

# **Overdevelopment, Overpopulation, Overshoot**

Tom Butler (editor), Foundation for Deep Ecology, Population Media Institute, 2015

The title of this book succinctly states its message, but the medium here is photography. *Overdevelopment, Overpopulation, Overshoot* is a photographic essay over current living conditions on planet Earth for both human and nonhuman life. It is a jarring, shocking, occasionally peaceful and strangely beautiful exposé, even when the subject is painful or ugly. It is a mirror that shows us ourselves not as the beings we innermost are (cooperative, kind, seekers of meaning) but what we have outwardly become: anthropocentric, quick-breeding and utterly disrespectful to the community of life which gives us birth.

The beginning and closing photo essays highlight two alternative parables for mankind's quest: man the conquerer and man the cooperative participant in the community of life. While the book's photographs mostly show the results of the parable of domination, the closing chapter provides needed emotional relief and a hopeful vision to take home.

There is little text and it is not needed—the photographs speak for themselves. Simply browsing through the book (free online at [populationspeakout.org](http://populationspeakout.org)) can almost take away your breath—the sheer magnitude of what is often aptly called “the human enterprise” comes at you in full force. I think having this book on the table in a library, waiting room or school could do a world of good and sow seeds about our place in the order of things, in the minds of many people who otherwise might not be receptive to such reflection.

Archie Duncanson, Stockholm, March 2015

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## **Quotes from Overdevelopment, Overpopulation, Overshoot**

(Note: unattributed quotes below are by the book's editors.)

The health of the oceans, the air, the water and the land affects human health. The size of the human family and the way we live influence the quality of life for people today as well as for future generations—Musimbi Kanyara, Foreword, p 13

Our faith in breakthroughs is misplaced, as amply demonstrated by the past three hundred years' scientific and technological advances that have accelerated, not slowed, the degradation of the natural world—William Ryerson, Introduction, p 58.

Viewed from almost any angle, addressing population is a win-win proposition...We are part of a complex web of interdependent life and our welfare depends upon the health of the whole—William Ryerson. p 59

Every pressing problem, from poverty and malnutrition to biodiversity loss and climate change, is linked to human numbers and behavior. p 72

Can you think of any problem in any area of human endeavor...whose long-term solution is in any demonstrable way aided, assisted, or advanced by further increases in population, locally, nationally, or globally?—Albert Bartlett, p 9 and 316

Despite that huge area converted from wild habitat to feed humankind, nearly a billion people are hungry and another billion persist tenuously. p 120

In absolute numbers, more illiterate, impoverished and chronically malnourished people live in the world at the end of the twentieth century than at the beginning—Marvin Harris. p 150

Consumerism is not an ahistorical trait of human nature but a specific product of capitalism—Juliet B. Schor. p 160

Things like capitalism, free enterprise, the economy, currency, the market, are not forces of nature, we invented them...and we can change them—David Suzuki. p 162

Human domination over nature is an illusion—Donald Worster p 185

All of our current environmental problems are unanticipated harmful consequences of our existing technology. There is no basis for believing that technology will miraculously stop causing new and unanticipated problems while it is solving the problems that it previously produced—Jared Diamond. p 231

The essential problem is that we are overpowered...and we are overpowering nature—Richard Heinberg. p 232

Good water, good life. Poor water, poor life. No water, no life—Sir Peter Blake. p 238

We have traditionally regarded sin as being merely what people do to other people. Yet, for human beings to destroy the biological diversity in God's creation...to contaminate the earth's waters, land and air—all of these are sins—Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, Head of the Greek Orthodox Church. p 244

Air pollution and greenhouse gases...are [called] "externalities". The reality is that we all pay in the end through shortened lives, increased health care expenses, and the quickly rising ecological and social costs of a disrupted climate. p 250

In a few decades, the relationship between the environment, resources and conflict may seem almost as obvious as the connection we see today between human rights, democracy and peace—Wangari Maathai. p 252

Capitalism is quite partial to the twin peaks of population growth: cheap labor and mass clientele—Eileen Crist, Afterword, p296...Many consumers and growers, alike, have been duped by corporate salesmen (and their government allies) into believing that it is normal and necessary to poison the biosphere for the purpose of producing human nourishment—Eileen Crist, p299

To live on a planet of Life it is necessary to limit ourselves so as to allow the biosphere freedom to express its ecological and evolutionary arts—Eileen Crist, p297

The belief that humans are exempt from any natural "carrying capacity" is a cornerstone of the mission to continue expanding food production to support coming billions...Human carrying capacity (how many people the Earth can support) has been extended not simply because we are so clever at manipulating natural processes and inventing stuff, but through forcefully taking over the carrying capacity of other life-forms and, in the process, wiping them out regionally or globally—Eileen Crist, p297

Food production contributes at least 30 percent of anthropogenic greenhouse gases... [and] consumes at least 70 percent of the fresh water taken from ecological watersheds, thus depriving the nonhumans who called that water home, and killing or driving them to extinction....So how is the amount of food we produce to be doubled or more without additional damage?—Eileen Crist, p299-300

By choosing the wisdom of limitations and humility, humanity can reject life on a planet converted into a human food factory and allow for the rewilding of vast expanses of the biosphere's landscapes and seascapes...And if the world would look more beautiful and sane with expansive rewilding; with abundant food, ecologically and ethically produced; with streams, rivers, lakes and estuaries returned to being living waters...If all these things can be achieved, what is keeping us from pursuing such a world?—Eileen Crist, p299-300