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Don't Look at Us, Look with Us! A Discussion about Multisituated Perceptions on Surrogacy

Abstract: This paper asks if ethnographic inquiries about surrogacy, the practice in which a woman carries a child for someone else, can be feminist and decolonial in their ethos? It asks this question in the light of the vexed histories of ethnography as a discipline that seeks to know the 'Other' and discusses research strategies that ethnographers who study surrogacy developed to overcome ethnography's colonial and masculinist historical inheritances. In doing so, the paper examines the concept of multisituated ethnography introduced by Kaushik Sunder Rajan. It discusses selected ethnographic studies about surrogacy that chart ways toward a feminist and decolonial ethos. The paper aims to locate different strategies of knowing and representing surrogacy that maintain the Other's subjectivity and train the imagination to envisage the possibility of acting collectively with the Other.

Keywords: surrogacy, labor, Spivak, multisituated ethnography, multi-sited ethnography

Schau nicht auf uns, schau mit uns! Eine Diskussion zu multisituierten Perspektiven auf Leihmutterschaft

Zusammenfassung: Dieser Beitrag fragt, ob ethnografische Untersuchungen zur Leihmutterschaft in ihrem Ethos feministisch und dekolonial sein können. Er stellt diese Frage angesichts der umstrittenen Geschichte der Ethnografie als Disziplin, die versucht, das ‚Andere' zu kennen, und erörtert Forschungsstrategien, die Ethnograf*innen entwickelt haben, um diesen kolonialen und maskulinistischen Blick abzulegen. Für diesen Zweck widmet sich der Beitrag der von Kaushik Sunder Rajan vorgestellten Idee der multisituierten Ethnografie und benutzt dieses Konzept, um ethnografische Forschungsstrategien im Hinblick auf ihren feministischen und dekolonialen Ethos zu beleuchten. Das Ziel des vorliegenden Artikels ist es, anhand der Idee von multisituierter Ethnografie verschiedene Forschungsstrategien zum Untersuchungsgegenstand der Leihmutterschaft ausfindig zu machen, die nicht nur die Subjektivität der ‚Anderen' aufrechterhalten, sondern auch die Vorstellungskraft schulen, kollektiv mit ‚Anderen' zu handeln.

Schlagwörter: Leihmutterschaft, Arbeit, Spivak, multisituierte Ethnografie, multi-sited ethnography

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1. Introduction

Surrogacy has grown into a multibillion-euro industry over the past few decades. Thousands of online sites are dedicated to promoting surrogacy agencies and clinics that organize and offer surrogacy services for anyone who wishes to have a child and can afford the expense (Yakuppur 2022: 75). Despite its great success, surrogacy is not welcomed by everyone. For many, the idea that a woman becomes pregnant for someone else raises disaffection and concerns about her motivation and the broader societal forces behind it. Many critics fear that poor women might serve as surrogates to enhance their financial situation and regret this decision afterward. Others criticize that surrogacy treats children like commodities and threatens their dignity. Respective concerns led legislators across the globe to outlaw surrogacy. Countries in which surrogacy is currently illegal include China, Pakistan, and Turkey, as well as most countries in Western Europe and a few states in the United States.[1] While prohibitions in these countries are typically justified by the need to protect women and children, they also triggered the development of a thriving fertility industry to countries with no or permissive regulations. Today, popular destinations for surrogacy are countries like Ukraine, Georgia, Cyprus, and certain states in the United States.

Due to its controversial ethics and politics, global migration for surrogacy services has become a popular topic for ethnographic research to investigate. However, engaging in ethnographic research about surrogacy poses similar problems like research about sex work or the selling of organs and bodily tissues and other phenomena of disembodiment and marginalization:[2] Those who write about surrogacy are usually not serving as surrogates and often find themselves in a financially more privileged position than women performing this labor. This implies that writing about surrogacy is always a form of writing about the Other and comes with a risk of violence in representing the Other. This Other, the surrogate, is in a vulnerable position, as she risks being represented by the ethnographer in ways she cannot anticipate and usually cannot influence. If we further take into account that much of the writing about surrogacy is produced from the West while large parts of the practice take place in the East or South the critical question in studying surrogacy becomes how to avoid what Chandra Talpade Mohanty has called discursive colonialism – the idea that Western feminist analyses may have distorting and destructive effects on the lives of women in the Global South whom they are meant to represent (1988: 62). In addition, the question of class becomes crucial in surrogacy as the pool of people who act as surrogates and the pool of people who use surrogacy to start a family is not only highly stratified in terms of sex and race, but also wealth.

