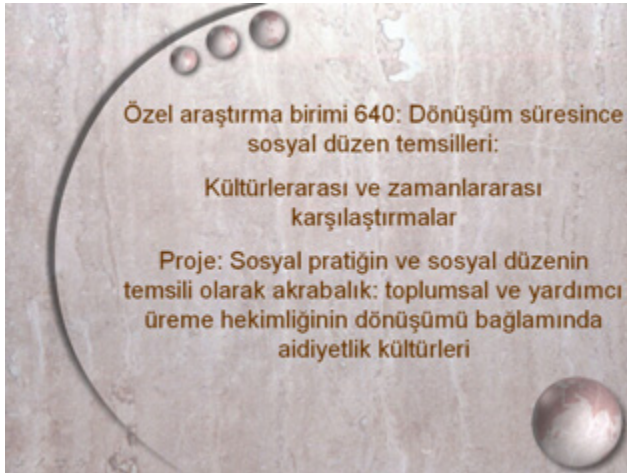


# Workshop Istanbul (April 2005)

Stefan Beck / Michi Knecht

## **Reproducing Kinship - Cultures of Relatedness in the Context of Technological and Social change.**

Project presentation

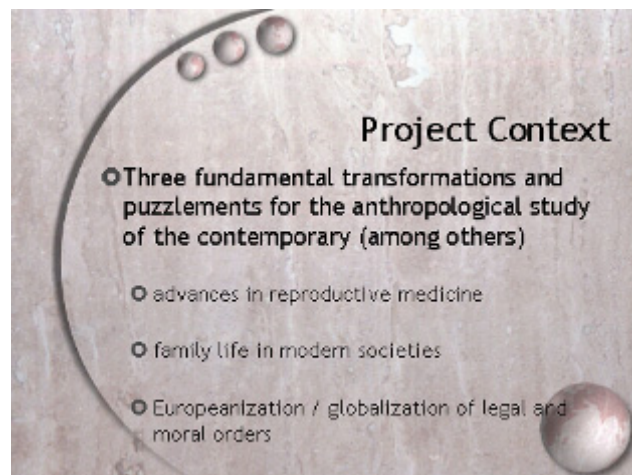


### **Intro**

In the following, we will give you a very brief outline of our basic ideas when we first discussed the project. We intended to conceptualize an empirical study in the cross-section of three major anthropological fields. These fields are

- First, one of the most traditional fields in international anthropology is the comparative study of kinship as a central device ordering the social field of all human groups. This field witnessed a remarkable resurrection in anthropology in the 1990s after many years that were characterized mainly by routine and not very exciting studies. This renewed interest was triggered by social transformations in kinship practices in many societies that rendered many tacit notions of relatedness and perceived connectedness problematic. I will come back to this point in a minute.
- The second field, in which we intended to locate our study, is constituted by anthropological studies looking into culturally bound medical practices, concepts of body and notions of health. This field of medical anthropology is a vibrant and dynamic field of academic interest mainly in Anglo-American countries; because of historical developments, however, in German universities this fertile field is a barren landscape that deserves – as we see it – urgent watering.
- And finally, the third field of study that has a powerful and enlightening potential for an understanding of issues like reproductive technologies are studies under the heading of “science and technology studies”.

But I will not go on and bore you with disciplinary politics and deliberations what might be promising research strategies in German academia. Instead, I will present you briefly with our leading assumptions that stake out the intellectual space of our research project that will be presented to you in detail by Asiye Kaya in the following.



