



Centre for **C**ultures
of **R**eproduction, **T**echnologies and **H**ealth



The CORTH Team



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The Centre is based within the School of Global Studies, University of Sussex, in Falmer, Brighton.

CORTH 10th Anniversary

This year the Centre celebrated its 10 year anniversary since it was founded. Over the past decade the Centre has grown significantly, now with over 300 members from across the world and representing different institutions and fields from anthropology, sociology, law, health, medicine, human-rights and development.

Established in 2014, our Centre provides an intellectual space for intensive research, critical thinking and the development of an interdisciplinary body of scholarship on reproductive and health cultures. Framed by a specific interest in the processes of power and addressing health inequities, we promote research on the social, medical, public health, legal, and moral lenses through which reproductive health is perceived, produced, concretised and articulated (for instance, through new policies, engagement with new technologies, or new forms of social relations in reproduction). With our unique focus on cultural ethnographic perspectives, our Centre facilitates knowledge transfer partnerships between anthropologists, social and human scientists, health researchers, medical professionals, practitioners, legal activists and policy makers working internationally on critical issues in global maternal, sexual reproductive health (SRH), emerging technologies and health and human rights. A specific aim is to facilitate international dialogue on 'Southern' analytic models and practices. CORTH fosters a strong research environment for its international and home doctoral or postdoctoral students and through hosting visiting researchers and fellows, we seek to develop collaborative projects, produce quality research outputs and connect Sussex faculty and graduate students to key thinkers and policy makers in the field of SRH research.





‘Reproductive Futures’ Anniversary Workshop

The CORTH Centre held a very successful day-long international workshop on the theme of **‘Reproductive Futures’** on the 13th of May to celebrate its 10th anniversary. The hybrid event saw many of its international members join to contribute their reflections and felicitations. The Keynote was delivered by Professor Marilyn Strathern from the University of Cambridge. The event also included the launch of a 5-year MOU between the University of Bergen, Norway and Sussex for research collaboration and knowledge exchange. University of Bergen representatives Professor Astrid Blystad and Emerita Professor Karen Marie Moland were greeted by Professor Sasha Roseneil (VC at Sussex) and Professor Rosie Cox (Faculty of Social Sciences Dean, Sussex). Visiting PhD student from Bergen - Kaja Skoftedalan - shared her experiences of her fruitful stay at the Centre this term.

In the morning session **Prof. Shobhita Rajagopal** (Former Professor, Institute of Development Studies Jaipur (IDSJ), India) and **Ms. Chhaya Pachauli** (Director, Prayas and National Co-convenor, People’s Health Movement (PHM), India) shared their thoughts on the theme of *“Reproductive Futures in India: Access, Choices and Challenges.”* **Innocent Grant** (Youth co-Chair of the International Conference of Family Planning (ICFP2025), Tanzania) and **Dr. Paula Baraitser** (Medical Director, SH:24, UK) together discussed what contraceptive futures in Tanzania and the UK would look like. **Dr. Devanik Saha** (University of Greenwich, UK), **Dr. Ulla McKnight** (University of Sussex, UK) & **Govind Singh** (Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, UK) brought together their individual research experiences in India and the UK to highlight the *“Lessons from discriminatory practices within sexual and reproductive health.”* **Prof. Silvia De Zordo** (University of Barcelona, Spain) spoke on *“(Non)-Reproductive Futures: self-management, decriminalisation and demedicalisation of abortion.”* Our afternoon speakers **Liiri Oja, PhD** (Head of National Human Rights Activities Office of the Estonian Chancellor of Justice) shared her insights on *“Sexual and Reproductive Rights in Estonian Prisons: Observations about Forced Gynaecological Examinations, Menstrual Health Rights and Obstetric Care.”* **Dr. Inga Winkler** (University of Wageningen, Netherlands) offered her overview on *“Critical menstrual studies: Reflections on the emergence and development of a field”* and **Dr. Jayna Kothari** (Centre for Law and Policy Research, CLPR Bangalore and Supreme Court, India) shared her reflections on *“Reproductive Futures in the Law.”* The Keynote speaker for the workshop was the wonderful **Prof. Marilyn Strathern** (Girton College, Cambridge, UK) who delivered her thoughts on *“Past and present - where the future comes from.”*

Image above: Participants of the ‘Reproductive Futures’ workshop held at Sussex

Past and Present - Where the Future Comes From

Professor Marilyn Strathern



One can appreciate two striking dimensions of the initial venture that became CORTH. First, as soon as one connected concerns about fertility with *health*, notably maternal and child health, one was in a world of diverse policy making and unequal provision. A world in which local ‘cultures of reproduction’, including power relations turning on gender, sexuality and kinship, would play a large part. So, there was a bigger picture to be painted, in brief, that of ‘reproductive politics’ – how procreative and sexual healthcare were mediated by the state, by law, by moral concerns, by preference and prejudice, by medical practice, by local and national economics. In other words, connecting fertility and health made

relevant whole socio-political fields of action. Focusing on power, rights and justice is one of CORTH’s signatures.

