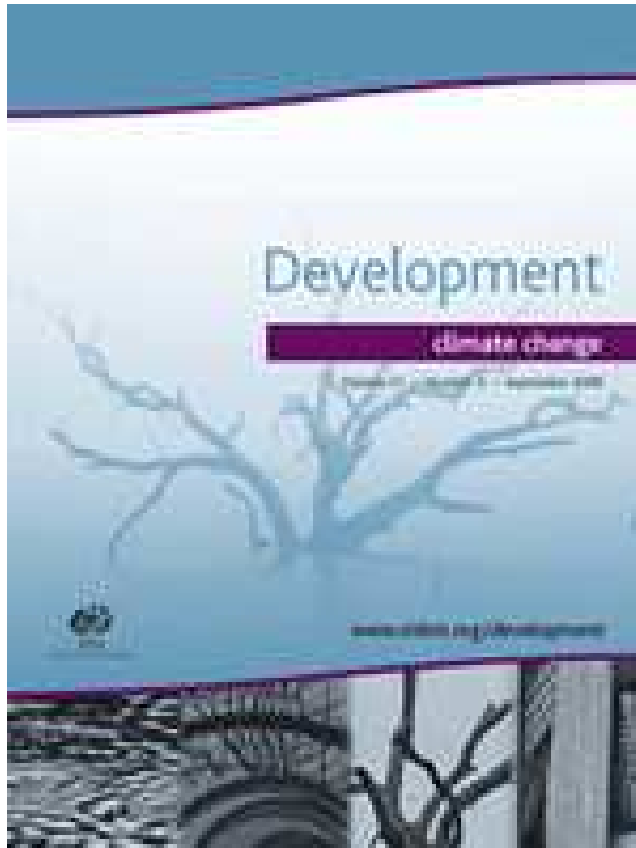


Ethical Debates, Gender, Technology and Climate Change

Wendy Harcourt





Three ethical questions

- **'The Malthus Factor' in population policy.**
- **nuanced and aware gender analysis is brought into the climate change**
- **Understanding the role of technology.**

The Malthus Factor

- Eric Ross 'The Malthus Factor: Poverty, Politics and Population in Capitalist Development' debunks these malthusian myths:
- The illusion that the poor's economic and reproductive behaviour is the source of their misery, and that development or 'economic growth' is their only source of hope, is Malthusian myth
- That the environmental crisis/climate change is due to a "population problem" and a "tragedy of the commons"

Rosalind Petchesky

how can a woman:

"avail herself of [reproductive] right if she lacks the financial resources to pay for reproductive health services or the transport to get to them; if she is illiterate or given no information in a language she understands; if her workplace is contaminated with pollutants that have an adverse effect on pregnancy; or if she is harassed by parents, a husband or in-laws who will abuse or beat her if they find out she uses birth control."

Betsy Hartmann

- points to the persistence of neo-Malthusianism and the dangerous intersections between it and the conservative assault on immigrants, women of colour and the economically poor in general within the climate change debate.

What to guard against in the climate change debate

- the fears of 'over population' reemerging in popular thinking, obscuring the structural and systemic roots of poverty, inequality and environmental deterioration.
- Current debates about globalization, welfare, the minimum wage and migration continue to be influenced by Malthusian arguments which reaffirm the privileges of the few over the hopes of the many

Avoid the neo Malthusian trap

- We need to be very clear that sexual and reproductive rights and health is linked to fundamental inequalities that are evident within Europe and outside Europe, and to ensure that women living in Europe or anywhere in the world are entitled to the same rights, economic, social and political.

Nuanced gender analysis

- neither misogynist nor romantic about the gendered roles women play.
- work with the gender differences and design supportive, transformative shifts for the behaviour of both women and men.
- Work for major institutional and structural changes that supports community survival building and decreases gender inequalities without recourse to stereotyping or blaming the victim mentality.
- get down to brass tacks on ways to ensure gender equality.

Convergence technologies

- Move out of romance and face some of the tough problems we all face.
- What are political, ethical and cultural consequences of new bio technologies?
- What are the responsibilities of companies, scientists, policy makers, the public in the Global North towards poor women and men in the Global South?
- What is the nexus between new technologies and the global economy, environment and reproductive politics?
- Do we know the effects of biotechnologies on women's bodies and the environment?

Some technological ethical dilemmas

- 'human performance enhancement' and 'transhumanism'.
- huge ethical dilemmas around whether to manipulate one's body further through these new technologies
- increasingly evasive genetic technology as well as the underlying racism and eugenics
- the drive behind the industrial and medical interest in these technologies
- Confront the 'choice mantra' leading to genetic manipulation, designer babies as well as the 'virtual holocaust of girls' in Asia

Technology and environment

- toxicity of nanoparticles (used in plastics, housing materials, clothing and even food) and their impact on health and the environment.
- new, constructed photosynthesising and carbon dioxide absorbing bacteria - are they solutions to the climate crisis, or dangerously disturbing to humans and ecosystems?

How to respond?

- Ways to ensure participation, engagement and political action that will shape the impact of technologies in ways that promote methodologies and applications that do not misuse or negatively impact on women, men or nature
- Ways to confront neomalthusianism
- Ways to link feminist and gender analysis to climate change and climate justice debates

And the last word to Oz cartoonist Judy Horacek ...

