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Against Population, Towards Alterlife

Michelle Murphy

A group of individuals and the sum of inhabitants. Population is pervasively used as a neutral term that abstractly describes a multitude. Yet figures of massified life, in the forms of crowds and overpopulation, have been persistently racializing. With intensifying climate change, mass extinctions, and extraction regimes poisoning lands, airs and waters, the problem of overpopulation has been recharged for left and liberal politics as a way to think through environmental crisis. In media venues like *The Guardian*, aerial photos of global slums and crowded shopping malls excite privileged viewers to reattach anxiety to overpopulation.

This essay takes a position against population as a framework for a feminist politics while still elevating the question of reproductive politics in feminist decolonial environmental justice. Even if population as a framework is abandoned, it is also the case that an individualized approach to reproductive justice, in

which the individual and their right to choice only takes precedence, is also an inadequate framework for addressing the mesh of responsibilities and entanglements reproduction has with environmental violence. Following in the footsteps of a multitude of radical reproductive justice visions, might we search for concepts that reframe reproductive justice as fundamentally a concern of environment—that is of land, water, non-human relations, hostile conditions, and life supports in worlds already damaged? This essay opens a critical path against population and moves towards a reparative path, envisioning a distributive reproductive politics that stretches beyond bodies, choice, and babies to extensively include all our relations and responsibilities within damaged worlds.

Achieving distributive reproductive justice requires creating infrastructures that disseminate viable worlds, queer and non-human kinships, harm reduction practices, and also the taking apart of violent systems. What concepts might be given up to make room for other ways of creating a politics of reproductive justice? Population is not the only way to think through a politics of more-than-individual reproduction that is responsible to environmental violence. Hence, I make my case beginning with a refusal of population and then move towards positing the beginning of something else: the concept of alterlife.

Against Population

While we can trace population thinking back to Malthus in the 18th century, the managerial sense of population—as a quantity problem fixed by *adjustable* birth and death rates—is a 20th-century formulation. Population, in the 20th century, became a calculative concept used to govern the stock of people in a nation-state for the sake of economic productivity. In 19th-century Britain, the term designated the working class as an undifferentiated mass, and in mid-20th-century United States, the word named the totality of people in a prison. Population, as an artifact of a particular way of counting, bundles up bodies into a single tally, creating distance and abstraction for a managerial gaze that is then poised to ask, “What should be done about them?” It is a formulation that allows the anonymization of lives into deletable data points.

The histories of the uses of “population” are ignored at our peril. I have tried to show this in *The Economization of Life*, building on works by Alison Bashford, Betsy Hartmann, Farida Akhter, and many other chroniclers of eugenics and population control. In the first half of the 20th century, the problem of population was politicized in nations around the world as the eugenic project of racial futures, how to prevent the breeding of some for the sake of the evolutionary future of the whole. The word “prevention” here hides the vast range of violences undertaken in the name of racial evolution: sterilization, segregation, child-theft, residential schools, incarceration, starvation, murder, war. The future of population was often posed as the problem of differential fertility, creating national projects of destructive sorting: the problem of poor people having

more children than the rich, of blacks having more children than whites, of the colonized having more children than the colonizer. From Malthus to American foreign policy, the problem of population has been framed as a way to avert crises, as necessitating unsavory acts in order to thwart a potential apocalypse of starvation, resource depletion, and war.

In the cold war/postcolonial/ongoing-settler colonial period of the second half of the 20th century, when it became less allowable for scientific and political elites to explicitly invoke racial biological difference as a sufficient rationalization for violent policies, the problem of population was transformed within the social sciences into the dilemma of too many people: the problem of the prevention of the birth of surplus others for the sake of future economic prosperity of the nation. In the UN, USAID, and national population departments around the world, population became a concept affectively charged with a fear of future apocalypses caused by the too-many. Population became a kind of simple quantification of mass, containerized by the project of nation-statehood. It joined Gross National Project as a simple kind of measure, one meant for adjustment: population and economy *together* needed to be counted, stimulated, managed. Economy's perpetual growth required population's curbing. In the second half of the 20th century, every nation was required to offer up such numbers as the price of participation in transnational agreements and finance.

