

## Doing Family "In the Space Between the Laws"

Notes on Lesbian Motherhood in Greece

**IN HER POEM** "Six Years for Nancy" (1978), Alice Bloch addresses her lover: "We built our own common life in the space between the laws." We would all agree that kinship and family relationships are subject to, constructed and signified by intense and intensive negotiations in contemporary bourgeois democracies. Not only is this assessment instantiated in the recent condemnation of Greece by the European Court of Human Rights,<sup>1</sup> and the Opposition Party's proposal that civil partnerships be revised and that same-sex couples should be included, but it also outlines part of the local context. Accordingly, what this verse stresses is the paths outlined in the interspaces of the law, the trails mapped by the absence of the law, and during the silences between the laws. In contemporary Greece, it is the space between the laws wherein lesbian and gay domesticity experiences draw, in the words of Bloch's abovementioned poem, "every day a new map of the same terrain," family, kinship, and relatedness.

In this article, we focus on aspects of lesbian parenthood achieved by means of assisted reproduction technologies in Greece – a society that relies heavily on heterosexual marriage and having children, that does not recognize any form of legal kinship relations among nonheterosexual people. Drawing on interviews conducted for the research

program (In)-FERCIT<sup>2</sup> we are interested in how our interviewees became parents in the context of their legal exclusion. What meanings do medically assisted parenthood and kinship acquire in the context of same-sex relationships? How are "old" notions of kinship and family related, extended, and reconceptualized into "new" significations through the use of assisted reproduction technologies? Our ethnographic interest in same-sex desires, motherhood, and family and kinship relations in Greece dates back to the late 1990s (Kantsa 2001; 2006; 2010). Presently, we have combined this longstanding interest with more recent ones that focus on assisted reproduction and its interrelations with science and the law. One of the key subjects of our research is the diverse uses and conceptualizations, and the differentiated methods of accessing medically assisted reproduction, with respect to gender and sexuality issues. Within this framework, we have carried out a number of open interviews with people who identify themselves as lesbian or gay and who are or wish to become parents.<sup>3</sup>

### **Theoretical Background: Anthropology Meets Same-Sex Families**

"Family"<sup>4</sup> has proved to be an exceptionally troublesome term for anthropology to analyze, due to its very complication with the direct, personal, empirical, experiences of the anthropologists themselves. It took many years of extensive ethnographic research to acknowledge the contingency of the meaning, and the importance, of this term upon the context and the conditions under which it is met, namely the legal regulations, the medical technology, the religious beliefs, and the available representations for gender relationships, parenthood, and the upbringing of children (Kantsa 2007). Anthropological studies in non-Western societies have always shown that one universally applicable definition of family can never be provided either in regard to its size, form, and function, or in regard to the gender of the people who constitute a family (Yanagisako 1979; Collier, Rosaldo and Yanagisako 1982). Even in Western societies, though, the term "family" may denote the wife and the children, as is the case of an adult man who declares, "I work for my family," it

may include a group of people who offer emotional and personal support to somebody, and to whom the latter refers as "my real family" (Fox and Luxton 1993, 19), or it might designate a network of relations, called "families of choice," created by people who build same-sex relationships, and to which friends, ex-lovers and children are inscribed (Weston 1991; Carrington 1999; Weeks, Heaphy and Donovan 2001).

The fact that people of the same sex in the United States and North-western European countries have started families by means of adoption or sperm donation since the late 1970s, has set forth a number of questions concerning what nonbiological parents should be called, what their role is, and how they are to be recognized by other people outside the family. Certain issues also arise when relationships are broken, which brings nonbiological parents' position at stake, when donors change their minds and decide to engage more with children, when biological mothers die and their parents disagree with their ex-partners over custody of the children. What remains as a central question in this discussion is the theoretical framework that should be used in approaching, interpreting, and analyzing same-sex families, while the analytical adequacy of the view according to which these are "different" or "alternative" families is challenged (Lewin 1993; 1995; 2009; Dunne 1998; 1999; 2000; Mamo 2007).

