XI International AFIN Conference
Towards Reproductive (In)Justice: Mobilities, Technologies, Labourings & Decisions

4-6 September, 2019
Granada, Spain

For this conference, we invite researchers, professionals and end-users to think about reproduction in terms of stratifications, hierarchies and reproductive justice. We believe reproductive justice to be an increasingly necessary perspective in a world of growing inequalities and threatened solidarities.

On August 22, 2018, the prestigious publication *Nature* published an article by a group of authors led by Viviane Slon of the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, Germany. The article presented the genome of Denny, a 13-year-old girl found in the Denisova cave (Russia) who was the daughter of two different, extinct human groups: a Denisovan father, from Eastern Eurasia, and a Neanderthal mother, from Western Eurasia. The news confirmed that the groups moved throughout Europe and Asia 120,000 years ago, and that although they did not live together permanently nor have many opportunities to meet, when they did, their sexual encounters would have been habitual, to the point of yielding reproductive results.

As noted by Faye Ginsburg and Rayna Rapp (1991), "reproduction" is a slippery concept with diverse connotations. It is used to refer to childbirth as well as to the maintenance of domestic groups, the constitution of labor forces and the ideologies that sustain social systems. The XI AFIN International Conference will focus on various aspects related to reproductive justice today. We live in a time when, unlike in Denny’s epoch, the meaning of biology is increasingly indeterminate (Franklin 2013). Reproduction is becoming more and more biomedicalized and it involves transnational relations, finance, commerce, organization and social hierarchies, human relations, moral and experiential life, and even the industrialization of human life itself (Thompson 2011).

In an increasingly neoliberal world (Briggs 2017, Inhorn 2018), growing hierarchies stratify reproduction between social groups (Colen 1995), some of which enjoy diverse social supports for their reproduction while others have little to none. The Spanish case is a good example of these tendencies, as shown in AFIN Research Group’s work since 2004 (Marre & Briggs 2009; Fonseca, Marre & San Román 2015;...
In the 1970s, Spain had one of the highest fertility rates in the world, attracting adoptive families from throughout Europe and the rest of the world. In contrast, since the mid-1990s Spain has had one of the world’s lowest birth rates, was second in the world in the number of transnational adoptions in 2014, the number-one country in Europe and third in the world in using assisted reproductive cycles since 2016, as well as the top European provider of female oocytes. These changes in recent decades have transformed Spain into a global hub for reproductive travels from around the world.

Thus, it seems urgent, as proposed by scholarship in the field of reproductive justice (Luna & Luker 2013, Ros & Solinger 2017, see also Smietana, Thompson & Twine 2018, Marre & Briggs 2009, Franklin 2011) to ask ourselves the basic questions inherent to reproductive justice: Who has the right – including the proper conditions and support – to take their own decisions about reproduction, including to have or not to have children, and raise them in a safe environment? As evidenced by studies on reproductive justice, reproductive rights and decisions are conditioned or influenced by social structures, given that some people have more rights and decision-making ability than others, depending on the groups to which they belong. Reproduction in some populations or groups is more supported than in others, and the burden of reproductive work falls on some women, groups and populations in a disproportionate way (De Zordo & Marchesi 2014 [2012], Rudrappa 2015, Twine 2015, Puar 2007).

In many Western jurisdictions with low fertility levels, higher fertility rates among some immigrant populations are perceived and depicted as a “threat” by conservative politicians, who use them to fuel nationalistic and xenophobic discourses on what has been defined as the “demographic suicide” of European or American Christian nations and to criminalize abortion as well (Krause & Marchesi 2007; Marchesi 2012). Many countries, not only in Europe and America but also for example in China (Wahlberg 2018), have undergone, over the last two decades, important demographic changes, in particular a dramatic decrease in fertility rates to non-replacement levels, which have also triggered anti-reproductive rights backlash (for Eastern Europe and Russia see Mishtal 2015; Rivkin-Fish 2010). In some countries with very low fertility rates, anti-abortion groups have become very active in recent years and have extended their political influence and advocacy work trans-nationally (for Latin America see Morgan, 2017). Such a political environment has produced policies that tend to reward white, heterosexual families, while neglecting or undermining the family-making processes and reproductive rights particularly of migrants and of non-heterosexual people.

