Welcome to CORTH

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 health technologies and human rights. A specific aim is to facilitate international dialogue through ‘Southern’ analytic models and practices. CORTH fosters a strong research environment for its international and home doctoral and postdoctoral students, and through hosting visiting researchers and fellows, we seek to develop collaborative projects, produce quality research outputs and connect Sussex faculty, graduate students and our broader membership to key thinkers and policy makers in the field of SRH research.

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Aims and Objectives

• 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, 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**.

**Our Values: interdisciplinary, critical thinking, inclusive and collaborative research**

We are against institutional racism, repressive violence and discrimination and committed to pursuing decolonisation and reproductive justice for all.

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**The CORTH team**

We have 243 members, including 56 Sussex faculty, 40 international senior research associates and advisors, 77 external members and visitors, and 70 internal and external graduate members. We encourage all those interested in our Centre to get involved! (Visit our website to become a member).

CORTH is based in the School of Global Studies at Sussex and works closely with other Schools on campus: the School of Law, Politics and Sociology (LPS), the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), the School of Education and Social Work (ESW) and the Brighton and Sussex Medical School (BSMS). CORTH is directed by **Maya Unnithan**, Professor of Social and Medical Anthropology (School of Global Studies), along with fellow co-directors, **Hayley MacGregor**, Professor of Medical Anthropology and Global Health (Institute of Development Studies), **Maria Federica Moscati**, Senior Lecturer in Family Law (School of Law, Politics and Sociology), **Chi Eziefula**, Clinical Senior Lecturer in Global Health and Infection (Brighton and Sussex Medical School), and **Beth Mills**, Senior Lecturer in International Development (School of Global Studies).
CORTH Research Themes

Since our inception, key themes continue to develop as areas of shared interest and an impetus for new projects.
CORTH News

Welcome

Beth Mills as Co-Director
We are delighted to have Beth Mills join us as co-director of CORTH. Beth is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Sussex. Originally from South Africa, Beth has worked with policy makers, activists and academics and published research in the fields of sexual and gender-based violence, access to HIV treatment and, most recently, COVID-19 health governance and LGBTQ+ reproductive justice.

Welcome to Eve Wilcox as Research Centre Coordinator
Eve joined the centre in September as our new Centre Coordinator. She works across all the school centres in Global Studies and is responsible for organising and promoting events, as well as keeping the websites up to date. Eve says as her background is in English Literature, she enjoys the interdisciplinary nature of CORTH's work, particularly when the creative collides with the quantitative in this kind of research. We look forward to working with Eve!

Felicitations
Megan Schmidt-Sane on her promotion from post-doctoral fellow to research fellow at the Institute for Development Studies.

Congratulations to CORTH director Maya Unnithan who will take on the role of Head of Anthropology as of August 2022.

Visitors
Although delayed due to the pandemic, we were delighted that Professor Astrid Blystad’s visit went ahead this year. Astrid is a professor of Medical Anthropology and Global Health at Bergen University in Norway. Her particular research interest is in maternal health and an empirical focus on fertility, infertility, mother to child transmission of HIV, obstetric fistula, female genital cutting, incontinence and prolapse. Many thanks to Astrid, for joining us here at CORTH and sharing her time and knowledge with us. More details about the talks Astrid led during her visit can be found in the Discussions and Webinars section below.

In our new academic year, we look forward to welcoming

Mulu B Kidanemariam
Currently a PhD student at the Faculty of Law, University of Bergen, Mulu studied law and taught at Mekelle University, School of Law, in Ethiopia. His PhD project examines the legal framework regulating the production and use of maternal mortality data, mainly in the Ethiopian context. His research areas of interest include Ethiopian constitutional system, human rights, reproductive health rights, human rights indicators, and health data for accountability. He also belongs to a larger collaborative project led by the University of Bergen, MATRISET. He is visiting CORTH as part of this collaboration. Mulu will spend a semester at Sussex under the mentorship of CORTH co-director Maria Moscati and work with fellow CORTH PhD student Ritabrata Roy in the School of Law.
Welcome to New Members

