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# BEYOND THE FAMILY

SPATIALITY, MODES OF  
(RE)PRODUCTION AND FORMS  
OF LIFE

A WORKSHOP BY LIZA MATTUTAT AND  
BEATE SÖNTGEN

APR 10 – 11,  
2025



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## BEYOND THE FAMILY

SPATIALITY, MODES OF (RE)PRODUCTION  
AND FORMS OF LIFE

### PARTICIPANTS

Louis Breitsohl (LMU Munich)

Silvy Chakkalakal (University of Zürich)

Maria Teresa Costa (Leuphana University Lüneburg)

Marcus Döller (University of Erfurt)

Jo Eckert (HU Berlin)

Tobias Ertl (University of Freiburg)

Florian Kappeler (Berlin)

Paul A. Kottman (The New School, New York)

Livia von Samson (HU Berlin)

Brigitte Sölch (University of Heidelberg)

### ORGANIZATION

Liza Mattutat

Beate Söntgen

### COORDINATION

Catharina Berents Kemp

### ADMINISTRATION

Stephanie Braune

APR 10 – 11, 2024



Location

Footpath and cycle path

Passage blocked

Information

# VENUE

Leuphana Universität Lüneburg  
Universitätsallee 1  
21335 Lüneburg  
Central Building, C40.606

Please register by sending an email to  
**kdk@leuphana.de** by March 14, 2025.



# BEYOND THE FAMILY SPATIALITY, MODES OF (RE)PRODUCTION AND FORMS OF LIFE

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. The current shift in social reproduction goes along with spatial 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. 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?

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. How was the relationship between space, economy and form of life determined in these projects? How have artistic practices intervened in family models and alternative concepts of living? What can we learn from them today?

The workshop *Beyond the Family* invites scholars from the fields of art and cultural studies, architecture, literature, sociology and philosophy to contribute to this twofold question.

Please register by sending an email to **kdk@leuphana.de** by March 14, 2025.

Prior to the workshop, draft papers of the contributions will be sent to all participants for preparation.

# THURSDAY, APR 10

2.00–2.30 PM	<b>WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION</b> Liza Mattutat
<b>PANEL I</b>	<b>HAS THE FAMILY COME TO AN END?</b> Moderation: Liza Mattutat
2.30–3.15 PM	<b>LOVE AS HUMAN FREEDOM</b> Paul A. Kottman (The New School, New York)
<b>COFFEE BREAK</b>	
3.45–4.30 PM	<b>WHY FAMILY ABOLITION?</b> Livia von Samson (HU Berlin)
4.30–5.15 PM	<b>TRANSNATIONAL SURROGACY: THE ‘UNDERSIDE’ OF THE FAMILY WITHIN A GLOBAL REGIME OF REPRODUCTION</b> Jo Eckert (HU Berlin)
<b>COFFEE BREAK</b>	
5.45–6.30 PM	<b>QUEER FRIENDSHIP AS A MOMENT OF LIBERATION FROM THE FAMILY</b> Marcus Döller (University of Erfurt)
7.00 PM	Reception

# FRIDAY, APR 11

PANEL II		AESTHETIC REFLECTIONS Moderation: Beate Söntgen
10.00 – 10.45 AM	UNSETTLING KINSHIP: SPATIOTEMPORALITY OF (BROKEN) RELATIONS AT THE KOCHI-MUZIRIS BIENNALE Silvy Chakkalakal (University of Zürich)	
10.45 – 11.30 AM	“SOCIALIZATION ALL ALONG THE LINE”: LU MÄRTEN AND ELLA BERGMANN-MICHEL ON THE HOUSING QUESTION Tobias Ertl (University of Freiburg)	
COFFEE BREAK		
12.00 – 12.45 PM	QUEERING THE PROLETARIAN HOUSEHOLD. THE CASE OF MARIA EINSMANN Florian Kappeler (Berlin)	
LUNCH BREAK		
PANEL III		PROJECTS (UN)DONE Moderation: Melcher Ruhkopf
1.45 – 2.30 PM	THINKING OF HOMES BEYOND THE FAMILY MODEL AND THE SUPREMACY OF MAN Maria Teresa Costa (Leuphana University Lüneburg)	
2.30 – 3.15 PM	HOUSE, HOME, STREET 1972+: BETWEEN CRITICAL THEORY AND THE ART OF EXPERIENCE Brigitte Sölch (University of Heidelberg)	
COFFEE BREAK		
3.45 – 4.30 PM	BETWEEN SHIP OR PALACE? A HOUSING UTOPIA OF THE WORKING-CLASS FAMILY Louis Breitsohl (LMU Munich)	
4.45 PM	End of the event	