But so too was population summoned as a problem modeled as a planetary-scaled phenomenon open to ongoing management, legitimating projects incorporating American interests to cover the globe. Population, as worked through the now globalized practices of population control since the 1960s, has

rested on calculations of surplus life and white supremacy, of foreign life to be kept outside of borders, of lives not worth saving, of killable brown and black others, and of elite lives to be protected. The concept of population has worked its way deep inside conventional policy, economic, ecological, and life science thinking. Trained to inhabit a world composed of objects and forces rendered by these epistemologies, critics of environmental violence, especially biologists, might find it difficult to imagine a future organized without "population" as a concept.

Yet the problem of population is not just conceptual. Population as a problem carries with it thick transnational webs of infrastructures, laws, experimental platforms, clinics, and technologies of population control still in operation today. Population infrastructures continue to weaponize birth control practices, distributing coercive sterilization, inventing new flexible forms of eugenics, propagating extractive experiments, putting up border walls, and fomenting racist violence. Population is bound to the material horror of genocide, apartheid, sexual violence and colonialisms. Each is animated by designations of life as expendable.

After spending over a decade in the thick archive of data produced by histories of the experimental exuberance of globalized family planning in American empire, after reading thousands of studies about averting the births of poor, Indigenous, brown, and black people, studies in which race is rarely mentioned even as it is the very grammar of designations of surplus life, after living with the ongoing violence of settler colonialism in Canada, population has become for me an intolerable concept. I am against population. #AgainstPopulation

Not only is population a way of managing human presence saturated with racism, concentrating fears on the problem of population is also a distraction. It deflects from the crucial fact that it is the structures of industrial accumulation, militarism, and consumption—justified by the goal of improving macroeconomic measures—that have overwhelmingly produced the material violence of climate change, extensive planetary pollution, and death-making terraforming. A 2017 Major Carbons Database report identifies just 90 companies that are responsible for two-thirds of the last 150 years of green house gas emissions. In this moment of intensifying environmental violence, human density is attractive as a managerial policy problem and container for worry because it points the finger at preventing future human life without requiring the reordering of capitalism, colonialism, the nation-state, or heteropatriarchy as world orders. If only there were fewer humans in sites of high-human density, then future others might live more abundantly. Population policies of every flavour imaginable have been tried over the last half century, and they have resoundingly failed to curb the violence of the world.

Instead, nearly a century of governing industry for the sake of growing the national macroeconomy has produced a globalized capitalist infrastructure that, on the one hand, produces the molecular material “waste” of emissions as outside of the calculation of value and, on the other hand, designates poor people as forms of human “waste,” better for the world to be without, and hence correspondingly open to abuse, abandonment, and elimination. In other words, population as a concept is enmeshed in the very infrastructures and logics that have produced ubiquitous environmental violence.

The problem of massive, widely distributed, environmental violence has today reinstalled population as an affectively charged problem. Categories like climate change and the Anthropocene offer planetary-scaled renderings that calibrate well with the framework of population. Charts demonstrating the “Great Acceleration” put the dramatic upward slope of human population next to those of extinction, carbon dioxide, and pollution emissions. This earth systems optics of Anthropocene, as Joseph Masco has shown, is caught up in cold war American military histories of planetary-scaled measurement, planning, and nuclear war modelling. It is thus no accident that population thinking (with its own entanglements with cold war military global planning, and not just ecological modelling) fits well within the units of analysis of the Anthropocene. Narratives of the Anthropocene emphasize environmental violence at the totality of the planetary combined with an imminent apocalyptic horizon that, together, encourages responses crafted as massive and urgent, hence assembling the enormous earth system scale of problematizing with the ethically fraught timescape of the emergency as a justification for suspending ethics. For whom do these scalings of the problem make sense? Population is not the only way of thinking through reproductive politics in relation to intensive environmental violence, even if the inheritance of cold war and colonial epistemologies keep offering population as a container. Given the existence of elaborate national and transnational projects to reduce population in the 20th century, is there any surprise that it remains easier to imagine doing something about population than ending capitalism? I do not believe that a radical political imaginary for the concept of population can be mobilized without

amplifying existing infrastructures already deployed towards racist necropolitical ends. To take a stance against population is to prompt the challenge of recognizing and creating other ways of figuring humanity, relations, and density as part of collectivities resisting environmental violence and towards more livable worlds.

