

Scientific Meeting between Pôle Suds-Ceped-Unige

Progress in Access to Abortion in Restrictive Contexts: Historical and International Perspectives

Tuesday, December 8th, 2015

INED, 133, boulevard Davout, 75020 Paris
Salle Sauvy

Abortion is often discussed by comparing different legislative approaches to it, and by classifying these approaches as either “for” or “against” abortion’s legalization. These discussions tend to mask the concrete strategies that are being used on the ground to improve access to safe abortion in legally restrictive contexts.

A historical perspective is particularly relevant for this issue, as a way of understanding the present. Despite the grave consequences for women’s health and lives, bans on abortion have never it stopped from taking place. Women (among other actors) have always found ways to organize themselves and to develop or adopt new technologies to procure (mostly clandestine) abortions. The legal status quo that seems to prevail in the vast majority of countries since the end of the twentieth century actually obscures a wide range of *effective* and safe access to abortion. In practice, this access depends a great deal on local, informal initiatives. This types of action result in concrete improvements in women’s access to pregnancy termination, and, in the long term, can change attitudes toward abortion, if not formal policy. The current international push to improve post-abortion care is training providers in the latest techniques of uterine evacuation, which in turn, can enable these providers to interrupt pregnancies. Similarly, the diffusion of both information on medical abortion and the drugs themselves (through channels ranging from formal to informal to web-based) is facilitating increased access to abortion

This meeting will focus on various historical and geographic contexts, and will be an opportunity to discuss several cross-cutting questions. Can these discrete changes open significant new gaps? Are the systems used to bypass the law as effective as fighting political, legal, and legislative battles? Do these systems help promote mobilization around abortion in the public sphere, or do they stifle mobilization?

Organizers: Fabrice Cahen (INED, UR11 et 4), Agnès Guillaume (CEPED/IRD) and Clémentine Rossier (Université de Genève/INED, UR3)

Admission is free as long as there is there is space available.

[Register online](#) on Pôle Suds website

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Program

9:00-9:15 – Welcome coffee

9:15-9:30 – **Introduction** by the organizers

9:30-11:00 – **Strategies to improve access to abortion in legally restrictive contexts**

- *Safe abortion outside of the law in the northeast of the Caribbean*, Gail Pheterson (Université de Picardie, CRESPPA/CSU) and Yamila Azize (School of Medicine, University of Puerto Rico)
- *Abortion among foreign women in Japan in the 1950s and 1960s*, Isabelle Konuma (Inalco, Paris)
- *The decriminalization of abortion in Mexico: between debates and controversies*, Agnès Guillaume (Ceped-IRD, Paris), Susana Lerner (El Colegio de Mexico) et Lucía Melgar (El Colegio de México, PUEG)

11:00-11:30 – **Break**

11:30-12:30 – **Evolution within the religious world**

- *Catolicadas: an animated series on sexuality, gender and religion. The impact on youth positions about abortion*, Evelyn Aldaz et Sandra Fosado (Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir-México, Mexico)
- *The complex position of Catholic activists facing abortion rights in the 1970s*, Anthony Favier (LARHRA (RÉSÉA), Lyon 2)

12:30-13:30 – Buffet lunch

13:30-17:30 – **Popular knowledge, circulation of information, and care practices**

13:30-15:30 – **1st part: Methods and ways of bypassing the law**

- *Population knowledge and clandestine techniques in France (1900 - 1970)*, Fabrice Cahen (INED, Paris)
- *When transnational actors change access to safe abortion in Africa: misoprostol between non-appropriation by women and the institutional registration process*, Fatoumatta Ouattara (IRD- LPED, Marseille), Carine Baxerres (IRD, Benin) and Agnès Guillaume (IRD-Ceped, Paris)
- *Local realities and global strategies to overcome the State in the struggle for safe abortion*, Marlies Schellekens (Women on the Waves)
- *Medical Abortion in Our Hands – using international online abortion service as a strategy for empowerment and activism in Poland*, Kinga Jelinska (Women on line)

15:30-16:00 – **Break**

16:00-17:00. 2nd part: Post-abortion care as a screen

- *Abortion in Burkina Faso: A social issue surrounded by public health*, Katerini T. Storeng (Centre for Development and the Environment, Oslo), Fatoumatta Ouattara (IRD- LPED, Marseille)
- *The role of midwives in post-abortion care in urban and rural Gabon*, Aimée Patricia Ndembi Ndembi (CENAREST, Gabon), Marijke Alblas (sexual and reproductive health advisor, South Africa), Justine Mekui (midwife at the University Hospital of Libreville, Gabon), Gail Pheterson (Université de Picardie, CRESPPA/CSU)

17:00-17:30 – **General review**