According to anthropologist Kath Weston, such families are not necessarily subversive, even though they cannot be equated with heterosexual families either. And this is because they transform our conception of family, replacing "forever" with endurance, and permanence with persistence (Weston 1998, 76). Hence, while in the framework of families of origin the main principle is that "whatever is real" – meaning that it is based on a relation – remains immutable, what poses as a central principle of organization in the framework of families of choice is the view that in the end of the day, "whatever lasts in time" – meaning constant friendship relationships, in contrast to blood ties that can be broken and come to an end – "is real." In this case, endurance legitimizes and sanctions the authenticity of a relationship, which is not given by nature, but is rather conquered through the subjects' cohabitation, interrelation, and communication on an everyday basis.

In a similar vein, in her article "Gender, Genetics and Generation: Reformulating Biology in Lesbian Kinship" (1995), Corinne Hayden highlights the notion of flexibility regarding the alleged juxtaposition "blood and choice," so as to take it one step further, underscoring the importance of the framework and the power relations involved. In spite of the reputed gender equality among lesbians, having children through donor insemination automatically introduces its own asymmetry into the relationship. One example of this has to do with the use of lexical items – who is the "mother"? What is the "biological mother's" partner called? Is she the "nonbiological mother," the "other mother" (Hayden 1995, 49)? Attempts are often made to establish egalitarian relationships between parents by means of a "real" or "symbolic" distribution of the blood between the "nonbiological" mother and her child. In certain cases, for instance, they opt for a sperm donor who resembles the nonbiological mother, or even her brother (Hayden 1995, 50).<sup>5</sup> This distribution is related to the self-presentation of women as the child's "biological" parents to the extent that part of the genetic material originates from their own descent line. In other cases, the genealogical relation is not expressed in terms of genetics, but is represented through an emphasis on motion, since what are emphasized are the process and the active participation, as in the example where insemination is performed by the "nonbiological" mother (Hayden 1995, 52). What is additionally emphasized is the common choice, responsibility and participation, the creation of relationships with both parents' relatives, as well as the practice of compounding the women's surname with each other so as to form the child's surname.

In neighboring Italy, anthropologist Monica Bonaccorso's interviewees emphasize the concept of choice and do not see themselves as integrated or assimilated, since they believe that they act against the dominant model of heteronormative unions (2009, 89). They talk about difference and originality, about not compromising. Since starting a family in the framework of a same-sex relationship and having children in this way is not considered "natural," "common" or "usual," they constantly address questions: What constitutes a family? What is there in a family? Why

start a family? They also revise primary conceptualizations of family and parenthood (often in their negotiations with relatives, friends, and colleagues). As a result, they often feel excluded by their social environment.

Hence, kinship in the framework of same-sex relationships is not identical to kinship in heterosexual relationships, and neither are kinship relationships created in regard to new reproduction technologies. The "old" notions of biology, origin, and exchange interrelate in new ways, thus acquiring a "new" content and "new" significations. As regards all of the above, on an analytical level, studying same-sex families cannot possibly be separated from studying heterosexual ones, since they do not only share certain cultural conceptualizations of family and kinship, but they also extend and reconceptualize the very notions of family and kinship. The question is how do these "new" significations relate to "old" notions? Do they introduce some novel suggestion or do they encompass the old notions in new terms?

### **Methodological Concerns**

One of our primary methodological concerns was how to find potential interviewees. The dilemma did not result from some kind of arithmetic computational anxiety, but rather followed from our awareness of local social discourses. In dominant Greek discourses, lesbian and gay experiences and narrations only become visible under certain conditions, thus making the question of "how to locate families with same-sex parents" impossible to settle with just a simple answer. It is rather a question that, in its very demand for an answer, turns our gaze and directs our attention not only to what is not visible, i.e. same-sex parenting, but to the conditions that impose, or very often require, the practice of silencing, as well. Likewise, the very moment when the methodological question of "how and where to locate families with same-sex parents" arises, it simultaneously exposes a key component of the heterosexual condition; the privilege of being everywhere without been marked, of surrounding and being "around." In other words, the privilege of being self-evident and creating what Sara Ahmed calls comfort zones for those who can inhabit them (Ahmed 2004).

