

Abstract for:

STS Conference Graz 2015, "Critical Issues in Science, Technology and Society Studies"

Theme: Bodies, Health and Technology

Session 3: Emerging Configurations of Biomedical Technologies

May 11-12, 2015

Title: Assisted reproductive technologies on trial

Although assisted reproductive technologies (ART) are increasingly 'globalized', comparative STS studies have shown that the practices as well as values attached to them vary greatly among different nations.

The Austrian reproductive medicine act, which is currently changed, can be described as very restrictive but also as rather unique in terms of technologies permitted. It has been challenged in different practices, e.g. in reproductive tourism or the establishment of fertility clinics in neighbouring countries. Nonetheless, there was hardly any public debate or a change of law in the past 30 years. It was only due to legal disputes that ART became topic of modification. In order to better understand the work involved in enacting seemingly globalized practices and knowledges very differently in local contexts I analyse Austrian versions of (assisted) reproduction. This paper, which is based on empirical data gathered for my PhD project on the renegotiations of the Austrian regulation on ART, analyses two legal disputes at the European Courts of Human Rights and at the Constitutional Court of Austria. Both cases provide excellent examples to make visible how specific Austrian enactments of ART (e.g. differences drawn between natural and artificial modes of reproduction) are coproduced with rights and responsibilities of the state and its citizens as well as moral regimes to value and evaluate them. In my analysis I pay particular attention to the ways how the law is enacted as a context in which locally specific configurations of biomedical technologies can emerge.

Anna Pichelstorfer

Department of Science and Technology Studies

University of Vienna

Universitätsstrasse 7 (NIG)

1010 Vienna

Austria

E-Mail: anna.pichelstorfer@univie.ac.at

Tel: +43-1-4277-49610