The second set of connections came through seeing that the global spread of new interventions, the advantages and disadvantages they trailed, offered fresh *conceptual* resources. I don’t have to tell you that CORTH’s explicit aim was not just to foster research across numerous social contexts but to engage actively with scholars and researchers concerned with the global South. In short, to create a discursive space for learning -- in the words of its own declaration of purpose -- from ‘Southern analytics and practices’. While most anthropologists would hope that they are open to such learning, CORTH provided an infrastructure – an institutional context – to facilitate, and make visible, the communications implied. Of course, bringing networks together makes a Centre seem self-evident. But the institutional infrastructure had first to be put in place in such a way as to realize and communicate those ‘Southern’ conversations. As for the achievements of the programme – today is ample evidence of this!

.... So we come to a final reflection on CORTH’s configuration of reproductive politics, and its past: what it has put in place over these last ten years. It is a programme that has attended to the conditions of reproductive flourishing and everything that contributes to it – impediments as well as supports. It has taken reproduction as an element of social flourishing as such, which in turn is connected to other forms of flourishing life. For particular lives, this has meant finding a way of apprehending what is going on around them, putting their circumstances into context, identifying effects of power relations that may not on first sight be apparent.

Here, that other signature of CORTH’s work comes into its own, and I refer of course to its commitment to ethnographic perspectives. Notionally speaking, these are less a matter of taking ‘everything’ into account than a question of being alert to ‘anything’ that might, in this or that circumstance, be relevant. And the flourishing of an ethnographic perspective comes in part from its embeddedness in how research is organized, institutionalized. Consider the whole network of concerns that comprise CORTH’s Research Themes. The fact that any single element is so evidently in an environment with others constitutes a commitment to a certain openness. It is a commitment, sedimented in past

practices, on which we can draw, and also make it the future's. *Not to reproduce the circumstances of the past but to reproduce the vitality that made the present possible.* Like the child that finds itself in a place its parents could never have imagined, ethnographic openness is ever ready for new horizons.

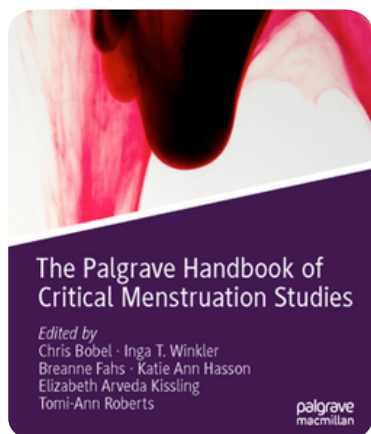
A last comment. If reproductive flourishing does not happen without effort, certainly the means for making it an object of knowledge and research does not. Of course, institutions in and of themselves can be as much impediment as support. But where institution-building is under threat, and where the effort is belittled, we can appreciate the value of giving certain organizational forms to thought and action. In the case of an institution such as CORTH, we can see the spaces it creates for communication, inhabit the relationships it fosters, realize that in company each of our worlds is enlarged.

Photo courtesy of Professor Strathern

Dame Marilyn Strathern is Emeritus Professor of Social Anthropology and Life Fellow of Girton College, University of Cambridge (UK). She has published widely on both Melanesia and the UK. Her research in Papua New Guinea includes gender relations, feminist scholarship and legal anthropology, and in the UK, kinship, the reproductive and genetic technologies, and audit culture.

Critical Menstrual Studies: Reflections on the emergence and development of a field by Dr. Inga Winkler

Menstrual Studies “is finally coming into its own” field of study as characterized in the Palgrave Handbook of Critical Menstruation Studies. While menstrual scholarship is not new, only recent years have brought the necessary volume and cohesiveness of research. In my talk, I address the risks and opportunities of the rapid expansion, offering three recommendations for the development of the field: 1) We need to value quality over quantity and create space for different types of research. Not all research needs to follow the paradigm of ‘problems’ in need of ‘intervention’ and we should be careful not to frame the menstrual body as a problem. 2) We need to invest in truly inclusive participatory scholarship and transnational collaborations that provide opportunities for learning from the global South. 3) We need to acknowledge that menstrual stigma is stubbornly persistent, even in the context of research. Pursuing critical menstrual studies means understanding these social constructions and challenging unequal system of power and knowledge.



Sexual and Reproductive Rights in Estonian Prisons: Body Searches, Menstruation, and Obstetric Care by Liiri Oja, PhD

The presentation examined the protection of sexual and reproductive rights in Estonian prisons. Despite international human rights standards, prison authorities in Estonia have used forced gynaecological examinations on imprisoned women out of broadly and arbitrarily defined ‘security concerns’. Such intimate searches are not only unnecessary, but also degrading and violent, raising serious concerns about autonomy, dignity, and consent. Access to menstrual health products has also been inadequate at times. In some cases, imprisoned women were given too few menstrual products and were required to “prove” their need for additional supplies. Lastly, the presentation highlighted how the prison authorities have not always taken a human rights-based approach when organising the obstetric care of imprisoned women, and guaranteeing their right to privacy during prenatal appointments and childbirth. The



findings were based on interviews with prisoners and staff, analysis of relevant documents, and data collected by the Estonian Chancellor of Justice from 2016 to 2022.

