

## Call for Papers

### **Contested Reproductive Rights in Turbulent Times: Interrogating the Politics, Ethics, and Practices of Reproduction From Feminist and Intersectional Perspectives**

**International Workshop  
of the Chair of Sociology/Social Inequality and Gender**

**Ruhr University Bochum (Germany), 13–15 May 2020**

Reproductive rights began to develop as a subset of human rights at the United Nation's 1968 International Conference on Human Rights. It took until 1994 as they were first defined at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo and included in the Beijing Platform in 1995. In Western cultures and politics, reproductive rights comprise the physical and mental wellbeing in relation to all areas of human sexuality and reproduction. This includes the freedom of choice with regard to the individual's family planning, e.g. if, when and with whom a family should be formed, how big this family should become, and how a family should be lived and done.

The concept of reproductive rights is highly contested since its introduction. This is not only the case among feminists with different social, cultural and geopolitical backgrounds. Even more the concept of reproductive rights is used for the neo-liberal transnational marketisation of reproductive technologies and the development of bio-sciences neo-conservative political and Christian as well as Islamic forces are organising resistance against it on various local and global levels. This tense situation is framed by a demographic situation that on one hand is shaped by low fertility rates in many parts of the Western world since the 1970's and on the other hand consists of an ongoing population growth, especially in many parts of Africa and Asia. Political attempts to raise the fertility rates in the Western world and to limit them in those parts of the world where fertility rates are considered as being too high, are restricted by political, legal and ethical boundaries and furthermore do not seem to be very successful.

The international and interdisciplinary workshop aims at analysing the concept of reproductive rights and the politics, ethics, and practices of reproduction from a critical perspective which is informed by feminist and intersectional perspectives. Special attention is paid to comparative aspects, also with regard to different geopolitical, sociocultural, and historical contexts.

We welcome offers of both theoretical and empirical academic papers, in particular those concerning the following themes and related questions:

- How do (national and transnational) politics and policies refer to reproductive rights? Which roles do pro- or antinatalism play in gender, family and population politics? How is the pro- or antinatalism linked to nationalist, right-wing populist, religious, or even postcolonial aspects? Are there any taboos concerning population politics and, if so, why? How does politics address the population in order to stop the fertility decline in

the Western world and/or to stop the population growth especially in parts of Africa and Asia, and which policies are introduced to support these aims? Which role do gender (in)equality, intersectionality and (hetero)sexuality play in these policies?

- Some feminists have argued that motherhood strengthens female oppression and gender inequality, whereas others have argued that motherhood can also stand for women's emancipation and freedom. What can we learn from social practices in different societies about the contribution of motherhood to women's emancipation? In what respect does family formation and having a family play a role in men's identities and life plans? Which new lifestyles beyond the heterosexual gendered family model are emerging in the light of reproductive rights? And what about (in)voluntary childlessness, abortion, assisted reproductive technology, and the marketisation of parenthood (including surrogate motherhood), which are still orientated to the heteronormative model of gender and generational relationships?
- How do recent attempts to redefine the family and parenthood as primarily social and not biological institutions challenge the modern understanding of the (nation) state which is based on the ideas of heterosexuality, marriage, and biological parenthood? How do states, politics and legal systems react to these challenges? How could a revision of statehood look like which takes the concept of reproductive rights seriously and creates gender-equitable politics and policies of reproduction? What possible ideas of new societal models to organise social reproduction and to divide labour are emerging in public and private spheres in the light of reproductive rights, and (how) are the introduced new institutional arrangements gendered?

Both junior and senior scientists are invited to submit an abstract (between 500 and 800 words on the topic, objectives and research questions plus, if applicable, the empirical background of the paper) in form of a Word- or pdf-document. Abstracts should also include FULL contact details, including your name, institutional affiliation, mailing address, and e-mail address. **Abstracts should be sent until October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2019 to Heike Kahlert ([conference-sozsug@rub.de](mailto:conference-sozsug@rub.de)).**\* Deadline for notice of acceptance/rejection of the paper is November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

The workshop is an opportunity to discuss 'work in progress' and research results as well as to form networks for further international collaborations. Therefore, admitted papers will be discussed in small working groups which will continue to work together throughout the whole workshop. The papers (with a maximum length of 7.000 words) will be due on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020, and will be delivered to all participants of the workshop. All participants are expected to read the papers in advance. During the workshop, the authors will introduce their papers briefly, and each participant will comment on one paper. Selected papers will be published.

*!Note: We apologise for the fact that no funding, fee waiver, travel or other bursaries can be offered for attending the workshop! The workshop fee (max. €150) will cover conference material and catering during coffee and lunch breaks.*

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\* More information about the organising Chair of Sociology/Social Inequality and Gender can be found at <http://www.sowi.rub.de/sozsug/index.html.en>.