## Thematic Section

# Kinship Travel: Relatedness through International Tourism and Travel Networks

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***Abstract:*** While genealogical, or roots tourism, in which people return to an ancestral homeland has been popular for some time, travel to create families is relatively new. These contemporary forms of what we are calling "kinship travel" are the central focus of this issue.

**Keywords:** kinship, tourism, fertility, adoption, reproductive technologies

The fundamental question we explore in this themed set of articles is: How are travel and kinship interrelated, given the association of kinship with domesticity and a resolutely stable "home," on the one hand, and of travel with leisure, detachment and "away-ness" on the other hand (Harrison 2003; Hui 2009)? Despite the apparent opposition between travel and kinship, travel is one among the many social, economic and cultural processes that contribute to the diverse ways in which kinship ties and family structures are being formed and sustained in the 21st century. Assisted reproductive technologies offered for cheap in non-western or developing western countries, such as India and the Czech Republic, in addition to new options abroad for transnational adoption, have expanded the possibilities for those who wish to have children, many of whom are in need of technological or legal assistance. Moreover, contemporary travel has expanded the array of reproductive choices and presents new opportunities for cross-border intimacy and non-assisted reproduction, that is, "natural" conception. These contemporary formations are contingent on the movement and mobility of children and adults across national borders in multiple and diverse ways that often entail extensive as well as recurring transnational travel. Material infrastructure of tourism is used, and in new formations of "kinship travel" the ideological underpinnings of tourism as a "journey," a "spiritual transformation" and a "quest" for tradition, authenticity and alterity are also mobilized (Badone and Roseman 2004; Graburn 1977; MacCannell 1989). In these ways we view international travel and its material and symbolic border-crossings as a contemporary means to produce offspring, multiple categories of progenitors, and relations of relatedness and family.

While genealogical or roots tourism, in which people return to an ancestral homeland, has been popular for some time and has been written about by anthropologists and other scholars, who have focused largely on flows of American tourists to the geographical region of

western Africa (e.g., Bruner 1996; Clarke 2006; Ebron 1999; Handley 2006), organized and commodified forms, systems and networks of travel for the intended purpose of creating families through reproduction (conception, surrogacy and adoption) are relatively new. These contemporary forms of what we are calling "kinship travel" are the central focus of this set of themed articles. Because these recent modes of kinship travel, since about the 1980s, are linked to historical forms of gendered colonial travel and the regulation of miscegenation—for instance, where European women were sent to colonies as brides for colonial men to reproduce the nation and avoid "interbreeding" among European groups—(e.g., Pierard 1971; Stoler 2002), we are compelled to consider the power dynamics of gender, sexuality and nation-building that are at the core of modern travel practices in late capitalism for the purposes of creating socially legitimate and legally recognized kin ties. While not every article explicitly examines the historicized routes and colonial underpinnings of contemporary kinship travel, these histories nonetheless are implicitly recognized and, in turn, contemporary power dynamics specific to localized kinship travel practices are closely examined.

In bringing together genealogical-making events and social relations that take place in disparate parts of the world—the Czech Republic, India, China and Costa Rica—through the common thread of "travel," as three cultural anthropologists and one sociologist we have produced ethnographic accounts from our respective long-term field sites that as a collective set of articles reveal several timely and important themes.

First, some forms of kinship travel are purposive and rationalized yet unregulated and unpredictable at the same time. Reproductive tourism and adoption tourism require highly organized routes of mobility across national borders to create categories of relatedness, such as "intending parents," "surrogate mothers," "adoptive parents," "biological" mothers and fathers, "donors," "bicultural" offspring, "adopted" sons and daughters, and various configurations of normative and non-normative families, which involve a multitude of brokers, agents and state officials. Therefore, these not only are a particularly rationalized (although sometimes unregulated) form of travel, but are also dependent on a globalization of markets for reproductive biological substances, babies and baby-making. Reproductive travel to the Czech Republic, for instance, initially relied on the presence of in vitro fertilization (IVF) brokers to bridge these journeys. Spaces of entrepreneurship are opened up, but relations of exploitation are also created within these new commoditized forms of kinship creation, for example, as gametes are priced at differential values according to national and ethnic-racial origin. Furthermore, the outcomes of the purposive kinship travel are never guaranteed because of the emotional dimensions to kin-making and to the relational aspect of being a tourist versus belonging. In China, for instance, although American parents may logically anticipate a homecoming for their adopted children from China on a return visit, how locals will receive the child, who is American by nationality, is partly an affective response that can be compelled but cannot be regulated.