During the interviews, negotiations about the (in)visibility of lesbian and gay parenting arose again and again. These negotiations pertained to the doctors and nursing staff at clinics for assisted reproduction, the models of family configurations, as well as the extent to which the intimate relationship between the parents would be visible in the neighborhood, at school, in public spaces, to their families of origin, in addition to the limits of this visibility. Along with issues related to the procedures of assisted reproduction, our interviewees have indicated certain axes of devising viable family formations, which are inclusive of both the biological and the nonbiological parent, as well as viable arrangements of daily household routine. Considering the time devoted to these axes during the interviews, it seems that lesbian and gay parents and expectant parents invest much effort and time to invent, plan, and implement a plan for a common family life, in which the same-sex status of the parents becomes a site of continuous and constant negotiation.

### **Same-Sex Parenthood in Greece: State Policies and Cultural Meanings**

Greece is one of the few countries in Europe with no legal recognition of same-sex relationships, neither in the form of marriage nor as registered partnership or registered cohabitation. By the end of 2004, the National Committee for Human Rights (the official Counselor of the Prime Minister on such issues) had proposed that the government legally recognize cohabitation among same-sex persons, as a means of prohibiting discrimination. In April 2006, one of the major political parties, PASOK (the Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement), distributed a draft law on registered cohabitation for heterosexual and same-sex partners. However, same-sex couples were not included in the law on registered partnership eventually voted by the Greek Parliament in 2008.<sup>6</sup>

In the same vein, some years ago, in 2002, lesbian women were excluded from the law on assisted reproduction.<sup>7</sup> At that time, the church put tremendous pressure on the government to exclude nonheterosexual couples and unmarried women from the law. Finally, while nonheterosexual couples were excluded, nonmarried, single women were included,

but only because, as one of the exponents of the bill has stated, "women are natural-born mothers, this is a kind of information which is inscribed in their DNA" (Kantsa 2006).<sup>8</sup> Consequently, although a significant number of same-sex desiring women do consider the possibility of having children by asking a gay friend, using a sperm donor or adopting a child, the actual number of women who become mothers through such means is very limited. Insemination techniques and adoption are available to nonmarried people, but they are rarely used in practice. Insemination is a high-priced means of reproduction, which is not always crowned with success, whereas there are very few chances for a single parent to adopt a child, not to mention for same-sex ones, because of the limited number of children who are available.

We mostly, though not exclusively, refer to lesbian couples or lesbian women, as in Greece the instances of single or couples of gay men who start a family are extremely limited. In the Greek context, although surrogate motherhood has been established as legal by law 3089 of 2002, gay men are excluded by relevant regulations. According to the law, inserting genetic material in the body of a surrogate mother is allowed, provided that a permit has been issued by a regional court. However, in order for the specific court decision to be made, *the woman*, who wishes to have a child but is unable to gestate, has to make the request. According to the existing legislation, a request cannot be made by a single man or by a couple of men. Thus, with this regulation the state explicitly excludes gay men from the possibility of starting a family, as well as excluding gays and lesbians from adoption procedures.

During the 1990s, more and more lesbian women in Europe and America considered having children and keeping them, empowered by the explosion of new reproductive technologies. As a result, "access to insemination, custody and legal recognition of the relationship between lesbian [and gay] parents and their children are subjects currently high on the agenda of lesbian and gay movements in many European countries" (Griffin 1998, 25). In the Greek context, due to a complex amalgamation of medical perceptions, religious beliefs, law regulations, psychological and sociological prejudice, motherhood is intrinsically re-

lated to conjugal household<sup>9</sup> and little space is offered for single motherhood, let alone lesbian motherhood.<sup>10</sup>

