

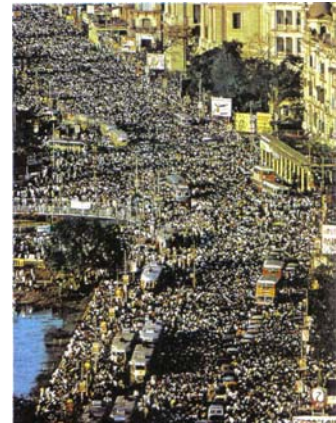
OVERPOPULATION, A GLOBAL PROBLEM

Mihai Anton, Andrei Baceanu, Danut Garbu, Dinel Iova, Dumitru Stanciu

*The Polytechnic University of Bucharest, Faculty of Electrical Engineering,
email: mihai.anton@gmail.com*

To ignore population as a central issue while talking about sprawl, air and water pollution, loss of biodiversity, agricultural land and animal habitat, global warming and many other crucial environmental issues - is to deny reality. Yet it's one that the green movement ignores for fear of alienating a public that may associate family planning with abortion or see attempts to curb immigration as racist, but the numbers of people added to the planet each year roll back any progress made by conservation measures.

As is the nature of unchecked growth, the momentum accelerated and the world went from 5 billion people to 6 billion in only 12 short years. The balance of nature has been drastically upset and the environment is already paying the price.



REASONS WHY POPULATION MATTERS

1. Worsening water scarcity stems in large part from increases in human demand. Water tables are dropping world wide.
2. Pollution in cities is the number one killer of young children because of respiratory diseases. Cities are growing at an alarming rate.
3. Worldwide, 800 million people are malnourished, and the number could grow significantly. Farming lands are suffering from soil erosion and desertification.
4. The poor are getting poorer due to competition for resources while governments are strained to keep up with them and economies fail.
5. The world's oceans are overfished and the coral reefs are dying
6. Humanity is rapidly changing the earth's atmosphere and thus its climate
7. Wild habitats that shelter endangered plants and animals are giving way to human activities and needs
8. Disease knows no borders, and crowding helps spread disease, and lack of education in reproductive health is a factor in the recent upsurge of infectious disease
9. Migration pressures are aggravated by rapid population growth
10. Civil conflict often emerges in societies where rapid population growth combines with environmental scarcity to undermine governments.

IMPACTS FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM

- World energy needs are projected to double in the next several decades, but no credible geologist foresees a doubling of world oil production, which is projected to peak within the next few decades.
- While protein demands are projected to also double in the century ahead, no respected marine biologist expects the oceanic fish catch, which has plateaued over the last decade, to double. The world's oceans are being pushed beyond the breaking point, due to a lethal combination of pollution and over-exploitation. Eleven of the 15

most important oceanic fisheries and 70 percent of the major fish species are now fully or over-exploited, according to experts. And more than half the world's coral reefs are now sick or dying.

- Growing stress can also be seen in the world's woodlands, where the clearing of tropical forests has contributed recently to unprecedented fires across large areas of Southeast Asia, the Amazon, and Central America. In Indonesia alone, 1,100 airline flights were canceled, and billions of dollars of income were lost.
- Environmental deterioration is taking a growing toll on a wide range of living organisms. Of the 242,000 plant species surveyed by the World Conservation Union in 1997, some 33,000, or 14 percent, are threatened with extinction-mainly as a result of massive land clearing for housing, roads, and industries. This mass extinction is projected to disrupt nature's ability to provide essential ecosystem services, ranging from pollination to flood control.
- The atmosphere is also under assault. The billions of tons of carbon that have been released since the Industrial Revolution have pushed atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide to their highest level in 160,000 years-a level that continues to rise each year. As scientists predicted, temperatures are rising along with the concentration of carbon dioxide. The latest jump in 1998 left the global temperature at its highest level since record-keeping began in the mid-19th century. Higher temperatures are projected to threaten food supplies in the next century, while more severe storms cause economic damage, and rising seas inundate coastal cities.

POPULATION IMPLOSION IN EUROPE: DOES THIS MEAN THERE IS NOT A PROBLEM?

While the European fertility rate dropped below 1.6 by 1995 and is projected to continue to decline, the population of Europe will continue to grow through the year 2000 and will not begin any significant decline before 2025. Beyond 2025, projections are quite speculative, since they depend in large part on predicting the fertility rates of women who have not yet been born, as well as future migration patterns.