Second, kinship travel creates new global ties as well as localized differences. North Americans who meet one another at Czech clinics or Chinese Social Welfare Institutes form bonds that may be sustained when they return to North America. At the same time, when children are conceived through assisted reproductive technologies or are adopted into transnational families, cultural legacies often inform or define new differences within families. White couples who adopt Chinese children and white Euro–North American women who have "souvenir babies" in Costa Rica are incorporating these differences. As they struggle to understand cultural differences between "us" and "them," they are simultaneously imagining and constructing cultural differences, which are ever so highly valued within a broadly cosmopolitan perspective shared by many of the western travellers in question (also see Volkman 2005). Another example is U.S. and Canadian couples undergoing IVF with donated gametes, whose new ties to Central Europe depend on simultaneous notions of cultural difference and similarity. Travel thus "bridges" and, at the same time, creates divides, borders or "friction" between racial, ethnic and national identities and groupings. Furthermore, local traditions concerning relatedness, such as endogamy or matrifocality, are impacted by travel mobilities and reproductive technologies, which may radically alter conventional definitions and formulations of family, maternity and paternity.

Through international travel, motherhood becomes a "global assemblage" (Ong and Collier 2005); drawing on post-structuralist ideas about the ways that, in the context of globalization and neoliberalism, institutions are formulated from multiple entities and determinations that are unstable, shifting and not reducible to a single logic. We suggest that motherhood has become such a product, as manifested in celebrities' claims to "global motherhood" and their positioning as "global" mothers via their humanitarian adoptions in African countries, for instance (see Shome 2011). Therefore, motherhood might be seen as a shifting, mobile site of new, often highly gendered contestations vis-à-vis the

local, when, for instance, the individual wrests power from communities to champion one culturally embedded notion of family and set of parental rights over another. The tussle over the bodily (breast milk and womb) versus the socio-legal ties (surrogacy contract) of a mother to a child between the Indian surrogates with the foreign genetic mothers, where the foreign women come out ahead to always be the ones to physically depart the country with the newborn baby, is a prime and poignant example. Challenges to normative heterosexual reproduction and the supremacy of "natural" conception (i.e., without use of technological or medical intervention), for instance, enabled by technologies of travel can be both progressive and conservative, allowing same-sex couples and single persons to create families, while at other times upholding romantic heterosexual monoracial monogamy. The articles in this issue explore the multifaceted disjunctures that occur when local notions and practices of kinship confront global organizations, couples and technologies.

Third, kinship travel extends beyond the episodic and relatively short-term events of conception, surrogacy and adoption. Diffuse emotional ties and experiences that are ephemeral but also remain long after the travel is completed underpin kinship travel. Many families formed through transnational adoption or assisted reproduction, or through transnational encounters and holiday romances, may also participate in heritage and roots travel as their children grow older. In turn, journeys of return to homelands reveal how new and old travel routes and practices have served to both sustain and create affective bonds. Another example of the expansive temporal reach of kinship travel can be seen in how affective bonds are sustained over time between Czech hosts and North American guests, when accommodations become a temporary "home" for tourists while they undergo therapy and subsequently longer-term affective and sometimes fictive kin are forged. Quite differently, entire communities along the Caribbean coast in Costa Rica are affected by transnational encounters that result in babies born to tourist mothers who eventually return to their homelands, while local men aspire to one day reconnect with their children abroad and the grandmothers of the transnational bicultural offspring feel a sense of loss. In the context of quests and journeys abroad for medically assisted conception, surrogate progenitors and adopted and bicultural children, tourists are thus more than "temporary strangers," which in tourism theory and the popular imagination is often the relationship designated to foreign visitors (Hui 2009); they become relatives to local residents, however contested or romanticized. In these examples, we aim to demonstrate how the analytical focus on kinship travel encourages the recognition of the affective underpinnings of tourism rather than merely the commercial, the liminal and the leisure aspects of such travel. In turn, these affective dimensions point to how overlapping categories of travel, such as tourist, medical patient or visiting relative, and different modes of movement, such as leisure, reproductive technology and returnee travel, are becoming increasingly blurred as "the numbers and varieties of travelers traversing the global expands" (Amit 2007:7). In addition, these diverse types of journeys leave traces and legacies of a sentimentalized "home" in fertility clinics, adoption centres and local households around the world, as prospective parents and family often work to return with a meaningful understanding and bond with the country to which they travelled or, conversely, seek to sever emotional ties all too quickly in the eyes of local social actors, such as surrogate mothers in India and their children and spouses—again pointing to the temporalities of kinship travel.