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1 For a detailed list of scientific publications and AFIN Magazine, see [http://grupsderecerc.uab.cat/afin/content/publicaciones](http://grupsderecerc.uab.cat/afin/content/publicaciones)
heterosexual and single people are often left with the option of travelling across borders to have access to adoption or ARTs that are locally forbidden to non-heterosexual, non-married couples. Heterosexual women and couples also travel across borders, not only to seek access to ARTs, but also to seek access to abortion care. In fact, women face a number of barriers to access legal abortion not only in countries with very restrictive abortion laws, but also in countries with relatively liberal abortion laws, such as gestational age limits, mandatory waiting time/counselling, conscientious refusal of care, and abortion stigma (Berer 2008; De Zordo, Mishtal, Anton 2017; Gerdts et al. 2016; ; Unnithan, De Zordo 2018). All these barriers can lead women to travel far from their area of residence, including abroad, to seek abortion care – if only their economic and other circumstances allow them for such travel.

We invite the conference participants to consider the following questions and/or build on them in examining stratified reproduction and reproductive justice:

- Who can decide whether, when and how to have children? Including women, men, transgender and non-binary people; fertile and infertile people; homosexual, bisexual or heterosexual people; able-bodied or disabled people; single people, nuclear families or co-parenting groups; citizens and migrants; economically privileged or excluded people; people of some races, ethnic groups or origins and not others; human beings or non-human animals…
- Can/should some people travel to conceive or adopt children, or to become parents, or to prevent or terminate unwanted pregnancies?
- Do donors and surrogates have access to information about the health effects of donation and gestation in the short and the long run?
- (How) can birth families of adopted children, and the children themselves, be in contact with each other and have access to the information that allows them to do so?
- (How) can donor-conceived individuals and the gamete donors who helped in their conception have access to identifying information about each other and maintain mutual relationships?
- Is work-family life balance possible and if so, can we widen the scope of those who have access to it?
- Are people able to actively participate in decision-making about their reproductive life, including contraception, pregnancy, abortion, childbirth and adoption, as well as to choose their own approach to parenthood?
- What new partnerships, collectives and other changes can we imagine to promote a version of reproductive justice in which everyone involved has the same right to participate in reproductive processes in the way they prefer, to have children and to raise them in a safe and beneficial environment, as well as the right not to have them?
• Whose reproductive health and decision-making is disadvantaged by structural exclusions and circumstances, and in what ways?

Many of these questions, except for the ones surrounding the biomedicalization of reproduction, were raised in the case of Denny, mentioned earlier. The news of her discovery did not highlight the fact that she was found in the Denisova cave where the father’s group lived. But this is a finding that raises more questions about the discovery, much like the ones we are dealing with today in the context of reproductive justice. For example:

• Had her mother decided to move to live with her father after the birth of Denny, perhaps to provide reproductive “services” to the paternal group, or at some prior moment, to access some new technology that her own group lacked?
• Had Denny’s father taken care of her on his own during her 13 years alive?
• If that were the case, would her mother have agreed or was Denny ‘appropriated’ by her father or adopted by another family in her group?
• If so, had Denny known before dying at 13 years old who her mother was, and when had she learnt about her origins?

These and other critical topics in the study of reproductive justice are changing, as they have in the past, the characteristics of our societies. In order to analyse these urgent questions, we invite research and practice professionals, activists, and end-users to participate in the XI Congreso Internacional AFIN, to be held in Granada on 4, 5 and 6 September 2019. We trust that this congress will serve, as it has in the past, as a crucial international encounter for researchers, professionals and activists working on these topics, as well as for families. To that end, we also invite submissions from those who have not as yet focused their work on reproductive justice or stratified reproduction, but who have been working in the field of reproduction and believe they can provide unique insights to the participants of this congress.

Individual communications will be organized in the following seven topic areas, which will be programmed along with plenary sessions given by invited keynote speakers:

1. Origins, Revelations, Anonymity, Secrets
2. (In)mobilities and Borders
3. Justice, Stratifications and Intersections
4. Queer kinships, Solidarities and Affinities
5. Populations, Species, Environments, Ecologies
6. Labors, Intimacies, Care
7. Health, Medicine, Science, Technology
Important Dates:
- Abstract submission deadline: 4 March 2019
  - Please send a 300-word abstract, a short bio, and one of the 7 topic areas you would like to be included in, at the email address c.afin@uab.cat
- Abstract admission responses: 3 May 2019
- Early bird registration (€130 euros): 10 June to 14 July
- General inscription (€150 euros): 15 July to 31 August

References


De Zordo S. and M. Marchesi. 2012. Irrational Reproduction: New Intersections of Politics, Gender, Race, and Class, across the North-South divide, Anthropology & Medicine, Special Issue, 19 (2).


Marchesi, M., 2012. Reproducing Italians: Contested Biopolitics in the Age of 'Replacement Anxiety', Anthropology and Medicine, 19(2-Special Issue):171-188.