Feminist and postcolonial studies have been at the forefront of reflecting on the politics, risks, and importance of writing about *otherness*, *marginalization*, and *subalternity* (e.g. Spivak 1988; 1999). One of the most recent reflections on the ethos of ethnographic studies that engage with phenomena of disembodiment and marginalization was provided by Kaushik Sunder Rajan in his book "Multisituated: Ethnography as Diasporic Praxis" (2021). The present article discusses the decolonial and feminist ethos of recent ethnographic engagements

with surrogacy through the idea of multisituated ethnography. In so doing, I do not seek to provide a comprehensive review of ethnographic writing on surrogacy but discuss recent examples in which I see the idea of multisituatedness at work. In what follows, I will first discuss Sunder Rajan's idea of multisituated ethnography and focus on his discussion about how different ways of scaling and comparison can help ethnographers to engage in feminist and decolonial representations. I will then discuss selected ethnographic studies on surrogacy in which I see a multisituated ethos at work and conclude with a reflection on surrogacy as a promising realm for the expansion and further development of multisituated ethnography.

Multisituated Ethnography

In his book "Multisituated" (2021) Sunder Rajan assesses the potential of feminist and decolonial ethnographic practice. He assesses this potential against the background of anthropology's deeply colonial and phallogocentric history and the enduring presence of epistemic modalities of objectification and appropriation in ethnographic practice. Even though anthropologists have explicitly disavowed their discipline's colonial and phallocentric heritage over the past decades through intense investments in theory, ethnographic practices for garnering knowledge are, according to Sunder Rajan, still based on the epistemic objectification of the native informant, which lies at the heart of colonial reason (ibid.: 2, 175).

The answer to the question that Sunder Rajan poses – "is a feminist and decolonial ethnographic practice possible?" is *yes, it is*, but only if multisituated in its ethos. With the notion 'multisituated' Sunder Rajan means an appreciation of knowledge as being 'situated', an idea initially introduced by Donna Haraway (Haraway 1988 as cited in Sunder Rajan 2021: 8). Thinking of knowledge as situated rejects the idea and ideal of objectivity as a view from 'nowhere'; what is needed is a critical stance towards the hegemony of disembodied Cartesian rationality that seeks to objectify the world it desires to know in possessive ways (ibid.: 8). Sunder Rajan's idea and ideal of ethnography is further influenced by the idea of 'multi-sited ethnography'. This concept was initially introduced by George Marcus, and Sunder Rajan interprets it using Anthropology as Cultural Critique (ACC) by George Marcus and Mike Fischer (Marcus/Fischer 1986).

In ACC, Marcus and Fischer propose that ethnographers should not take the people affected by political economic forces as their subject of study, but rather the "system itself", meaning "the political and economic processes spanning different locales or even different continents" (1986: 91). As Fischer and Marcus go on to explain: "Ethnographically, these processes are registered in the activities of dispersed groups of individuals whose actions have mutual, often unintended, consequences for each other as they are connected by markets and other major institutions that make the world a system" (ibid.: 91). By recommending researchers to study 'the system' with the help of ethnographic methods, ACC promoted what was even more explicitly expressed in the title of Marcus's

seminal paper "Ethnography in/of the World System" (Marcus 1995). With the expression *in/of*, Marcus made clear that ethnographers who place themselves inside the world are likewise able to contribute to a theorization *of* the world's systems and structures (ibid.).

Today, Marcus's essay on multi-sited ethnography is often understood as suggesting that ethnographers must be mobile and engage in fieldwork at various places or/and within various communities. When asked how to study the 'system itself', Sunder Rajan admits that thinking ethnography as being about circulation can help researchers to scale out of experience-proximity and make structural and systematic claims. However, he insists that this is not the only method of scaling. Sunder Rajan understands multisituated sensitivity above all as being created through careful consideration of the relationship between the stuff one wishes to describe and the stuff one wishes to conceptualize (2021: 59). He identifies different ways in which ethnographers during the past two decades have straddled the gap between experience-proximity and the broader societal structures and systems through ways of doing research that transcend circulation as sole method of scaling. In the following, I will discuss these ways of straddling by looking at different ways of scaling and comparisons alongside selected ethnographies on surrogacy.