# BETWEEN SHIP OR PALACE? A HOUSING UTOPIA OF THE WORKING-CLASS FAMILY

Louis Breitsohl  
(LMU Munich)

The family was in crisis. At the beginning of the last century, the city of Amsterdam encountered a challenge that extended beyond just work and housing issues and evolved into a central concern for families: many working class men chose to spend their evenings in pubs and bars, often squandering their earnings while their wives and children waited at home. This high level of alcohol consumption inevitably had significant repercussions for the families. The moral and political concerns surrounding the drinking habits of the working class ultimately provided the backdrop for the emergence of one of the most ambitious and revolutionary architectural icons of the 20th century. Build from 1919 till 1921 by architect Michel de Klerk, the housing complex Het Ship sheltered not only 82 habitations, a primary school and a post office, but an agglomerate of utopian promises and symbolic over-determinations. In my paper, I aim to explore the intersection of utopian ideals and their symbolic expression through architectural form.

**Louis Breitsohl** is a PhD candidate at LMU Munich. Their scientific and artistic work focuses on mental images and agential scenes, queerfeminist and intersectional theories of affect, psychoanalytic theory and historiographic film aesthetics.

# UNSETTLING KINSHIP: SPATIOTEMPORALITY OF (BROKEN) RELATIONS AT THE KOCHI-MUZIRIS BIENNALE

Silvy Chakkalakkal  
(University of Zürich)

Starting point is an ethnographic approach to India's largest event for contemporary art, the Kochi-Muziris Biennale, founded in 2012. My project examines the utopian/dystopian designs of postcolonial poetics and interventions in the global art field. How can we understand the aesthetics of relation and queer kinship, reparative archives, fractured homelands, and diasporic biographies within the current conjuncture of intervening arts? The Kochi-Muziris Biennale is of particular interest in this regard, as its program and mediation formats strongly engage with local networks in the Global South, especially in Kerala — for instance, through the Students' Biennale, which explicitly supports young (Malayali) artists.

**Silvy Chakkalakkal** has held the Chair of Popular Literatures and Media at the Department of Social Anthropology and Cultural Studies (ISEK) at the University of Zurich (UZH) since August 1, 2023. Until 2023, she was a board member of the Collaborative Research Center (SFB) 1512 *Intervening Arts*, where she is involved in three subprojects. She is an editor of *Geschichte der Gegenwart*. Her work is influenced by feminist, queer, and postcolonial theory.

# THINKING OF HOMES BEYOND THE FAMILY MODEL AND THE SUPREMACY OF MAN

**Maria Teresa Costa**  
(Leuphana University  
Lüneburg)

Philosophy and architecture have always dealt with the concept of space. While the field of architecture has traditionally focused on style, tectonics, and form and only in relatively recent times has put its focus on the question of how human beings interact with and within space, philosophy has ever since centered on this topic. Engaging philosophy with architecture can help us to look at similar questions from different perspectives, to better understand both our past and our present. Starting from this framework, the paper aims to think about homes as spaces in which we define ourselves as human beings. How to think of homes in the light of the crisis of the family model and its relative household economy on the one side, and of the ecological emergency on the other side? How can we develop new models of (co)habitations beyond familiar boundaries and beyond the supremacy of the human being? To address these inquiries, a interdisciplinary dialogue between philosophy and architecture will be initiated, drawing upon Emanuele Coccia's *Philosophy of the Home* and Stefano Boeri's *Vertical Forest*.

**Maria Teresa Costa** is currently serving as Managing Professor of Contemporary Philosophy at Leuphana University Lüneburg. Following the completion of her dissertation on Walter Benjamin at the University of Padua, she held positions in several research institutions worldwide. Her research is situated at the intersection of philosophy, art history, and the history of science.

# QUEER FRIENDSHIP AS A MOMENT OF LIBERATION FROM THE FAMILY

Marcus Döller  
(University of Erfurt)

Recently Geoffroy de Lagasnerie wrote a book about friendship as counter-institution for the politicization of the modes of reproduction within the capitalist form of life. The idea is that friendship can be seen in radical in opposition to both, the heterosexual family, and the academic practice of anonymous writing. In the conception of queer friendship in contrast de Lagasnerie explores a mode of autobiographical writing that creates a counter-moment against these two hegemonial practices. In the talk I am going to construct queer friendship as an oppositional practice of critical thinking and writing together, that interrupts the heteronormative order and challenges the way in which the family is still central to the social reproduction of our form of life in capitalism today. In contrast, queer friendship is able to construct counter-experiences of a social perception that interrupts and transgresses the social reproduction within the family by creating its own style of autobiographical writing and thinking.

