



The Leverhulme Trust



## Call for Papers: *In the Regions of Utopia*

**2<sup>nd</sup> Symposium of the Leverhulme International Research Network ‘Imaginarities of the Future’, Newcastle University, 28-30 June 2015.**

What place is there for the unique and multifaceted identities of regions in a globalised world? How might we theorise a sustainable concept of the local that could survive into the future? How do online communities affect our experiences of the local?

The second symposium of the ‘Imaginarities of the Future’ research network seeks to investigate what the concepts of local and regional identity might mean in the future. One of our key objectives is to explore these concepts in a way that avoids the risk of becoming either exclusionary and inward-facing, a mere neoliberal branding exercise, or morbidly nostalgic. Cities across the world from Bilbao (Spain), to Newcastle-Gateshead (UK) to Baku (Azerbaijan) have paradoxically attempted to assert their identity through a kind of ‘sameness’ by the construction of so-called ‘icon’ buildings and the attraction of multinational chains to every high street. In this context, are the concepts of local and regional identity hopelessly utopian in a negative sense as inward-facing or morbidly nostalgic, or can they open up a utopian prospect in the more positive sense of being dynamic, inclusive and provisional?

Politically, a focus on the local is not without risk. Local communities may gather in a particular location precisely as a means to create an enclave of acceptance, recognition and support within an intolerant society. The ‘temporary autonomous zones’ of protest movements from Copenhagen to Kowloon are anticipatory, establishing sites of pre-figurative transformation. Yet both can often seem unable to affect broader and lasting social change. More problematically, identity politics based on “dwelling” and *belonging* to a fixed social group or place can easily slide into a hierarchical politics of insiders versus outsiders. Such issues are rooted not only in academic theory, but also in the embodied experience of the everyday or *quotidian*. How do communities (whether in cultural forms such as theatre, in person, or virtual) maintain and promote a sense of locality through everyday interaction?

While regional identity can be a product of and represented by such things as the built environment, topography, local dialect and languages, visual arts, music, dance, film, literary expression or cuisine, none of these things alone, or even together, guarantees a survival of the local, which suggests that something else *must* be in play. It is precisely this problem that the symposium seeks to understand.

We seek initial proposals of 250-300 words from all disciplines in the Arts & Humanities (and beyond) for papers, presentations or performances of up to 20 minutes in length. Please send all proposals to [adam.stock@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:adam.stock@ncl.ac.uk) by 15 February 2015.

### **Bursaries**

Five travel bursaries, two of up to £1000, and three of up to £350, will be awarded through open competition to individuals who promise to make a significant contribution to the work of the Network by leading part of the symposium. The larger bursaries are intended for applicants traveling a significant distance to attend the symposium. We welcome submissions from all career stages including PhD researchers. Applicants may propose:

- (a) An interactive workshop in any form of under 1 hour in length.
- (b) A focused discussion on a specific topic, relevant to the symposium, based upon a piece of their own work, which will be circulated to participants in advance.

To apply for a bursary, please send a CV and proposal of up to 500 words, which should outline both your method of delivery and content. Relevant images/apps/reading material/sound files etc. may be appended if required, or for files over 5mb, a link to a cloud-based file sharing service such as Dropbox or Google Drive. Please be sure to specify whether your workshop requires any special preparation, technologies, materials, or spaces. The presentation of scholarly papers in bursary recipient sessions is not permitted.