



**University of
Zurich** ^{UZH}

**Newsletter URPP
Human Reproduction
Reloaded | H2R**



It is our pleasure to launch our first newsletter of the University Research Priority Program (URPP) “Human Reproduction Reloaded | H2R”. This newsletter offers a retrospective of our past events in 2021 & 2022 – such as last year’s kick-off event or the Summer School in September 2022 – and will provide an outlook for future events to come. We hope that you will find this helpful in planning the months ahead and reflecting on previous discussions and fruitful exchanges you have had. In the case of the kick-off event 2021, which included a public screening of the movie “Human Nature. The CRISPR Revolution”, you can also entirely revisit our panel discussion in the recording on our website.

Our newsletter highlights the ongoing research projects and studies of the different sub-projects of the URPP and outlines their current key questions and aims. Five working papers have been published this year in the H2R Working Paper Series, and you can find the links to where you can download the individual issues here. Finally, this newsletter would like to put a particular spotlight on the URPP’s Best Researcher Award, our four Visiting Scholars as well as the important work of the Citizen Science Centre.

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Zurich, December 2022

[URPP Human Reproduction Reloaded | H2R](#)

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[URPP H2R Newsletter 01/2002](#)



Reports

Kick-off Event 2021



The kick-off event of the University Research Priority Program (URPP) “Human Reproduction Reloaded | H2R” took place on 1 October 2021. It provided insight into the research of the newly established URPP H2R through the public screening of the movie "Human Nature. The CRISPR Revolution".



Following the screening of the documentary, Andrea Büchler, director URPP H2R, alongside Brigitte Leeners, Professor of Gynecological Endocrinology and Reproductive Medicine, Gerald Schwank, Professor of Neuropharmacology, and Michael Braunschweig from the Institute of Social Ethics at the UZH Ethics Center held a discussion.

All panel discussion participants are involved in the URPP H2R as co-leaders or postdocs. For more impressions and to view the panel discussion recording, visit our [website](#).



Workshop: Fortpflanzungsmedizin für alle?

Given the ongoing debates on the political and jurisprudential level around an adaptation of the “Federal Act on Medically Assisted Reproduction” (RMA), a workshop took place on 27 and 28 January 2022 at the Law Faculty of the University of Basel. The workshop “Fortpflanzungsmedizin für alle?” (Reproductive Medicine for all?), a cooperation between the Center for Life Sciences Law (University of Basel) and the URPP H2R, was divided into two parts.



The first part explored whether the restrictions on access to reproductive medicine established in the current RMA, such as the restriction on opposite-sex couples, should be maintained or whether there are good reasons to lift these restrictions. Without those restrictions, it would allow access to reproductive medicine for all, including same-sex couples or single persons.

The second part of the workshop focused on the legitimacy of numerous punitive bans on specific reproductive procedures such as egg donation or surrogacy. With the new possibilities of genome editing through the so-called gene scissors CRISPR, the absolute prohibition of germ line therapy is also coming under legitimation pressure. It is important to examine who or what these prohibitions protect and whether these protective interests can justify interventions in reproductive autonomy.

These and other topics were addressed and critically analysed at Zoom-Webinar workshops. Under the academic guidance of Prof. Dr. Bijan Fateh-Moghadam and Dr. iur. Matthias Till Bürgin, in cooperation with the research program "Human Reproduction Reloaded" of the University of Zurich (Director: Prof. Dr. Andrea Büchler), key points of a modernised RMA were debated and presented to the interested expert audience.



Summer School 2022

The H2R Summer School 2022, titled “Kinship Reloaded. Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Human Reproduction” focused on kinship, parenthood, and family within the context of reproductive medicine.

Our speakers approached this topic from their respective fields of Social Anthropology, Ethics & Philosophy, Sociology, Medical Psychology and Law, with the following contributions:

Prof. Dr. Ulrike Ehlert: “Family Relations. An Introduction to the Topics of the Summer School”;

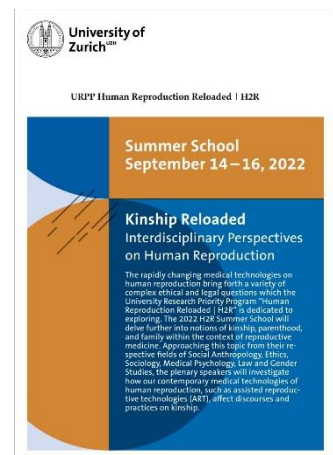
Prof. Jeanette Edwards: “Making and Breaking Kinship” (Keynote);

Prof. David Archard: “The Right to Parent and Reproductive Possibilities”;

Prof. Dr. Heike Trappe: “A Sociological View on Medically Assisted Reproduction From a German Perspective”;

Prof. Dr. Beate Ditzen: “Attachment as a Mediating Mechanism in the Intergenerational Transmission of Norms, Values, and Biopsychological Variables” and;

Prof. Dr. Michelle Cottier: “Gendered Normativities: The Legal Regulation of Reproductive Medicine and Family Relations”.