In contemporary Greece there is no kind of legal recognition for same-sex couples; neither alliance relationships (the connection between them), nor joint parenting is legally recognized.<sup>11</sup> Two women or two men cannot marry each other, nor sign a civil partnership, nor have joint custody and care of a child. The only kin relations that are recognized are the ones between individuals and their families of origin (i.e. parents and siblings) or, once again, between individuals and the children they have had using the (relatively) new methods of assisted reproduction. In other words, what is not recognized is the possibility for lesbians or gay men to legally unite two groups (and this is exactly what alliance relations do through marriage, they unite two previously discrete groups, the families of origin of both spouses) and to include their child in two distinct families of origin as a grandchild, nephew or cousin by means of their connection. We mention these two possibilities together, because they are two sides of the same relationship. In the Greek framework of marriage, family and parenthood are closely intertwined. Therefore, the legislator's hesitation in 2002 to include same-sex couples in the law on medically assisted reproduction is closely linked to the absence of a legal framework for same-sex marriage. As a result, access to medically assisted reproduction is only possible for lesbian women, provided that they disclaim their sexual preference/desire/relationship and appear as single women. In other words, the right to medically assisted reproduction is not offered in terms of recognition of same-sex sexuality, but through the recognition of a single woman's desire to have a child.<sup>12</sup>

At the same time, the possibility to resort to methods of assisted reproduction are chiefly available for lesbian couples or lesbian women who can afford the financial cost it involves. Although the cost of assisted reproduction was largely covered by insurance funds some years ago, the recent changes brought about to the National Organization for the Provision of Health Services (EOPYY) coerce many women to cover most of the expenses, thereby excluding whoever cannot afford the procedures. Two of our interviewees, Vasso Canaka, who lives in Athens, is



employed in the private sector and had insemination performed in 2013, and teacher Gogo Dimaki, who also lives in Athens and had insemination in 2006, broach the significance of financial restrictions:

Ok, it makes sense, you always know anyway that in case it succeeds, a child needs money. But it's another thing to have to cover some expenses every month, and quite another to have to shell out a few thousands for the procedure. It's not the same. So, yes, this is what stresses me the most. For the moment I can afford it, if it turns out that the attempts I have to make are too many for my budget, I'll see what I'll do. I hope that I won't need IVF, insemination costs nothing compared to this. (Vasso Canaka, 36)

I told you, I was very lucky. You can't give less than three thousands for one attempt for IVF. There are some ways, some less expensive centers, some more expensive ones, it depends on how you want to handle it and it's very difficult to get access to hospitals, it's really difficult to make an attempt in a public hospital. I don't know how I made it [...]. There's a girl in our group, she isn't trying again because she has no more money. But who's got money anyway? No one. The cost is huge. I've also heard about some centers where you can go and tell them, "I've got this money, I'm giving it to you, but we're going to make a contract that you'll impregnate me. I've got no more money, that's it." (Gogo Dimaki, 47)

"Nonheterosexual sexuality" and "motherhood" are positioned as incompatible terms on account of the established interrelation between motherhood and heterosexual marriage. Despite medical and technological advances helping lesbian women to become mothers, there are significant limitations on the cultural understanding and acceptance of a "lesbian mother." At the same time, there is no legal context, which would allow for the recognition of the parental role held by the "other woman," i.e. the mother's partner. Thus, the interrelation of gender, sexuality, and motherhood becomes a field of controversy, transformations, and multiple ways of relatedness; as a result, more than often, a lesbian mother

can only be recognized as a "single mother," or a "nonmarried" mother.

Nevertheless, there is an increase in the number of same-sex desiring women who raise the children they have had through assisted reproduction – with a sperm donor or the sperm of a gay friend – either on their own or with their partner. The questions hence arising concern the ways in which our interviewees become parents in the context of their legal exclusion, and the meanings acquired by medically assisted parenthood and kinship in the context of same-sex relationships.

### **Reproduction Without Sex**

According to the interviewees, the use of assisted reproduction technologies is considered as "an appropriate" procedure that can offer same-sex couples – especially lesbian couples – access to the experience of parenthood. In their accounts, the possibility to use assisted reproduction technologies assumes a remarkable significance, since they evaluate it in terms of the ability to eliminate/bend/escape not necessarily biological/medical/physical limitations, but rather social restrictions and exclusions.

More specifically, as far as our lesbian-identified interviewees are concerned, assisted reproduction technologies provide the possibility to remove two central regulatory expectations; the expectation that people who take on the parenting role are heterosexual, and the expectations regarding the parents' gender identity, i.e. the predominant demand that every family be built by a mother and a father. One of the questions we have studied is how same-sex partners become parents using assisted reproduction technologies.