External members

Nafisa Bedri (Professor of Reproductive Health, Afhad University for Women), Rose Bosire (Kenya Medical Research Institute), Anne Gatuguta (Senior Lecturer, Global Health, Brighton and Sussex Medical School), Innocent Grant (Researcher and Advocate, Young and Alive Institute, Tanzania), Isabelle Lange (Assistant Professor, Anthropology, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine), Margaret E. MacDonald (Associate Professor, Anthropology, York University, Canada), Catherine Maiti (Principal Medical Officer Strategy and Policy, National Malaria Control Programme, Ministry of Health Uganda), Mara Malagodi (Assistant Professor, Law, Chinese University of Hong Kong), and Haripriya Narasimhan (Associate Professor, Liberal Arts, Indian Institute of Technology Hyderabad), Sarah Rudrum (Associate Professor, Sociology, Acadia University, Canada), Katerini T. Storeng (Associate Professor, Global Health, University of Oslo), Lauren J. Wallace (Senior Researcher, Dodowa Health Research Centre).

Doctoral Students and Research Associates

Laurene Oluwakemi Abisioye Ajayi (PhD student, Law), Anushka Zafar (PhD student, International Development).

Sussex Staff

Liam Berriman (Senior Lecturer, Childhood and Youth Studies, University of Sussex), Angélica Cabezas Pino (Research Fellow, Anthropology, University of Sussex), Becky Faith (Research Fellow, Institute of Development Studies), Judith Townend (Senior Lecturer, Media and Information Law, University of Sussex)

New Member Focus

Angélica Cabezas Pino

Angélica Cabezas Pino is an ESRC postdoc at the University of Sussex and a new CORTH member. She is a visual anthropologist and documentary filmmaker whose practice and research focus on the exploration of intimate sense-making processes through the use of collaborative visual methods. She has conducted research with people living with HIV in Chile, queer communities in the UK and refugee women in Bangladesh, Jordan and the UK. Angelica received a PhD in Anthropology, Media and Performance from The University of Manchester and she has worked for universities in the UK and Chile, and for international organisation, such as UN Women and UNAIDS.

Innocent Grant

Innocent Grant is a program director at Young and Alive Initiative in Tanzania. He is a gender specialist with a background in clinical medicine. In the year 2022, Innocent focused on evaluating the digital care model that is an online/offline – interface for the provision of local and responsive contraceptive education for young people in Mtwara, Tanzania called contraceptives conversations. His involvement in CORTH is to initiate a digital care network WhatsApp group chat to lead and spark informal discussions about digital care on reproductive health promotion.
CORTH Twitter

CORTH Twitter continues to have a highly active presence at the University of Sussex. Our Twitter handle has a regular engagement which involves daily tweets, live tweeting of events and the publicising of our members’ research work. We currently have over 641 followers in total. Our Twitter handle is managed by Eve Wilcox, our centre coordinator.

twitter.com/CORTHSussex

CORTH YouTube channel

Since most of our events have been online this past year, our members have found the CORTH YouTube channel very helpful. Here you can find some of our recent event recordings, in case you missed the live discussion. Some of those available to view are:

- In Conversation with Angélica Cabezas Pino: ‘This is my Face’
- CORTH Digital Care Network x Sussex Humanities Lab: The Datafication of Children’s Lives with Dr Liam Berriman
- The Access Paradox in Safe Abortion Care: the cases of Ethiopia, Tanzania and Zambia with Prof. Astrid Blystad
SPECIAL FOCUS Digital Care

Following initial talks during semester one, CORTH officially launched its Digital Care Network (DCN) in April. This is to be a collaboration between CORTH and SH:24, a sexual health service led by Paula Baraitser. The network has already seen the launch of a Whatsapp group for sharing articles of interest, led by Sussex doctoral candidate, Anushka Zafar and SH:24 Research Assistant, Innocent Grant.

CORTH Digital Care Network Launch

‘Understanding the power relations of online gender-based violence’ with Dr Becky Faith (Institute of Development Studies)

Chaired by Lyndsay McLean
5 APRIL 2022

This event signalled the official launch of the network as a collaborative research community.