**Marcus Döller** is a PhD candidate at the IGS *Resonant Self-World Relations in Ancient and Modern Socio-Religious Practices* at the Max-Weber-Kolleg, Erfurt. His research focuses on the interplay between subjective autonomy and institutional practices.

# TRANSNATIONAL SURROGACY: THE 'UNDERSIDE' OF THE FAMILY WITHIN A GLOBAL REGIME OF REPRODUCTION

**Jo Eckert**  
(HU Berlin)

To address the contemporary regime of social reproduction, it is indispensable to account for its spatial configuration as global. I argue that the modern reproductive stratification, as it manifests within the phenomenon of surrogacy as a transnational industry, stabilises the naturalization of the family. The family, as privatized mode of social reproduction, relies on "external" reproductive labor that is rendered invisible. The prevention of gestational workers from physically (or discursively as speakers) appearing in the same space is a new manifestation of this constellation. The global spatiality of modern reproductive stratification within surrogacy, therefore, stabilises the naturalization of the family. Since the very existence of this industry, at the same time, reveals the crisis of the naturalization, the recognition of the exploited reproductive workers would have denaturalizing potential. This prompts the question of how emancipatory struggles can address the global regime of reproduction, which, nonetheless, is regulated within national legal frameworks.

**Jo Eckert** is a Master's student in Philosophy at Humboldt University of Berlin, with primary research interests in feminist philosophy and critical social theory. For their Master's thesis, Jo investigates the connection between gendering/sexing and the societal organization of reproduction via the feminization of pregnancy.

# “SOCIALIZATION ALL ALONG THE LINE”: LU MÄRTEN AND ELLA BERGMANN-MICHEL ON THE HOUSING QUESTION

**Tobias Ertl**  
(University of Freiburg)

In 1919 the socialist art critic and theorist Lu Märten demanded a “socialization all along the line”. According to Märten, Communist revolution would not only abolish private property and class relations, but crucially transform social life. In her writings, Märten inextricably linked the expanded notion of artistic labor producing utilitarian aesthetic forms with a repurposing of the norms and activities that constituted the gendered subjectivities of modern capitalism, and its nucleus, the bourgeois family. The issue of housing, in its economic as well as aesthetic dimensions, is key to this renegotiation of social space. Architecture and urban planning as material intersection between (infra)structures of social reproduction and aesthetic life forms, are also central to Ella Bergmann-Michel’s filmic work from the early 1930s, such as her experimental documentary film *Wo wohnen alte Leute* (1932). Drawing on the work of the two women, I will discuss art and aesthetics as a privileged site for the socialization of the household economy.

**Tobias Ertl** is a postdoctoral researcher in the SNF-funded project (Schweizerischer Nationalfonds) *Real Abstractions: Reconsidering Realism's Role for the Present*. In 2023 he completed his PhD on Melanie Gilligans at the University of Fribourg’s Art History Seminar, where he also worked as a research assistant (2019–2023).

# QUEERING THE PROLETARIAN HOUSEHOLD. THE CASE OF MARIA EINSMANN

Florian Kappeler  
(Berlin)

In 1931/32 the case of Maria Einsmann attracted a great deal of media attention. For a decade, she had successfully pretended to be her former husband while living with her friend Helene Müller and her two children. The case was taken up in several stories and film scripts, including Bertolt Brecht's *Der Arbeitsplatz* (1933) and Anna Seghers' *Der sogenannte Rendel* (1940). Since the 1970s, several new film adaptations have been made (*Tod und Auferstehung des Wilhelm Hausmann*, 1978; *Katharina oder: Die Kunst Arbeit zu finden*, 1995; *Frau Vater*, 2021) as well as a radio and a theater play. The paper will focus on the presentation of the case in Seghers' novella, with a few excursions to other texts. It will show how the two women's way of life and reproduction, their spatial organization and their new division of care and paid work are depicted. The question is to what extent it can be understood as a solidary practice of coping with capitalist circumstances beyond the patriarchal family, and to what extent the proletarian household is thereby queered.

**Florian Kappeler** is a literary scholar. He habilitated at the University of Potsdam in 2022 with a study of German literature on the Haitian Revolution. In 2024, he organized the establishment of the working group *Political Aesthetics* at Literaturforum im Brecht-Haus and is currently coordinating a project on Anna Seghers. His research interests include the literature of modern revolutions, literature and masculinity, narratology, mediality, literary theory and theories of practice.

