

IN THE CLIMATE AND EXTINCTION CRISES

IS MENTION OF OVERPOPULATION NOW TABOO?

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This past June France's President Macron held a Summit for a New Global Financial Pact in Paris aimed at finding the financial solutions to the interlinked global goals of tackling poverty, curbing planet-heating emissions and protecting nature. The summit brought together more than 50 heads of state, world finance officials and activists. They discussed ways of [reforming the global financial system](#) and address the debt, climate change, and poverty crises.

https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2023/06/22/paris-climate-summit-opens-with-macron-s-call-for-public-finance-shock_6035330_4.html

I was stunned that President Macron, in his interview on June 25th 2023 with Fareed Zakaria (www.cnn.com/shows/fareed-zakaria-gps) made no mention of curtailing population growth through more effective family planning. The expanding human and farmed animal biomass is a major contributor to climate change, poverty, and loss of biodiversity. Clearly, for political and other reasons, overpopulation of people and farmed animals is off the agenda but should not be.

The article by Associated Press reporters Evelyne Musambi and Desmond Tiro, 'More lions killed by herders amid drought in Kenya' (*Star Tribune* June 25th) documents the killing of six starving and endangered lions who took 12 goats from a farmer with a family of eight children, highlights growing human-wildlife conflict. All should look at the numbers:

The United Nations has projected that the world population, 8 billion as of 2023, would peak around the year 2086 at about 10.4 billion.

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Projections_of_population_growth).

According to Compassion in World Farming an estimated 70 billion farm animals are reared for food in the world each year. Approximately two out of every three farm animals in the world are reared on a factory farm.

(<https://www.animalmatters.org/facts/farm>

There are some 900 million dogs across the world, almost 85% being free-range.

(<https://worldanimalfoundation.org/advocate/dog-statistics/>)

As of 2021, the number of owned cats in the world is estimated to be 220 million, while the number of stray cats is estimated to be 480 million. (<https://a-z-animals.com/blog/how-many-cats-are-in-the-world>). Free roaming and feral dogs and cats are a significant negative impact on wildlife.

The [IUCN Red List](#) tracks the number of described plant and animal species and updates this figure annually based on the latest work of taxonomists. In 2021 it listed 2.13 million species on the planet. Monitored populations of vertebrates (mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles, and fish) have seen a devastating 69% drop on average since 1970, according to World Wildlife Fund's (WWF) [Living Planet Report 2022](#).

The growing human population is responsible for a massive decline in species, biodiversity, and ecosystems across the globe. (Hogue, A. S., & Breon, K. (2022). The greatest threats to species. *Conservation Science and Practice*, 4(5), e12670. <https://doi.org/10.1111/csp2.12670>).

Larger families and expanding communities need more livestock and land for grazing and for food and cash-crops, further harming wildlife and reducing biodiversity now all imperiled by climate change. Decades before the burning of fossil fuels became a major factor in climate change I witnessed the devastating ecological consequences of livestock overgrazing, corporate plantations, and deforestation for firewood in Kenya, Tanzania, and India.

Scientists have documented five prior mass-extinctions of life on planet Earth and are now ringing the alarm bells about the sixth extinction which is now gaining momentum. This is not alarmist eco-panic but a reality that is being reported worldwide and communities experiencing as they suffer increasingly severe, and frequent extreme climatic events.

This Anthropocene extinction crisis cannot be averted by the technofix brinkmanship of atmospheric geoengineering to shade the earth from sunlight to reduce global warming; by creating flood, drought, insect and salt-resistant varieties of genetically engineered crops along with more vaccines to protect us and factory farmed animals from pandemics which natural biodiversity help contain; and costly biopharmaceuticals to treat cancer and other diseases due largely to our contamination of the environment and our food, water and air.(For more details and potential short and long-term solutions and preparations, see my posting: <https://drfoxonehealth.com/post/the-anthropocene-extinction-crisis/>)

Whatever political will can be mustered internationally should give equal priority to social justice, economic justice, animals' rights and environmental justice; and the courts recognize crimes against nature as they do crimes against humanity, and the moral injury to those who care for animals and their habitats. These initiatives, facilitated by the utilization of Artificial Intelligence optimized by our emotional intelligence, empathy, and bioethical sensibility, may put us closer to making the vision, science, and praxis of One Health a reality, linking public health with animal and environmental health.

It is time for us all to step back, which is not a setback for the national GNP but the survival imperative of planetary CPR-conservation, restoration, and protection- of the natural environment upon which our lives and all life depend. Stepping back will facilitate the economic and social transition to a post-industrial, post-fossil fuel era of mindful consumption. But only if we vote to secure the collective political will: An informed majority answering the call for personal responsibility, austerity/voluntary simplicity (to minimize our carbon footprint and its collateral harms to the life community) and benevolence toward others be they human or non-human; all planetary citizens worthy of equal respect and consideration.

It is evident that the Climate Crisis is awakening environmental awareness with ecocentrism transcending the anthropocentrism that has limited progress, which some might call a significant step in our evolution at both religious and secular levels and the influence on public policy and how we chose to live as our numbers and appetites increase on a planet of finite resources. The late theoretical physicist Prof. Paul Hawken opined: "At present we are stealing the future, selling it in the present, and calling it gross domestic product. We can just as easily have an economy that is based on healing the future instead of stealing it. We can either create assets for the future or take the assets of the future. One is called restoration and the other exploitation. And whenever we exploit the earth, we exploit people and cause untold suffering. Working for the earth is not a way to get rich, it is a way to be rich."

The spiritual and environmental crises we face today are due to our lack of understanding and respect for the sanctity of all life that engages us spiritually in a hallowing covenant of planetary care. This responsibility continues to be abdicated by most current technologies and industries that pollute the planet, and along with the burning of fossil fuels, jeopardize our physical health. The collective, miasmatic, and delusional psychoses of egotism and anthropocentrism can be rectified and

prevented by right example through right living; right education, right industry and by embracing equal justice for all sentient beings.

The fundamentally spiritual and ethical roots of this existential crisis need to be recognized. Until we have respect for all life and apply the Golden Rule to all our relationships, human and non-human, chaos, and suffering will continue and intensify. We might yet evolve into a more empathic and compassionate primate species and become worthy of the self-anointed title of *Homo sapiens*.

AFTERWORD; All paths that rise, converge. Johanna Wothke stood beside my wife Deanna Krantz when Deanna and I were married in Assisi in 1989. In the years that followed we supported *Pro Animale* every way we could and now our hearts are broken by the devastation of the animal sanctuary and planted trees in the valley near Assisi by unprecedented flooding and a raging torrent of water. I appeal to all who can help in any way to restore this catastrophe of climate change.