Liiri [pictured left] is Head of National Human Rights Institution Activities, Office of the Estonian Chancellor of Justice



‘Reproductive Futures’ Workshop

Along with our fantastic speakers, a number of CORTH researchers joined in a Roundtable, including **Dr. Sangeeta Chhattoo** (York University, UK), **Dr. Jerker Edstrom** (Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, UK), **Dr. Trudie Gerrits** (University of Amsterdam, Netherlands) and CORTH Co-Director **Dr. Beth Mills** (University of Sussex, UK) and some of the Centre’s former PhDs created posters to showcase their research.

[Image above: Prof. Silvia De Zordo delivering her talk]



Digital Assemblages of Bangladeshi Women’s Urban Navigation

By Anushka Zafar, ID @ Global Studies

[1.] Research

My PhD research examines how digital technology like mobile phones and apps help Dhaka’s working women overcome gender-based barriers and take charge of their mobility, social life, work, and political participation.



[2.] Methods

I used ethnographic fieldwork like participant observation as they used various forms of public transport around Dhaka city to understand women’s embodied experiences & lived realities.



[3.] Objectives

- [a.] Profile Dhaka’s middle- and working-class women and their gendered norms;
- [b.] Map digital assemblages mediating mobility, social, professional, and political choices;
- [c.] Trace dialectical tensions between norms and tech-enabled strategies;
- [d.] Analyze embodied agency in hybrid practices.

[4.] Outputs + Impacts

Contextualized digital assemblage framework about urban Bangladesh, empirical case studies on women’s embodied urban navigation, mobile ethnography innovations, and potential policy innovation.

Anushka Zafar (PhD student of International Development and Anthropology and a CORTH graduate) provided a poster [left] to highlight the work she has been doing on *Digital Assemblages of Bangladeshi Women’s Urban Navigation*. Last year Anushka had an article published on “Gendered struggles in urban transit” in the Daily Star (<https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/view/s/news/gendered-struggles-urban-transit-3561006>).

One of our University of Bergen graduates, **Mulu B. Kidanemariam**, produced an insightful poster about his work into *The Legal Regulation of Maternal Death Reviews* [Poster image under ‘Impactful Research’].

The posters were displayed at the workshop to highlight the important work of our graduates and researchers. If you would like to share your own work with us to feature on the website, please email the CORTH team at corth@sussex.ac.uk

Bergen

MOU



As part of the 'Reproductive Futures' workshop, CORTH Directors welcomed members of the University of Bergen's team to celebrate the launch of a 5-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Universities of Bergen, Norway and Sussex for research collaboration and knowledge exchange. Representatives from the University of Bergen were Professor Astrid Blystad and Emerita Professor Karen Marie Moland. They were greeted by Professor Sasha Roseneil (Vice Chancellor of the University of Sussex) and Professor Rosie Cox (Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences). PhD visiting student from Bergen - Kaja Skoftedalen - shared her experiences of her fruitful stay at the Centre this term. We toasted the occasion with fizz and a very British treat of strawberries and cream!

Astrid Blystad (Professor in Anthropology and Global Health, University of Bergen) "There is a history of several years of collaboration between CORTH and the Global Health Anthropology Research group, Centre for International Health, at the University of Bergen in Norway. The project that fully symbolizes our collaboration is the MATRISET project on monitoring global maternal mortality (2021-2026)."

Karen Marie Moland (Emerita Professor, University of Bergen) "The flagship of CORTH is abortion, and a chief research interest in the global health anthropology group at Bergen has similarly been abortion related issues. We have been particularly engaged in the dynamic in encounters between national abortion laws on the one hand and girls and women's actual access to safe abortion services on the other."



"I feel like CORTH is my 'academic home', a space where I naturally belong. It's mission to achieve reproductive justice aligns deeply with my passion and commitment to women's empowerment. The Centre serves as a vital platform for addressing reproductive health issues not only in the Global North but also in the Global South. I particularly appreciate that CORTH has consistently provided a platform for scholars to discuss a wide range of issues related to #Infertility and also on #GBV"

Papreen Nahar

Brighton and Sussex Medical School

Member Research and Projects

Jan Brunson secured a Fulbright U.S. Scholar Award to conduct research on caesarean sections in Nepal in 2024-2025

Giulia Zanini's **PregDaT** project aims at exploring the sociotechnical and political components of pregnancy and reproductive time by focusing on the investigation of the process of gestational age assessment in four different European countries

Anna Robinson-Pant and Laura Burke recently concluded their "**Empowering communities through University partnerships in public health: a pilot project in Nepal and the Philippines project**"

