
”Global Fertility Chains” A new political economy approach to understanding transnational surrogacy and egg provision

Sigrid Vertommen*¹ and Michal Nahman²

¹king’s college london / reprosoc cambridge – Royaume-Uni

²UWE – Royaume-Uni

Résumé

Since the late 1990s third party reproductive services such as surrogacy and egg donation have transformed from small-scale and local reproductive practices into flourishing multi-billion-dollar transnational industries, involving various actors such as fertility clinics, surrogacy agencies, legal counsellors, medical couriers and a global army of reproductive workers from the Global South and North, including egg cell providers and surrogate carriers. Over the past 20 years an array of single country-based sociological and anthropological research has been conducted on commercial surrogacy in India (Parry, 2014; Pande, 2014; Rudrappa, 2015; Vora, 2015; Deomampo, 2016), Mexico (Schurr, 2017) Israel (Teman, 2010; Nahman 2008; Vertommen, 2017), Russia (Weis, 2015), the United States (Deomampo, 2016; Berend, 2017, Smietana, 2017). However, what is often still lacking is an integrative political economy framework to analyse the global and highly gendered and racialised processes of capital accumulation, labour exploitation and appropriation in which assisted reproduction is embedded. Through a critical reading of the science and technology scholarship on bio-capital/bioeconomies on the one hand, and the feminist literature on global commodity/care chains on the other hand, this paper introduces the concept of *global fertility chains* to better understand the political economy of the fertility industry. This approach takes into account 1) the networked role of multiple actors and scales throughout the fertility chain, including 2) the constitutive role of the state in creating the demand, organising the supply and facilitating the creation and distribution of surplus value, 3) their highly technological nature, 4) their geographies of uneven development and distributed reproduction, and 5) their reliance on women’s waged and unwaged reproductive labours. This theoretical framework will be illustrated based on our respective empirical research on transnational surrogacy between Israel/Palestine and Georgia (Vertommen) and migrant, transnational egg provision in Spain (Nahman).

Mots-Clés: global fertility chains transnational surrogacy egg donation political economy social reproduction

*Intervenant