

A few years ago while doing research for a debate on China's population policies, I came across some startling information. One of the sources I found claimed that by the year 2020, Earth's population would be so great that each individual would have, on average, only one square foot of living space. Images of crowded streets in third world or Asian countries I'd seen in magazines flashed through my mind; that was what all the world would look like. Life would be lived amongst crowds, reduced to a battle: fighting for space, fighting for food, and fighting for clean air and water. Population grows exponentially, but will we face such a situation? Some assert that the Earth has almost reached its carrying capacity, **but with controlled growth, sustainable use of natural resources, and effective allocation of these resources, humanity just might make it.**



*[Explicit main point]*

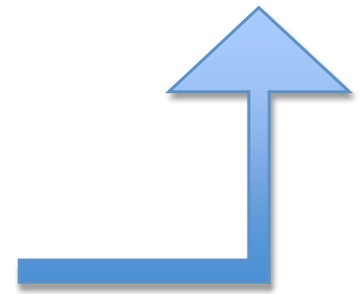
Two hundred and five years ago in his essay entitled, "An Essay on the Principle of Population" Thomas Malthus explored future implications of a large population. **According to Malthus, if the human population was allowed to increase unchecked, it would eventually exceed available resources, reaching a "crashing point".** The question this raises is how large is too large? **Paul Erlich, author of "The Population Bomb," estimates population doubling time at approximately 37 years.** The current population is just over 6 billion, and if Erlich is correct, the world population in 2040 will be approximately 12 billion. Does the earth and human infrastructure have the capacity to sustain such a population?



*[References readings and uses them to formulate ideas/critical discussion/analysis]*



While efficiently and fairly allocating natural resources may temporarily alleviate problems associated with a large population, a growing population cannot be perpetually sustained within a finite system. Humans must reach some balance, some equilibrium in growth: it must be curbed. Some may say that this is not necessary, that with our knowledge and technology, we will be able to manipulate the future and allow growth to continue unabated. I however, tend to agree with Garrett Hardin on this point. As he asserts in his piece, "The Tragedy of the Commons," **"Most people who anguish over the population problem are trying to find a way to avoid the evils of overpopulation without relinquishing any of the privileges they now enjoy ... but the solution they seek cannot be found. The population problem cannot be solved in a technical way."** The very values and beliefs encouraging growth must be changed.



**To decrease population growth, governments should stop subsidizing larger families. Beyond that, I think that government regulation should not play a role in reducing population. Regulations can change the way one acts, but they cannot change the way one thinks. The government should instead fund education campaigns, empowering women and instilling positive values in children, which would hopefully be adopted by subsequent generations. Efforts should also be made to improve the use of resources. Incentives should be offered to encourage recycling, conservation, and sustainable agriculture, and regulations should attempt to control unnecessary destruction of natural habitats, depletion of soil fertility, and pollution. The government should also take on the responsibility of establishing fair and effective distribution systems.**

Humans can no longer afford to be selfish: we must think of other individuals now, and in the future. We must achieve equilibrium, we must achieve sustainability. This is a finite world we inhabit, we are provided with finite resources. We must use them wisely and unselfishly.

**Comment:** Develops personal responses to the issues explored above; uses critical thinking: does not just state ideas but connects them with the material explored above and engages with strengths as well as weaknesses