Many thanks to our great speakers and participants. We spent three exciting days at the Botanical Garden of the University of Zurich!

Find more pictures on our [website!](#)



H2R Working Paper Series



The H2R Working Papers Series aims to do research related to the project “URPP Human Reproduction Reloaded | H2R” widely available in a timely and open-access manner. The Seismo Press AG, Zurich and Geneva will publish the H2R Working Paper Series, predominantly written in German, English and partly in French. An abstract in English is always available.

The editorial board consists of Andrea Büchler, Ulrike Babusiaux, Annuska Derks, Ulrike Ehlert, Tanja Krones, Brigitte Leeners, Katja Rost, Nina Jakoby (coordinator) and Elena Brodeala (coordinator). Please visit [our website](#) to learn more about the Working Papers and download the individual issues.

So far, five Working Papers have been published in 2022:

H2R Working Paper 1; Peter Schaber (2022): Das Instrumentalisierungsverbot

H2R Working Paper 2; Estelle Fragu (2022): La réforme française de la bioéthique : Vers un nouveau modèle de reproduction?

H2R Working Paper 3; Veronika Siegl / Carolin Schurr / Laura Perler / Christine Bigler / Tina Büchler (2022): Transnationale reproduktive Mobilität – empirische Befunde zu einer umstrittenen Praxis

H2R Working Paper 4; Kurt Pärli / Daniel Mahrer (2022): Fortpflanzungsmedizin für alle? Sozialversicherungsrechtliche Aspekte, Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der Sozialversicherung

H2R Working Paper 5; Karla Alex / Christoph Rehmann-Sutter (2022): Gibt es einen therapeutischen Imperativ zum genome editing in der menschlichen Keimbahn?



Research

The URPP H2R seeks to understand and provide policy guidance on the societal impact and legal challenges of the rapidly changing medical technology on human reproduction.

The first sub-project, **SP1 Normativity of Human Reproduction**, concerns itself with the fact that numerous norms govern human reproduction while itself generating normative ideas which lead to social, ethical and legal consequences and answer questions like:

- How can a normative framework adequately take into account the interests of the individual and society as a whole?
- How can the legitimate objectives of medical advances be reconciled with the fundamental values of ethics and law?

The second sub-project, **SP2 Human Reproduction in Societies and Markets**, encompasses sociological, psychological and economic quantitative research on human reproduction:

- How do reproductive decisions, individual biographies, societies, and labour markets interrelate?
- What are the consequences of new fertility treatments for women, parents, children, families, economies, and ethical and social norms?

SP2 Empirical Project

StART Familie – Studie zum Einfluss assistierter Reproduktionstechniken auf die Familie (The impact of assisted reproductive techniques on the family), by Julia Jeannine Schmid & Prof. Dr. Ulrike Ehlert.

The project StART aims to examine the medium-term biopsychological effects of assisted reproductive techniques on the family to better understand their risks and opportunities. We are analysing whether using assisted reproductive techniques affects parents' mental health, various aspects of parenthood, and the psychosocial development of children. In addition, we would like to know more about the biological and psychological mechanisms behind it. The study participation includes filling out psychological questionnaires for the parents and collecting fingernail samples and saliva samples from the whole family at home. The expected duration of the project is from September 2021 to August 2024.

The third sub-project, **SP3 Ethnography of Human Reproduction and Single Case Studies in Threshold Areas**, adopts a qualitative and empirical approach to exploring the remaking of human reproduction:

- Can exploring human reproduction at the current normative and technological boundaries help unravel the effects of reproductive technologies on what it means to be human?



- To what extent does the prospect of genome editing change these notions?

SP3 Empirical Projects

IDENTITY «Meine Identität. Erfahrungen und Perspektiven von Menschen, die mit Hilfe einer Spende oder Leihmutterschaft gezeugt wurden. Eine qualitative Studie» («My identity. Experiences and perspectives of people conceived through donation or surrogacy: A qualitative study») by Dr. Daniel Drewniak and Prof. Dr. Tanja Krones.