By "family formations," we refer to the participation in undertaking parental responsibility among people engaging in coparenting, whether their involvement in reproduction is biological or not. The family formations we came across include single parent families with lesbian mothers, lesbian coupled families, families in which the child has emerged from the fusion of genetic material of a lesbian and a gay man, who have both undertaken the responsibility of raising it, as well as more extensive models of families of choice, in which parenting responsibility includes

the gay and lesbian biological parents and their lovers. In any case, the term "family formations" signifies family figures, through which our interviewees plan, imagine, organize, and materialize parental roles.

Regarding medical technologies for assisted reproduction, lesbian mothers' narratives problematize the very notion of kinship, to the extent that it is reduced to biological parameters, i.e. the genetic material of the donor and the recipient. We use here the term *crisis* invoking its double meaning in the Greek language, both as criticism and as a critical state, disruption, and discontinuity. Kaliopi Chryssou is an interviewee who lives in Athens, where she works as an engineer in the private sector. Her partner was impregnated with the sperm of a gay friend through DIY insemination. The family formation they are planning includes her partner and their gay friend, who has contributed genetically, as well as his partner. Kaliopi comments:

Look, there are couples who try various tricks in order for the child to have genetic material from both, like getting the sperm of one mother's brother and the egg of the other mother. We didn't care about that [...]. I have not participated with any genetic substances and generally I don't consider genetic material to be a necessary contribution for being a parent to a child. (Kaliopi Chryssou, 34)

The "continuity" of genetic relation is interrupted, or intercepted, by terms that emphatically insist in practices of relationality and reciprocity. Again, in the words of an interviewee:

[Parenthood] is a commitment, which we undertake in advance [...]. That is, you get involved in a process, convinced that you want to become a parent. It's not that it just "happened to me" [to get pregnant] it's that "I achieved it," and this is very important. (Gogo Dimaki, 47)

### **I Gotcha!... Or Maybe Not?**

At this point, it is crucial that we elaborate on the institutional context, which in the case of Greek reality consists of a lack of a legal framework

for recognition of parental roles of same-sex partners. On our part, we need to elucidate the stakes, and insist on the condition of the "absence" of a legal framework even more persistently. This absence is not a lack of framework, but actually constitutes the frame, along with "other" conditions, namely a discriminative frame that devalues the families of same-sex parents on the basis of sexuality. This is not so much an exclusion of same-sex families from social conditions as an inclusion in the social condition through the practice of exclusion; through the practice of exclusion of the recognized, permissible, intelligible forms of parenthood, relationality and kinship.

In this respect, the "lack of" an institutional framework does not constitute a nonengagement of the law with the paradigm of families of same-sex partners; it rather forms a state position and an institutional choice. This lack is not an institutional absence, but an evident presence of institutional homophobia. In this context, the use of assisted reproduction technologies is also understood as a way to make unimaginable family models and impermissible parenting roles intelligible. This is illustrated in an interviewee's narrative. Katerina Stergiou, a teacher who lives in Athens and had an insemination procedure done in 2000, comments with regard to the use of assisted reproduction technologies by lesbians who usually present themselves at clinics as single women:

In this case technology says "gotcha." The progress in science says "gotcha." I want to have a baby and not to go through what I have been told by everybody [meaning marriage], and, especially in this case, technology is a kind of *passe-partout*, it takes you where they have not predicted. It's unpredictable, we went very quickly into something different and I felt from the beginning that this change implies a huge social change. (Katerina Stergiou, 47)

Yet, in many cases of deliberating single motherhood by means of assisted reproduction, the significance of the natal household is prevalent, and nonheterosexual women continue to be largely depended on their families of origin for practical and emotional support. At this point, we

have to draw on previous research on lesbian motherhood (Kantsa 2001; 2006) in order to illustrate our argument.