So how to talk about intensive human-caused environmental violence and its relation to the questions of human presence, distributions of reproductive possibility, and differential exposures to death? How do reproductive politics and massive environmental violence connect? How to create a politics of reproduction beyond the myopia of the individual body and in recognition of macrological political dimensions of human life, and even all being? This essay is an attempt to think through these questions in, alongside, and in struggle with colleagues and mentors whose work, it is no exaggeration to say, have made my own possible. It is an attempt to think futures and concepts in the spaces between conflicting and yet deeply entangled feminisms. And it is an insistence of opposition to population and human numbering as a feminist framing for land defense while still puzzling through how reproductive politics is integral to environmental justice.

For some, particularly people in privileged vantage points, the abuses of population control are parried with a politics of individual choice and the individual right to choose to have or not have children. However, women of color, Indigenous, queer, and decolonial feminist reproductive justice has long been critical of this privileged version of reproductive politics, which pivots on the well-resourced individualized user and consumer of reproductive health care services

and commodities. Reproductive justice frameworks built by organizations such as the Sister Song Women of Color Reproductive Health Collective, Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice, or Native Youth Sexual Health Network emphasize building strategies of *community*, not just individual, survival and flourishing. Radical reproductive justice takes as its starting point the *affirmative making of the conditions that support collective life* in the face of persistent racist, colonial, and heteropatriarchal life-negating structures. Thus, reproductive justice bleeds into environmental justice, which includes water, land, and non-human relations, as well as policing, food, shelter, schools, reserves, carceral systems, war, structural unemployment, and pollution. If you cannot drink the water, there is no reproductive justice. Or, as the Third World Women's political banner at a 1979 Boston protest about murdered Black women declared, "We cannot live without our lives."

So if conditions of environmental hostility require versions of collective reproductive justice, might the same be said of elite and enabled life? What reproductive justice politics can grapple with rich, white, settler colonial, heteronormative reproduction, of baby-making with expensive strollers assembled in supply chain capitalist webs, of fossil-fuel guzzling SUVs fed through pipelines, of oil turned into piles of plastic toys destined for landfills and then microplastic gyres, of white property relations with empty rooms, of grocery stores stocked with the bright goods of multi-national corporations, and all the many forms of white possession and enablement? Reproduction here is not just the baby. Webs of relations and distributions of violence make possible the smooth life of abundant choice. This kind of reproductive accumulation is another kind of

density—a density of relations that enable capitalist life at the expense of all else. Here we can think of density in a different way: not in terms of human numbers, but as densities of relations that create the enablement and entitlement that in turn depend on and propagate often quite distanced distributions of violence.

What responsibilities to webs of injury, land theft, and other worlds does an anti-colonial, anti-racist environmental reproductive justice politics attuned to the environmental violence of capitalism, white supremacy, and settler colonialism demand? What responsibilities to our entanglements in webs of accumulation, entitlement, and hoarding? An extended, anti-racist and decolonial reproductive justice politics stretches beyond babies, birth and bodies and out into struggles of survival that are not just personal survival, but struggles over what more-than-life relations might persist into the future for collectivities. It also asks what relations should be dismantled, refused, shunned? This extensive sense of reproductive relations thus includes policing and military violence, reserves and borders, heterosexuality and family, property and labor, land and water, and questions of redistribution of resources and life chances. It includes Black Lives Matter, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two Spirit People, No One is Illegal, and countless struggles against extractive regimes around the globe.

A distributed reproductive politics is not about birth rates or human numbers. It is about which kinships, supports, structures, and beings get to have a future and which are destroyed. A distributed reproduction is not about babies in particular (neither is it against them); instead its ambit extends into air, water, land, and a mesh of life forms into the multigenerational future. It is not merely about how bodies reproduce, it

is about how life supports are replenished, cared for, and created. It is inseparable from a becoming-with-the-many that includes shelter, technologies, protocols of governance, structures of violence, animals, plants, ancestors, and histories. A distributed sense of reproduction attends to what infrastructures, assemblies, systems, and collectivities are supported through violence—capitalism, colonialism, white supremacy, heteropatriarchy—and what relations must struggle for their continuity or resurgence, and in so doing fight for the destruction of those violent systems, a dismantling that makes room for other forms of life. As Winona LaDuke asserts, not pipelines for oil, but for water. Which structures have to end to make room for livable ways of being together? The list is long. Reproduction (as perpetuation) is not in itself an inherent good.