2. Ethnographic Accounts of Surrogate's Lives

A large part of ethnographic writing about surrogacy looks closely at the living and working conditions of surrogates, and can therefore be understood as "ethnographies of personhood" (Sunder Rajan 2021). Ethnographies of personhood who engage with feminist and postcolonial literature typically follow what Sunder Rajan has summarized with the provocation "Don't look at us, look with us" (2022). If misunderstood, one might read this as suggesting that we should ask how surrogates make sense of surrogacy and write down their words. But simply writing down the surrogate's words does not suffice, if the aim is to write about surrogacy in a responsible manner. In her seminal essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?", Gayatri Spivak discusses the epistemic and political problem with ethnographic studies that try to 'give voice' to the Other and explains her conviction that the researcher's reading of the Other's words should not be represented as the Other's *voice* (Spivak 1988). Spivak makes this point by introducing the story of Bhuvaneswari Bhaduri, a middle-class woman who committed suicide in North Kolkata (formerly Calcutta) in 1926. Bhuvaneswari was a member of a military group that was involved in armed struggle for Indian independence and had been entrusted with political assassination. Unable to face the task, while at the same time feeling strongly committed to her resistance group and the idea of independence, Bhuvaneswari hanged herself. She timed her suicide to coincide with her menstruation to ensure that it would not be misinterpreted as an act prompted by illicit pregnancy. While her suicide took place in direct response to colonial power, British emperors as well as her own family members framed her self-inflicted death as the result of a clandestine love affair. The

story of Bhuvaneswari is about a woman who, in trying to speak, even picked a specific moment for her own death, and yet remained unheard. In evoking the story of Bhuvaneswari, Spivak does not deny the subaltern's ontological ability to speak, but questions the ethnographer's ability to listen. She claims that the way ethnographers hear the subaltern's voice is always framed within epistemological schemas that are connected to the researcher's values and interests. The invocation of the subaltern as a speaking subject, even while that very subjectivity is created within conditions of power and hegemony, can, according to Spivak, become an act of epistemic violence and should therefore be avoided.

How one can write an account of the Other without 'giving voice' or being objectifying? In answer to this question, Sunder Rajan suggests situating the individual in relation to the institutional (2021: 40). The ethnographies of personhood Sunder Rajan thinks with are studies provided by João Biehl's "Vita" (Biehl/Eskerod 2005), Angela Garcia's "The Pastoral Clinic" (Garcia 2010) and Jonny Steinberg's "A Man of Good Hope" (Steinberg 2015). All these ethnographies follow people in difficult situations: Garcia discusses a woman struggling with heroin addiction who seeks rehabilitation. Steinberg follows a Somali refugee who goes to South Africa and then to the U.S., and Biehl's writing is about a woman who is diagnosed with a mental illness and institutionalized in a 'zone of abandonment' in Brazil, where the extremely sick, poverty-stricken, and ill are left to die. What makes these studies multisituated for Sunder Rajan is their focus on subjects whose lives and desire for life exceed the institutional, as becomes apparent throughout each of the ethnographies. Alma, the heroin addict, searches for relief through spiritual experiences and joins the evangelical church. Asad, the Somali refugee who has been forced to flee his country, chooses to continue migrating and follow his dream of moving to the U.S., even at moments which confirm that the institutional framework that was set up to help refugees would have expected him to stay. And Catarina, the protagonist in Biehl's ethnography, continues to move, ride a bicycle, and write a diary while the institutional frame that surrounds her is there to keep her still and render her words meaningless. In all these three ethnographies, the protagonist's resistance to submitting to institutional repression does not only highlight the violence of the institutional, but also provides the conditions to make the dialogic possible. This dialogic element arises from the protagonist's agency – the things they draw strength from and that enable them to understand their lives in ways that go beyond mere survival. It is this dialogic element that Sunder Rajan considers as multisituated; it allows us to train the imagination to envisage acting collectively with the Other (2021: 39, 44-45).

