproductive healthcare, but rather to suppress certain populations' birth rates.

It should be noted that USAID is an active collaborator with the Bill and Melinda Gates Family Planning Program. In 2010, the two agencies, along with a number of other institutions that focus on development, launched the Alliance for Reproductive, Maternal and Newborn Health. Their self-proclaimed goal is to “avert unintended pregnancies and reduce maternal and neonatal mortality by promoting cost-effective use of resources” (USAID 2016a).

Again, we should be very wary and cautious when neo-colonial institutions support family-planning programs, even as they attempt to justify such programs under the banner of environmental sustainability and uplifting women's reproductive rights. These programs far too often become coercive towards marginalized populations and instead of uplifting reproductive rights, end up suppressing the autonomy of women and their communities, limiting their ability to engage family-planning practices on their own terms. At best, they attempt to blame humanity as a whole for the crises of the Anthropocene, deflecting blame away from the specific subsets of humanity that have truly perpetuated our modern crises. At worst, they blame and further marginalize the women of the Global South and their reproductive activities.

We must further ask ourselves what other consequences could we be facing, with many elites and powerful figures engaging in this population control rhetoric. Kaijser and Kronsell (2014) outline the inequitable truth surrounding our ecological crisis by stating,

It is widely noted that the emissions of greenhouse gases triggering global warming to a large extent originate in unsustainable lifestyles among

the world's more affluent minorities, mainly in the so-called developed regions. At the same time, those most exposed and vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change are poor and marginalised people living particularly in low-income areas. These groups tend, moreover, to be underrepresented at all levels of decision making regarding climate issues. (pg. 418)

But this is just the tip of the iceberg when you conceptualize that the impact of climate change will be felt most harshly by low-income areas around the globe. Gaard (2015) reiterates,

Reducing third world population becomes increasingly important when first-world over consumers realize that the severe climate change outcomes already heading for the world's most marginalized communities will create a refugee crisis and urgent migrations of poor people. Since the growing populations of the Two-Thirds World will be hardest hit by climate change effects and will seek asylum in One-Thirds nations. (pg. 16)

Alongside Gaard (2015), Christa Wichterich (2012) agrees that the family-planning and birth-control movement targeting the women of the Global South are a response that stems from the view "population growth in the South as a threat" (pg. 24). The threat of mass immigration to developed countries, with already protectionist border policies, is a real consequence the Global North is facing. We are witnessing the manifestation of this with the Syrian Refugee Crisis, which can partially be attributed to a five-year-long drought, like no other seen in recorded history. Grosfoguel et al. (2015) point out the growing sentiment in Europe by stating, "Extreme right parties are growing and winning massive numbers of votes in successive elections across Europe with Islamophobia and xenophobic anti-immigrant discourses," and further, "Metropolitan centres do not have a 'minority problem' as defined in The Netherlands and Great Britain or an 'immigration problem' as defined in France and the United States, but rather a 'racist problem'" (pg. 12). Unfortunately, this isn't a new phenomenon to follow conversations of population control and family-planning programs. Therefore, we must take a critical look at historical trends of political movements, such as the development of Ecofascism in Europe, to understand historical trends with similar rhetoric.

5 Eco-Crises, Responses, and Spectre of Ecofascism

Now that we have considered and offered some criticism of the ideas proposed by Gates, Gore, and—more broadly speaking—the moderate technocratic strand of environmentalists, it's vital to place these discussions within broader historical, philosophical, and political contexts. The purpose of this section will be to demonstrate how seemingly well-intentioned, techno-scientific proposals of individuals who, through their refusal to address the root causes of Earth's most dire crises, run the risk of fueling twenty-first century (eco)fascism. First, we will discuss and clarify the concept of ecofascism and where it may be found historically and in the modern context. Then, we will revisit the shortcomings of family-planning programs. Lastly, we will conclude by considering the future direction of discussions and research that explore similar topics.