Sangeeta Chattoo has been working with ASHWINI, Adivasi Hospital (India), on a project to develop a 'minimally safe practice toolkit' for improving outcomes in sickle cell disease

Astrid Blystad is involved with a Research Council of Norway-funded MATRISET project (2021-2026) that is an interdisciplinary initiative exploring institutional routines, legal frameworks and accountability processes in maternal health, with a prime focus on maternal death surveillance in Ethiopia and Tanzania

Devanik Saha worked on a project on "**Gendered Violence and Poor Mental Health Among Migrants in Precarious Situations**" across India, UK, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Myanmar

Member Publications

"**How Did You Get in There and Make the Law Work?** Feminist Activism, Doctors and Abortion Law: The Occupation of an Hospital' article by Elena Caruso, featured in Sage Journals

"**Extended childcare?**" Reflection on the science of the Zika virus' article co-written by Soraya Fleischer, featured in SciFLO

'**Gendered struggles in urban transit**' article by Anushka Zafar

'**Its manifestations may vary, but menstrual stigma is universal**' article co-written by Inga Winkler, featured in Sage Journals

Sreeparna C's publication on non-reproduction in India: '**Locating vulnerable masculinities among childfree men in urban India**'. Journal of Gender Studies, 1-25

Congratulations

Anushka Zafar and her new baby Neda!
Mulu Kindanemariam and baby Delina!
Marte Halland and baby Tuva!

Appointments

Innocent Grant selected as co-chair of the WHO-IBP (Implementing Best Practices) network on Family Planning and Sexual Reproductive Health, representing his organisation Young and Alive, in Tanzania (2023)



Impactful Research

Join us as we look back at some of the highlights and achievements of CORTH members and staff over the previous years!

What our Directors have been up to

Maria Moscati received the National Mediation Award on Diversity and Inclusion (awarded by the College of Mediators and Civil Mediation Council, UK) and was the finalist for the OUP Law Teacher of the Year. Maria is also co-editor of the EUP series Comparative Legal Studies, Society and Justice and Co-editor of the journal **Amicus Curiae**

Maria and Maya ran a special 2 hour dance workshop called **Dancing Surrogacy!** Maria also ran another dancing session in the School of Law, Politics & Sociology (Sussex) with further sessions planned!

Felicitations

Govind Singh passed his Viva Voce examination on the 10th April. Govind's PhD Thesis title is "Understanding experiences of quality of care in family planning services: Moving beyond metrics to meaning centred approaches"

Sophie Collins recently completed her PhD on "Exploring the framing, frame mobilisation, and power relations involved in menstrual health priorities, policies, and programmes: The case of Kenya"

Nils Klim Prize

Congratulations to Daniela Alaattinoğlu who was awarded the 2025 Nils Klim Prize! Daniela is a Finnish jurist and an Assistant Professor of Law at the University of Turku. She joined CORTH as a Visiting Fellow while working on a project on intersex people's rights and mobilisation in the Nordic countries. The project was the result of an award from The Icelandic Research Fund.

THE LEGAL REGULATION OF MATERNAL DEATH REVIEWS
By Mulu B. Kidanemariam (UiB, Norway)

RESEARCH
The PhD project examines the legal framework governing Maternal Death Surveillance and Response (MDSR) systems and investigates how human rights law can enhance their implementation, with a focus on Ethiopia.

OBJECTIVES

- To identify legal issues and conflicting interests in the implementation of the MDSR
- To clarify states' human rights obligations in addressing preventable maternal deaths, including through death reviews.
- To support global and national efforts to improve the production and use of maternal health data.

METHODOLOGY
As a lawyer working on a health subject, I combine doctrinal legal methods with a contextual approach. This involves drawing from relevant domestic and international laws, as well as considering the economic, social, and political realities in which these laws operate.

POTENTIAL IMPACT
My research has the potential to advance knowledge on the role of law in supporting public health initiatives and enhance efforts to reduce preventable maternal mortality through improved maternal death tracing and review systems. It will also offer a human rights interpretation of maternal death reviews, which are predominantly discussed through health and medical lenses.

OUTPUTS
While several academic articles resulting from the project are still under review, one has been published and two blog posts are also available. Results have also been presented at various forums.

Preventing Maternal Deaths Reauthorization Act of 2023
This critical legislation provides federal support for state-based maternal mortality review committees (MMRRCs) that analyze pregnancy-related deaths to identify causes and recommendations for prevention.

"We are a diverse group of women, students and teachers.
We dance to learn about law, politics and sociology.
We dance to empower, include, and unite. We dance to navigate social justice.
We dance to learn. We dance to respect and celebrate all bodies.
We dance to smile, to cry, to feel.
We dance to resist.
We invite you to dance with us...six, seven, eight...Everyone can dance...!"



New Member Focus

Adriana Myland

Adriana is a first year doctoral student in Social Anthropology based in the School of Global Studies. Her research focuses on Hausa Muslim women's experience of divorce in the context of Islamic Law in Abuja, Nigeria. She is working with two supervisors: Prof. Pamela Kea, an expert on West Africa and Prof. Maya Unnithan, specialist in the anthropology of reproduction and human rights. From being part of CORTH her highlight this year was attending the 10th anniversary and being inspired by impactful research taking place globally.