Aspiring towards decolonizing and queer alter-worlds, reproduction might be better rethought as a politics of redistributing relations, possibilities and futures. #RedistributionsNotReproductions. Making redistributed relations is an extensive, ongoing endeavor, looped with imperfections, messiness, returns and futurities. I am against population and for a politics of differently distributed futures. #DifferentFutures

So to be against population is to reject the zeroing in on human density and wealth as problems of disconnected counting and to instead concentrate political attention on decomposing the density of consumption, property, waste and state sanctioned violence that prop up capitalism, colonialism, and white supremacy, while at the same time creating less violent ways of being with land. It is to struggle over different futurities, not differential fertility. To be against the problem of population, then, calls for concepts and practices of becoming-with-the-many-

Alterlife has become a political concern for me as I live as a guest in Tkaronto/Toronto, on Anishinaabe territories, on the Great Lakes governed by the Dish and One Spoon Wampum Treaty, and in Canada, a settler colonial and petro-extraction state. The question of alterlife is shaped by a sense of responsibilities as a guest of this place, to its water and land, to its knowledge-making, and to my own position as an urban Métis person from Winnipeg with responsibilities to both my complicities in settler colonialism and whiteness as well as activations of decolonial Indigenous relations. To be a white-coded Métis in settler colonial spaces is to be messily pulled between systems intent on Indigenous erasure interconnected with structures of white entitlement.

Alterlife is a concern here in Canada, where entangled relations of life and death take the form of neoliberal managerial governance combined with a capitalist settler colonial extraction regime that together create a potent environmentally violent mix dependent on Indigenous dispossession. Alterlife is a concern for me as someone who lives with bodies of water that hold 21% of the world's fresh surface water, and 84% of North America's. Alterlife is a concern for me as I live as a guest of both ancestors and those yet to come, who also already have relations with this land. Thus, my thinking of alterlife is also about upholding Indigenous sovereignties and continuing Land/Body relations in the ongoing aftermaths of settler colonialism, even while surrounded by skyscrapers and enmeshed in the enjoyments and densities of city life.

My sense of a politics of distributed reproduction for the condition of alterlife is also animated by emergent technoscientific renderings of endocrine

disruption and metabolism that overflow the old singular toxicological focus on acute poisonings that have previously been used to map (and limit) the terrains of environmental violence. Some scientists are now tracking low dose epigenetic, neurobehavioral, developmental, and metabolic effects of industrial chemicals, some of which may be transgenerational. What it means to be a human is to materially develop in the uneven distribution of chemical exuberances of a century of industrial capitalism. *As such, the very premise of the discrete body is unravelling.* Microbiome research, for example, shows how bodies are not singular organisms, but instead always collectivities. These are emerging research trajectories that might be collaborated with towards thickening a sense of alterlife.

Moreover, Hannah Landecker has identified a turn to a “post-industrial metabolism” in which many life scientists now explicitly acknowledge that their object of inquiry has become life forms that are materially transformed at biochemical registers by entanglements with a capitalist-made built environment both inside and outside labs. The nascent field of “exposomics” likewise extends the sense of the beings and doings that make up bodies by attending to the metabolic effects of synthetic chemical exposures as they accumulate and cause metabolic changes in bodies from conception onward. While this field is aimed at creating a personalized medicine that can address the problematics of individual exposure, it nonetheless sparks a potential for new ways of studying exposures as the extensive molecular alteration of life in capitalist fields of relation.