To begin, let us clarify what we mean by ecofascism, and provide a recent history of the term. As discussed by Biehl and Staudenmaier (1996), one of the historical hotbeds of ecofascist thought lies in nineteenth and twentieth century Germany where a variety of ecological concerns began to interact with the xenophobia, nationalism, and racism present in the region. In their short book, Biehl and Staudenmaier briefly recap this history, and highlight the influence of prominent natural scientists and environmentalists, such as Ernst Moritz Arndt, Wilhelm Riehl, and Ernst Haeckel, on German ecofascist thought. Initially through the writings of individuals such as Arndt, arguments for the preservation of the environment adopted a twisted nationalistic rationale.

Arndt's environmentalism ... was inextricably bound up with virulently xenophobic nationalism. His eloquent and prescient appeals for ecological sensitivity were couched always in terms of the well-being of the German soil and the German people, and his related lunatic polemics against miscegenation, demands for Teutonic racial purity, and epithets against the French, Slavs, and Jews marked every aspect of his thought.

BIEHL AND STAUDENMAIER 1996:6

Also in the nineteenth century, as further discussed by Biehl and Staudenmaier, Ernst Haeckel began to establish the field of ecology as a scientific discipline. Haeckel, however, also endorsed the concepts of Nordic racial superiority and racial eugenics, and synthesized "a peculiar sort of social Darwinist philosophy he called 'monism,'" leading to the founding of the Monist League, which combined "scientifically based ecological holism with völkisch social views" (pg. 7).

Ultimately, these interactions between ecologist and fascist social thought crystallized into distinct policy positions of the Third Reich and their accompanying rationales. The racially “superior” German people were cast as the protectors of environmental purity to help justify expansionist lebensraum (living space) projects, and later exclusionary and genocidal policies. This was under the guise of protecting the health and well-being of the German people, and the environments to which they were intimately connected. This thinking did not disappear with the conclusion of World War II. Into the 1990s writers such as Herbert Gruhl have continued to maintain these ecofascist tendencies, but adapted them to pressing contemporary issues—especially overpopulation. Individuals such as Gruhl have argued, for example, that migrants must be turned away in order to preserve the ecological integrity of his home country, and that only death can bring equilibrium back to “all life that has overgrown in this planet” (Biehl and Staudenmaier 1996:43).

Importantly, authors such as Biehl and Staudenmaier have been particularly critical of certain strands of far-leftist thought that they argue have become a safe haven for misanthropic individuals who embrace what they consider regressive social, political, and technological policies. “Policies that act as an excuse for ‘population control’ constructed around a simmering racist meta-narrative: the problem is really that brown people are too stupid and/or too sexual to control themselves” (McBay et al. 2011:206). Importantly, similar to Simmons’ (n.d.) call to “smash patriarchy” and Robert’s (2018) claim that “female empowerment is the most effective carbon mitigation strategy,” McBay et al. (2011) argue that “raising the status of women and eliminating poverty are key to lowering the birthrate” (pg. 207).

As alluded to within our discourse analysis, such plans and proposals disregard the historical root causes of our present station, and (in the context of overpopulation) make women of color in the Global South the agent primarily responsible for changing our present reality, subtly implying that they share a considerable part of the blame. The civilizational crises of the Anthropocene are not the fault of the Global South, nor humanity as a whole, and stating so allows culpable agents to shuck responsibility. In reality, our current civilizational crises are the result of intersecting and mutually reinforcing structures of patriarchy, racism, coloniality, capitalism, Eurocentric modernity, androcentrism, industrialism/developmentalism, ableism, and anthropocentrism (Figueroa-Helland and Lindgren 2016; Harrington 2016; Hartley 2016; Moore 2016; Salleh 2016). Perhaps the term Anthropocene is actually a misnomer. As pointed out by Harrington (2016),

Many thoughtful commentaries have argued that the term Anthropocene, by implicating humanity as a singular force of nature, masks deep divisions and inequalities of sex, race, geography, and class. The Anthropocene was not created equally; it was made by a specific subset of humans, namely, those on the frontlines of modernisation: white, wealthy, rich males of European heritage. For these reasons, a variety of new labels have been proposed as a way to more accurately reflect the specific characteristics of the human age, including the 'Capitalocene', the 'Anthroscene', the 'Oliganthropocene', or the 'Manthropocene'. (pg. 483)

Considering the context of this discussion, it is especially important to emphasize the gendered nature of modern civilizational crises. This stems in large part from the interactions of Eurocentric masculinities, competitive and violent characteristics with capitalism's pursuit of endless profit and growth through any means necessary. These means include, but are not limited to, the exploitation of ecosystems and human bodies and labor—especially of non-male and non-European persons (Federici 2004; Robinson 2000; Salleh 2016).