Image [above]: Adriana Myland

Sophie Zadeh

Sophie Zadeh is a Reader in Family Psychology at the School of Psychology, University of Sussex. She joined CORTH at the same time she joined Sussex, in March 2024. Sophie first completed a doctorate in social psychology at the Centre for Family Research, University of Cambridge. She remains interested in the intersection of social and

Knowledge Exchange and Impact

Welcome to **Kaja Skoftedalen**, a visiting PhD student, who is completing her Doctorate at the Centre for International Health, Department of Global Public Health and Primary Care, University of Bergen, Norway. Kaja came to Sussex for 3 months as part of the MOU agreement CORTH have with the University of Bergen. Read more about Kaja's time at CORTH in her *Visitor Reflection* piece.

Congratulations to **Prof. Anna Robinson-Pant** and **Dr. Laura Burke** for the completion of their project **Empowering communities through University partnerships in public health: a pilot project in Nepal and the Philippines**, which spans the Philippines and Nepal and looks at new ways of engaging with communities in public health. The project grew out of two earlier research studies on intergenerational and indigenous learning implemented by the University of East Anglia UNESCO Chair. It was funded by the UK Medical Research Council PHIND (Public Health Intervention Development) and is a collaboration between the University of Sussex (CORTH), the University of Santo Tomas in the Philippines and Tribhuvan University in Nepal. The aim was to pilot a more democratic model of partnership in public health between medical institutions and local communities. You can find out more about the project at <https://empcommunitiespublichealth.com/> and Reports on the findings at <https://empcommunitiespublichealth.com/reports/>

Book Launch: *HIV, Gender and the Politics of Medicine: Embodied Democracy in the Global South*
16 October 2024

CORTH Co-Director **Dr. Beth Mills** celebrated the launch of her new book *HIV, Gender and the Politics of Medicine*. During the launch Beth spoke with a panel of academics and activists from South Africa and the UK, to discuss the lessons from the global struggle for equitable access to life-saving HIV treatment. The book centers on the lives of women who live with HIV in South Africa and who have navigated a complex assemblage of affective relationships, activist networks, government institutions and global coalitions to transform international and national health policies that govern access to essential HIV medicine.

New Member Focus

developmental psychology in the study of non-normative families, including families formed through assisted reproduction. Sophie has conducted some of the first psychological studies of children and young people's perspectives and experiences in families headed by single mothers by sperm donation; two-parent families via sperm donation, egg donation, and surrogacy; and trans parent families. Most recently, she led the Young Adults Study: www.youngadultsstudy.co.uk



Image [above]: Dr. Sophie Zadeh

Visitor Reflection: Kaja Skoftedalen

My stay at Sussex as a guest researcher began in mid-February, as the grey and cold winter was slowly retreating. I was fortunate to arrive two weeks after the start of term and could participate in weekly PhD workshops and other seminars. At CORTH, I was fascinated by the

Knowledge Exchange and Impact

Do Doctors Really Understand Women's Health?

12 March 2025

Brighton and Sussex Medical School (BSMS) celebrated International Women's Day (8th March) with an online talk titled '*Do doctors really understand women's health.*' More than 70 people joined the online event, which featured a talk from **Dr. Chi Eziefula**, Associate Professor at BSMS, and Jane Dancey, Somatic Health Practitioner and Educator, on the latest research on nutrition, brain and bone health, exercise and stress – and why hormonal cycles matter across a lifetime.

Women's Empowerment: A Question of Education?

18 March 2025

Co-sponsored by CORTH, this seminar explored the complex relationship between education, literacy, and women's empowerment. Drawing on four decades of ethnographic work in Nepal, **Prof. Anna Robinson-Pant** challenged the idea of literacy as a "magic bullet" for development, often promoted by policymakers. Instead, the talk emphasised informal learning and everyday experiences as key to understanding social change. By focusing on lived realities rather than formal schooling or planned development, the seminar encouraged a stimulating group discussion on how education intersects with women's evolving roles in society.

Menstruation Research Network Conference

28-29 May 2025

CORTH co-Director **Dr. Chi Eziefula** was busy this summer as part of the Committee for the 4th Annual ***Menstruation Research Network Conference***. The conference explored the vital theme of Dignity, Health, and Inequalities, focusing on how social, cultural, and economic disparities shape menstrual experiences. This interdisciplinary event brought together voices from across sectors to share insights, discuss challenges, and generate innovative solutions for addressing poor menstrual health and equity in both the Global North and the South. Next year, we will be hosting this conference at Sussex so watch this space for more details!



workshop on 'Dancing Surrogacy', a creative event where we not only learned about surrogacy but also explored how dancing could be used as a tool to express and highlight emotions, power relations, and actions linked to surrogacy. In one of the CORTH seminars, I presented empirical material from my PhD research and received valuable feedback that helped me further develop my ideas. I am very grateful to Professors Maya Unnithan and Hayley MacGregor for supervising me during my research stay. Our monthly meetings really helped me push my writing forward.

