

Call for Papers ‘Rethinking Social Reproduction in the Environmental Crisis’

University of Cambridge, Department of Sociology, 30th June 2020.

Organisers: **Carolina Topini** (PhD researcher, Institute of Gender Studies, University of Geneva, Switzerland; visiting PhD researcher in history, University of Cambridge, UK) **Elisabeth Sandler** (PhD researcher, Reproductive Sociology Research Group (ReproSoc), Department of Sociology, University of Cambridge, UK), **Aideen O’Shaughnessy** (PhD researcher, ReproSoc) and **Marlyse Debergh** (PhD researcher, Institute of Sociological Research, University of Geneva, Switzerland; Visiting PhD researcher at ReproSoc)

From Silvia Federici to Angela Davis, marxist feminist theorists of political economy have demonstrated the historical contingency of the hierarchical sexual and racial division of labour, characteristic of contemporary capitalism. The consolidation of industrial capitalism, Davis explains, saw a split between the new ‘economic sphere’ and what was formerly the ‘home economy’, now recast as a devalued ‘domestic sphere’ to be presided over by the modern (bourgeois) housewife (Davis 1981). It has been the remit of ‘social reproduction’ scholars, like Silvia Federici, to make clear this dependency of capitalist production on this “particular type of family, sexuality, procreation” (Federici 2013, 90). Contemporaneously, environmental reproductive justice activists have demarcated how the heteronormative family structure is bound up in “environmentally dangerous social and economic practices”, Noël Sturgeon describing how the ‘American family’ relies not only on the unpaid domestic labour of women but on a broader model of suburban consumerism entailing “fuel-intensive transportation” and the “promotion of women as shoppers” (Sturgeon 2010, 107).

This conference seeks to rethink the relations between white heterocapitalist patriarchy and environmental destruction through a re-engagement with the politics of social reproduction. The scholarship cited here argues that the social and political organisation of the ‘family’ has ramifications in terms of sexual and gender politics, as well as impacting directly upon the environment in potentially negative ways. In response, feminist theorists such as Donna Haraway have called for imagining “alternative ways of living and dying in response-ability on a damaged earth” (Haraway 2016, 2). As Hazel Carby has pointed out, however, the concepts of ‘family’, ‘patriarchy’ and ‘reproduction’ have more complex, and sometimes contradictory effects when applied to the lives of women of colour (Carby 2005). For some, ‘making babies’ (as opposed to ‘kin’) can be an act of resistance in a context which has historically pathologized the structures of black or indigenous families (Lewis 2017). Moreover, the ability to radically transform the mechanisms and relations of social reproduction in one’s own life is mediated by both socio-economic and embodied condition(s).

This conference aims to engage with these conflicts, and more, calling into conversation queer, transnationalist and intersectional feminist perspectives on social reproduction in the age of environmental destruction. This is a one-day conference which aims to attract early career researchers – namely PhD students and post-doctoral researchers, in the UK and beyond. We welcome empirical, theoretical and methodological contributions from various social science perspectives (gender and feminist studies, sociology, anthropology, political science, history etc.). Please send your abstracts (no longer than 300 words) with your name and institution to ‘conference@sociology.cam.ac.uk’. The deadline for submissions is 1st April 2020.

Bibliography:

Davis, A. 1981. *Gender Race and Class*, New York: Random House.

Carby, H. 2005. (1982). “White woman listen! Black feminism and the boundaries of sisterhood.” in Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in 70s Britain*. Oxon: Routledge.

Federici, S. 2013. “The Reproduction of Labour Power in the Global Economy, Marxist Theory and the Unfinished Feminist Revolution.” in Atzeni, M. *Workers and Labour in a Globalised Capitalism*, London: Red Globe Press.

Lewis, S. 2017. “Cthulu plays no role for me.” *Viewpoint Magazine* accessed @ <https://www.viewpointmag.com/2017/05/08/ctulhu-plays-no-role-for-me/>, February 27th, 2020.

Sturgeon, N. 2010, “Penguin Family Values: The Nature of Planetary Environmental Reproductive Justice.” in Erikson, B. & Mortimer-Sandilands, C. *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.