An ethnography of surrogacy that incorporates this idea of multisituatedness has been provided by Amrita Pande. Pande provides an inspiring example of an ethnographic study about surrogacy in India that, going beyond moral adjudication and attempts at *giving voice*, moves towards a focus on women's agency.[3] Pande visited fertility clinics and remained in contact with surrogates over many months and sometimes years. She noted that surrogates often present themselves as altruistic and describe their motivation to carry a child for someone else as purportedly not of a financial nature, but rather due to their wish to help

others (Pande 2014). If Pande had attempted to simply *give voice* to these women, she would have described them as altruistic and loving, without discussing the part played by economic dimensions of surrogacy and power-relations. However, she chooses not merely to *give voice* but to focus on agency. Wondering why so many surrogates downplayed the contractual and monetary aspects of surrogacy, Pande's attention was drawn to the stigma that is attached to surrogacy and the way this affects surrogates' ability to defend their rights and interests. Like other forms of intimate labor that transgress the boundaries between the private and the public, including sex work or selling a kidney, serving as a surrogate is often considered to be physically and morally degrading. This becomes evident, for instance, in the fact that many of the surrogates Pande talked to choose not to inform friends and family members about their work. As Pande pointed out, their self-perception, not as laborer but as someone who helps others, allowed surrogates to demarcate themselves from sex workers and cast off the stigma attached to surrogacy (ibid.: 56-57). Having studied surrogacy in India for many years, Pande also observed how surrogacy underwent a process of destigmatization, which led to changes in surrogates' self-perception and agency. Increasing media coverage of surrogacy in India helped to create greater public acceptance of the practice. In the light of this development, surrogates began to demand higher payments and better working conditions from their employers and greater support from their family members (ibid.: 11, 34).

Pande's decision to analyze surrogacy in terms of labor might seem to be a violent act at first sight, given that many of the surrogates she talked to did not consider themselves as laborers. Yet on closer inspection, it testifies to Pande's epistemic openness and sensitivity towards her informants, allowing her to shed light on surrogates' agency. Pande's methodological move to discuss surrogacy in terms of labor should not, however, be confused with a liberal position or an ignorance of the power dynamics shaping this practice. As Pande elucidates:

> I do not ignore the multiple bases of inequality in this form of labor. It cannot be denied that the limited range of a surrogate's alternative economic opportunities and the unequal power relations between the client and the surrogate call into question the voluntary nature of this labor. But instead of dismissing the labor market as inherently oppressive and the women involved as subjects of this oppressive structure, there is a need to recognize, validate, and systematically evaluate the choices that women make in order to participate in that market. (Pande 2014: 30)

Knowledge about the agency of women who serve as surrogates – where their agency comes from and how it develops – can indeed serve as valuable resource to design and conduct individual and political interventions that benefit surrogates. This appears particularly important, given that many of the institutional settings that surrogates face seem to hinder rather than support their agency.

While Pande provides a particularly intriguing example of a multisituated study of surrogacy, many other ethnographers have also identified the importance of the perception of surrogacy as a form of labor and the questions of agen-

cy that this perception entails. An example of a study of personhood in the U.S. context is provided by Heather Jacobson's book "Labor of Love: Gestational Surrogacy and the Work of Making Babies" (Jacobson 2016). In her book, Jacobson investigates how surrogates as well as their family members, intended parents and surrogacy professionals in Texas and California experience their engagement in surrogacy. Jacobson's study shows great sensitivity with respect to the question how to relate to surrogates' and other actors' narratives in a way that remains accountable to their words, but is not reduced to them alone. Placing the perception of surrogacy as a form of labor at the center of her analysis, she highlights the myriad tactics used to obfuscate surrogates' labor and how these tactics serve the profitable market of surrogacy.

In addition to Pande and Jacobson's research, there have been a spate of studies in recent years in which the perception of surrogacy as a form of ambiguous labor and the questions of agency that come with this ambiguity, as well as the technologized aspects of surrogacy, are central. Many such investigations have been conducted in India: Sharmila Rudrappa has studied surrogacy by thinking with and through the question of gendered justice (Rudrappa 2018; 2021), and Anindita Majumdar has demonstrated how women's agency can be snatched away through the process of segregating their body parts and different reproductive capacities into isolated 'oocytes' or 'wombs' (Majumdar 2021). Other multisituated studies look at surrogacy in Russia, where Christina Weis draws attention to the fact that women from rural areas migrate to metropolises in order to become surrogate workers. She asks what this migration implies for these women's lives and agency (Weis 2021). Having engaged in extensive fieldwork with various actors in the Mexican surrogacy industry, April Hovav shows how the dichotomous conceptualization of surrogacy as either 'altruistic' or 'commercial' hinders surrogates' agency, perpetuating the power asymmetries between surrogate mothers and intended parents that are rooted in gender, race, wealth, and nationality (Hovav 2019). Another recent example of an ethnographic investigation that casts light on surrogates' agency is provided by Teman and Zsuzsa Berend's examination of surrogates' views on centralized governmental control and the standardization of the surrogacy process in the U.S. and Israel. Their study offers insights into the various ways in which surrogates themselves assess the role of governmental regulations in supporting their agency and realm of action (Teman/Berend 2022).

