**Human reproduction “on the move”: navigating the invisible challenges of reproductive decisions in borderland cultures[[1]](#footnote-1)**

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The dimensions of the borderland cultures encompass a wide array of factors that influence any aspect of organisational behaviour and socio-cultural practices. Studies such as Jun et al. (2005) and Baeza et al. (2017) delve into the impact of what has been called “nomadic social organising” (Lucas, 2014), shedding light on how permeable and malleable cultural practices define the social in such borderland cultures.

Nomadic organising is a concept that challenges traditional hierarchical models of organising by emphasizing decentralization, autonomy and adaptability. For example, people who are always “on the move” often rely on networks and are more open to relationships when navigating different contexts. In organisational studies, researchers have explored how businesses can adopt more agile structures akin to nomadic organising to respond effectively to changes (Otamış, 2016).

Borderland cultures epitomise the archetypical manifestation of nomadic social organising. As Anwar Shaheen (2011) referred for the case of Pakistan’s borderland’s nomadic population, “living on the margins” implies dealing with everyday crossings, transgressions, trespassing, transitions and transformations.

Indeed, borderlands cultural practices affect all aspects of life, including those on family conceptions, kindship and reproduction. Human reproduction in the borderlands is a distinctive practice. Symbolic and material interactions and sensemaking are always “on the move” and transitions and transformation are part of a malleable ethos, affecting reproductive decisions, including the economical, the technological, the emotional, the intimate and even the practice of what has been called “techno-human reproduction”. The use of assisted reproductive technologies (ARTs) has led to significant cultural changes and redefinitions of reproductive practices (Inhorn & Birenbaum‐Carmeli, 2008). The commercialization of in vitro fertilization (IVF) has not only transformed reproductive medicine (Wiel, 2019; Merleau-Ponty et al., 2018) but the meaning of human reproduction. The availability of ARTs across the borderlands and their uses are constantly in definition and redefinition, depending on the legal, economic and cultural constructions. Equally, the practice of drug-based pregnancy termination is culturally manifested in the borderlands depending on a permanent sensegiving and sensemaking construction of economic, moral and religious argumentation; misoprostol, antiprogestins and prostaglandins became more than options to decide about pregnancy, but rhetorical devices to justify displacements, treatments and make economic decisions to support the move across the borderlands. One of the primary complexities of seeking IVF treatment and abortion abroad revolves around navigating the legal and regulatory frameworks. The absence of uniform international standards is expressly manifested in the borderlands, where a proliferation of clinics, hospitals and health consultancies became spaces where to find advise on how to navigate the regulations regarding surrogacy, egg donation embryo transfer and pregnancy interruption, that vary significantly from one country to another, and in the case of US, for example, even from one state to another.

As the techno-human reproduction extends beyond the biological realm and encompass social, ethical, and environmental dimensions, culture permeates any of its manifestations and sensemaking. Research has shown how, for example, the concept of “motherhood” changes in some societies because of the gradual alteration of the meaning of human reproduction and what has been called “techno-maternity” practices (Suksom and Sangkhamanee, 2022; Wiel, 2019; Alvarez, 2013). Díaz-Carrión, Vizcaino-Suárez and Gaggiotti (2020) have reported that even the meaning of “pregnancy” is altered in Mexico because of the semantic transformation of the public understandings of “motherhood”.

Living “on the move” in the borderlands, however, doesn’t come without a cost. Research by Wright (2001) and Walker (2005) into gender issues and femicide, for example, have underlined the distinctive discursive construction of gender and difference in borderland organisational practices, underscoring the complex and invisible interplay between cultural representations, violence against women, and social imaginaries in border regions like Ciudad Juárez-El Paso and Tijuana-San Diego. Vulnerability is emphasized in settings of nomadic and borderland cultures and is manifested in every social and organisational practice. To alternate “to be abroad” and “to be at home” when been immersed in the process of deciding about your own reproduction, creates an invisible transitional dimension of liminality and liminoidity (Gaggiotti et. al, 2018) where meanings and understandings of what is human are produced.

Indeed, when individuals opt for reproductive and IVF treatments abroad, they often face a myriad of invisible stressors and challenges. Couples undergoing In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) treatments experience significant stress due to the painful nature of the treatment and the fear of treatment failure (Ying et al., 2015). Research indicates that psychosocial factors such as ineffective coping strategies, anxiety, and depression are linked to lower pregnancy rates following IVF procedures (Eugster & Vingerhoets, 1999). The stress and anxiety experienced during IVF treatments are not limited to one gender. Women undergoing infertility treatments have been found to experience stress, anxiety, and depression related to their reproductive trajectories (Kamboj et al., 2023). Additionally, men involved in IVF treatments face their own set of challenges, with emotional and physical support from their partners playing a crucial role in helping them cope with the stress of the treatment (Zaake et al., 2019).

The global increase in subfertility diagnoses and treatments, particularly the focus on profit-driven IVF treatments, raises significant societal and economic questions for both patients and stakeholders (Bahadur et al., 2022). Furthermore, the complexity of measuring success in IVF treatments underscores the multidisciplinary nature of addressing the challenges and outcomes associated with these procedures (Rienzi et al., 2021). Complications related to IVF treatments include multiple births, ectopic pregnancy, maternal haemorrhage, gestational diabetes, hypertensive disorders, and various other risks that contribute to the overall stress and anxiety experienced by individuals undergoing these treatments (Vuniqi-Krasniqi et al., 2018). In conclusion, individuals seeking reproductive and IVF treatments abroad are confronted with a range of stressors, anxieties, and challenges that encompass both the physical and psychological aspects of the treatment process. Understanding and addressing these multifaceted issues are essential in providing comprehensive support to individuals undergoing such treatments.

In this paper we discuss our analysis of how the multifaceted practice of mobile procreation is embedded in the cultural organising mobility of the liminal space of the Mexican-US borderlands. The research was conducted as part of the REPROMOB project. REPROMOB is a multi-disciplinary, multi-sited and collaborative research project organised by two Universities of Catalonia, Spain: the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB) and the University of Barcelona (UB), in which researchers from different universities in Spain also participate. Europe and Latin America. Its objective is to investigate different forms of reproductive mobility: flows of people, substances, knowledge, practices, subjectivities, capitals, networks of relationships and connections that assisted reproduction and the search for abortion, as well as adoption, generate worldwide. Our work for this paper is based on a longitudinal intermittent multidisciplinary fieldwork produced between 2015 and 2023 in Ciudad Juarez (Mexico)-El Paso (US) borderland analysing three types of (un)reproductive mobilities: abortion, birth and IVF. The paper report on the research conducted on the multifaceted, and mostly invisible nature of reproductive mobilities and the intricacies involved in seeking IVF treatment in the Mexican-US borderlands.

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