We presume three central transformations in contemporary societies that provide intriguing puzzlements for anthropological studies as well as social science in general; these are

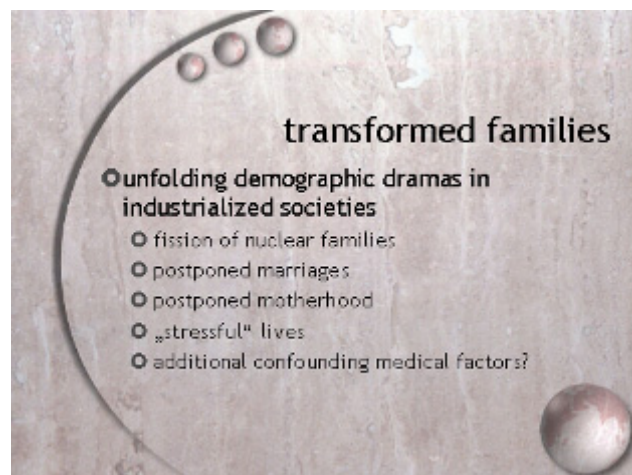
- Advances in reproductive medicine and generally a growing importance of scientific knowledge and interventions for everyday practices and vernacular understandings of lay people regarding body, health, etc.
- Dramatic transformations of family life in modern, not only industrialized societies, and
- What I will term the advent of an „Europeanization“ or „Globalization“ of legal and moral orders on an unprecedented scale.



Regarding the advances in medicine it is striking that the implementation of new procedures and knowledges can serve as a prime example of rapid globalization: in all countries where a sufficiently big number of solvent consumers exist, state of the art reproductive medicine is available – with a time lag of only a few years. However, in stark contrast to this rapid diffusion of techniques and well trained experts, knowledge and skills, there exists a remarkable diversity in what counts as socially, culturally acceptable intervention in reproductive processes. Just to give a few examples:

- egg and sperm donation
  - public or private biobanks are expanding in countries like the US or Great Britain while egg-donation is prohibited in Germany, however, sperm donation is a well funded practice in this country.
- Similarly, in the field of IVF (in-vitro fertilization)

- in the US infertility is mainly considered financially to be a „private problem“, while in Germany infertility was a „public-(ly funded)“ problem until recently. Today, it is a semi-private / semi-public affair: Public health care is only paying for two cycles of infertility treatment; all other cycles have to be paid for by the respective couple.
- ICSI (intra-cellular sperm donation) is available in most countries, however, it was recently questioned as a
  - routine intervention by the German bioethics committee.
- PID (pre-implantation diagnosis) was intensely discussed in the German parliament as well as in the many bioethics committees – with the result to ban pre-implantation diagnosis. Only in very restricted cases, namely because of indications of deadly genetic diseases will the procedure be permissible.
  - However, in countries that have to cope with high incidences of genetic disorders in their respective populations, this ethically rigorous position is not very likely to be followed. For example, in Cyprus as well as in many Asian countries, PID is advertised as a necessary, and ethically rather unproblematic procedure to fight against Thalassemia.



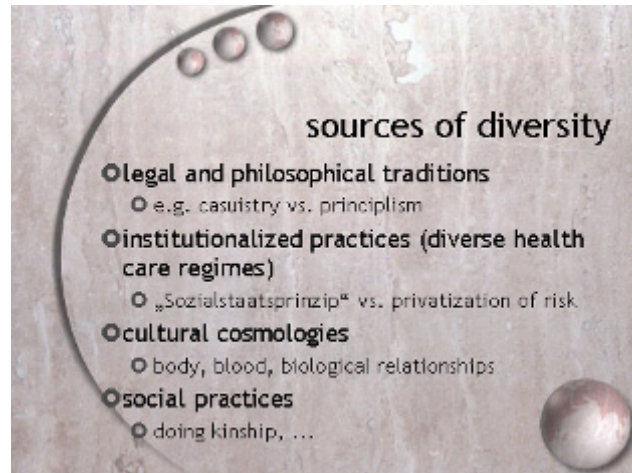
Regarding the transformations in the social organization of the family, we are regarding several developments as crucial that combine to produce what is discussed as the

- unfolding demographic drama in industrialized societies, namely
  - the *fission of nuclear families* – after the disappearance of the multi-generational family in the course of industrialization and modernization, the dramatically increasing numbers of separated marriages,
  - the dramatically postponed marriages followed by
  - postponed motherhood resulting in increased female infertility as well as
  - growing male and female infertility due to generally „stressful“ lives spell out what is considered the most dramatic demographic crisis in industrialized societies since the dramatic rise in population in the mid 19th century.
  - In addition, there is much discussion in the medical field about other, additional confounding medical factors that might explain what is discussed – e.g. in the German press – a big fertility crisis, endangering the very existence of the social order.