To these emerging fields of research, environmental epigenetic studies are now suggesting that the environments of our ancestors may be present inside us

as *inherited metabolic patterns*. This bundle of research contributes towards a sense of relational living-being that extends not only outward into multi-species and land relations, but out into the very physical infrastructures of capitalism, colonialism, and racism. Or put another way, it offers a sense of how such infrastructures are physically present inside of us, unevenly distributing harms and supports. These are not the life forms of cold war population models. They point to different kinds of densities and relations of becoming. While evocative, these various technoscience materializations of the already-altered body need to be troubled, challenged, collaborated with, and recomposed with critical research from Black studies, Indigenous studies, postcolonial studies, queer studies, and trans studies, fields that have many lessons for how to craft concepts, existences, kinships, and political actions that rise from and resist the aftermaths of structural violence. Alterlife is forged in recognition of the long duration of densified everyday environmental violence. Alterlife does not happen at the scale of molecules, it is extensive, now planet wide, even as it is unevenly concentrated in some places and bodies.

Learning from and making kin with the decolonial projects of Frantz Fanon, Sylvia Wynter, and Indigenous Land/body prophecies, understanding the densities that make up “alterlife” is a project aimed at summoning new forms of humanity, not preserving the human that histories of deep violence have created. Alterlife is not waiting for the apocalypse—apocalypses of many kinds have already happened, even as livable worlds keep being snatched away. First the buffalo, then the land, now the water. Alterlife resides in what Frantz Fanon called “an atmosphere of certain uncertainty.” This is a crucial point. The frame of population

crisis and the Anthropocene both put apocalypse on the horizon. It is yet to come. This is telling. For whom has massive violence not already been a daily struggle, and thus who has the luxury to think endangerments to life are in the future? Alterlife, in contrast, insists on a different temporality, recognizing the many long-standing world-destructions, from settler colonialism to plantation slavery. As Kyle Whyte argues, Indigenous people of Turtle Island already know well loss of land—through land theft, displacement, and industrialism—and do not have to wait for climate change to intimately know forms of loss tied to land change. Slavery too brutally robbed people of their worlds, their lands, their knowledges, languages, and relations, creating legacies of dehumanization and death, as well as accumulations of wealth out of unfree labor, the structures of which are still at work today. Theorizing the plantation as an ongoing violence, Kathrine McKittrick asks, “What kind of future can the plantation give us?” In this spirit, the temporality of alterlife is one of the aftermaths, even as they are still happening, and for which there has been continual heterogenous projects of making life otherwise in the ongoing fallout.

Of vital significance here is that life has not just been altered, it is more generally open to ongoing alteration, both desired and imposed, making and destroying, choreographed and unexpected. Alterlife resides in ongoing uncertain aftermaths, continually challenged by violent infrastructures, but also holding capacities to alter and be altered—to recompose relations to land and sociality, to love and sex, to survival and persistence, to undo some forms of life and be supported by others, to become alter-wise in the aftermath of hostile conditions, to surprise.

Alterlife is the condition of being already co-constituted by material entanglements with water, chemicals, soil, atmospheres, microbes, and built environments, and also the condition of being open to ongoing becoming. Hence, alterlife is already recomposed, pained, and damaged, but has potentiality nonetheless. If life holds together tensions between violence and possibility, braiding the organic and inorganic, body and land, and resides in the indistinctions between infrastructures and ecologies, recognizing Alterlife attends also to openness, to a potential for recombination that exceeds the ongoing aftermaths. Refusing narratives of purity, or a sense of life as separate from its conditions, or a politics of reproduction separate from environment, alterlife strives for a politics of survival-as-resistance—what indigenous scholar Gerald Vizenor calls survivance. Alterlife is life damaged, life persistent, and life otherwise; life materialized in other ways and life exceeding our materializations.

The concept of alterlife is offered as a way of approaching the politics of relations in solidarity with the vast labors of anti-racist and decolonial reproductive and environmental justice activism, as well as Indigenous survivance and resurgence. This vision of decolonializing more-than-life collectivities draws inspiration from the work of many scholars, land defenders, activists, and artists, as well as students and friends, who are working hard to activate decolonial potentials now, without waiting for a better moment to arrive.