The list of valuable ethnographies that allow us to learn about surrogates' agency could go on for several pages more. What they all have in common is their potential to become meaningful from the standpoint of the surrogates, as they provide useful hints on how their agency can be fostered and extended.

3. Following an Ethnographic Object

In addition to the focus on agency, Sunder Rajan identifies another research strategy for multisituated ethnography. This second strategy is employed by ethnographers seeking to study complex political and economic structures and systems and implies working with an "ethnographic object" (Sunder Rajan 2021: 49ff.). An ethnographic object is something researchers trace empirically in their search for answers to their overarching research question. Examples of ethnographic objects that researchers studying surrogacy have investigated include parenthood, kinship, race, or the governance of labor (Thompson 2007; Twine 2012; Deomampo 2016; Cooper/Waldby 2014). Such ethnographic objects are material and abstract at the same time and can help researchers to analyze complex political, social, or economic structures and systems. They are often enmeshed and span various scales and might incorporate multiple layers, identities, iterations, lives, and other dimensions that are key to the researcher's focus. If carefully chosen, these ethnographic objects speak to the very stuff in the world that researchers are looking at, while hitching together the different concepts and ideas researchers are grappling with in their research. In other words, ethnographic objects represent the study's ethnographic focus and help to conceptually connect together all of the elements of the research topic (Peterson 2014 as cited in Sunder Rajan 2021: 197).

There are different ways to conceptualize and employ the idea of research objects. Many of the ethnographies that have been cited as showing surrogates' agency also work with ethnographic objects. Elly Teman, for instance, has already introduced various ethnographic objects for the study of surrogacy. In her book "Birthing a Mother" Teman looks at surrogacy in Israel in order to investigate motherhood as an ethnographic object. This allows her to look at complex sets of power relations as well as the way motherhood is negotiated in relation to Jewish religion and Israel's national identity (Teman 2010). An inspiring example of research into surrogacy using an ethnographic object is provided by Daisy Deomampo in her book "Transnational Reproduction: Race, Kinship and Commercial surrogacy in India" (Deomampo 2016). In this study, Deomampo traces the ideologies of race and kinship that have enabled and fostered transnational surrogacy in India. Her research is based on ethnographic fieldwork in Mumbai and other cities in India prior to the Indian government's ban on transnational surrogacy in 2015. Race and kinship in her study serve as ethnographic objects and allow her to bring together the various ways in which actors in transnational surrogacy participate in structures of inequality (ibid.).

4. Comparing Otherwise

In his discussion on multisituatedness, Sunder Rajan also reflects on comparison as a crucial element of ethnographic practice. His stakes in articulating an-Other kind of comparison as being central to the multisituated ethos lie in his perception of comparison as allowing researchers to generate better descriptions and pay attention to structures and operations of power which would otherwise remain invisible (Sunder Rajan 2021: 59-60). To draw on the full emancipatory potential of a comparative approach, according to Sunder Rajan, researchers must be careful not to define figure and ground, the terms of comparison, and the nature of the compared entities in advance. A comparison Otherwise would

> […] seek epistemic unsettlement by holding open the terms, entities, and grounds of comparison to see whether different anthropological problems might emerge to those normally presumed. It would thus seek to deconstruct, and possibly invert, logocentric and patriarchal center-periphery assumptions that structure the terms of dominant comparative modalities. (ibid.: 59-60)

Thinking comparison otherwise and Otherwise, Sunder Rajan engages with various scholars' conceptual and methodological moves, including Sheila Jasanoff, Marylin Strathern, and Gayatri Spivak. All these authors use comparison to engage with questions of globalization, modernity, and liberalism in ways that allow for imagining the possibility of acting collectively with the Other. Reflecting on the various ways in which contemporary feminist and postcolonial studies on surrogacy engage in comparisons, Gayatri Spivak's conceptual interventions seem of particular relevance. I will therefore briefly illustrate Spivak's interventions here before examining various ways of comparing Otherwise in surrogacy research.

