

CALL FOR PROPOSALS – SOCIAL REPRODUCTION SUMMER SCHOOL

29th June–4th July–2025

The Hidden Abode of Social Reproduction: Community, Activism, Art, and Theory

In a capitalist system, a substantial amount of work often remains hidden, undervalued, or even goes uncompensated. This is frequently seen in tasks referred to as "labour of love" or dismissed as non-work. A key component of this invisible labour is associated with social reproduction, which includes the essential activities involved in nurturing life and maintaining the well-being of individuals and communities daily and across generations. Such work encompasses caregiving, household management, and emotional support — tasks that are vital for upholding the fabric of society but are often overlooked and unrecognised.

Perspectives on social reproduction represent a comprehensive field that aims to highlight the significance of often-neglected forms of reproductive labour for capital accumulation. These perspectives examine the complex relationships between economic exploitation, socially oppressive systems, and value-generating processes. They have been crucial in demonstrating that historical capital accumulation relied heavily on the exploitation of women, enslaved individuals, and colonies, who have typically been categorised as unproductive labourers within Marxist theory.

Since the late 1960s and 1970s, Marxist feminist activists and scholars have examined the contradictory relationship between capitalism and social reproduction. They have highlighted the conflict between capitalism's economic demands and the needs of social reproduction. This interplay between market and non-market relationships within capitalist development was vividly illustrated by the London-based art collective See Red Women's Workshop. In their famous 1976 poster titled "Capitalism Also Depends on Domestic Labour," they creatively depicted the connection between the reproduction of human beings and the production of factory goods. The poster shows women working on a metaphorical household conveyor belt, from which human beings flow directly to a

factory conveyor belt. This imagery emphasises the concept of an invisible social factory made up of unseen, atomised, and unpaid female workers, essential for the continuous production and reproduction of the labour force. Similarly, later international campaigns advocating for and against wages for housework aimed to challenge the perception of social reproduction as a voluntary and affective activity while advocating for the development of collective modes and infrastructures of care.

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in activist, artistic, and theoretical engagement with social reproduction approaches across various social movements and disciplines. This interest builds on earlier traditions of social reproduction feminism and feminist political economy. The growing focus on this framework is closely linked to its relevance in critically examining the interconnected crises that have emerged since the 2008 Great Recession. It effectively highlights how people's lives and livelihoods have been transformed, particularly regarding provisioning, caregiving, and the social interactions essential for fostering individual well-being and maintaining social connections.

THE SCHOOL

The school adopts a broad methodological approach because our topic encompasses multiple dimensions of life.

We will gather for five days to engage in critical discussions about social reproduction across four primary dimensions: community, activism, art, and theory. The school is designed to be a space for mutual learning, where participants are encouraged to contribute to our understanding of the present while collectively envisioning an emancipated future. The summer school will be a valuable platform for graduate students, researchers, artists, community organisers, and anyone interested in social reproduction to explore vital questions emerging from this field critically.

We invite participants to engage with the following questions:

What is social reproduction, and how are our conditions of existence affected by the modes of provision?

How is social reproduction organised?

What occurs when societies place more value on "production" than on "reproduction"?

In what ways does the exploitation of reproductive labour contribute to the deterioration of the global commons?

If we accept that a significant amount of care work and domestic labour is unpaid, what might potential solutions and alternatives look like?

How have changes in national regimes of social reproduction impacted contemporary restrictions on the movement of people?

How can we cultivate solidarity between productive and reproductive struggles to build a unified workers' movement?

In what ways is the increasing emphasis on the traditional nuclear family and pro-life discourses threatening LGBTQI+ lives and reproductive rights?

What does the devaluation of care under capitalism mean for the right to live and to have a life worth living?

How can perspectives and approaches rooted in social reproduction be utilised to envision, define, and conceptualise post-capitalist, emancipatory social and political projects?

HOW

Over the course of five days, we will gather to share food, space, and experiences to stimulate meaningful discussions.

Participants who prefer working with text will have the opportunity to present their papers and engage in conversations with fellow activists, artists, and theorists in the field.

We strongly encourage interdisciplinary dialogues and believe that the integration of art, activism, and community organising represents valuable and exciting modes of knowledge production. We will host sessions where art, activism, and theory are closely connected.

The primary working language for this event will be English.

WHERE

The Summer School will take place at Oficina Rua do Relógio.

Oficina Rua do Relógio is a social and cultural space. Born in Alcáçovas, at Rua do Relógio, in a house that was until then a family home of Mr. João Ilhéu. A house and a shoemaker's workshop turned into a space for various crafts. People gather in this workshop. People with a desire to learn, to make and to share. To make with the local people and to bring people to the place. Alcáçovas is a small village in the Alentejo region of Portugal, known for being the site where a historical peace treaty was signed between Portugal and Spain at the end of the 15th century. This authentic gem features beautiful vernacular architecture, a Renaissance palace with charming gardens, and a famous cowbell industry that is recognised as an intangible cultural heritage. The village also boasts a renowned pastry tradition. Surrounding Alcáçovas are scenic villages and cities, including Évora, a UNESCO World Heritage site just 30 minutes away, which is well worth a visit.

We invite you to submit a one-page cover letter outlining your interest in the summer school and a short mini-bio, plus an abstract of your project, topic, concern, or essay (maximum of 800 words) by March 31, 2025 by email: coop@oficinaruadorelogio.com

The organising team is working towards making participation free of charge, aside from travel costs, and we will provide further details on this topic in due course.

In the meantime, do not hesitate to send us your proposal for participation and join us in Alcáçovas!

ORGANISING TEAM

António João Lima, Oficina Rua do Relógio

Camila Lobo, Nova University of Lisbon

Carlos Batista, Oficina Rua do Relógio & PhD student at University of Coimbra

Cristina Grande, Oficina Rua do Relógio & Serralves Foundation

Juan Luis Toboso, Oficina Rua do Relógio & ESAP

Luísa Veloso, Oficina Rua do Relógio & Iscte-University Institute of Lisbon

Mafalda Araújo, CICS.NOVA (FCSH)

Matthew Alexander, Master student at Iscte-University Institute of Lisbon

Miguel Duarte, Master student and invited professor at Iscte-University Institute of Lisbon
Patrícia Matos, CRIA-ISCTE-IUL & FCSH/Universidade Nova de Lisboa
Pedro Rocha, Oficina Rua do Relógio & Serralves Foundation
Tracy Denfeld, Master student at University of Sunderland