After a brief history of the development of the network from Maya Unnithan and Paula Baraitser, and a short presentation from Anushka and Innocent to discuss the DCN Whatsapp group, IDS Research Fellow, Becky Faith, guided us through the intricacies of being a woman online. Becky discussed the hostility women face online and how the normalising of this contributes to a culture of violence both on the internet and in ‘real life’. She described the technology gender gap, contesting whether arbitrary measurements of development such as this are useful when technology is not automatically empowering for women. Notably, Becky detailed how mechanisms of power manifest against women in these online spaces and concluded that there is a cross-disciplinary importance of protecting women online. In the discussion, we explored the link between the digitisation of healthcare and the hostility experienced by women online. We discussed the potential barriers to women accessing healthcare services if digitised and reflected on ways of overcoming these barriers. Lyndsay closed the session with a message of hope for this exciting new network.

Our first Digital Care Network Webinar

How data intervenes in children’s lives: looking at childhood data practices in contemporary and historical perspective

Dr Liam Berriman (Sussex Humanities Lab)
17 MAY 2022

We were very pleased to have Dr Liam Berriman join us from the Sussex Humanities lab and Department of Social Work at the University of Sussex for our first stand-alone Digital Care Network event. In this webinar, chaired by DCN co-founder, Paula Baraitser, Liam detailed a historically-informed, contemporary perspective on how data impacts children’s lives. In what he terms an ‘age of “datafication”’, ruled by “Big Data”, our lives are translated into/we become data, as digital platforms suck up information about us. This includes schools, medical institutions and other areas that pertain to children’s lives. Liam framed children as ‘data subjects’ to an extent that not only have the lives of children in “the West” been morphed, but also, the (already modern) concept of childhood has been altered accordingly. This webinar led to some in-depth discussion about the range of positive and negative impact that the datafication of children’s lives might trigger. Notably, we discussed the contemporary context of surveillance capitalism and the juxtaposition of digital care alongside the moral panic surrounding “Big Data” surveillance.
To me, ‘digital care’ is a joint effort between people and technology. It can go as far as to empower individuals to make better decisions around their own health, safety and wellbeing. Whether through smartphones or other devices, we can learn so much from the data people produce every day. Yet, we should not forget our subjectivities and lived realities and also let them inform the way technology is designed to be more effective and contextualized for users. Our data can be very personal and should receive the same care and respect as the real-life people behind these quantifiable values.

Anushka Zafar
PhD Candidate in Social Anthropology, School of Global Studies, Sussex

In our work on ‘Doing Ethnography on Care for mothers and their children with the Zika Virus Syndrome in Pernambuco’ digital care became both a valuable and a precarious substitute to the exhausting daily routines of therapy, exams and medical appointments that these women and their children followed. Because of the Covid confinement they had to stay at home. Urban transport costs went down for them, as did the already few extra income opportunities, but the impossibility of hands-on treatment led to frequent misunderstandings about the quality of mothers’ and of health care professionals’ capacities to diminish the suffering and promote the well-being of the children. The minor gains with increased speed of contact with professionals were undone by technical communication difficulties and difficulties of transmission of information both ways (mother-professional and vice versa) about treatment involving bodily contact with the children. Research on implications for the children’s development and for the undertaking of post-confinement treatment needs to be done.

Parry Scott
Professor of Anthropology, Federal University of Pernambuco, Brazil

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Parry Scott
Professor of Anthropology, Federal University of Pernambuco, Brazil

In the context where people have less understanding of the use of digital technology, their ability to leverage digital care may be dependent on their digital literacy, especially ability to find suitable and credible sites of health information that respond to their specific needs, ability to understand privacy and safety in digital technology and ability to have affordable internet access. Digital care to me means bridging these issues, while actively engaging the users of services from the designing to digital care provision. In the year 2022, I am focused on evaluating the digital care model that is an online/offline – interface for the provision of local and responsive contraceptive education for young people in Mtwara, Tanzania called contraceptives conversations.

Innocent Grant
Program Director, Young and Alive Initiative, Tanzania
Our blog site continues to be a space for the critical exchange of knowledge and discussion from around the globe. Our highlight this year is as follows:

Reflections on the ‘Menstruation: sharing experiences from the global north and south’ conference (December 2021)

By Sophie Collins, PhD researcher at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Sussex and CORTH member.