Gayatri Spivak sets out one of the most intriguing and influential conceptual groundworks for feminist and decolonial comparative research. In her chapter "History" in "Critique of Postcolonial Reason" (1999), Spivak juxtaposes her seminal essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?"[4] to another essay she wrote earlier in the 1980s, which is about the Rani of Sirmur, a queen of a tribe in the foothill of the Himalayas (ibid. 1988; 1985). As Spivak lets us know in her essay, the Rani, whose real name remains unknown, lived during the early nineteenth century, at a time when the British empire was well established in South Asia. Today, the only available accounts of the Rani are those found in the archives created by the British imperialists. Spivak traces the Rani in the archives, not to recuperate the Rani's voice nor to learn about the Rani as an end to itself, but to turn her own gaze on imperialist power. Looking for traces or what she calls "fragments" of the Rani, asking "When does she emerge? When does she disappear? In whose accounts? To what ends?" (Gayatri Spivak as cited in Sunder Rajan 2021: 72), Spivak seeks to learn about imperialist power, which she understands as performed not only through direct rule but also through archiving. She asks why and how certain accounts of the Rani made it into the archives and juxtaposes the narratives of different emperors to show their

incongruency and the different strategies behind them. Spivak recognizes that accounts of the Rani in these archives are rare because British emperors began to mention her only when her husband died and quickly lost interest in her person afterward. The Rani's appearance in the archives, so Spivak, was led by the British Emperor's concern that she might conduct *sati*, a form of suicide that women commit to follow their husband into death. She goes on to illustrate how different imperial figures, including a young administrator, a military general, and the board of directors of the English East India Company sitting in London imagined the Rani differently and how these images related to their strategic interest in governance. The story that unfolds in this interpretative reading of the archives is about "configuring and contesting relationships between crown and corporation, between an imperial project of mercantile capitalism and a colonial project of direct rule", and lies at the heart of the historical moment Spivak investigates (Sunder Rajan 2021: 76-77).

Juxtaposing the story of the Rani and the story of Bhuvaneswari in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Spivak confronts us with two stories of female suicide – one that happened and one that did not (1985; 1988). Both suicides and the way we know about them were inscribed in colonial governance as well as the phallogocentric societal structures of both, the colonizers and the colonized. While the story of Bhuvaneswari illustrates that agency cannot be seen simply as the expression of the Others' voice, when this Other is constituted within a field of (imperialist) power, her essay "The Rani of Sirmur", shows a way to abstain from turning a textualizing gaze on the subaltern. Evoking the Rani as a speaking subject at the very moment when her subjectivity was erased and in which all we know about her is articulated through archives created by British imperialists would, indeed, constitute an act of epistemic violence. Spivak therefore chooses not to write 'about the Rani' but engages in an interpretative reading of the archival material and hereby turns her gaze towards imperial power. This methodological move allows Spivak to reveal how archiving helped emperors to justify and stabilize their power and exercise control over the colony. It further enables her to illustrate the politics inscribed into British archives more broadly, which she sees as an example of the power of European epistemologies in the colony (Spivak 1988: 33).

In more conceptual terms, it can be said that in her chapter "History", Spivak deconstructs Western hegemonic modes of knowing by looking at their 'legacy' and hereby engages in three conceptual moves: She looks for traces and fragments, she dislocates the object of knowledge away from the subaltern towards (imperial) power, and she engages in incongruent juxtapositions by placing the stories of Bhuvaneswari and the Rani next to each other. As I will show below, the last two conceptual moves can also be found in studies about surrogacy that engage with feminist and postcolonial literature.

In their book "Clinical Labor", Melinda Cooper and Kathrin Waldby juxtapose surrogacy, the selling of oocytes, and participation in clinical trials in exchange for money, or as a sole means of accessing medical care (Cooper/Waldby 2014). These are all practices that are central to biomedical innovation and profit, while at the same time, they are rarely regarded as labor. In the words of Cooper

and Waldby, clinical labor is "the process of *material abstraction* by which the abstract, temporal imperatives of accumulation are put to work at the level of the body" (ibid.: 12, emphasis in orig.). Treating 'clinical labor' as their ethnographic object enables them to "explore the legal, social, and technical forms of value production that have converged to enroll in vivo biological processes (from metabolism to spermatogenesis and gestation) in a labor relation" (ibid.: 10). In following these *in vivo* biological processes, Cooper and Waldby also show that the exceptional status of clinical labor as something not conceptualized as wage labor is emblematic for capital accumulation in the twentieth century, in which the concept of full-time employed wage labor decreases and various risks such as decline in demand and profit are transferred to the worker.

