

Stakeholders Perceptions of the Linkage between Reproductive Rights and Environmental Sustainability: Environmental Mainstreaming, Injustice and Population Reductionism

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Abstract : Analyses of global emission scenarios demonstrate that slowing population growth could lead to substantial emissions reductions and play an important role to avoid dangerous climate change. For this reason, the advancement of individual reproductive rights might represent a valid climate change mitigation and adaptation option. With this focus, we reflected on population ethics and the ethical dilemmas associated with environmental degradation and climate change. We conducted a mixed-methods qualitative data study consisting of an online survey followed by in-depth interviews with stakeholders of the reproductive health and rights and environmental sustainability movements to capture the ways in which the linkages between family planning, population growth, and environmental sustainability are perceived by these actors. We found that the multi-layered marginalization of this issue resulted in two processes, the polarization of opinions and its eschewal from the public fora through population reductionism. Our results indicate that stakeholders of the reproductive rights and environmental sustainability movements find that population size and family planning influence environmental sustainability and overwhelmingly find that the reproductive health and rights ideological framework should be integrated in a wider sustainability frame reflecting environmental considerations. This position, whilst majoritarily shared by all participants, was more likely to be adopted by stakeholders of the environmental sustainability sector than those from the reproductive health and rights sector. We conclude that these processes, taken in the context of a climate emergency, threaten to weaken the reproductive health and rights movement.

Keywords : environmental sustainability, family planning, population growth, population ethics, reproductive rights

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