In her blog Sophie reflects on the ‘Menstruation: sharing experiences from the global north and south’ conference she attended in October 2021 at the British Academy. Professor Bobel’s deliberation at the conference on the importance of how we talk about menstruation resonated with her significantly. The conference overall emphasised that increased conversation around menstruation must be inclusive of a range of voices and experiences, including those that continue to be underrepresented, specifically on account of disability, age, gender, geography or socio-economic factors. In this context, Sophie found the emphasis made around tapping into and continuing to develop a global network through which resources can be disseminated, highly pertinent.
Impact and Engagement

Law reform and training

MARIA MOSCATI

In September 2021, along with Craig Lind and Philip Bremner, Maria presented a law reform proposal on birth registration at the Family Law Reform Conference in Birmingham. Their proposal was then submitted to the Law Commission’s consultation on their latest programme of law reform. They advocate for a more flexible approach to the registration of the gender of the child at birth with a two-part register. Part A of the register would identify the child, parent(s) and informants. This part would be open to scrutiny as the current birth register is, acknowledging the fundamental role of the birth register in identifying the child and parents. Part B would record certain additional details surrounding birth that might be or become relevant for the child or others. As recording this information is not a central function of birth registration, access to this part would be more fully regulated.

Maria also delivered training sessions and workshops to mediators, lawyers and magistrates in the UK and Italy. Her interactive workshops and training sessions opened up conversations on the practical implications for family mediators, lawyers and magistrates when dealing with parenting disputes involving same-sex parents, trans parents and nonbinary parents. Attention has been given to the manner in which sexual orientation and gender identity influence the resolution of family disputes. Questions answered during the sessions include: What issues do same sex, trans and non-binary parents face when experiencing family conflicts? What are the issues and challenges that mediators, lawyers and magistrates might face in such cases? How may the voices of children raised in sexually and gender diverse families be heard?

Maria led the following training sessions in 2022:

• ‘Rainbow after the Storm: working with Same-Sex, Trans and Non-Binary Parents in Mediation’, delivered to Relationships Scotland.
• ‘Dispute Resolution and Same-Sex Couples’, delivered to GEA (Italian family mediation provider).
• ‘The Breakup of Multi-Parent Families: Their Rights and Responsibilities in Law’, delivered at the West Sussex Magistrates Association.

Tackling Modern Slavery in Malaysian Medical Gloves Factories

MEI TRUEBA

A High Impact Report was published by Mei Trueba and colleagues at Newcastle University following AHRC-funded research on ‘Tackling Modern Slavery in Malaysian Medical Gloves Factories’. The report provides robust evidence of forced labour issues in the medical gloves sector before and during the COVID-19 pandemic and suggests opportunities for remedy. Findings and recommendations have been well received by UK government departments, Members of Parliament (MPs), National Health Service (NHS) procurers, gloves suppliers, manufacturers in Malaysia, and organisations advocating for labour rights in global supply chains, including the British Medical Association. The report has also generated national and international media interest, including reports by The Independent and Voice of America, and the Spanish newspaper El Periodico. A brief research summary has been published by the Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre (Modern Slavery PEC). Links to both can be found on the CORTH website.

Poetry for Sexual and Reproductive Justice

ELIZABETH WRIGHT VEINTIMILLA

Elizabeth successfully submitted her poem “For the women who came before us”, to the ‘Sexual and Reproductive Health Matters’ journal. They have gone on to include her poem in an anthology, Poetry and Sexual Reproductive Justice, published in March 2022.

Who brought you to the world
Who birthed you
What happened before she gave birth to you?

It is not my story to share, but I think that’s why she once said to me, with a lot of pain and regret

“Yo quisiera haber tenido las fuerzas para decir algo cuando tenia tu edad”

I wish I had the strength to say something when I was your age.

Tell me what does justice look like for the women who came before us?