Unfulfilled Wish to have Children: Meaning-Making of Reproductive Medicine in the Light of Cultural and Religious Values by Linda Bosshart and Prof. Dr. Dorothea Lüddeckens. The study explores the perspectives of people who have an unfulfilled desire to have children and are therefore considering the possibilities of ART (Assisted Reproductive Technologies) or alternative medicine. The research project aims to analyse the role of religious, spiritual, and cultural values in decision- and meaning-making processes and to explore to what extent these beliefs and convictions are perceived as a resource or a burden. The study applies qualitative research methods, especially qualitative interviews, and participant observation. The expected duration of the project is from October 2021 to October 2024.

Potentialities of CRISPR: An ethnography of reproductive medicine in Switzerland, by Anina Meier and Prof. Dr. Annuska Derks. More information about this project will follow.

Global Issues of Human Reproduction: Altruistic Surrogacy, by Lea Heistrüvers and Prof. Dr. Tanja Krones. More information about this project will follow.

The fourth sub-project, **SP4 CRISPR Technology in Human Reproduction**, takes an interdisciplinary approach to the following questions:

- Can we improve CRISPR's precision, reliability, and safety to a point where we can consider its use in human embryos?
- Do we understand enough about complex genetic diseases to be able to delay or suppress their onset?
- Can modifying the human germline ever be ethically defensible?

SP4 Empirical Projects

Transient in vivo prime editing for clinical applications, by Eleonora Ioannidi and Prof. Dr. Gerald Schwank. The project focuses on improving genome editing tools for their future use in gene therapy. Even though genome editing technologies have been significantly improved over the last few decades, there are still challenges that need to be resolved prior to their use for clinical applications such as their delivery and potential off targets. This project aims for making prime editing, a new technology that allows different modifications without causing double strand breaks, transient, while maintaining its precision and efficiency.



Applications of AI in the development of genome editing tools, by Dr. Amina Mollaysa and Prof. Dr. Michael Krauthammer. The research project addresses the following research questions:

- Can we develop AI models that accurately predict the possible outcomes of different genome editing tools?
- Can we identify the factors that affect the outcome of the genome edits and improve the tools' precision, reliability, and safety?

The range of reproductive options investigated by the URPP H2R includes future scenarios that rely on CRISPR-based technologies. These investigations focus on the opportunities and risks of human germline editing tools that might represent a promising approach for curing monogenetic disorders (e.g. cystic fibrosis) and for reducing genetic risk factors associated with common chronic diseases in which multiple genes interact with environmental factors (e.g. obesity, coronary heart disease, diabetes, Alzheimer's disease, and various cancers). However, the efficiency of germline modifications is still low; outcomes are unstable; indications are ambiguous, and technical feasibility is challenging. Given the complexities of the undertaking, the use of AI in the development of genome editing tools is warranted, with the goal of enabling more precise and controlled DNA modifications.

Ethical Issues of Germline Genome Editing from a Reproductive Justice Perspective, by Agnes Kandlbinder, Prof. Dr. Peter Schaber and Prof. Dr. Michael Coors. The project explores normative questions of Germline Genome Editing (GGE) at the intersection of applied ethics and societal debate. The cumulative dissertation critically examines both bioethical scholarship and activist discourses on GGE, particularly with regard to disability as a social justice issue. Thereby, the project aims to signpost how the public and academic discussion on research on GGE can be fruitfully brought forward in an inclusive way. Methodologically, Agnes combines tools of analytical applied ethics with a reproductive justice framework. The expected duration of the project is from February 2022 to February 2025.

The Empirical and Normative Knowledge and Data Centre is the backbone of the URPP H2R. It integrates normative and empirical perspectives and ensures a coherent, stringent research program. The Data Centre chiefly provides an information and discussion hub for researchers involved in the URPP H2R to collaborate in developing research questions and sharing information and data.



Spotlights

Best Researcher Award

The URPP H2R recognized Dr. Elena Brodeala with the Best Researcher Award for the year 2022.

Visiting Scholars

The URPP H2R has had the pleasure of welcoming four Visiting Scholars so far. Visiting Scholars are researchers from other institutions around the world who are in residence at the URPP H2R for either a semester or an academic year.

Prof. Judit Sándor (2021-2022) from the Central European University (CEU) joined the URPP H2R as a guest professor.

