

Call for Papers

Workshop “Beyond the Family. Spatiality, Modes of (Re)Production and Forms of Life”

April 10 – 11, 2025, Leuphana University Lüneburg

Organized by Beate Söntgen and Liza Mattutat

The family is in crisis. Yet again. It has gone through a lot since replacing the comprehensive household economy in which productive and reproductive tasks were not yet spatially and functionally divided. Its current quandary can be attributed to the replacement of the breadwinner-housewife model by the double-income model, which results in a dualized organization of social reproduction: commodified for those who can pay for childcare and domestic services and privatized for those who can't. This reorganization of social reproduction coincides with spatial and economic phenomena: Co-working spaces are popping up everywhere in urban centers, commercial co-living spaces are monetizing forms of collective living, the sizes of kitchens and living rooms are shrinking, people are increasingly working from home, the food and grocery delivery business is booming and domestic workers can be hired through platform-based services. If every society produces its own space by differentiating the places where we live and reproduce life from the places where we work and produce value (Henri Lefebvre), what kind of societal transformations do these phenomena indicate? What are the economic and social transformations they manifest? And what new forms of relation do they entail? Has the family become obsolete?

In addition to this diagnostic perspective, the links between space, economy and ways of relating can be addressed from a political perspective. While recently brought up again by the debate on the abolition of the family, the question of the relation between these three fields has been put on the agenda time and again by artistic, reformist and revolutionary movements throughout history. For example, in Charleston Farmhouse, which was an important meeting place for the Bloomsbury Group outside London, the artists Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant and Roger Fry, who were entangled in a complex web of working and social relationships, created a place to live. Charleston Farmhouse both reflected their search for new ways of living that transgressed the social fabric of late Victorian society and provided an expressive framework for their form of life. Similarly, the architects of the English Garden Cities were convinced that a new building typology - the co-operative quadrangle - needed to be developed in order to both express and support the new spirit of cooperation. The “relationship between life style and life space” (Dolores Hayden) was also central for utopian socialists in the wake of Charles Fourier, Robert Owen and Edward Bellamy, who attempted to realise ideal concepts of communal living on a small scale in the US during the 19th century. How was the relationship between space, economy and form of life determined in projects like these? What hopes were conjured in them? What effects did they have on their residents' relationships and ways of working? What alternative models of living did they put to the test? What role did the design of these spaces play for these forms of living, working and relating? What can we learn from them today?

The workshop *Beyond the Family. Spatiality, Modes of (Re)Production and Forms of Life* invites scholars from the fields of art and cultural studies, architecture and architectural history, sociology and philosophy as well as economics to contribute to the twofold question outlined here: What are the contemporary developments in the regime of social reproduction that can be diagnosed using materialist concepts of space and what inspiration do historical experiments in collective living, working and economic organization offer us today?

The workshop will be held from **April 10 (from 2 pm) to April 11, 2025** at **Leuphana University Lüneburg**. The presentations (max. 20 minutes) should be shared with the other participants as draft papers by mid-March. A publication is planned; for this we request the manuscripts (25,000 characters and max. 8 images) by June 30, 2025 (this short timeline is dictated by a funding deadline). We ask prospective contributors to send an **abstract** (max. 300 words) by **November 28, 2024** to **kdk@leuphana.de**.