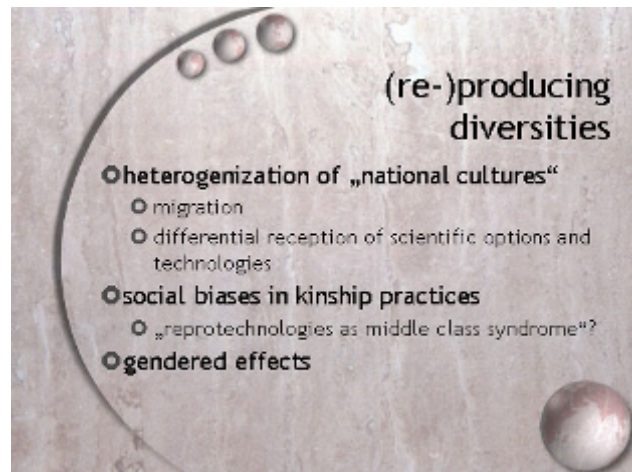
I already mentioned the German bioethics committee in the context of the ban of Pre-Implantation Diagnosis. What seems arresting to us is the phenomenon that the German debate about bioethics is – with a few exceptions – a national affair while – at the same time – the German government is preparing to sign the European bioethics agenda and discusses in the general assembly of the United Nations whether stem cell research should be permitted and under what preconditions. However, in the public domain – as well as in the academic discussions about bioethics – the emergence of a globalizing ethical regime is not sufficiently analyzed. This comes as a surprise since many questions that are open at the moment imply processes of globalization and transnationalism, e.g.:

- how to control globalized fertility services
- concerns about „fertility tourism“ and cross border offers for legally prohibited treatments
- „traffic in gametes“
- emerging „market“ for reproductive technologies
- increasingly international “investments” (TRIPPS treaty as a revolution for the service sector, also impacting in the health care domain)
- for transfers of knowledges and skills
- emerging European „ethical scape“, especially through the “Oviedo-Protocol”, that defines “basic human rights” in the domain of medicine and biological research
- However, in stark contrast to this new ethical regulation, highly diverse moral practices - regionally as well as nationally - exist in Europe.



Of course, there are many sources for the observable diversity in the reaction of different societies to the challenges posed by the transformations induced by reproductive medicine, demographic changes and globalized consumerism in the health care sector. Most prominent are different

- legal and philosophical traditions
  - e.g. Anglo-American casuistry vs. Kantian principlism
- institutionalized practices (diverse health care regimes)
  - „Sozialstaatsprinzip“ vs. privatization of risk
- cultural cosmologies
  - that is different concepts of body, notions of blood, and the importance of biological relationships
- Besides cultural factors, there are divergent social practices
  - like differences in doing kinship qua Adoption etc.



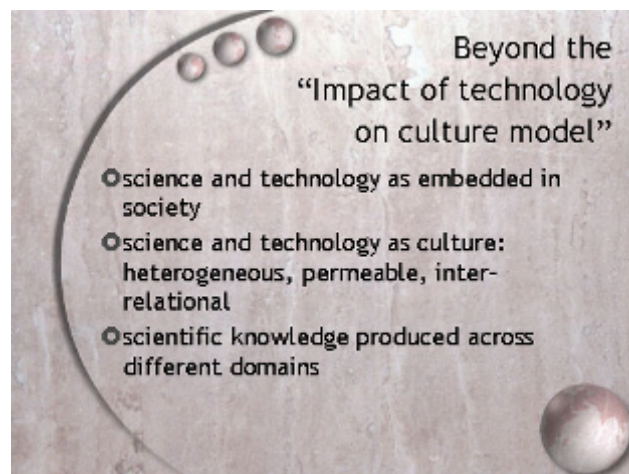
However, we think that it would be misleading to conceptualize recent transformations according to a simple model where innovations in “science and technology” impact on a static cultural and social system. Rather, the *internal*