Core to the sense of alterlife is the acknowledgment that bodies are not separable from lands, waters, airs, and other non-human beings. Body defense is land defense, as the Native Youth Sexual Health Project's reproductive/environmental justice work teaches. The violences against the land, water,

airs, and the many beings that are co-dependent on one another is also violence on bodies. "What happens to the land, happens to the people." Their recent campaign with Women's Earth Alliance on Land/Body Defense centers the experiences, resistances, and resurgences of Indigenous women, two-spirit, and young people whose lives are already also altered by racist colonial processes including the material environmental violence of extractive industries. There are generations of hard-earned learning to acknowledge and start from.

Our current work cannot afford to forget that a movement for land/body defense has been growing consistently for many years; there are tools and strategies already tried and true or discarded. The first step, then, had to be talking to and honoring the knowledge of those grandmothers, mothers, aunties, and elders who most intimately know the relationship between body, place, people, and movement.

#LandBodyDefense. It is already here.

Those who benefit from oppressive systems have much work to do in calling forth alterlife, dismantling the work of whiteness in the ways environmental violence is structured with beneficiaries: the people and institution who are often densely supported and enriched by capitalist, colonial, and racist systems of consumption and waste. This teaching points to another way of conceiving of a politics of density. Where are the benefits of violence concentrated? Which density of enablement catches life in structures that demand environmental violence as the price of living? Most people are caught in quotidian and humble complicities that are entangled with the very acts of sheltering, eating, cleaning, and surviving that are in

turn knotted to a cacophony of consumption and harms within supply chain capitalist webs, and tied to discard systems built into objects, tethering ordinary survival to the continual spewing of injury and persistent chemical violence.

Our relations are not just supportive, they can also be injurious and toxic. Vanessa Agard-Jones calls this “chemical kinship.” Honoring “water is life” demands fraught practices of caring for bodies of water, geological processes, weather, and organisms, as well as relationships with the chemical and radioactive offspring born of extraction processes, nuclear power, and careful as well as careless discard. These non-innocent webs of relations are densified as white supremacy, multi-national corporations, and settler colonial nations. *They constitute the political problem of density; not human number counts of surplus life.* Métis artist and land defender Erin Marie Konsmo who works with Native Youth Sexual Health persistently reminds that an understanding of water as life includes queer, addicted, homeless, hungry, urban, and sick ways of being, and thus demands a politics of harm-reduction aimed at leaving none of our relations uncared for. No one is discarded because the land and water needs everyone. Attention to alterlife asks, not for a politics of fixing the other but, in the words of Fred Moten, “your recognition that it’s fucked up for you, in the same way that we’ve already recognized that it’s fucked up for us. I don’t need your help. I just need you to recognize that this shit is killing you too however much more softly.” Within the condition of alterlife the potential for political kinship and alter-relations comes out of the recognition of connected, though profoundly uneven and often complicit, imbrications in the systems that distribute violence.

One perversity of population control rhetoric today is that it focuses on places like Africa and Bangladesh, where everyday contributions to planetary environmental violence by humans is minimal. It worries about teenage Indigenous pregnancy in a world of settler colonial exterminations. It targets desperate displaced people passing over border fences looking for slightly better life chances. Population rhetoric points responsibility away from low-fertility, heteronormative, elite, massively consumptive lives that are profoundly supported by the exposure to structural violence of others. It deflects from the infrastructure of our current elite and human-centered support systems. It is this infrastructure that I want to attend to, built by a cosmology that frames the body as distinct and isolatable from conditions of becoming with the many. It is the result of seeing land as a resource, with bodies on it, rather than bodies as manifestation of land, and land as extensions of bodies.

Alterlife gathers at least three affirming gestures for a reconceptualized sense of more-than-life becoming within and against conditions of massive violence.

First, alterlife considers living-being within entanglements of becoming, and unbecoming, with others and infrastructures, as a project of future-making. What might a radically inclusive becoming-in-time together look like? No single being on this planet escapes entanglements with capitalism, colonialism and racism, even as their violent effects are profoundly concentrated in hotspots of hostility. Alterlife makes futures in explicit recognition and resistance to profoundly uneven distributions of life chances. Alterlife seeks to find other ways of persisting in ongoing aftermaths that materially redistribute densities of enablement and misery.