I appreciate the social vibes at the School of Global Studies, which, through regular seminars and initiatives for scholarly and fun interaction, made it very easy for me to come in as a foreign student. The events I attended regularly were the PhD community's 'Ethnographic Fridays' and the Anthropology Seminars, all of which were very social events, making it quite easy to get to know both students and staff. Although people are incredibly busy, both staff and PhD fellows would take the time to chat over a cup of coffee and to provide valuable tips on literature and feedback on ideas in my PhD thesis. Some of my PhD fellows also established a PhD group in Medical Anthropology while I was there, which has been greatly appreciated for facilitating continued collaboration even after the research stay. As if to place a 'cherry on top', the stay ended with an inspiring and bubbly celebration of CORTH's 10th anniversary in mid-May. Hurra!

Knowledge Exchange and Impact

5th World Congress on Justice with Children 2-4 June 2025

During the 5th World Congress on Justice with Children, co-Director **Dr. Maria Federica Moscati** facilitated *Dancing Children's Rights*, a dance practice workshop with young activists from all over the world, who created and danced a choreography on children's rights.



Men, Masculinities and Reproduction Workshop 19 June 2025

Former PhD student (IDS/Global Studies), **Dr. Devanik Saha**, organised a special 2 hour workshop at Sussex. Co-sponsored by CORTH, the online workshop featured a Keynote speech on *Treatment-Seeking Pathway of Infertile Men in Urban Bangladesh* by Dr. Foyjunnaher Sultana Prova (ICDDR Bangladesh), a panel discussion on men, masculinities and the role of men in reproduction/reproductive politics, and the introduction and launch of the international network on male reproductive health.

Materialising Affective Beacons - Singing Trauma and Calling Race with Women of Colour, Brighton 6 June 2025

Dr. Ulla McKnight arranged a stunning evening of live music, sensory performance and collective reflection on race, trauma, and (non)reproductive health. The event took place in the Meeting House on campus and built on an NIHR workshop linked to a larger AHRC project that Ulla has been a part of.

Visitor Reflection: Kaja Skoftedalen



Kaja Skoftedalen, PhD Candidate

Centre for International Health,
Department of Global Public Health
and Primary Care

University of Bergen

Visitors Blogs

Read more about our visitors and members' experiences of the Centre through their blogs at <https://www.sussex.ac.uk/corth/publications/blog>

Publications

Congratulations to CORTH member **Isabel Davis** who had a book published, titled *Conceiving Histories: Trying for Pregnancy, Past and*

CORTH Fora and Discussions

CORTH Research Fora

29 October 2024

CORTH co-Director **Prof. Hayley MacGregor** organised a Research in Progress Forum for researchers and PhDs, to discuss the progress of their research in front of a friendly audience. We held this as a Roundtable open forum, providing space for informal input and the opportunity to connect with other researchers at different career stages.

CORTH Conversations: "The psychosocial experiences of donor conceived young adults"

25 November 2024

Dr. Sophie Zadeh (Reader in Family Psychology at the School of Psychology, University of Sussex) presented her recent research to Centre members. The multi-method study ran between 2020 and 2024 and focused on young adults, between the ages of 18 and 30, in the UK, the majority of whom were conceived through anonymous sperm donation to heterosexual couples.

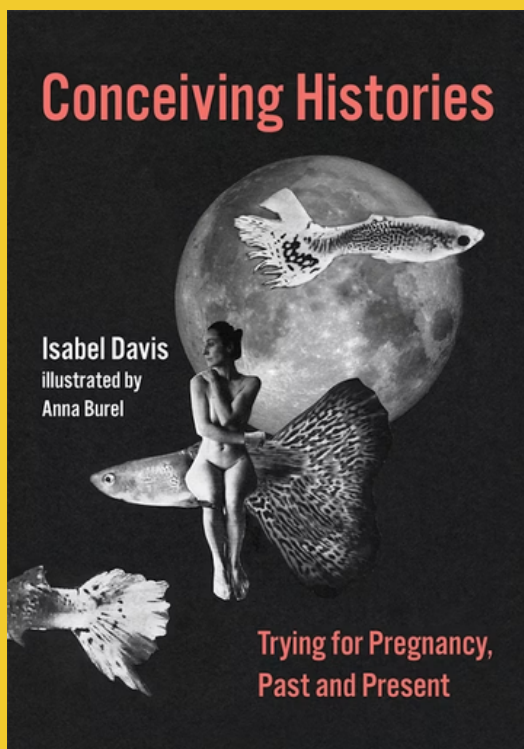
CORTH Research Fora

13 February 2025

The second Researcher Fora of the year took place in Spring and welcomed researchers from both within the CORTH network and wider University community and covered topics such as *Gender and Disability in Lima*; *Social Risk and Healthcare Delays* and *Making Meaning of Divorce*.