In 2006, a lesbian mother, Artemis (pseudonym), won the first prize in a novel competition organized by the Athens-based LGBT publishing house Polychromos Planitis [Colorful Planet]. Her novel, entitled *Korfi* [*Peak*], is the story of her life. At the age of forty – when the novel was published – Artemis lived in a village in Crete, an island in the South. She is the mother of two boys that she had had by means of IVF, the older one being six years old, and the younger one just a few months old. In an interview she gave to the journalist Vena Georgakopoulou for the Athenian newspaper *Eleftherotypia*, a few months after she had won the prize, she narrates:

I wanted to write my story in order to present it to my children some day. For the time being, my oldest one knows that his father is dead. Same-sex families are a very new innovation in our society, and we still lack a very clear picture of them. Nevertheless, I believe in the saying: "Love conquers all." (Georgakopoulou 2006)

In the novel, she describes the whole procedure, right from the moment she announced it to her family. As she says in the interview: "My family consists of two women: my mother and my grandmother. 'Do it and don't be afraid,' my grandmother said. 'I am here for you; you have no one and nothing to think about.'" Her partner was on her side but, as she says, "I had never connected motherhood to the comfort and safety of a permanent relationship." (Georgakopoulou 2006) On her part, Artemis' mother, Maria, in an interview she gave to the Greek lesbian electronic list Sapphides, declared: "I am a mother and, no matter what, my child will always be my child. Anyone who is under my roof is under my protection. No one dares to tell me anything because I do not allow anyone it." (Sapphides 2004)

Due to the absence of a lesbian network or state policies, which could act as a substitute for family relations, kin preserves its role as the principal resource of emotional, practical, and financial support. Even in the

cases where nonheterosexual forms of reproduction and family formation are accepted and recognized, acceptance is strongly related to a kind of "protection," provided by the natal household. Protection takes practical and most significantly symbolic forms. The "proper environment" that a child needs in order to grow up "normally" is equated to the parental household. Thus, the ambiguities of nonheterosexual motherhood are absorbed by the nonheterosexual mother's parental family members, who embrace their daughter for the "sake of their grandchild," and thus "legitimize" and "rationalize" their daughter's choices. However, it is through the same path that these choices are rendered invisible.

### **Shadows of Kinship**

Anthropologists refuse to regard lesbian families as "alternative," "fictive" or "substitute" formations of "real" families, and are rather interested in similarities and exchanges between different family forms (Weston 1998a; 1998b). Still, others adopt a more hesitant perspective, and are very ambivalent toward this proliferation of medical and juridical "techniques" which enable (or maybe enforce?) lesbian motherhood (Mamo 2007). They underscore their ambivalent outcome and remark that "political struggles for gay and lesbian citizenship rights in areas of intimacy are driven, at least in part, by acceptance of a new ideology and mandate: that gays and lesbians reproduce in the same way as heterosexual couples" (Mamo 2007, 248).

Same-sex partners' families do not simply suggest "alternatives" or "different" readings of family and parenthood that go beyond the heterosexual nuclear family model. Such is the case in the figure of two mothers or in parenting models that instigate and instrumentally invoke traditionally identifiable and legitimized relations in the field of kinship; as for instance in the mother/mother or the mother/aunt or the mother/godmother models.

In addition to this, and equally importantly, we should note that these family formations map parenthood paths and invite us to imagine parental responsibility and the parenting role through and beyond the identities of father and mother. Here, we draw on the paradigms of

partners who participate in parenting without any involvement in the genetic material of the child and without bearing an identifiable kinship status. Once again, as put by an interviewee:

I had this fear of how I could socially manage with it, and of what could be socially manageable in general, I felt that I just couldn't handle this "two moms" model, the title of the second mom. I couldn't handle the idea of a child who goes to the playground and says, "This is my mom and that's my mom," and it seemed to me that it would be socially simpler to have the child's mother on the one side and me – with my name – on the other; and to provide the child with the contents of parenthood through my relationship with them, without assuming a title. And this formation helped me to enter this situation without fear and to skip over my fears. (Kaliopi Chryssou)

