

CONFRONTING POPULATIONISM—a new feminist challenge to population control

August 22, 2019

We are proud to announce the publication of “Confronting Populationism: Feminist Challenges to Population Control in an Era of Climate Change,” in [Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography](#). The themed section addresses contemporary forms of population control through a feminist critique of populationism. We build on Angus and Butler’s (2011) definition of populationism as an ideological position which holds that population is the primary driver of social, political and ecological problems. We analyze the interwoven demographic, geographic and biopolitical dimensions of populationism through our demo, geo and biopopulationism framework.

Using this framework, we expand on the typical understanding of population control as a top-down, coercive and at times violent curtailment of fertility, most often targeting poor women of color, particularly in the global South but also in the North. While we analyze current manifestations of fertility control that continue this destructive legacy, we also point to a wider set of processes that restrict bodies, families and communities, produce segmented and segregated spaces, and determine whose lives are valuable and reproducible, and whose are not. These processes are of particular significance because of the ways that they produce, reinforce, and naturalize inequalities along lines of race, class, gender and geography. They also perpetuate the idea of an ongoing war of absolute humanity against absolute nature.

“Confronting Populationism” came out of a collective rethinking of today’s population politics from feminist perspectives. We write in the spirit of the feminist resistance to population control from the heyday of the international women’s health movement and recognize in particular the foundational work of writer, activist and teacher, Betsy Hartmann, in challenging population control.

With this themed section, we seek to build bridges and forge connections. We hope to contribute to visioning feminist futures that eschew inevitable dystopia, catalyze feminist research agendas, and strengthen social justice approaches.

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“Confronting Populationism” articles include:

Daniel Bendix, Ellen E. Foley, Anne Hendrixson & Susanne Schultz (2019): Targets and technologies: Sayana Press and Jadelle in contemporary population policies, *Gender, Place & Culture*, [DOI:10.1080/0966369X.2018.1555145](https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2018.1555145)

Rajani Bhatia, Jade S. Sasser, Diana Ojeda, Anne Hendrixson, Sarojini Nadimpally & Ellen E. Foley (2019): A feminist exploration of ‘populationism’: Engaging contemporary forms of population control, *Gender, Place & Culture*, [DOI:10.1080/0966369X.2018.1553859](https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2018.1553859)

Geoffrey Alan Boyce, Sarah Launius, Jill M. Williams, & Todd Miller (2019): Alter-Geopolitics and the feminist challenge to the securitization of climate policy, *Gender, Place & Culture*, [DOI:10.1080/0966369X.2019.1620698](https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2019.1620698)

Anne Hendrixson, Diana Ojeda, Jade S. Sasser, Sarojini Nadimpally, Ellen E. Foley & Rajani Bhatia (2019): Confronting Populationism: Feminist challenges to population control in an era of climate change, *Gender, Place & Culture*. [DOI: 10.1080/0966369X.2019.1639634](https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2019.1639634)

Diana Ojeda, Jade S. Sasser & Elizabeth Lunstrum (2019): Malthus’s specter and the Anthropocene, *Gender, Place & Culture*, [DOI: 10.1080/0966369X.2018.1553858](https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2018.1553858)

Claudia Rivera-Amarillo & Alejandro Camargo (2019): Zika assemblages: women, populationism, and the geographies of epidemiological surveillance, *Gender, Place & Culture*, [DOI:10.1080/0966369X.2018.1555518](https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2018.1555518)

Amanda Shaw & Kalpana Wilson (2019): The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the necro-populationism of ‘climate-smart’ agriculture, *Gender, Place & Culture*. [DOI:10.1080/0966369X.2019.1609426](https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2019.1609426)