While ignorance obviously does not qualify one as an ecofascist, it is vital to consider the consequences of the approaches and scenarios that this ignorance may precipitate. In refusing to address the root causes of various modern crises, such as the ecological crises outlined by Foster et al. (2010), they will be allowed to reproduce and increase in intensity. Importantly, the effects of these crises, especially through climactic events, are not felt equally, but disproportionately impact individuals in the Global South, especially women (Gaard 2015). One of the main impacts of these crises is displacement of populations (Bettini 2013; Betts 2009; Wise 2015). In facilitating the unrelenting destruction of diverse ecosystems that sustain cultures and communities transnational capitalist actors and their supporting states earn the ecofascist moniker. It doesn't stop there however. It's also vital to consider to what these displaced populations are subjected, especially in the context of the growing xenophobic, nationalist, racist, authoritarian, and protectionist tendencies throughout Eastern Europe, Germany, France, the UK, and the US, as well as the looming threat of twenty-first century fascism in the regions that may receive these displaced populations (See Robinson 2014). Whether or not these entities fully attempt to utilize environmental rhetoric to justify their turning away of migrants remains to be seen. In the meantime, it is worth pointing out the immediate threat that anti-immigrant policies pose to individuals in areas drastically impacted by climactic catastrophes, especially those threatened by rising sea levels. By turning away these displaced populations via policy or the

erection of physical barriers, and confining them to sinking, drying, or increasingly violent landscapes, these entities are willfully creating the twenty-first century geographies of ecofascism.

6 Concluding Thoughts

Considering the positive turns within far-left environmentalist rhetoric alongside our previous analysis and criticisms of Gates' and Gore's rhetoric, we feel it's vital to consider the following possibility. Perhaps currently the group that is most dangerously teetering on the precipice of ecofascist rhetoric and action is not the left-wing, often biocentric environmentalists and ecologists, but instead the more moderate techno-scientific, "green capitalist" environmentalists who actively push policies that place the responsibility to act on some of the world's most historically marginalized populations, while refusing to engage the root causes of the twenty-first centuries crises of civilization.

This more politically moderate technocratic group of individuals who pose as environmentalists under the guise of "green capitalism" are dangerous in several key ways. Most immediately proposals concerning family planning and birth control must be considered within the context of the Global North's historical engagements with marginalized communities, and how family planning, birth control, and sterilization has been utilized as a tool of colonialism and slow ethnocide. Unfortunately, within the context of modern environmental crises, such policies and proposals have continually re-emerged, but with the suggestion that they are motivated by either environmental concerns or the idea that population reduction is the key to alleviating poverty, completely disregarding other sociocultural, political, or economic factors. Ultimately, such proposals have the potential to continue to reduce the population of non-European peoples who hold and embody a diversity of worldviews, epistemologies, and lifestyles that represent alternatives to the dangerous hegemony of European development. In this respect, such projects, inadvertently or not, may serve as the heir to the historical genocides, ethnicides, and epis-timecides carried out by European actors (Dastile and Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2014; Grosfoguel 2011). In turn, this may further the homogenization of cultures and populations from which hegemonic systems and ideologies thrive (Brookfield 2004). Importantly, this homogenization and the perceived lack of alternatives then encourages individuals and communities to consent to the hegemonic norm. Eerily similar to how the German ecofascists once cited environmental concerns (laced with racial undertones), today's politically moderate

technocrats risk enacting a slow ethnocide via birth control on the world's most marginalized communities using similar justifications.

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