Excerpt from ‘For the women who came before us’ by Elizabeth Wright Veintimilla
Research Updates

LUNA Connection Group (Menstrual Health)

In March 2022, the LUNA Connection group gathered online to share findings and explore future areas for funding and engagement. The aim of the roundtable meeting was to spotlight how women and girls’ periods are impacting adolescents’ human rights in Uganda, Kenya and Sudan and if there is learning and knowledge that can inform funding and policy and practice more broadly. Catherine Maiteki, Rose Bosire and Nafisa Bedri shared findings from their research in Uganda, Kenya, and Sudan, respectively.

In the discussion the group explored: In what ways and to what extent does poor access to menstrual health limit adolescents’ rights in these countries? What is the impact that sanitary products have on the environment? What next? How can we build on what we think we know?

Findings from the deliberations were i) women’s health continues to be impacted by suboptimal hygiene products and pain management. ii) For young girls, not being able to manage their periods can hinder access to education, iii) Periods are often seen as an indication that girls ready for marriage, sexual activity and childbirth. Reflections on the environmental considerations included:

- **Disposal of products** – Lack of incinerators, the shame of blocking toilets and contributing to pollution and open waste disposal were cited as common factors.
- **Use of natural products** – In Uganda the use of natural resources such as banana fibres could be seen as possible alternatives. Some wider discussion around the health implications of using products that include plastics was also referenced.
- **Cost of products** – Across the country studies women and girls discussed the prohibitive cost of products. More sustainable products often relied on significant financial outlay even if in the long run there would be a saving. This was often not an option as household economies, are often structured by spending little, by little on a weekly basis.

The proposed next steps were to expand the network, encourage uptake, and to communicate and engage.

MATRISET Project

Research partners on the MATRISET project met in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania from April 30th to May 8th for the launch of the project. Led by the University of Bergen, its key partners include the Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences, University of Dar es Salaam, Addis Ababa University, Ethiopian Public Health Institute and University of Sussex (CORTH). Associated partners include Gynaecology/obstetrics-, midwives- and women’s associations in Tanzania and Ethiopia.

The overall aim of the MATRISET research project is to strengthen reporting in maternal mortality surveillance systems to ensure relevant response in the contexts of Ethiopia and Tanzania. Through a combination of ethnography, survey and analysis of register data, the interdisciplinary research group will investigate health workers’ experiences of reporting care in the MDSR- and other maternal health registry and review systems at health facility level; explore community perspectives on birth care provision and social accountability processes in maternal health; investigate how reported maternal mortality data is reviewed and managed at health administrative level (facility-, district-, region and national levels); study legal frameworks surrounding maternal mortality surveillance systems and how these are practiced and linked to accountability mechanisms, and will finally develop policy relevant knowledge to improve maternal mortality surveillance systems, and to enhance the balance between professional accountability and legal protection of health professionals.

Queer Judgements Project

Together with Prof Nuno Ferreira (University of Sussex) and Senthorun Raj (Manchester Metropolitan University), CORTH Co-Director, Maria Moscati, is leading the Queer Judgments Project that aims at re-imagining, re-writing, re-inventing, from queer and other complementing perspectives, judgments that have considered sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) issues. The project has an international reach and multi-disciplinary scope.
CORTH Fora, Discussions and Webinars

We have had a very active year with stimulating conversations and webinars with speakers from our global network of members. We will continue to run our events online going forward to make our discussions more open and accessible. You can view our event recordings via our website and YouTube channel.

CORTH Fora

CORTH Meet and Greet Research Forum

6 OCTOBER 2021

At the start of our new academic term, we met online to hear from a selection of doctoral researchers about their work. Ritabrata Roy (doctoral student, Law, Sussex), discussed his work ‘No More on the Periphery: Hearing the Voice of the Male Victims of Honour Crimes’. Sunisha Neupane (visiting doctoral researcher, International Development, Sussex) shared her plans to work with local minoritised communities on memories and experiences of specific blood technologies, this project aims to open new pathways for decolonising medical museums. The studentship is part of WhiteRose Vital Circulations Network. Please go to www.vitalcirculations.org for some excellent forthcoming online events that are free to attend.

Rebecca Blaylock, who is Research and Engagement Lead and the British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS). Rebecca talked about the history of abortion services in the UK and BPAS’ current role in the reproductive health sector.

