

## ***Debating on Surrogacy. Different Voices on the Goodness of Surrogate Motherhood***

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## Debating on Surrogacy. *Different Voices on the Goodness of Surrogate Motherhood*

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Undoubtedly, the title of this issue of *Italian Sociological Review* could be read as a dogmatic defense of the practice of surrogate motherhood as well as of gestational surrogacy – but it is not. On the contrary, this issue represents an attempt to give voice to the individuals and their ideas, representations and experiences about surrogacy rather than to social ideologies, ontologies or theories. Instead of judging – as an *a priori* assumption – that surrogacy is always *bad*, the articles outline the conditions thanks to which surrogacy can be a *good* way to have a child – or to help someone to have *their* child.

Our debate on surrogacy opens with Zsuzsa Berend's article '*Surrogates all make that choice to help*'. Drawing on ethnographic research on the biggest US online surrogacy support forum – *surromomsonline.com* – Zsuzsa Berend explores surrogates' debate of choices and responsibilities. The surrogate mothers, as Berend explains, consider their choices as reflections of morale agency: if they are well-informed, free, independent, the women, who deliberate to become surrogates, see the surrogacy as a private, intimate journey that contribute to create families and parents.

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Corinna S. Guerzoni's contribution, *Gift narratives of US surrogates*, gives us the partial results of two researches conducted on the experiences of fifty US surrogates within two fertility clinics of Southern California. Guerzoni, in particular, studies the relationships between the international intended parents and the surrogate mothers and how the rhetoric of the gift is not used by the women since they believe that what they give to the intentional parents is more than a 'gift'.

How surrogate motherhood is represented both in academic and scientific debate as well as in the everyday lives of homosexual peoples is investigated by Luca Guizzardi in his essay, *What we talk about when we talk about. The symbolic representations of surrogate motherhood among gay*. Guizzardi tackles the three main dilemma of the wider scientific debate on surrogacy. So, he outlines a complex debate with many voices, some of which are irreconcilable, and with many problems and different aspects. The complexity of this debate, as the authors states, over time, has progressively increased rather than finding answers. The contribution goes on focusing on the partial results of a research on gay men's social and symbolic construction of surrogacy.

Cristina Lonardi, in her article, *Intrafamilial surrogacy: motivations, imaginary and current reality*, gives us important reflections on this type of surrogacy. What is the social imaginary associated with this intrafamilial *gift* or *donation*? What are the cultural and symbolic categories that the individuals associate with the intrafamilial surrogacy?

Then, Debora Viviani's essay, *Surrogacy: the apotheosis of control* comes. Thanks to a qualitative study conducted on a sample of 60 women, Viviani's aim is to outline the womanlike social imaginary around surrogacy and, principally, about the place of human factors as emotions in the medically assisted reproductive technologies where, on the contrary, planning and control mechanism are the supremacy rule.

Our debate on surrogacy ends with Angela Balzano's article, *Biology commodification and women self-determination. Beyond the surrogate ban*. Reflecting on European Parliament's stands on surrogacy, Balzano focuses on the repeated arguments against this practice. But – the author suggests – surrogacy should be read with the lens of reproductive rights. So, Balzano gives us a well-articulated thesis in favor of the surrogacy as a reproductive right.

Debora Viviani and Luca Guizzardi

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