Finally, kinship travel affects relatedness in sites of both "destination" and "origin." As transformative a process as tourism can be and is often claimed to be for tourists, as Edward Bruner (1991) stated some years ago, it is also the case that the hosts and "natives" are the ones most often changed by the presence of tourists. Thus, as we have already hinted at above, the scope of reach of the affective consequences of kinship travel, the social impacts of tourism on local communities with regard to legacies of "souvenir babies" and children born out of temporary relations with tourists, is becoming increasingly apparent as more and more places in the world become sites for sexual tourism and transnational intimacies (Constable 2009). In the surrogacy hostels in urban centres in India, where Indian women live to be monitored for the duration of their pregnancies, their spouses and children are not unaffected as they make sacrifices to benefit from "gifts" bestowed by the intending parents. Thus, the surrogacy tourists hold the power to shape the lives of Indian families, not just the woman offering her uterus, and, by extension, to influence the social organization of communities where surrogacy clinics, hostels for the surrogate mothers and other infrastructures have been established (Pande 2010).

Drawing on ethnographic examples from four different locales in different regions of the world, including Central America, Central Europe, South Asia and Asia, this set of articles contributes innovative, fresh insights to an emergent body of scholarship concerned with how processes of travel shape the ways in which kin ties are forged and how kinship shapes the ways in which travel

is practised and takes on new meanings (e.g., Bergmann 2011; Inhorn and Patrizio 2009; Martin 2009; Yngvesson 2003). A brief summary of each of the articles further engages with the themes we have only sketched out here and, in the "Concluding Remarks," Yasmine Ergas provides provocative ideas and analytical concepts for further exploration of this new trajectory of research and scholarship in anthropology.

Amy Speier's article "Czech Hosts Creating a 'Real Home Away from Home' for North American Fertility Travellers," is somewhat akin to Pande's focus on kin labour. Speier utilizes the term *intimate labour* (Boris and Parreñas 2010:1) to frame the intersection of economic transactions and intimate bonds between North American reproductive tourists and Czech hosts. IVF brokers, Czech doctors and hosts engage in intimate labour with North American patients to minimize the economic nature of reproductive travel. This article considers the "home" that is created for North Americans while they are staying in one Moravian *penzion* (bed and breakfast) that has successfully attracted the most business, as testimonials praise its excellent hospitality. The multifaceted relationships between IVF coordinators, North Americans and Czech hosts are viewed through the lens of kinship tourism. As in the case of intended parents who engage in transnational adoption in China, North Americans undergoing IVF in the Czech Republic may form strong affective ties with one another, which constitute new forms of social kinship.

In "Tracing the Red Thread: Chinese–U.S. Transnational Adoption and the Legacies of 'Home,'" Frayda Cohen touches on the four themes described above. The global routes to transnational adoption in China are well travelled and highly constructed, relying on traditional tourism infrastructures. Yet, in addition, newer organizations, such as adoption travel agencies as well as charitable NGOs that are creating "heritage tours," have entered the scene. On such heritage tours, parents of adopted Chinese girls purchase traditional souvenirs, such as stuffed pandas and mandarin jackets that, in turn, become commoditized mementos of Chinese ethnic identity.

