

ISA RESEARCH FORUM

**Coping with Thalassaemia:
Health-related mobility in the Republic of Maldives**

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In this presentation I shall outline a research project at the Indian Ocean rim that is focusing on the intersection between health and mobility. About 18,1 per cent of the Maldivian population carry a defect gene that may result in children born with a life threatening disease called thalassaemia. Patients affected with this blood disease need blood transfusion therapy on a regular basis – not a simple task in an island nation scattered over 1200 islands in the Indian Ocean. My approach to investigate coping with such a hereditary disease in one of the geographically most dispersed countries in the world shall take various forms of mobility, travel, movements and flows into consideration; some of these forms in fact give rise to tensions and even to conflict. These processes discussed here include mobile patients and health care providers, a gene defect traveling between generations, flows of knowledge about genetic risk and social risk management, and blood and bone marrow moving between healthy and sick bodies. The only chance to 'heal' thalassaemia is bone marrow transplantation, but Maldivian patients have to travel abroad for this procedure.



Eva-Maria Knoll is a researcher at the Institute for Social Anthropology, Austrian Academy of Sciences. She studied Social Anthropology & Gender- and Women's Studies at the University of Vienna. From 2000 to 2005 she was working at the University of Vienna's College for Gender Studies, and since 2001 she is a staff member of the Austrian Academy of Sciences. Her main research interests include tourism, science and technology, gender relations, and medicine. She is about to submit her doctoral theses "Navigating Socio-technical and Moral Landscapes: Reproductive Tourism in Europe". In her post-Doc work she will concentrate on medical and tourism related topics in the Republic of Maldives. Knoll has co-edited "Ritualisierungen von Geschlecht" 2006 Wiener Universitätsverlag and the forthcoming "Lexikon zur Globalisierung. Konzepte, kulturelle Diversität und Alltag".

Recent publications are „Fortpflanzungsmedizin ohne Sexualität als gesellschaftliche Irritation: Diskurse über ‚Jungfrauen-Geburten‘“, in: Pethes/Schick Tanz (Hg.): *Sexualität als Experiment. Identität, Lust und Reproduktion zwischen Science und Fiction*, 2008 Campus.

„So weit gehen für ein Kind: Reproduktionstourismus als grenzüberschreitender Umweg, in: Bockenheimer-Lucius/Thorn/Wendehorst (Hg.): *Umwege zum eigenen Kind. Ethische und rechtliche Herausforderungen an die Reproduktionsmedizin 30 Jahre nach Louise Brown*, 2008 Universitätsverlag Göttingen.

„Reproducing Hungarians – Reflections on Fuzzy Boundaries in Reproductive Border Crossing, in: Knecht/Klotz/Beck, Stefan (eds.): *Reproductive Technologies as Global Form. Ethnographic Knowledge, Practices, and Transnational Encounters*, 2011 Campus.