



Reconfiguring conception and family through the use of assisted reproductive technologies challenging regulation and norms

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In the industrialized world, low fertility rates are currently changing the demographics. At the same time, there are women and men that do not become parents to the children they had hoped for.

In Denmark, the regulation regarding assisted reproductive technologies currently enables single women and couples access to subsidized treatment. This has led to a widespread use of assisted reproductive technologies. Today approximately 10 % of the children in Denmark born each year, have been conceived by use of either in vitro fertilization or insemination. Still, it is estimated that 1/3 of those women and couples going through fertility treatment, end up leaving treatment without the child or children they hoped for; to many this is caused by age related infertility.

In this talk, I will describe the situation in Europe, asking: How does conception and the making of families reconfigure today through the use of assisted reproductive technologies?

To answer this question, I draw on my ethnographic research on the use of assisted reproductive technologies and private sperm banking in predominately Denmark from 2002-2004 and 2012-2014. Over the years, I have made observations in five fertility and insemination clinics and two sperm banks. Moreover, I have carried out interviews with more than 50 women or couples regarding their treatment experiences, including women traveling from other predominately European countries to Denmark for treatment, and I have conducted interviews with more than 25 health professionals at clinics or sperm banks. Finally, I have analyzed regulative changes that take part in shaping possibilities for access to fertility treatment.

Since 2002 regulation and norms have changed radically around the world in relation to who and how women can have children. In Denmark as well as other European countries, the legislation has been liberalized, while in other countries the legislation has been constricted, making it harder for single women or lesbians to build families. In this talk, I will show how norms and possibilities to have children are undergoing changes in Europe, and could be otherwise, providing working women, single women, and same sex couples with better possibilities of starting a family while they also pursue their career.