

Over the last decades, medical techno-scientific innovations have radically transformed reproductive processes at every level by putting the reproductive body under strict biomedical surveillance and submitting it to significant technological manipulation. Most of these innovations, often promoted as miracles and even revolutions, were generalised very rapidly thanks to ever-growing national and global markets. Their side effects on health were, however, insufficiently studied, or even ignored, until scandals (diethylstilbestrol, thalidomide, primodos, Dalkon Shield) or controversies (contraceptive pill, hormonal replacement therapy) unavoidably made them public. Other technologies routinely used in hospital births that generate iatrogenic risks, such as induction of labour, continuous foetal monitoring, epidural anaesthesia or caesarean section, have rarely been critically examined considering their effects in the short and long term. Moreover, many innovations, tests and treatments were made routine despite the fact that their efficiency is marginal, unproven or unevaluated, as is the case for the 'add-ons' that are supposed to increase the success of IVF or the MRTs that aim to prevent the transmission of mitochondrial diseases. Beyond their clinical or practical impacts, however, innovations within fertility markets, pregnancy testing, obstetrical care and reproductive health often have ethical, legal, social, economic and even anthropological implications, which are rarely publicly debated before they become normalised.

At the crossroads of STS, sociology of risk, medical anthropology, gender studies and ignorance studies, the aim of this international conference is to analyse the dynamics of ignorance production prior to, during but also after the rapid expansion of reproductive technologies, innovations and products. In our contemporary knowledge societies, what are the zones and frontiers of knowledge and ignorance in the field of human reproduction? How do the innovators, promoters and regulators of reproductive technologies or products draw or influence such boundaries? What are the economic, social, political or gendered prerogatives or interests that lead to the non-production of evidence on health externalities or, taking a different perspective, to the loss of collective memory on un-medicalised ways of procreating or giving birth? Are there national regimes of ignorance production that persist despite the increasing importance of transnational regulatory bodies and the exceptional information flow characterising today's globalised and connected world? How are real-world or embodied experiences of women, parents, babies and patients recognised, or rather dismissed, in different political-cultural contexts and techno-industrial sectors? What are the processes, circumstances or actions that facilitate their recognition?

This international conference will tackle these questions by putting together empirical contributions that highlight the contemporary as well as historical processes of technological normalisation and relevant ignorance production (as well as its possible public challenge) in the fields of human reproduction and reproductive health.

**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE**  
University of Lausanne (UNIL)  
and the School of Advanced Studies  
in the Social Sciences (EHESS Paris)

# minimising risks, selling promises?

Reproductive Health,  
Techno-Scientific Innovations  
and the Production of Ignorance

Université de Lausanne  
Salle Cubotron III

Lausanne **2018**  
**22-23**  
November

**FREE  
ENTRY**

Organisers:  
Irène Maffi (UNIL) & Sezin Topçu (CEMS-Ehess)

For more information:  
<https://www.unil.ch/stslab/fr/home.html>

or:  
<https://www.unil.ch/iss/home.html>

# PROGRAM

## DAY 1: 22 NOVEMBRE 2018

09:00-09:30  
Welcoming of the Participants

09:30-10:00  
Introduction  
(Irène Maffi & Sezin Topçu)

10:00-12:00  
**Session 1: Risky Hormones, Public Controversies, Health Scandals**

Emmanuelle Fillion (EHESP, ARENES)  
& Didier Torny (CNRS)  
*«Like mother, like daughter, like grand-daughter...»: Transgenerational Ignorance Engendered by a Defective Reproductive Health Technology*

Birgit Nemec (University of Heidelberg)  
*From Thalidomide to Primodos: Teratology, policy networks and ignorance production in West Germany*

Jesse Olszynko-Gryn  
(Glasgow University)  
*Risky Hormones and the Production of Ignorance about Birth Defects: the Case of the Pregnancy Test Drug Primodos*

Discussant: Aude Fauvel (CHUV-UNIL)

12:00-13:30  
Lunch Break

13:30-15:30  
**Session 2: Medical Cultures and the Structural Production of Ignorance**

Sezin Topçu  
(CNRS, HYPMEDPRO, Ehess-Paris)  
*Caesarean Epidemic, Maternal Body and Production of Ignorance in Turkey*

Lola Mirouse (Ehess, Paris)  
*Securising Childbirth, Banalising Risks: the Paradox of Normalized Episiotomy in France during 1990s*

Kelly Colas (Michigan State University)  
*"Here We Really Don't Treat Low-Risk Patients as Low-Risk:" The Use of Cesarean Sections to Mitigate Risk at Two Public Mexican Hospitals*

Discussant: Irène Maffi (UNIL)

15:30-16:00  
Coffee Break

16:00-17:30  
**Keynote: Susan E. Bell**  
(Drexel University)  
*What's Prudence? Where's Justice? Feminist Reflections on the Global Dynamics of Producing Reproductive Technologies*

## DAY 2: 23 NOVEMBER 2018

09:30-12:00  
**Session 3: "Expert" vs. "Lay" Knowledge, Ignorance and Experiences**

Cathy Herbrand (De Montfort University)  
*Silences, omissions, and over simplification: the UK debate on mitochondrial donation*

Mwenzha Blell (Newcastle University)  
*Ontology, Reproduction, and What Anthropologists Didn't Know about How Babies are Made*

Lucia Gentile  
(MilanoBicocca University & Inalco)  
*Female Sterilisation and Hysterec-tomy. Reproductive Technologies and the Representation of the Women's Body in Bhuj (Gujarat, India)*

Caroline Hodge  
(University of Pennsylvania)  
*An Invisible Fracture: Embodied Experiences of the Oral Contraceptive Pill in the United States*

Discussant: Chiara Quagliariello  
(HYPMEDPRO, Ehess)

12:00-13:00  
Lunch Break

13:00-15:00  
**Session 4: From Ignorance to Capture? (Un)Knowledge Production in Regulatory Arenas**

Carine Vassy (Paris 13 University)  
*Which Science for Evaluating Science? The Contemporary Regulation of Foetal DNA Tests in France*

Solène Gouilhers (HESAV, HES-SO)  
*Opening the Blackbox of Birth Risks: Maternity Hospital Guidelines and Production of Knowledge and Ignorance in Switzerland*

Helena Prado (IFRIS, Paris)  
*Zika Virus Epidemic and the Regime of Ignorance Regarding Reproductive and Maternal Health in Brazil*

Discussant: Cynthia Kraus (UNIL)

15:00-15:30  
Concluding Remarks