As we have already mentioned, no alliance (even in the form of cohabitation) or coparenting relationship can be established for same-sex partners in Greece. In this context, we find the figure of the partner who participates in the upbringing of a child, and whose partnership with the biological parent and parental relationship with the child are never recognized, in institutional and biological terms, respectively. This figure outlines a limbic border in the horizon of kinship. At the level of everyday lived experience, this state can be either used instrumentally, enabling access to parental participation, as shown in the previous quotation, or remain permeated with a painful and persistent load of silencing. Dina Vamvakelli is an interviewee living in Athens with her family, consisting of Dina's children, who she had in her previous, heterosexual marriage, and her partner's children, who she had by means of IVF. Referring to her silenced role in parenting, she says:

This thing offends me too deeply, this thing offends me very deeply. The nonbiological mother has too many "non-", i.e. non-straight, non-mother, non-visible and all these things are killing me. But I'm trying to do something, I try every day. (Dina Vamvakelli, 54)

And another one:

Our relationship exists. My concern is how to legitimize her parenting status as a second parent, for her, who has raised the kids up to 5 and 6 years old, and she stands by them and by me; for her, who has been beside me for all these years and it seems like she's nowhere. And particularly for the children. (Gogo Dimaki, 47)

The condition of missing one's representation of oneself is not simply related to the invisibility of LGBT parenting in public spaces and public discourses, nor does it just serve as a comment on a potential uncertainty about the existence of "a know-how" in same-sex parenting roles. Although it does bear these connotations, it is equally important to highlight here the close connection between negotiations on parental invisibility, and the ways through which same-sex sexuality is experienced as subjectivity, as self. There is an interrelation between being aware of the lack of representation of the experience and desire for same-sex parenting, and the invisibility through which one is constructed as gay or lesbian in the local context. More specifically, we are pointing to the experience of subjectification through silencing, through being excluded from what may be seen and said. The "nowhere" of lesbian motherhood and same-sex parenting that same-sex mothers put forth refers to the heterosexist horizon of socially and institutionally legitimized (i.e. straight) parenthood which reinforces the shadowing of existing relationships.

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## NOTES

1. On November 7, 2013, the European Court of Human Rights condemned Greece for violating the right to respect for private and family life, as well as the laws against discrimination.
2. (In)FERCIT, ((In)Fertile Citizens: On the Concepts, Practices, Politics and Technologies of Assisted Reproduction in Greece. An Interdisciplinary and Comparative Approach), is a three year research program (September 2012 to September 2015), funded by the European Social Fund and the General Secretariat of Research and Technology, Greece. The research project focuses on the detailed, multisided ethnographic account of assisted reproduction concepts, practices, politics, and technologies in Greece, relating them to legal issues and human rights on (in)fertility and reproduction, and providing a comparative perspective that will associate the Greek project with similar research conducted in selected European and non-European countries: Spain, Italy, Bulgaria, Turkey, Cyprus, and Lebanon.
3. A total of fourteen interviews, with twelve lesbians and two gay men, were conducted in Athens and Thessaloniki from June to September 2013.
4. This section draws on an article by Kantsa and Chalkidou (2014).