Second, alterlife thinks with and against ways of framing environmental violence in discourses about the Anthropocene (which tend to erase the complex histories that have generated and unevenly distributed environmental violence and benefits), as well as within scientific fields such as ecology, climatology, geology, demography, toxicology, epigenetics, and endocrine disruption that are riven by biopolitical grammars, challenging the ways damaged-based research redeploys portraits of racial and sexual difference and blame. Alterlife seeks to refuse the eugenic residual that calculates lives worth living, lives that are better not to have been born, lives not worth supporting, unproductive lives, and lives ignorable and killable. Such calculations vividly persist in policing, ecology, toxicology, demography, public health, economics and many other science, technical, and policy practices. Alterlife rejects damage-based research and biopolitical frameworks that focus the burden of representing violence (and hence the managerial aim and blame) on people, beings, and communities already confined in hostile worlds. Alterlife insists on a politics of valuing, loving, and supporting violated, endangered, and queer life, while fashioning problemizations and projects that attach responsibility to perpetrators and their infrastructures.

And **third**, alterlife compels speculation about futurity and potentials of being otherwise. Alterlife shares with responses to the Anthropocene a politics of non-deferral that is a commitment to act now. But this politics of non-deferral is not driven by the logic of the emergency, the scale of the planetary, or the container of the nation state. It is a politics of non-deferral interested in the humbleness of right here, in the scale of communities, and in the intimacies of relations.

Alterlife is a challenge to invent, revive and sustain decolonializing possibilities and persistances right now as we are, forged in non-innocence, learning from and in collaboration with past and present projects of resistance and resurgence. Thus, “Alterlife in the Ongoing Aftermath” is offered as an unfinished and ongoing call to collaborative action, land defense and reoriented responsibility. It is a calling forth of something else, even if that something is not known, even if small, and recognizing that this work has already been happening.

This version of hopefulness is not a deflection. Our bodies/lands are materialized through synthetic chemicals that bind to multinational corporations, through settler colonial extraction, through juridical systems that diminish the value of life and turn it into a cost benefit calculus for finance. I want to learn with others how to activate non-innocent, harm-reducing support systems that, here in Tkaronto, enact the radically generous potentials of Indigenous sovereignties and are mindfully responsible to our planetary relations. At the same time, I want to propagate responsibility to ongoing violences, the responsibility to not only build alter-relations, but also the responsibility to dismantle and shutdown. #AlterRelations and #ShutItDown.

Even as it dreams expansively, what this essay offers are some humble concepts derived from feminist decolonial STS as practiced on the Great Lakes, building on longer resistive legacies of Indigenous, Black, queer, and other projects of radical justice. Concepts that manifest environmental and reproductive justice together, that express Land/Body persistence in the ongoing aftermath. I can almost imagine a politics of alter-collectivities both more than pessimistic and less than optimistic, that draws from what was and what has

persisted, that affirms, disrupts, dismantles, regenerates, and resists; a way of being oriented to relations and that cares about distributions, that needs new and old kinds of solidarities, interdisciplinaries, and pedagogies, and does not reproduce the same, that has concepts that grapple squarely with encompassing violences and yet propagate the alterwise. Almost. #AlterlifeintheAftermath

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New Feminist Biopolitics in Ultra-low-fertility East Asia

Yu-Ling Huang and Chia-Ling Wu

In 2013, 37-year-old actress Jessie Chang made her first documentary, *Freeze My Eggs*, chronicling her reproductive adventures in Taiwan. To enhance her healthy body before the clinical procedures, this single woman went to see a doctor of Chinese medicine and a naturalist healer, quit smoking, and did yoga regularly. She then visited an assisted reproductive technologies (ART) center in Taipei and started her biomedical journey: testing her hormone levels, having ultrasounds to assess the quality of her ovaries, self-injecting an egg-stimulating drug for ten days, and undergoing egg-retrieval surgery under anesthesia. She then had fifteen eggs stored at a cost of NT \$150,000 (roughly US \$5,000) for the whole procedure. Taiwan's Artificial Reproduction Act allows only married couples to access ART. Thus, Jessie's plan, like other single women, was to freeze her healthy eggs while younger and use them when "Mr. Right"