Present. Inspired by Isabel's own experiences, *Conceiving Histories* brings together history, personal memoir, and illustration to investigate the culturally hidden experience of trying to conceive. It chronicles the trying-to-conceive lifecycle arc from sex education at school, through the desire to be a parent, into the specifics of trying and struggling to conceive. It also looks back at conception throughout history to open a new vista on what we live with today. Congratulations to Isabel on this wonderful achievement. The book landed in bookshops on 4th March 2025.



And CORTH's **Dr. Beth Mills** published the book *HIV, Gender and the Politics of Medicine: Embodied Democracy in the Global South* (Bristol University Press)

If you have any published material you would like to share with the CORTH network, please contact the CORTH team at corth@sussex.ac.uk, and don't forget about our social media channels for news too!



CORTH Fora and Discussions

Dance Workshop: "Dancing Surrogacy"

28 March 2025

CORTH Director **Prof. Maya Unnithan** and co-Director **Dr. Maria Moscati** organised a special 2-hour dance workshop where we imagined surrogacy through our own embodied expression and shared our thoughts combining music and movement. The event was open to CORTH members and non-members alike!

Excitingly, Maria has received funds for further workshops as part of her project **Dancing Belonging**, which draws on her ongoing research on Dance / Law.



CORTH Conversations: "Exploring care in rituals of social reproduction in Southern Tanzania"

8 April 2025

Kaja Skoftedalen, who was visiting from the University of Bergen, shared an exciting presentation about her ongoing PhD research into the communities, social practices and beliefs in Southern Tanzania. The lively discussion was well attended both in-person and online.

Amicus Curiae Special Edition Publications

Last summer (27-28 June 2024) CORTH held a special workshop and conference on *Beyond the Carceral: Culture, Law, and Lived Experience*, inviting guests and speakers from across the global to throw light on the various cultural and social ideas that underpin the concepts, language, and practice of surrogacy legislation. Researchers from the disciplines of law, sociology, anthropology, health and medicine, philosophy, among others, presented their work across the two days. As a result of the workshop, which was co-organised with the Department of Liberal Arts, Indian Institute of Technology, Hyderabad (India), two written pieces were published in a special edition of *Amicus Curiae* journal (Series 2, Vol. 6, No. 2), for which CORTH co-Director Dr. Maria Federica Moscati is Special Section's Editor. The contributions are titled '*The Undue Importance of Marriage in India's Current Surrogacy Legislation: Why Single Women Cannot Aspire to Motherhood*' and '*Special Section: Surrogacy Beyond the Carceral: Culture, Law and Lived Experience*,' edited by **Prof. Maya Unnithan** and **Dr. Maria Federica Moscati**. Both publications can be found at <https://journals.sas.ac.uk/amicus>

THE UNDUE IMPORTANCE OF MARRIAGE IN INDIA'S CURRENT SURROGACY LEGISLATION: WHY SINGLE WOMEN CANNOT ASPIRE TO MOTHERHOOD

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Abstract

Focusing specifically on the marginalization of "single", unmarried women in the Indian Surrogacy (Regulation) Act 2021, we highlight the socio-cultural biases that centre on the notion of marriage in the legislation. Drawing on insights from legislative mobilization (Kothari 2024) post 2021, we suggest that the current surrogacy legislation in India only selectively empowers certain women's reproductive autonomy. This defies the constitutional "right to family" of especially single women and discriminates against their equality of citizenship. The barriers presented by patriarchal concepts which frame the contexts in which the law is enacted must be recognized to remove the intentional and unintentional gender biases through which the law is implemented and experienced.

Keywords: surrogacy; marriage; singlism; gender bias; discrimination.

Prof. Maya Unnithan has also worked with **Dr. Jayna Kothari** (Centre for Law and Policy Research, CLPR Bangalore and Supreme Court, India) to produce an article on *The Undue Importance of Marriage in India's Current Surrogacy Legislation: Why Single Women Cannot Aspire to Motherhood*. It can be read at <https://journals.sas.ac.uk/amicus/article/view/5753>

Funding Successes

We celebrate the recent success of Centre Director **Prof. Maya Unnithan** who recently secured a Leverhulme Trust major research fellowship to explore the ethical, legal, and cultural dimensions of reproductive freedom, examining the right to reproduce and the right to avoid reproduction. Maya's project, titled '*Reproductive Freedom and Ethics: A Comparative Study on the Making of Self*' will investigate how reproductive decisions are influenced by religious, legal, and ethical frameworks in cultural contexts. By analysing case law in the UK, US, and India, as well as religious and ethical perspectives on

reproductive freedom, she aims to better understand how reproductive aspirations are framed and navigated. She said "*I have worked for a long time on rights issues to do with the body, conception and contraception. Now I am really excited about exploring this through the idea of freedom which provides a broader moral and inclusive vision.*"

In addition to the Leverhulme fellowship, Maya will also be involved with a second project called '*Contragestive Time: Pregnant Uncertainties in Fertility Control*' that has been made possible through a Wellcome Discovery Award. As co-Investigator, Maya will work alongside colleagues at Birkbeck, University of London.