Upending Patriarchy: Analysing gender issues through the lens of men and masculinities

CHAIRED BY MEGAN SCHMIDT-SANE (IDS) • 29 MARCH 2022

Over the years, social scientists and researchers have recognized that it is important to involve and engage with men – and better understand masculinities – to advance gender equality and understand what inhibits it. It is important to critically engage with men and masculinities in different contexts. The event highlighted the work of researchers who employ masculinities as a lens to understand and analyse complex issues such as reproduction, HIV, honour killings, colonial violence, marginalisation and ‘crisis’ in different regions. Devanik Saha, a PhD researcher from IDS, focused on understanding men’s involvement in antenatal care in an informal settlement of Delhi, India. Ritabrata Roy from School of Law & Politics explored the honour killing of men, a hitherto discussed topic in India.

Sangeeta Chattoo (University of York) and Jeun Kim (University of Leeds)

Dr Jeun Kim (School of Languages, Cultures and Societies, University of Leeds) and CORTH member, Sangeeta Chattoo (Sociology, University of York), in collaboration with Thackray Museum of Medicine, Leeds have secured an exciting WRoCAH funded Collaborative Doctoral Award: “Disentangling the History of Blood and Othering: A Relational Materialist Approach to Decolonising Medical Museums”. Focusing on Thackray Museum of Medicine’s collections around blood technologies, this project takes a relational materialist approach to exploring the potential of medical objects in unsettling historically rooted racial imaginaries. Combining collections-based ethnographic research at Thackray, oral history and co-creation work with local minoritised communities on memories and experiences of specific blood technologies, this project aims to open new pathways for decolonising medical museums. The studentship is part of WhiteRose Vital Circulations Network. Please go to www.vitalcirculations.org for some excellent forthcoming online events that are free to attend.

Maggie MacDonald, York University, Canada

Maggie has received a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Council of Canada (SSHRC) for a project called Midwifery and Reproductive Justice at a time of Crisis. Her Co-Principal Investigator is Professor Nadya Burton (Associate Professor in the Midwifery Education Program at Ryerson University). They have partnered with the Association of Ontario Midwives to carry out this study which looks at how midwives and their clients are faring during the COVID pandemic.

Pascale Hancart Petitet, Institute of Research for Development, France

Pascale has been awarded grants for 3 projects:

- Impact of the Covid19 pandemic on nurses in central and field hospitals in Vientiane Capital, Lao PDR: Knowledge, practices, perceptions and experiences. Grant Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie (2021-2022)
- Social Sciences & Health Research Capacity-Building in Vientiane, Laos.

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This discussion was then followed by a very informative paper presented by Rebecca Blaylock, who is Research and Engagement Lead and the British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS). Rebecca talked about the history of abortion services in the UK and BPAS’ current role in the reproductive health sector.

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CORTH Discussions

Law, Policy and Practice, the cases of maternal health surveillance in Ethiopia and Tanzania
9 NOVEMBER 2021

Astrid Blystad and Karen Marie Moland (University of Bergen, Norway) presented plans for the upcoming MATRISET project, an interdisciplinary research project, based in social sciences, law and public health. The project aims to use an interdisciplinary team of researchers, including clinical practitioners, to examine maternal mortality response and reporting processes, legal frameworks and accountability in maternal death surveillance in Ethiopia and Tanzania. In the discussion, we explored the methodological proposals as well as the project’s conceptual and theoretical grounding. As this was our first ‘hybrid’ event of the year, we were delighted to be able to hold vibrant discussion with both the in-person attendees and those online.

LUNA Connection Event: Menstrual Health, Human Rights and Environmental Sustainability: How is education about menstrual health represented in the school curriculum in East Africa?
25 FEBRUARY 2022

In this talk, Dr Anne Gatuguta (BSMS), Dr Maria Moscati (Sussex) and Dr Chi Eziefula (BSMS) presented a recent scoping review on the integration of menstrual health education for adolescents in schools in East Africa. The event was chaired by Professor Shobhita Rajagopal (IDS Jaipur).

