



## Call for papers

### **X AFIN International Conference: Reproductive Politics, Rights and Desires**

**2 - 4 November 2017  
Barcelona**

Over the last three decades, many European countries have experienced dramatic demographic changes. The main results are the shrinking family size and decreasing fertility rates (Balbo, Billari & Mills 2013) to non-replacement levels (Eurostat 2016), what Kohler et al. (2002) called *lowest-low fertility*, that is a fertility rate at 1.3 or below. “Never before have parents in most Western societies had their first children as late as in recent decades” (Mills et al. 2011:848). Southern and Eastern European countries like Spain, Italy and Poland have the lowest fertility rates in the world.

Spain’s demographic shift over the last two decades has been extreme. Between 1975 and 1995, the fertility rate in Spain went from being one of the highest in Europe (2.8 children per woman) to 1.14, significantly below the replacement rate, which has continued to date. This Spanish sharp fertility decrease could be interpreted as an expression of a waning desire to reproduce (Marre et al. 2017). However, Spain has one of the largest “child gaps” (the average difference between the desired and actual number of children [Bernardi 2005]) in the EU.

Diverse changes are contributing to it. New educational and job opportunities are increasingly available for women beyond motherhood and “new freedoms” (Gupta 2006) allow preventing unwanted pregnancies and births through the dissemination of effective contraceptives as well as through prenatal diagnosis and abortion. Nevertheless, this demographic shift is a consequence not only of new freedoms and opportunities, but also of reproductive disappointments resulting from gender inequalities in the labor market and poorly funded work-family conciliation policies. Parenting has become increasingly intensive and the availability of ARTs has transformed reproduction into an individual choice that people may envisage at older ages (Mascarenhas et al. 2012; Kupka et al. 2014; Inhorn & Patrizio 2015; Präg & Mills 2015).

The massive postponement of motherhood beyond early adulthood eventually produces age-related fertility problems. According to the World Health Organization, at the beginning of 2015 there were more than 80 million couples with fertility problems that used assisted reproductive technologies to become parents, followed by an increasing number of single and same-sex couples. Since the ‘80s, most Western European countries have modified their laws to legalise and include assisted reproductive treatments with donated material, surrogacy or otherwise socially reconstructed forms of parenthood like adoption or fosterage.





Debates on reproductive rights nowadays focus not only on contraception or abortion, as they did in the past, but also on the right to become parents via new reproductive technologies or adoption, as well as on the legal, procedural and social barriers that prevent individuals and couples from achieving their desired reproductive goals or accessing contraception and abortion. Legality, in fact, is crucial, but it is not always enough. Contraception and even more so abortion, for instance, are still not easily accessible everywhere, and abortion continues to be strongly stigmatized in the public debate, including in European countries where it has been legal for decades (De Zordo, Mishtal, Anton 2016). Similarly, not all reproductive technologies are legalized and easily accessible everywhere to everyone. Unequal access and gender and social inequalities trigger the individuals and couples' search for alternatives, including traveling to other countries.

In this call we seek papers that explore how reproductive politics and social practices are changing. We focus on multiple ways in which individuals and couples struggle to achieve their reproductive rights and desires within a heterogeneous, conflictive and sometimes paradoxical legal and political landscape.

The Conference will be organized in invited lectures and roundtable discussions with speakers and discussants invited by the convenors, as well as open sessions where participants will present and discuss their accepted papers.

To participate in the open sessions, please send an abstract of 200 to 300 words to [gr.afin@uab.cat](mailto:gr.afin@uab.cat) by 25 September 2017. At the top of the page please put the title, your name and contact details.

We have a limited number of registration fee waivers available for participants.

## Key References

- Balbo, N., F. C. Billari, M. Mills (2013). Fertility in advanced societies: a review of research. *European Journal of Population* 29(1):1-38.
- Bernardi, F. (2005). Public policies and low fertility: rationales for public intervention and a diagnosis for the Spanish case. *Journal of European Social Policy* 15(2):123–138.
- De Zordo S., Mishtal J., Anton L., Eds. (2016) *A Fragmented Landscape: Abortion Governance and Protest Logics in Europe*. Berghahn Books: Oxford and New York.
- Eurostat (2016). Fertility statistics. Eurostat Statistics Explained. [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Fertility\\_statistics](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Fertility_statistics)





- Inhorn, M. C. & Patrizio, P. (2015) 'Infertility around the globe: new thinking on gender, reproductive technologies and global movements in the 21<sup>st</sup> century', *Human Reproduction Update*, 21(4):411-426.
- Kohler, H. P., F. Billari, and J. A. Ortega (2002). The emergence of lowest-low fertility in Europe during the 1990s. *Population and Development Review* 28(4):641–680.
- Kupka, M. S. et al. (2014) 'Assisted reproductive technologies in Europe, 2010: results generated from European registers by ESHRE', *Human Reproduction* 29(10):2099-2113.
- Marre, D., San Román, B., Guerra, D. (2017). On reproductive work in Spain. Transnational adoption, egg donation, surrogacy. *Medical Anthropology*, 36(8), 10.1080/01459740.2017.1361947.
- Mascarenhas, M. et al. (2012) National, Regional, and Global Trends in Infertility Prevalence Since 1990: A systematic Analysis of 277 Health Survey, *PLOS Medicine*, 9(12):1-12.
- Mills, M., R. R Rindfuss, P. McDonald and E. te Velde on behalf of the ESHRE Reproduction and Society Task Force. (2011). Why do people postpone parenthood? Reasons and social policy incentives. *Human Reproduction Update* 17(6):848-60.
- Präg, P. & Mills, M. (2015) 'Assisted reproductive technology in Europe. Usage and regulation in the context of cross-border reproductive care', *Families and Societies Working Paper Series*, 43:1-23.

Diana Marre  
Associate Professor  
Anthropology Dept.  
AFIN-UAB

Silvia De Zordo,  
Ramón y Cajal Researcher  
Anthropology Dept  
GENI-UB