Dr. Kateryna Moskalenko (2022-2023) from the National Taras Shevchenko University of Kyiv joined the URPP H2R as a postdoctoral / guest researcher.

Dr. Oksana Kashyntseva (2022-2023) from the Ukrainian National Academy of Legal Sciences joined the URPP H2R as a postdoctoral / guest researcher.

Prof. Silvia Suteu (2022-2023) from the University College London (UCL) is joining the URPP H2R in October 2022 as a visiting professor.

Citizen Science

Research must consider other countries' experiences and adopt a comparative approach; it must also be heuristically open, evolve around the findings from empirical research and include citizen science to achieve valid results. Above all, our project deals with groundbreaking developments in contemporary society and raises important legal, psychological, societal, economic, and ethical issues. Thus, the involvement and participation of citizens are crucial for formulating research questions, data collection and analysis, and reflecting on the practical impact of our results in a democratic society. Following a co-designed citizen-science approach, we involve citizens in various steps in the research process.



Guest Lectures and Events in 2022

18 March 2022: **Workshop with the Citizen Science Advisory Panel** of the URPP H2R [Link](#)

21 March 2022 (via Zoom): **Advisory Board Meeting** [Link](#)

12 May 2022 (12:15 – 13:30 p.m.): **Animal Transgenic Technologies in the Era of Genome Engineering**. Brown Bag Lunch with Pawel Pelczar, Head of Center for Transgenic Models, CTM, University of Basel. [Link](#)

31 May 2022 (16:15 – 17:30 p.m.): **Surrogacy in Ukraine: Overview of Legal Regulation** by Kateryna Moskalenko & **Assisted Reproductive Technologies in Ukraine: Overview of Legal Regulation** by Oksana Kashyntseva. Lectures on Assisted Reproductive Technologies in Ukraine: Overview of Legal Regulation. [Link](#)

3 June 2022: **Filmevent Menschenskind** of the URPP H2R. Screening of the documentary “Menschenskind!” and discussion with film maker Marina Belobrovaja. [Link](#)

13 October 2022 (12:15 – 13:30 p.m.): **The Constitutionalisation of Reproductive Rights: Advancing Women’s Equality or Empty Promise**. Brown Bag Lunch by Prof. Silvia Suteu from University College London. [Link](#)

20 October 2022 (9.15 – 11.45 a.m.): **Gender, Law and Human Reproduction: between Progress and Regression**. Seminar by Prof. Silvia Suteu from University College London. [Link](#)

27 October 2022 (16:15 – 17:30 p.m., via Zoom): **Transhumanism in Conflict with Disability Justice**. Guest Lecture by Prof. Melinda C. Hall from Stetson University, USA. [Link](#)

23 November 2022 (18:00 – 19:30 p.m., via Zoom): **Genetics, Stem Cells, and the Future of Human Reproduction**. Talk by Lecture by Prof. Henry T. (Hank) Greely from Stanford University. [Link](#)

6 December 2022 (17.00 – 18.15 p.m., via Zoom): **Equal Protection in Dobbs and Beyond: How States Protect Life Inside and Outside of the Abortion Context**. Online Talk by Prof. Reva Siegel (Yale Law School) in cooperation with Feministisch.ius. [Link](#)

Upcoming Guest Lectures in 2023

20 April 2023 (12.15 – 13.30 p.m.): **Menschenkind. Wie die Wissenschaften auf die Frage nach dem Anfang des menschlichen Lebens stiessen und warum sie sie nicht beantworten können**. Brown Bag Lunch with [Prof. Dr. Caroline Arni](#) (Universität Basel), chairing by Prof. Dr. Simon Teuscher.



Open Positions

Currently, there are two open positions in the field of human genetics in reproductive medicine:

- Doctoral employment (60%, SNF)
- Postdoctoral Researcher (60-80%)

This open call addresses various disciplines such as biotechnology and medical ethics, law, sociology, psychology, or data science. Your research should address legal, sociological, medical, psychological or ethical questions raised by genetics in human reproduction, including gene editing, pre-implantation genetic diagnosis, and other possible developments in these fields. If possible, you are able to show your interest with a corresponding preliminary draft, project outline, or at least with some considerations regarding a concrete question in this field.

For more details about the application process and requirements, see [Open Positions H2R](#).

Stay updated on our website [URPP Human Reproduction Reloaded | H2R](#) and social media channels!