CORTH Webinars

The Access Paradox in Safe Abortion Care: the cases of Ethiopia, Tanzania and Zambia
29 NOVEMBER 2021

This talk was the second of two talks given by CORTH visiting research fellow, Astrid Blystad (University of Bergen, Norway). Where her first talk traced the MATRISET project, this webinar focussed on abortion processes in the differing legal contexts of Ethiopia, Tanzania and Zambia, identifying the political, economic and social factors that are at play in each country. In sub-Saharan Africa the rate of unsafe abortions is on the rise, especially among adolescents. Through the three country cases where Astrid and Karen Marie have worked, they discussed access to safe abortion services in different legal contexts to identify the political, economic and social processes that mitigate the effect of the law. Astrid and Karen Marie gave an in-depth and accessible analysis of the paradoxical relation between the law and realities of access to abortion care in these three case studies. This inspired some passionate discussion between in-person and online attendees.

CORTH Conversation

Reproductive Health as a Public Health Issue: new tools and insights?
With Sue Mann, Lydia Leon and Lucy Porter (Department of Health and Social Care, UK)
30 NOVEMBER 2021

This event saw CORTH welcome Sue Mann (National Medical Expert, Reproductive Health, DHSC), Lydia Leon and Lucy Porter (also from Department of Health and Social Care) to speak on the future of reproductive health. We were delighted that Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research, Professor Keith Jones, chaired the event. The speakers contested outdated definitions of reproductive health, emphasising that care must be provided beyond contraception, and new health indicators devised with people with women in mind. Specifically, Lucy noted that barriers to accessing reproductive health services need to be identified using research practices that consciously seek to represent the experiences of people of diverse genders and ethnic backgrounds. An emphasis was made on these groups that remain underrepresented in research and the dangers of them being overlooked despite having statistically poorer reproductive health outcomes.

CORTH Fim Showing

This is my Face (Esta es mi cara): What lies inside a journey with HIV?
15 MARCH 2022

Directed by Sussex Anthropology Research Fellow, and CORTH member, Angelica Cabezas Pino. This is my Face (Chile/UK, 2019, 58 mins) tells the stories of several Chilean men living with HIV. The film follows these men during the creative process of a photography project in which they are partaking and asks the audience to listen as they share stories of stigma, barriers to accessing medical care, grief and the dehumanisation they have felt as an accumulation of these factors.

One of the most poignant themes that also triggered further discussion was the narrative offered on the trans-generational impact of the virus, particularly on the parental bond. Where the participants found catharsis in revisiting places that they associated with pivotal moments in their journeys, and photography acted as vessel for closure, the closure itself revolved around mending, cementing or, for some, creating bonds with family members, love interests or close allies. This film and the discussion were immensely moving and reminded us of the importance of community in times of crisis or despair. This is my Face is available to buy on the Royal Anthropological Institute website.
CORTH Book Events

Co-sponsored with the Centre for Advanced International Theory (CAIT)
24 NOVEMBER 2021
Sumi Madhok joined us to discuss her book, Vernacular Rights Cultures, which challenges the dominant epistemologies and political practices of global human rights. It argues that decolonising global human rights calls for a serious epistemic accounting of the historically and politically specific encounters with human rights, and of the forms of worldmaking that underpin the stakes and struggles for rights and human rights around the globe. Through combining ethnographic investigations with political theory and philosophy, it goes beyond critiquing the Eurocentrism of global human rights, in order to document and examine the different political imaginaries, critical conceptual vocabularies, and gendered political struggles for rights and justice that animate subaltern mobilisations in ‘most of the world’. Vernacular Rights Cultures demonstrates that these subaltern struggles call into being different and radical ideas of justice, politics and citizenship, and open up different possibilities and futures for human rights.

International Women’s Day Book Talk
Childlessness in Bangladesh: Intersectionality, Suffering and Resilience, with Dr Papreen Nahar
Co-sponsored with Brighton and Sussex Medical School
8 MARCH 2022
Dr Papreen Nahar (BSMS) discussed her book Childlessness in Bangladesh, with Maya Unnithan and Trudie Gerrits as discussants. The conversation covered a range of areas, including anthropology, reproductive and global health, gender, development and Asian studies.