Cohen reveals the liminal position of adoptees, who are just recently beginning to embark on heritage tours with their families, often begrudgingly. We may consider these Chinese American girls "bridges" to China, who are welcomed with open arms by the Social Welfare Institutes where they spent the first years of their lives before being adopted. Yet, just as they are a bridge, they are also divided, separated, in terms of their relative wealth and ease of travel, from other Chinese girls who have yet to be adopted. Heritage tours are presented as a way for Chinese adoptees to sustain their Chinese ethnic and cultural roots, yet Cohen witnesses dissonance within these global ties. Globalization has expanded conceptions of "family," and families with children from China discursively employ global transnational networks that encourage enduring relationships between adoptive families and China as "home." These families are essential in maintaining this legacy for the largely female adoptees and are increasingly returning "home" for heritage tours, humanitarian projects and birth-parent searches. Marketed as a "time of excitement, wonder, and unpredictable experiences" where "everything is interesting" and your "cherished" child awaits (AdoptShoppe.com n.d.), adoption tourism illustrates the ways in which contemporary notions of kinship are linked to forms of travel in which boundaries between tourism, leisure and social projects are increasingly blurred.[1]

Amrita Pande's article "Blood, Sweat and Dummy Tummies: Kin Labour and Transnational Surrogacy in India" focuses on surrogates in India and prospective parents' efforts to create and sustain relationships. The travel of these parents from the global north to access the global south reflects traditional routes of mobility within a global tourism market. By engaging in "kin labour," the actors involved in transnational surrogacy, the "buyers" and "sellers," are creating global ties with one another. In this ethnography of transnational contractual surrogacy in a small clinic in India, Pande analyzes the kin labour done by the Indian surrogates and the (often international) intended mother to downplay certain anxieties about commodified transactions. Kin labour includes not just the labour of forging ties with the baby but also other kinds of work (forming ties of sisterhood, sending gifts, writing letters) undertaken by surrogates and the intended mothers. At one level, the kin labour performed by the surrogates and the intended mothers sustains relationships beyond contracts and across borders of race, class and nationality. Moreover, the powerfully forged ties between the surrogate and the baby challenge the notion of kinship ties as "natural" and passed on by male blood. At another level, there is inherent poignancy in this form of labour, as it ultimately reifies structural inequalities based on race, class and gender. Kin labour reflects the dual nature of global ties and localized differences that occur in global kinship tourism encounters.

Susan Frohlick examines cases of Euro-American women who bear children out of transnational liaisons with local Costa Rican men in her article "'Souvenir

Babies' and Abandoned Homes: Tracking the Reproductive Forces of Tourism." Frohlick traces female reproductive mobilities, as Euro-American females traverse well-worn travellers' routes from the global north to the global south, similar to the routes European women travelled as colonial brides. Frohlick frames the supply and demand of cross-border intimacies between Euro-American women and local men within an international tourism framework, offering a critique of the economic privilege and mobility by which maternity, affective bonds and citizenship are "bought" in tourist economies. She further examines how these practices are subsequently transforming local kin relations. In Caribbean Costa Rica, *souvenir babies* is an idiom that speaks to the apparent commodification of the most treasured and non-pecuniary of consanguineal kin relations through tourism. Frohlick also examines the ways local Costa Rican cultural norms and social processes influence these reproductive practices, which give rise to new forms of stratified reproduction. Ultimately, reproductive mobility is an artifact of unequal privilege and thereby manifests multiple contestations between local and foreign social actors and creates physical spaces in the form of permanent dwellings that remind residents of the absence of children who have left with their foreign mothers to live in the mothers' home countries.

The four articles in this special issue each address global mobilities of Euro-American reproductive, adoptive or intending-parent tourists traversing typical travel routes from north to south, as they head to China, the Czech Republic, India and Costa Rica to build new transnational forms of kinship. At times, these new families challenge traditional notions of kinship, as North Americans emphasize their daughters' Chinese ethnic heritage by engaging in charitable or heritage tourism in China years after their first transnational adoption, and as North Americans take advantage of lower price structures by travelling for anonymous Czech gametes or Indian surrogates. At the same time, these new families often reassert traditional notions of kinship, as Euro-American women engage in cross-border intimacies with Costa Rican men to reproduce "naturally," and as only heterosexual white couples from North America seek to produce a child that resembles them, thus evading the experiences of ethnic difference cherished by those who adopt from China. Thus, we witness the intersections of local differences with new global ties among disparate groups engaged in various forms of kinship travel that include but cannot be reduced to tourism. Global routes and travel networks—a blurring of leisure, labour and migration mobilities—both open up and complicate the ways human reproduction occurs and the ways families and kin networks are made and understood.

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## Notes

1 AdoptShoppe.com is a website that sells adoption-related supplies. The language used illustrates the ways in which travel is promoted within the adoption community.

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