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Transnational Reproduction: Experience of Italian Reproductive Travellers Receiving Donor Gametes and Embryos Abroad

Giulia Zanini

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Abstract

The phenomenon of people crossing regional and national borders to seek assisted reproduction occurs in many countries across the world and involves different actors, including patients, doctors, fertility clinic practitioners, law-makers, donors, surrogates, children, brokers, and others who take part in the globalised industry of assisted reproductive technologies. This dissertation focuses on the experience of Italian reproductive travellers who seek donor conception treatments outside national borders, as a reaction to Italian regulations on assisted reproduction banning gamete donation in Italy.

Through the qualitative analysis of the narrations and practices of heterosexual couples, same-sex couples and single women, this work explores the ways in which people face different reproductive itineraries with the aim of achieving reproduction through donor conception in a context of law evasion.

In particular, it takes into account the process that leads people to choose donor conception abroad and investigates the ways in which people make sense of this choice in relation to their understanding of kinship formation. The feelings that accompany this process, the concepts that people mobilise to make both law evasion and donor conception practice coherent with their reproductive goals, and the strategies that they employ to “kin” their donor-conceived children are presented and analysed.

This study highlights the fact that Italian CBRC travellers who seek donation treatments abroad mainly consider their reproductive experience as a transgressive act, because by doing so they circumvent laws that forbid those treatments locally. They tend to support the moral validity of their choices by arguing that it aims to accomplish what they perceive as a “normal” goal (having a child). Nonetheless, the recourse to such a reproductive experience challenges existing cultural understandings and the social organisation of kinship.



Jury: Fabrizio Bernardi (EUI), Enric Porqueres i Gené (EHESS), Joan Bestard Camps (University of Barcelona) (External Co-Supervisor), Giulia Zanini (candidate), Martin Kohli (EUI) (Supervisor)

Bio

Giulia Zanini studied anthropology and social sciences at the University of Torino and holds a MA in social anthropology from the École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS) in Paris and a MRes in social and political sciences from the European University Institute (EUI). During her PhD she was a visiting fellow at the Laboratoire d'anthropologie des institutions et des organisations sociales (LAIOS) in Paris. In 2008-2009 she worked as contracted researcher in the project "From generation to generation" led by Prof. Martin Kohli and based at the Free University of Berlin in collaboration with the EUI. Since 2010, she is teaching assistant in anthropology at the University of Trento. Her interests include kinship, assisted reproductive technologies (ARTs), gender, health and family policies, medical anthropology, science and technologies studies (STS) and feminist studies.