5. Something that would be considered as adultery or incest in the second degree (Heritier 2002). For a more elaborate analysis on incest, see also Edwards (2004).
6. In November 2008, the Family Code was reformed and the Greek Parliament voted for cohabitation rights, which would only apply to heterosexuals. Despite their pre-election promises, the Socialist Movement PASOK, which won the 2009 elections, did not amend the law, and neither did the subsequent governments. In February 2011, the European Court of Human Rights decided to convey to Greece the query whether the exclusion of same-sex partners from registered cohabitation violates Article 8 (right of respect for private and family life) alone, or in conjunction with Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination), as well as Article 13 (right for legal remedy) of the European Convention on Human Rights. See Kantsa (2014).
7. The Greek legal framework on assisted reproduction was formed by two laws: Law 3089/2002 on "Medical Assistance in Human Reproduction" and Law 3305/2005 on "Application of Medical Assisted Reproduction Methods." It allows for preimplantation genetic diagnosis, embryo freezing, anonymous sperm donation, anonymous egg donation, embryo donation, surrogacy, research on genetic material (donated gametes and fertilized eggs), and the free transportation of genetic material and fertilized eggs to and from other European countries, thus forming one of the most "permissive" profiles among European countries.
8. A systematic anthropological analysis of medically assisted reproduction in Greece from the perspective of gender is beyond the scope of the present article. A more elaborate analysis, though, may be found in Paxson (2003; 2006) and Kantsa (2011).
9. Greece has been often been described as a society where kinship and family relations hold a crucial role in the definition of female and male identities, while full adult status for both women and men is obtained through marriage and having children (Loizos and Papataxiarchis 1991). Motherhood in Greece is highly respected; one might even say revered, and unintended childlessness is the cause of many prayers, vows, and expenses. Yet, this does not mean that motherhood is regarded without ambivalence, or that the more children one has, the better mother one makes (Dubisch 1995; Paxson 2004). It is predominantly in the context of marriage and on the condition that a woman successfully fulfills her maternal duties, that her status as a mother is highly valued. Thus, despite its significance, not all forms of motherhood are considered "equal." See also Kantsa, ed. (2013).
10. Notably, even in the case of single motherhood, state policies are far from supportive. It is not a coincidence that Greece holds the lowest percentage of births outside wedlock (just 4% of the total number of births, compared to 28% which is the average percentage for the 25 countries that belong to European Union). The absence of state policies does not necessarily prevent the existence of such family forms. However, it perpetuates discrimination against them, and therefore reduces their number. A research program on family and state policies (IPROSEC, see

Stratigaki 2004) has demonstrated that the religious and symbolic importance of family in Greece is further underlined by the absence of family social policies. This has the effect of reinforcing the idea of the supremacy of the family and kinship networks in the task of tackling the problems of everyday life.

11. European countries vary in terms of the rights that they have established for same-sex individuals who wish to become parents and to have equal access to rights of custody and guardianship. According to ILGA Europe report (2013), Greece provided a total of 28% of the rights to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex people, thus rating 25<sup>th</sup> among 49 European countries. However, when it comes to family legitimization issues, percentage drops to 8%. Rights with reference to the family include: 1) the right to marriage; 2) registered bond (bearing the same rights as marriage); 3) registered bond (with fewer rights than marriage); 4) cohabitation; 5) joint adoption; 6) adoption by the second parent; 7) automatic recognition of parental custody; 8) access to medically assisted reproduction (for couples); 9) access to medically assisted reproduction (for individuals); 10) the right of transgender people to marry people of the opposite sex. In Greece only the last two rights are granted, namely, access to medically assisted reproduction for single women and the possibility of marriage for individuals who have made sex reassignment surgery.
12. In her article, "With or Against Nature?: IVF, Gender and Reproductive Agency in Athens, Greece" (2003), Heather Paxson argues that the prevalent sex/gender/kinship system in Greece "treats procreation and child raising as events more centrally feminine than masculine," thus enabling single parenting through assisted conception.

## SAMMANFATTNING

Artikeln belyser aspekter på lesbiskt föräldraskap, som tillkommit genom olika former av assisterad befruktning, i Grekland, ett samhälle som starkt betonar heterosexuellt äktenskap och vikten av att skaffa barn. Dessutom är Grekland det enda landet i Europa som inte rättsligt erkänner några former av släktskapsrelationer mellan icke-heterosexuella personer. Vi är särskilt intresserade av att följa hur familjebildning sker i luckorna i lagen, hur processen präglas av lagens frånvaro och dess tystnader. Hur blir lesbiska föräldrar i en situation av rättsligt exkluderande? Vilka betydelser får medicinskt assisterat föräldraskap och släktskap när de sätts i samband med samkönade relationer? Hur blir "gamla" föreställningar om släktskap och familj förmedlade, utvidgade och åter-begripliggjorda till "nya" betydelser genom använd-

ningen av olika tekniker för assisterad befruktning? Vi hävdar i att dagens Grekland finns en sfär mellan lagarna vari lesbiskas och bögars erfarenheter av familjeliv ”var dag ritat om kartan över samma landskap”: familj, släktskap och samhörighet.

**Keywords:** lesbian motherhood, assisted reproduction, Greece