Anthropologies of Global Maternal and Reproductive Health Book Launch
31 MAY 2022
CORTH hosted the launch of this landmark edited volume which brings together new research on the mechanisms by which maternal and reproductive health policies are formed and implemented in diverse locales around the world, from global policy spaces to sites of practice. Edited by Lauren Wallace (McMaster University, Hamilton, Canada), Margaret Macdonald (York University, Toronto, Canada) and Katerini Storeng (Centre for Development and Environment, University of Oslo, Norway), the book comprises contributions from both internationally respected anthropologists and new voices to demonstrate the value of ethnography and the utility of reproduction as a lens providing rich insight into professionals’ and lay people’s intimate encounters with policy. Core policy debates in the history of global maternal health are examined across six different continents, including, women’s use of misoprostol for abortion in Burkina Faso; the place of traditional birth attendants in global maternal health; donor-driven maternal health programs in Tanzania and efforts to integrate qualitative evidence in WHO maternal and child health policymaking.

The launch was attended by over 70 participants across the world. Contributions to the book were discussed by Irene Agyepong from the Ghanaian College of Physicians and Surgeons and Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, well know French and Nigerian anthropologist. As he commented: “This book is a remarkable example of the fruitfulness of policy anthropology, particularly in the field of health. Providing examples taken from six continents, it brightly demonstrates the extent to which anthropology is essential to understanding the concrete contexts in which policies are developed and implemented and what happens in encounters between policy and practice.” Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, l’Université Abdou Moumoun

Other CORTH Events

Chai Pe Charcha: A Roundtable Discussion on the Recent State Elections in India
Co-sponsored with Law, Politics and Sociology, Sussex Asia Centre, the Institute of Development Studies and the Centre for World Environmental History
5 APRIL 2022
On 5th April 2022, Chai pe Charcha, a roundtable discussion, was held on the state assembly polls held in March 2022. The discussion was moderated by Devanik Saha, a CORTH member and a PhD student jointly supervised at the School of Global Studies & Institute of Development Studies. The discussion included three other panelists: Dr. Rekha Diwakar (School of Law, Politics & Sociology), Dr. Indrajit Roy (University of York), Dr. Andrew Wyatt (University of Bristol). It covered different issues such as the reasons behind BJP’s stupendous performance in the polls, impact of these polls on citizen participation in elections, and the emergence of the Aam Aadmi Party in Punjab as a national alternative. The event saw more than 20 participants (in-person and online) which also included CORTH members and faculty advisors such as Professor Filippo Osella, Prof. Geert De Neeve and Prof. Priya Deshingkar. The event was supported by the School of Law & Politics, Sussex Asia Centre, IDS, and the Centre for World Environmental History.

(Un)safe to be me? Exploring the rights and lived experiences of LGBTI people in the UK
9 JUNE 2022
Co-hosted CORTH event with The Human Rights Implementation Centre, University of Bristol.

Together, Dr Peter Dunne (University of Bristol), Dr Ben Kasstan (University of Bristol) and CORTH co-director, Maria Moscati, organised this inter-disciplinary half-day conference. The event was co-hosted by CORTH and by the Human Rights Implementation Centre (University of Bristol) and brought together academics, advocates and activists from across the UK to explore the legal, social and political rights of LGBTI communities in this country, identifying current challenges and potential options for reform.
CORTH Publication Highlights

Here we provide a selection of recent publications from CORTH members:


Hancart Petitet P, “Principes et défis des allers-retours et du double engagement entre recherche et action humanitaire/ The principles and challenges of the interplay and dual commitment between research and humanitarian action», Alternatives Humanitaires, n°17, juillet 2021


Unnithan, M., and Kasstan, B. “‘But it’s not that they don’t love their girls”: Gender equality, reproductive rights and sex-selective abortion in Britain.” Medical Anthropology (2021): 1-14.


Please view previous CORTH annual reports via the website: www.sussex.ac.uk/corth/publications/documents
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Frieze from film, 'This is my face' by Angelica Cabezas Pino.
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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. The university is located at Falmer on the outskirts of Brighton, within easy reach of London and major international airports at Gatwick and Heathrow.

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