- heterogenization of „national cultures“ is under way for decades (even if it is acknowledged only recently as in the case of Germany). It is triggered – among other factors – by processes like
  - migration, which confronts many societies with a growing number of aging migrants, a group of patients, the public health care system is not well prepared to respond to appropriately.
  - But of course, due to a social differentiation of societies, a growingly differential reception of scientific options and technologies is observable.
- Social and cultural biases in kinship practices are quite obvious, however, they are seldom well understood or even appreciated in contexts of reproductive technologies.
- „reprotechnologies as middle class syndrome“?
- gendered effects

## Theoretical and methodological perspectives

Our project presents a comparative ethnography based on case studies in Turkey and Germany. It attempts to shed light upon how kinship is produced and understood in two different domains, with regard to two different strategies: The production of kinship ties through the “assistance” and “application” of reproductive technologies (IVF, ICSI, egg and sperm donation) and the creation of kinship bonds through the practice of adoption. Both of these practices will be investigated through qualitative methods and complex, contextualized case studies in Germany and in Turkey. In what follows, we will say a few words on *how* we are approaching this work, how we situate and conceptualize our research:

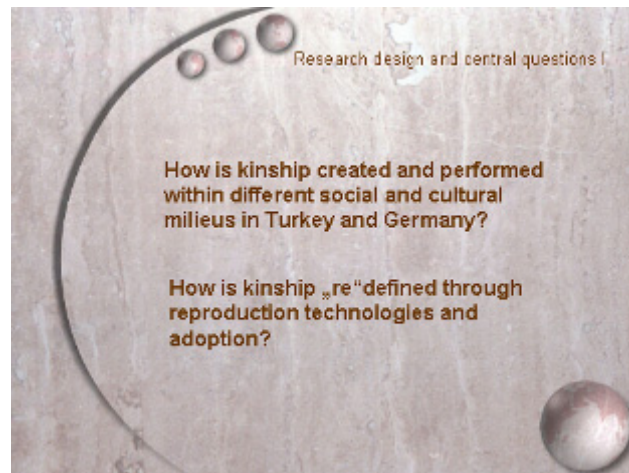
- How we conceptually understand and explore biomedical knowledge in gynecology, genetics and reproductive medicine and why we combine research on ARTs (Assisting Reproductive Technologies) with research on adoption.
- How we work with comparison in the framework of “multiple modernities”. Why and how do we compare at all, why, specifically, do we compare social practices and kinship networks in Turkey and Germany and how can comparison be done at all under the conditions of globalization, continuous knowledge transfers and growing transnational spaces.



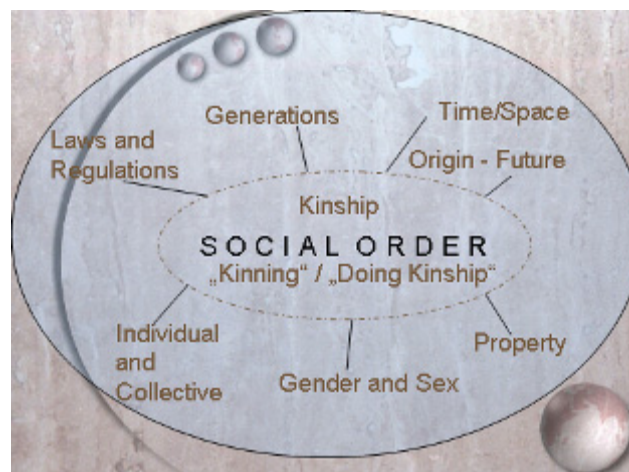
### Conceptualising New Reproductive Technologies (IVF, ICSI, Sperm-Donation, Egg-Donation)