# LOVE AS HUMAN FREEDOM

Paul A. Kottman  
(The New School, New York)

Critiques of so-called 'bourgeois' marriage are legion; compelling vindications of its social-historical significance are very few. My paper will consider the validity of such vindications, as well as their limitations and continued relevance. I will concentrate partly on a critical assessment of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, with some remarks dedicated to Marx and Engels. But I will also discuss what I see as a feminist-queer alternative to that philosophical tradition, which I track in the emergence of the modern novel and its treatment of the bourgeois-nuclear family, childbirth, sexual liberation and adultery, especially from Jane Austen through the novels of the 1960s. The fate of such philosophical and literary discourses since the 1960s will also be discussed.

**Paul A. Kottman** is Professor of Comparative Literature at the New School for Social Research, where he is Chair of the Committee on Liberal Studies and co-director of the Institute for Philosophy and the New Humanities. He is currently a fellow at the New Institute in Hamburg, where he is working on the aesthetic origins of ethical value.

# WHY FAMILY ABOLITION?

**Livia von Samson**  
(HU Berlin)

Queer, Marxist, Black and Indigenous feminists call for the abolition of the family. But what exactly do they want to abolish, and why? If “family” refers to any group of kin, the call to abolish the family loses its appeal. Kinship is a valuable and necessary component of social reproduction. If “family” refers only to arrangements which systematically harm women and children, calls for the abolition of such arrangements become trivial. Anyone would agree that a harmful family is to be abolished. I argue that the call to abolish the family thus applies to the family as a social institution, which includes seemingly benign families. I take it that the family, as institution, is defined by the following three features: i) the privatization of social reproduction, ii) the reinforcement of the romantic couple form, and iii) the prioritization of bio-genetic kinship. What is more, by engaging closely with Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*, I posit that the family promises certain goods which are central to modern, Western society. It promises to be the primary site where autonomy, self-determination, and non-alienation are experienced and instilled in children. Insofar as the family is structurally unable to realize these goods, which I argue it is, due to its aforementioned features, it fails on its own terms.

**Livia von Samson** is a PhD candidate at Humboldt-University, Berlin. Their research focusses on topics in critical social theory, feminism, and epistemology (and their various intersections). They studied philosophy and music in Heidelberg, Berlin, Oxford, and Cambridge (MA).

# HOUSE, HOME, STREET 1972+: BETWEEN CRITICAL THEORY AND THE ART OF EXPERIENCE

Brigitte Sölch  
(University of Heidelberg)

What possibilities for thinking beyond the family emerge when we look through the lens of 1972+ at very different projects and reflections that deal with categories like house, home, and street? Among them are (feminist) discussions of the shared house, bell hooks' reflections on the home from an intersectional perspective, the eco-critical re-conceptualization of the street (as in Milan), and the transformation of spatial "voids" beneath street intersections (Bonnie Sherk's Crossroad Community in California). These projects not only touch on the complex relationship between "private" and "public", but can also be seen as a constellation – one that is shaped by the approach to ecological challenges and the limits of growth, and that addresses the aesthetic and social dimensions of Do-it-Yourself. The aim of my talk is to reflect on the critical potential of these projects, not without focusing on the value of experience – as such, and in relation to John Dewey's *Art of Experience* (1934) and its democratic idea(l)s.

**Brigitte Sölch** is Professor of Architectural and Modern Art History at the University of Heidelberg. She is co-founder of the DFG network *Wege – Methoden – Kritiken: Kunsthistorikerinnen 1880–1970* (HU Berlin) and co-editor of the *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*. Her research focuses on the history of art and architecture from the 15th to the 21st century.

## ORGANIZERS

**Liza Mattutat** is a postdoc at the DFG Research Training Group *Cultures of Critique*, where she completed her doctorate in 2021 with a thesis on feminist legal criticism. She is a member of the Steering Committee of the Center for Critical Studies (CCS). Her research interests include critical theory, feminist theory, philosophy of law and materialist perspectives on care work.

**Beate Söntgen** is Professor of Art History at Leuphana University Lüneburg. She is the spokesperson of the DFG Research Training Group *Cultures of Critique* (DFG-GRK 2114) and PI of *Artistic way of Life as Intervention* (DFG-SFB 1512 *Intervening Arts*, FU Berlin). Publications on modern and contemporary art, art theory and art criticism.

## MODERATOR

**Melcher Ruhkopf** is a PhD candidate at the DFG Research Training Group *Cultures of Critique*. His PhD project deals with the critical potential of maritime museums and port museums, merging debates from museum studies and critical logistics theory. He has a background in urban studies and cultural studies and a longstanding interest in theories of space and subjectivation.

## NOTES





# **BEYOND THE FAMILY** SPATIALITY, MODES OF (RE)PRODUCTION AND FORMS OF LIFE

## **VENUE**

Leuphana Universität Lüneburg  
Universitätsallee 1  
21335 Lüneburg  
Central Building, C40.606

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