



Call for Papers

International Workshop on Gender and Reproduction

New Delhi 17/18 March 2020

Individual and social reproduction have always been two sides of the same coin and intrinsically tied together. With the advent of the modern state these private and societal questions became politicized. According to the ideas of the developing discipline of political economy, a growing and healthy population was the target of state policy. Later on, reduction of fertility or highly problematic concepts, such as eugenics, appeared as objectives of demographic policy. In the second half of the twentieth century, Neo-Malthusian ideas had a broad influence on UN Conferences on Population and Development.

The size of a population in relation to its economic environment matters. Adding persons to a population or taking persons away from it has a deep impact on questions of distributional justice within that population, between populations or between generations. However, efforts to balance population and development should not violate fundamental human rights and liberties. So at the Conference in Cairo 1994 the concept of “Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights” (SRHR) was added to the agenda of development. All persons should get the means to decide freely whether and when to have children and how many children, to have and to delay and prevent pregnancy, raise healthy children and manage problems of infertility, and enjoy a healthy, safe and satisfying sexual relationship. Within and around the UN, these questions received new momentum in the post-2015 development agenda. It appears that the concept of SRHR has changed significantly over the last twenty years.

In 1994 black women at a pro-choice conference in Chicago coined the term “reproductive justice”, both for scholarly and activist purposes. Explicitly highlighting intersectionality as a central problem, the concept interrogates, in the understanding of its framers, ongoing biological and non-biological power relationships between disadvantaged groups, social elites and the state. The approach from its very beginning included a much broader range of topics than SRHR. From that perspective “nearly every field of human endeavor affects and is affected by reproductive politics.” So for example, the gender-based division of labor concerning bringing up children and other reproductive work appears as a profound issue of distributive justice. From such a perspective, there is a circular relationship between culture and reproduction: via enculturation and socialization, bringing up children and other reproductive work informs culture, and is also informed by culture.

Due to developments in reproductive medicine within the last four decades, the very notion of 'natural' birth has undergone profound changes and subsequently the possibilities that assisted reproductive technologies (ART) provide have altered notions of the right to raise healthy children. ART brings to the reach of infertile couples, homosexual couples or even single persons, their 'own' biological child by in vitro fertilization and/or surrogacy. Pre-implantation diagnostics has turned risks of 'natural' birth into a task of making a justifiable decision, thus spurring ethical discussions about reproductive freedom. As a corollary to these new freedoms, responsibilities concerning the balance between risk and harm is distributed among involved actors in a new way.

These possibilities have generated a highly contested debate spanning positions from technological optimism by LGBTIQ groups combined with pro-choice arguments, to feminist critique of marketization and medicalization of biological reproduction to fundamental conservative and religious critiques of the use of ART.

In all fields of policy concerning social reproduction now, there is a remarkable absence of consensus regarding policy, norms and values. In the face of this challenge, and given the increasing importance of changing forms of social reproduction, there is an urgency to stimulate more public debate, and seek for ways to balance substantive and procedural values.

We invite presentations on themes like the following:

- New technologies of reproduction
- Crisis in social reproduction
- State, Nation, Demographics and Population Policies
- Relation between Governance and Democracy related to social reproduction
- Feminist politics and the question of reproduction
- Return to 'natural' childbearing?
- Surrogacy and questions of citizenship
- Motherhood redefined
- Race, Class, Cast and Reproduction
- Development of normative concepts concerning social reproduction (both historical and in social theory / practical philosophy)

Please send your abstracts (300 words max.) together with a short CV to reproduction2020@gmail.com till September 30, 2019

The workshop is organized by Prof. Samita Sen (Cambridge), Prof. Michael Becker (Würzburg), Dr Krishnaswami Dara (New Delhi) and Dr Matthias Gsänger (Würzburg).

Further information about ICAS.MP on <https://micasmp.hypotheses.org/>