- **Beyond the “Impact of technology on culture model”.** This Model is problematic, because it tends to conceive
  - Of biomedicine and new reproductive technologies as a field of its own, set apart from society, as a “solid entity behind citadel walls” (Emily Martin), as a “culture of no culture” (Sharon Traweek).
  - Of culture as something preconceived, given and static on which dynamically developing technology and biomedical knowledge “act”
- Instead, anthropological approaches to science and **technology as embedded in society and as culture** propose to study technology and biomedical knowledge
  - as something not developed “behind thick walls” but in continuous interaction with society

- as culture, not understood as homogeneous, bounded entity, but as heterogeneous, permeable, inter-relational. Not as a “noun” or a “state of affairs”, but a complex of processes.
- Focus on scientific knowledge as produced across a large array of different domains and transferred within and across socially and culturally diverse spaces. Borders between science – non-science as highly permeable



We are specifically interested in how IVF and related technologies are incorporated into understandings and structures of **kinship** and how, simultaneously, they might or might not change this understandings and structures. Kinship constitutes a social order that exists below or besides state social orders, and that is conceptualised both, as partly complementary and partly contrary to modernist forms of sociality of the nation-state. Kinship defines generations and identities, regulates and determines social belonging and exclusion, and structures ideas of origin and heritage, past, present and future. In this way kinship contributes decisively to the constitution of societal processes and their dynamics. In European and Western societies kinship is commonly understood as having a “biological-social twin nature”: as a natural fact that is socially and culturally shaped. This biosocial arrangement of kinship, regulated by substance (blood, genes) as well as code (diffuse, enduring solidarity), is being radically questioned at present, both by social transformations as well as by new options in reproductive medicine and genetic knowledge.

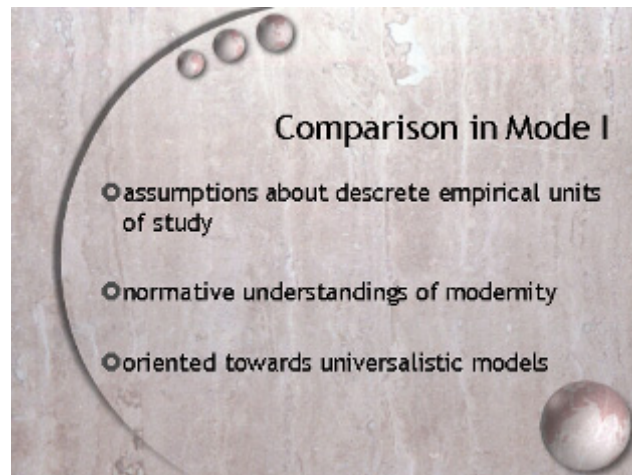


- Even before this background, our **parallel focus on NRTs/ARTs AND new (open) adoptive practices** might not be completely self-evident. However, at least from the German perspective, the binding together of these two strategies in a single research project makes sense along a number of lines:
  - It follows an empiric logic: it mirrors the experience and the two main options, couples / individuals face when confronting infertility and inability to “procreate naturally” (in different sequences)
  - It is sustained through a heuristic advantage: kinship, being connected tough kin, is widely experienced as something “given, not created”, nothing problematic or in need of explanation. People using and pursuing IVF and adoption, however, are (in Germany) **forced to clarify and explicate** their taken for granted assumptions about kinship, intimate notions of the person, sexuality, partnership, against the backdrop of contested public moral debates and in the context of international adoption “markets”.
  - Constitutes an important research desideratum: comparing socially and technologically induced transformations in their complex interrelations. So far, almost all research done is focused on technology OR adoption, on middle class, on the moment of deciding whether to use IFV or to adopt, and not on the social processes that follow these decisions. Virtually no long-term ethnography exists.

We are very interested in learning how Adoption and NRTs are seen or not seen as connected in Turkey, how their relatedness/non-relatedness is conceived.