Below are the total fertility rates (TFR) and the actual and projected population sizes for Europe, the United States, Asia, Latin America, Africa, and the world through 2025 (in millions), according to the most recent UN medium-variant projections.

Region	1995 TFR	1995 Pop.	2000 Pop.	2025 Pop.
		(millions)	(millions)	(millions)
Europe	1.57	728	729	701
US	2.05	267	278	332
Asia	2.84	3438	3689	4785
Latin Am.	2.93	477	515	690
Africa	5.71	719	820	1454
WORLD	2.96	5687	6091	8039

Table 1. The total fertility rates

Romania is scheduled to join the European Union (EU) at the next enlargement, in 2007. It will be, by far, the poorest nation ever to join the EU and although the population

projections are declining both Romania and EU, there are different worries to deal with. If the EU has time to plan for the future and to make the appropriate policy adjustments, Romania do not have the time. Not only the fertility rates are decreasing but also the country is facing massive moving of population, legally and illegally, to other countries especially the young population. All this will lead to a accelerate aged of population and that means that the number of population active or working in Romania will drop so much even to half of population and that will affect the GDP and the economy in general, an economy which today is in transition and ironic, is the major reason of youth migration.

SUSTAINABILITY AND OVERCONSUMPTION

There have been some remarkable environmental successes over the past few years. However, while there used to be a long time horizon for undertaking major environmental policy initiatives, time for a rational, well-planned transition to a sustainable system is running out fast. Full-scale emergencies now exist on a number of issues:

- The world water cycle seems unlikely to be able to cope with the demands that will be made of it in the coming decades.
- Land degradation has reduced fertility and agricultural potential. These losses have negated many of the advances made through expanding agricultural areas and increasing productivity.
- Tropical forest destruction has gone too far to prevent irreversible damage. It would take many generations to replace the lost forests, and the cultures that have been lost with them can never be replaced.
- Many of the planet's species have already been lost or condemned to extinction because of the slow response times of both the environment and policy-makers; it is too late to preserve all the biodiversity our planet once had.
- Many marine fisheries have been grossly over-exploited, and their recovery will be slow.
- More than half of the world's coral reefs are threatened by human activities. While some may yet be saved, it is too late for many others.
- Urban air pollution problems are reaching crisis dimensions in many of the mega-cities of the developing world, and the health of many urban dwellers has been impaired.
- It is probably too late to prevent global warming as a result of increased greenhouse gas emissions; in addition, many of the targets agreed on in the Kyoto Protocol may not be met.

THE MOST HARMFUL CONSUMER ACTIVITIES

- Cars and Light Trucks

The manufacture and, more important, the use of consumers' vehicles cause more environmental damage--especially air pollution and global warming --than any other single consumer spending category.

- Meat and Poultry

Meat and poultry production requires large amounts of water and causes 20 percent of the common (as opposed to toxic) water pollution related to consumer expenditure. It also uses a significant



share of the nation's land--800 million acres for grazing livestock and an additional 60 million acres to grow animal feed. Red meat causes especially high amounts of environmental damage for the nutrition it delivers.

- Fruit, Vegetables, and Grains

Irrigated crops grown to meet consumer demand use an enormous quantity of water (30 percent of consumer-related water use). pesticides and fertilizers cause 5 percent of consumer-related toxic water pollution. Food crops also use substantial amounts of land.

- Household Appliances and Lighting

Electricity seems clean and nonpolluting when it's used in the home, but most of it is generated by burning polluting fossil fuels, especially coal. Appliances and lighting are responsible for 15 percent of the greenhouse-gas emissions related to consumer expenditures and 13 percent of consumer-related common air pollution.

- Home Heating, Hot water, and Air Conditioning

Cooling and heating homes and water has an impact on global warming and air pollution similar to that of appliances and lighting. Systems that rely on electricity or oil contribute heavily to both problems. Most fireplaces and wood stoves are especially high air polluters.

- Home Construction

The land and wood used for new homes are responsible for about a quarter of consumers' impact on wildlife and natural ecosystems. Six percent of consumer-related water pollution comes from manufacturing the materials for new homes and disturbing the soil during construction.

- Household Water and Sewage

Despite advances in sewage treatment, municipal sewage remains a major source (around 11 percent) of water pollution, especially affecting coastal areas and estuaries. Interestingly, households' home water use is only 5 percent of the total compared with nearly 74 percent for food production and distribution.

