

Mobilities and Utopias: Historically and Today

Call for Panel Contributions

What can we learn from the history of relations between mobilities and utopia? How has the concept of utopia been “mobilized” through specific geographies, travels, and ways of moving? Literary accounts of utopia traditionally hinge on some sense of distance, and the implied mobility needed to cross that distance, with the classics being Thomas More’s *Utopia* (1516) and Francis Bacon’s *New Atlantis* (1627) set in faraway places, often imagined as islands. Yet literary scholar J.H. Pearl also notes the ways in which Daniel Defoe’s work “smuggles utopia home”, such as Robinson Crusoe’s return home, or his radical character Captain Singleton’s re-creation of the egalitarian sea-borne life of pirates back in England, thereby “unsettling our notion of the totality of state power to which his utopias are opposed.” *

In what ways are such proximate utopias possible today? How are utopias enacted through new experiments engaging in alternative mobilities, subversive mobilities, low-carbon mobility transitions, and intentional communities built around various kinds of sharing, commons, and mobility justice? Potential topics include:

- Mobilities within imagined and historical utopian communities and communes
- Subversive mobility practices as enacted utopias (e.g., 18th century Piracy, 19th century Underground Railway, 20th century Travelers)
- Mobility and place in the forming of “intentional communities” often in remote places
- Car-free living and active transport as a “proximate utopian” way of life
- Slow travel and tourism alternatives
- Food justice, Fairtrade, urban farming, and local food mobilities
- Transition Towns in relation to mobilities
- Permaculture in relation to mobilities

Submission

Please send your 300 word abstract and 100 word biographical note to Mimi Sheller by **April 12th**.

Further information about the Mobile Utopia: Past, Present and Future conference can be found at: <http://wp.lancs.ac.uk/t2mc2c/>

Panel Organiser

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* Pearl, J.H. (2017) “Defoe and the Distance to Utopia”, *The Public Domain Review*, Accessed 2 February 2017, <http://publicdomainreview.org/2017/01/25/defoe-and-the-distance-to-utopia/>. See also J.H. Pearl, *Utopian Geographies and the Early English Novel* (University of Virginia Press, 2014); Frederic Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (Verso, 2007); and Ruth Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia* (Peter Lang, 2011).