Another author who thinks surrogacy with and through incongruent juxtapositions is Kalindi Vora. In her seminal book "Life Support. Biocapital and the new history of outsourced labor", Vora juxtaposes insights from different sites of India's outsourced economy, including call centers, the IT industry, and surrogacy clinics (Vora 2015). Vora brings these different sites together by investigating "life support" as her ethnographic object. Doing so allows her to discuss various forms of labor that support life in the U.S. at the expense of the lives in India. Vora argues that even seemingly inalienable aspects of human life such as care, love, and trust as well as bodies and organs have become essential components of a globalized service economy and discusses how this expansion of "Life Support" echoes and replicates older, colonial modes of accumulation (ibid.). Vora argues that even seemingly inalienable aspects of human life such as care, love, and trust as well as bodies and organs have become essential components of a globalized service economy and discusses how this expansion of "life support" echoes and replicates older, colonial modes of accumulation (ibid.).

5. Conclusion

To date, there are already a variety of feminist and postcolonial ethnographies available that have studied surrogacy in different states and with different interests. Common to these ethnographic endeavors is a recognition that proliferation of knowledge about the practice is required going beyond dichotomic narrations of surrogacy as an ethical practice of love and care versus a form of cruel exploitation. In addition, ethnographers who work with feminist and postcolonial literature avoid an objectifying and textualizing gaze on the surrogate and often attempt to go beyond the mere absence of epistemic violence toward a form of knowledge creation that has the potential to become meaningful from the standpoint of surrogates. These ways of knowing and representing stand in critical opposition to many scandalous and sensation-seeking stories about surrogacy that can be found in tabloids or on social media.

Thinking with and through the idea and ideal of multisituated ethnography, the present paper discussed different strategies through which ethnographers have proliferated ways of knowing and representing the practice of surrogacy. As could be seen throughout the chapters, many authors have discovered the

perception of surrogacy as a form of labor that is crucial for responsible feminist and postcolonial narratives. While my discussion has focused on questions of scaling and comparison, some ethnographers further transgress conventional forms of knowledge creation and scholarly writing and embrace more experimental ways of engaging with surrogacy. Examples of these engagements can be seen in theater plays or poems, as well as attempts to think with and through photography, novels, or songs to tackle the controversial and emotional practice of surrogacy as well as the role of the ethnographer in studying it (Bernardo 2020; Siegl 2018; Siegl 2019). When these endeavors succeed in becoming a transformative experience for the reader, the viewer, or the listener, they can unravel the decolonial and feminist potential of ethnographic practice in unprecedented ways and are therefore also an essential part of a multisituated ethnography as introduced by Sunder Rajan (2021: 91-168). Ideally, gestures towards creative forms of seeing and knowing will train the imagination to envisage the possibility of acting collectively with the Other. This article could neither zoom into such emerging experimental engagements nor do justice to the complexity and depth of individual ethnographies discussed. Nevertheless, I hope it provided readers with an overview of surrogacy as a research field in which a feminist and postcolonial ethnography can be seen at play and potentially developed further.

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Anmerkungen

1 Legislations in many states distinguish between ‘altruistic surrogacy’ and ‘surrogacy arrangements’ in which the surrogate receives money for her service. The latter is prohibited in all countries in Western Europe. For a more detailed description of surrogacy laws in Europe see Garayová (2022).

2 Not all surrogates find themselves in a situation of marginalization and disembodiment. However, the fact that the pool of people who act as surrogates and those who use surrogacy to start a family is highly segregated in terms of sex, race, and wealth points to an inequality that characterizes many surrogacy arrangements. Focusing on this inequality, the present article discusses surrogacy as a form of marginalization and disembodiment. For similar reasons, the author rejects the notion of ‘donation’ in cases of oocyte-selling or the selling of kidneys but focuses on the fact that many who ‘donate’ do so to earn money.

3 Amrita Pande conducted research in various Indian states including Gujarat, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, and Punjab (Pande 2014).

4 For a discussion of the essay “Can the subaltern speak?” see chapter two in this article.

Literatur

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