

Call for Contributions

Utopia at the Border

The fourth symposium of the Imaginaries of the Future
Research Network

University of Regensburg, 20-22nd September 2016

'There was a wall. It did not look important...' – Ursula Le
Guin, *The Dispossessed*

*'[We seek]...a world without borders, where no one is
prevented from moving because of where you were born, or
because of race, class or economic resources...'* – No
Borders UK

*'We resolve...to strengthen control over our territories and
to not permit the entry of any government functionary nor of
a single transnational corporation.'* – *The Confederation of
Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador*

Borders are a key feature of our present. Whether national, regional, physical, electronic, cognitive, performative or cultural, they unevenly regulate the movement of bodies, ideas, objects, capital and bytes. Geopolitical borders are

frequently sites of domination, but they may also provide solace for oppressed groups, some of whom actively call for or construct borders so they might protect their ways of living and advance their struggles. Conceptual borders allow us to grasp a complex world, but may inhibit understanding, communication and change. Temporal borders, meanwhile, seek to fix history into discrete categories of past, present and future.

Yet borders are not permanent. They remain a key site of contestation and struggle; and must continually be remade through technology, performance and often violence. And border crossings transform subjects, the space-times they leave, and the space-times they enter; as well as borders themselves. This means that utopianism – praxis that seeks to transform space and time – has much to offer contemporary ways of relating to borders. It can educate our desire for alternatives, and by showing us these alternatives – in fiction, theory or practice – estrange us from borders as they currently exist. The need for utopian rethinking and contestation of borders strikes us as particularly urgent given the current refugee crisis in Europe, and the continued role of borders in neocolonial dispossession around the

world. Yet whilst a utopian lens may have much to offer the thinking and practice of borders this does not mean that the utopian is without borders of its own. Indeed, despite a turn to ‘the horizon’ and process in recent utopian theory, borders play a key role in many fictional utopias and dystopias; in ‘real world’ utopian communities; and in definitions of utopia itself.

Utopia at the Border aims to consider the relationship between borders and the utopian. Borders are to be critically examined even as participants question their own relationships to borders through their work and travel. We would also like to think through what is gained and lost by extending the notion of borders beyond the geopolitical. We welcome papers of up to 20 minutes and are open to artistic or activist contributions; as well as to interventions that fall between or go beyond such boundaries. Please contact us if you would like to discuss this informally before submitting a proposal, or if you would like to take up more than 20 minutes. A special issue of the *Open Library of the Humanities* journal will be produced drawing on presentations from the symposium. This will form part of the Imaginaries of the Future publication series.

Papers may engage with one or more of the following aspects of borders, although this is by no means an exhaustive list:

The borders of utopia and dystopia

- Borders in utopian and dystopian texts
- The borders of utopian communities
- Anti-borders utopianism in theory, fiction and practice

Colonialism, Indigeneity and borders

- Colonial border construction and praxis
- Reservations
- Indigenous borders
- New and future borders: Antarctica, under the sea, extraterrestrial?

(Anti-)border technologies and practices

- Passports
- Walls, fences, barricades
- Raids, detention and deportation
- Metrics and biometrics
- Anti-borders activism

(Refusing) temporal borders

- The division of time into past, present and future
- Spatial borders as temporal borders
- Spatial history
- The 'not-yet', the immanent, the prefigurative

Borders, identity and the body

- Borders, race and racialization
- Non-conforming bodies at the border
- Affect at the border
- Mestiza and cross-border identities

Public space, the commons and enclosure

- Borders and the commons
- Gated communities
- Border technologies in urban space
- Vertical borders

Cross border (non-) communication

- Online borders
- Disciplinary and conceptual borders
- Censorship and gate-keeping

- Communication technologies and border activism

More-than-human/non-human borders

- Non-humans at the border
- Finance, goods and trade
- Wilderness, nature and ecology
- Chemical, biological and physical borders/boundaries

Art of the border; art at the border; art against the border

- The architecture and aesthetics of (former) border crossings
- Artistic performance and representation of/at borders, their crossings and their refusals
- Passport design

Beyond borders

- Non-state space; the state of exception
- Necropolitics and the border
- Exile and statelessness
- International waters

Struggles with and against borders

- Fortress Europe and the migrant crisis
- Border struggles and crossings in history, religion and myth
- Smuggling

Borders and labour

- Freedom of movement and 'the career'
- Borders and divisions of labour
- University staff as border agents

The Network

Questions about the future are usually either goal-oriented, presupposing specific outcomes; or presume that the future is impenetrable, rendering thinking about it as irrelevant or fanciful. Confronted with these modes of thinking, the Leverhulme Trust funded *Imaginations of the Future* Network investigates questions about the nature of futural knowledge; and seeks to understand how different disciplines conceptualise the future in order to enact change. Organised around a succession of international transdisciplinary encounters between leading and emerging scholars, artists, activists and others, the Network

intervenes in current disciplinary methods and approaches to questions about the future.

Cost

There is no fee to attend the symposium. Lunches and refreshments will be provided during the days of the symposium.

Bursaries

Five bursaries – **two of up to £1,000, and three of up to £350** – will be awarded through open competition to individuals who wish to contribute to the symposium. These can be used to cover food, travel and accommodation costs, but can only be reclaimed after the symposium upon production of receipts. The larger bursaries are intended for applicants traveling a significant distance to attend the symposium. We welcome submissions from all academic career stages, as well as from non academics. Bursary recipients will be expected to contribute a piece of writing and/or media for the Network blog. **If you would like to apply for a bursary** please clearly state this with your proposal, and state whether you are applying for up to £350

or up to £1,000. Please also attach a CV (if a CV is not appropriate to convey the experiences you would draw on in presenting, please email david.bell@ncl.ac.uk before applying).

Proposals

Please send proposals (up to 300 words) to nathaniel.coleman@ncl.ac.uk, david.bell@ncl.ac.uk and kenneth.hanshew@sprachlit.uni-regensburg.de. Please indicate in your email if you would be interested in contributing to the special journal issue, which would have a deadline in spring 2017. **The deadline for proposals is midnight (BST) on Sunday June 12th.**

If you have any questions about this call please email david.bell@ncl.ac.uk