Schematic Representation of Work-in-Progress I

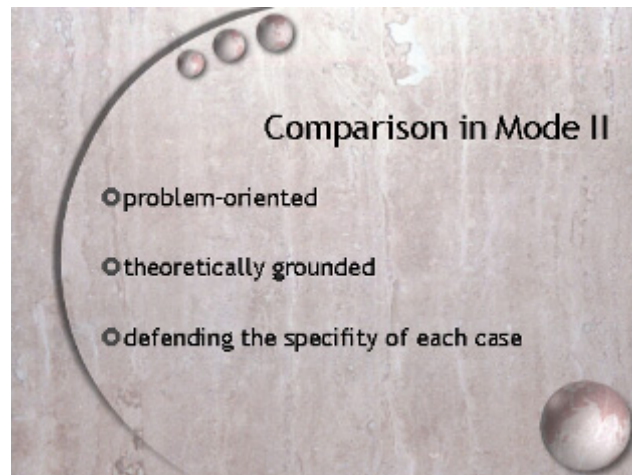
Phase Focus	I	II	III
Adoption	0 7 Interviews with experts – Contact with Couples/Families/Single persons Participant observation in self-help-groups, clinics or surrogates. Altogether: ethnographic/ethnographic Single-Interviews 00 Couples Throughout different phases of the process (Time) Within different everyday environments (Space) Start with evolution of the methodological approach for the discourse analyses	Choice of Couples/Families for the long term study Visits in regular rhythm On main connecting threads based interviews, protocols Goal: To grasp the dynamics of transformation 15 Couples Continuing work on methodological approach	Choice of the kinship networks for the longterm participant observation Ethnographies of family relations (i.e. baptisms, circumcisions, birthdays, marriages) Over several weeks participant observation of the family- and kin- everyday life, at different spaces that are touched by the family network Altogether 12-4 Kinship Networks Continuing work on methodological approach



### *Comparison in "Mode I"*

Globalization – and also Europeanization – have fostered a new urgency for comparative research into many fields. Our project tries to grasp the internally heterogeneous assemblages of knowledge orders and practices connected to the spread and appropriation of reproductive technologies and their accompanying knowledge forms. People in various social and cultural contexts engage themselves very differently with the new medical possibilities of reproduction and conception. But knowledge about the diversity and complexity of local articulations as well as about global “trends” and trajectories is crucial in assessing and understanding the cultures of reproductive technologies.

- However, anthropological comparison has come under critique for a plethora of reasons during the last decades. **Comparison in Mode I** is challenged for
  - It’s implicit assumption about seemingly given, discrete empirical units of study, such as “culture”
  - It’s coalition with normative understandings of modernity as a homogenous and western concept
  - It’s orientation towards universalistic model building, not taking into account the historicity of each case



### *Comparison in “Mode II”<sup>1</sup>*

- Instead of “comparing cultures” a new understanding opts for a “comparison of distant case studies” (Gingrich/Fox 2002), that acknowledges the relational nature of cultural processes and the increasing mobility of ideas, goods, and people in the sense of transfer. **“Comparison in Modus II”** as Marilyn Strathern calls this style of research is always simultaneously
  - Problem-oriented
  - Theoretically grounded
  - Not directed towards universal explanation, but defending the specificity of each case
  - Trying to understand “how different world areas refract the trends of so-called modernity in ways that do not exemplify either Western or Non-Western modernity”; focusing instead on contemporary experiences of alterity.<sup>2</sup>
- The overall goal of our project is, to explore the articulations between
  - Self-making (what constitutes a person, a newborn embryo, an adopted son, a frozen gamete, a “life” in Germany and Turkey?)
  - Ethical problematizations (what fuels debates? What organizes public and private considerations? How are objects, practices or technologies transformed into an “ethical problem” or an “ideal”?)
  - State-making (How are concepts of the person and moral dimensions embedded into the reproduction of Turkey, Germany, and/or Europe as political entities?)

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<sup>1</sup> Strathern, Marilyn (2002): Foreword: not giving the game away. In: Andre Gingrich and Richard G. Fox (Hg.) *Anthropology, by Comparison*. London and New York: xiii – xviii.

<sup>2</sup> Bruce M. Knauft 2002: *Critically Modern. Alternatives, Alterities, Anthropologies*. Bloomington: 1-54