BIRTH CONTROL CHOICES

A century ago, women feared dying in childbirth and yet could do little to control conception. The Comstock laws clamped down on freedom of information by making it a crime to send "obscene" material through the mail, including birth control information and devices. In 1916, Margaret Sanger was arrested for distributing diaphragms. In the 10 days her Brooklyn clinic was open, she fitted 488 women with diaphragms, an indication of women's unmet need to control pregnancy.

Reducing teen pregnancy is important for many reasons:

- The teen pregnancy rate in the U.S. is twice that of any other industrialized nation.
- Teens are often less able to care for their children.
- Pregnancy for teens is more dangerous and traumatic.
- Many teen pregnancies end in abortions.
- Teen birth adds directly to population growth by reducing the time between generations.
- Most importantly, almost all teen pregnancies are unintended

There are 1.05 billion teenagers in the world today. Half are young women. Many will become pregnant. Many in certain countries are pushed into early marriage. Education of girls has proven to delay the child-bearing years, which is key to detracting from 'population momentum' - the phenomenon that occurs when large numbers of women enter their child-bearing years.

This is history's largest generation of young people between 15 and 24, and their number is rapidly expanding in many countries. It is critical that all societies address their education, health and employment needs.

Providing Quality Information:

- A survey of secondary school students in Kenya found that only one in three males and one in four females knew that contraceptive pills had to be taken by the woman and not by the man. Even fewer knew the pills had to be taken daily, not just before sex.
- In Latin America, surveys show that 44 to 76% of the pregnancies of young unmarried women are unwanted. In Kenya, 74% of unmarried women aged 15-19 (and 47% of the married women) report their current pregnancy unwanted.
- Many women suffering from an unwanted pregnancy seek abortion whether it is legal or not. Young women are more likely to get an unsafe abortion because they often lack the money and the information to get it done in a safe way.
- Sex education does not increase promiscuity. Of 68 studies on family life and sex education in a scientific review 65 found no associated increases in sexual behaviour. Of the 53 studies that evaluated specific interventions, 21 found that young people taking part in such programs had higher levels of abstinence, later start of sexual activity, higher use of contraceptives, fewer sexual partners and/or reduced rates of STDs and unplanned pregnancy.

ACCORDS AND POLITICS - SOME KEY ENVIRONMENTAL SUCCESSES

- The ozone layer is expected to have largely recovered within half a century as a result of the Montreal Protocol.
 - The first international steps - the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol - have been taken to tackle the issue of global climate change.
 - The public is now much more concerned about environmental issues. Popular movements in many countries are forcing authorities to make changes.
 - Voluntary action taken by many of the world's major industries is reducing resource use and eliminating waste. The happy discovery that what is good for the environment can also be good for business may do much to reverse trends for which industry itself was originally largely responsible. This 'win-win' situation bodes well for the planet.
 - Governments in developed regions have been markedly successful in reducing air pollution in many major cities. Innovative legislation has been introduced, and the goal of zero emissions in several important areas is no longer considered utopian.
 - Deforestation has been halted and reversed in parts of both Europe and the North America.
 - Local Agenda 21 initiatives have proved an effective way of developing and implementing sustainable development policies that involve communities and political agencies alike.

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WHAT WORKS

The Two Parts of Sustainability Are Consumption and Population. The world could possibly reduce consumption down to a very basic level, but if population keeps growing, eventually that will not be enough. Even today many are living on a sub-sustainable level, due in part to an uneven distribution of resources, but also because, in many regions, population has outgrown essential resources for that region.

When people feel threatened by a hand-to-mouth existence, they are more likely to look towards less-than democratic ways to reduce population, especially if they have the foresight to realize that population growth is like a run-away train, very difficult to slow and stop.

However, more and more evidence is showing that the methods that work the best towards reducing population growth, are the methods established by the principles of the Cairo Conference in 1994 (United Nations International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) September 1994, Cairo, Egypt), which include:

- Family planning education and availability of contraception and sterilization;
- Removing gender disparities in education;
- Removal of 'target' family sizes;
- Reduce the infant mortality rate;
- Provide jobs or small business opportunities for women and education of females.
- Increasing financial and human resources commitments
- Strengthening cooperation between the public and private sectors in implementing these goals.

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