Image [above]: Participants at 'the Dancing Surrogacy' workshop
 Image [left]: Performers at the 'Materialising Affective Beacons - Singing Trauma and Calling Race with Women of Colour, Brighton' event organised by Dr. Ulla McKnight

CORTH co-Director **Dr. Beth Mills** received a British Academy / Leverhulme grant to research the socio-economic and medical intersections of gender, COVID-19 and HIV in South Africa.

And co-Director **Prof. Hayley MacGregor** was awarded a British Academy ODA Challenge-Oriented Research Grant to investigate 'Strengthening community resilience for pandemic preparedness in the Western Cape, South Africa.'

Dr Shalini Nair has been awarded a three-year Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship for her project on decolonial justice for marital rape survivors in India. She will begin the fellowship in September 2025 at the University of Glasgow, where she is currently a Lecturer in Criminology and a member of the Scottish

Centre for Crime and Justice Research (SCCJR), a collaboration among several Scottish universities. Shalini completed her PhD in Gender Studies (Sociology) at the University of Sussex in October 2023. Her Leverhulme-funded research seeks to make a significant intervention in the ongoing policy discourse on the criminalisation of marital rape in India. Drawing on her background as an Indian policy journalist and her academic work on gender-based violence and abolition feminism, the project will contribute original scholarship on



justice for marital rape survivors. The research adopts a sociological lens on a criminological issue, grounded in decolonial and intersectional feminist methodologies.

CORTH Aims

- To bring **culture, political economy and discursive power frameworks** to the heart of maternal, sexual and reproductive healthcare scholarship, practice, policy making and implementation.
- To bring **researchers and non-academic partners** to address and have **policy impact** in the critical domains of reproductive, sexual and maternal health, especially with reference to **health inequalities, technology regulation and population policies**.
- To bring together **stakeholders in reproductive health research, practice and policy globally**, i.e., across northern and southern nations, through forging connections across a number of networks within each context, including: state and civil society actors,

Welcome to New Members

Diya Koshy George (University of Sussex), **Adriana Myland** (University of Sussex), **Amy Riley-Powell** (Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex), **Saeideh Babashahi** (Brighton and Sussex Medical School), **Andrea Ford** (University of Edinburgh), **Ahmed Nur Muse** (University of Glasgow), **Rebecca Spencer** (Sky News), **Alexandra (Sandra) Widmer** (York University), **Thais Valim** (University of Brasília), **Sachiyo Yagi** (Geneva Graduate Institute), **Sudha Ghimire** (Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal), **Adonis Evan Basa Jr.** (UNESCO Chair in Adult Literacy and Learning for Social Transformation), **Bishnu Prasad Choulagai** (Central Department of Public Health at Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal), **Patricia Rezende Anderle** (University of Brasília).

A huge CORTH welcome to all the above, who join us to become part of the 306 strong members network!

CORTH Administrative Team

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Please visit: www.sussex.ac.uk/corth

We regularly update our website with our latest events, research and members' activities. We tweet and welcome you to follow us on Twitter: @CORTHSussex

The Centre for Cultures of Reproduction, Technologies and Health is part of the School of Global Studies, which is based in Arts C on the University of Sussex campus.

including: state and civil society actors, with a specific aim of engendering South-South exchange; to design collaborative research and policy impact projects with the partners identified in these networks; and to promote the work of researchers in civil society organisations.

- To translate and communicate ethnographic research methods for the understanding and use of health providers, public health practitioners and policy makers; to hold **training workshops** in ethnographic methods for health researchers; to **bridge the methodological gap between healthcare policy, quantitative health research and ethnography**.
- To actively engage with the media to influence public debates on SRH related issues, the CORTH Blog is one outlet to achieve this aim.
- To gain **large programme and Centre funding** to house active researchers and visitors, sustain international networks, and establish Sussex as a **global hub for research and dissemination on sexual reproductive health, maternal health and health rights**.
- To bring together a cross-section of Sussex academics working on SRH issues across the university network to further enable **international links**.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all our Centre members for the invaluable support and contributions they have provided over the years, which has made the success of the Centre possible and expanded the reach of our network in such a meaningful way. We would also like to thank the School of Global Studies at the University of Sussex for the funding to produce this report and allow us the opportunity to put on the wonderful events the Centre has organised over the many years, and to research co-ordinator **Amy Collyer** for producing this report. Thanks to the many co-Directors who have assisted Maya Unnithan over the past decade, who brought their experiences and passion to the Centre and allowed it to grow into the interdisciplinary research centre it is today. And thanks to the many past - and future! - researchers, fellows and PhDs who have come to CORTH and Sussex. We look forward to receiving many more in the coming years and continue to expand our fantastic network of researchers!

School of Global Studies



School of Law, Politics and Sociology

