

Summary

Situated at the intersections of reproduction, population politics, health care services, and marginality in Central Europe, this dissertation explores the diverse ways Romani women living in precarious circumstances demonstrate reproductive agency. In particular, it examines the ways their agency critically engages with the discourse of responsabilization (Rose 1996, 2007) on the affective and social levels in a context ruled by a moral regime that calls for reproductive governance (Morgan & Roberts, 2012, 2019). Discussion and analysis are based on long-term participant observation in a segregated Romani settlement in Slovakia, as well as a short-term observation of staff and patients at a maternity ward in the Czech Republic. The ethnographic methodology and analysis are inspired by critical medical anthropology and the anthropology of reproduction. Building on this mixed-method approach, the analysis focuses on the individual, communal, and societal aspects of reproductive decision-making. It discloses the significant material and moral constraints surrounding women's reproductive decisions and it shows that marginalized Roma women both revere and refuse the discourses of self-governance, responsibility, and accountability in their reproductive practices. The text tackles the economics of childbearing in a resource-scarce environment and it analyzes Romani women's birth narratives to show where personal autonomy is exercised before, during, and after labor. Agency does not necessarily mean resistance, and it does not automatically lead to increased inclusion and involvement in an institutionalized setting. An additional angle is provided through the perspectives of birth workers, and the dissertation accounts for ways they renegotiate and rationalize potentially conflicting situations with Romani women in a maternity care setting. Romani ethnicity is recognized at maternity wards, and it can have consequences with regard to care at the level of institutional approaches and practices.

Key words: ethnography, anthropology, reproduction, Roma, women, responsabilization, reproductive governance, maternity care, fertility choices