

Mobile Utopia 1851-20 1

Call for a Participatory Artwork

Mobile Utopia 1851-20 1 seeks to develop a deeper understanding of mobile utopias (and dystopias), and to creatively analyse and explore these. Critically, 'mobile utopias' are not transport utopias. Communicative, imaginative, embodied and disembodied, utopian and dystopian mobilities of information, people, goods, ideas as well as practices of immobilising, obstructions, borders, stasis, slowness intersect in the making of pasts, presents, futures. The project is part of the Arts and Humanities Research Council's (AHRC) *Connected Communities Festival*, which takes place from March – June 2016, and it is linked to celebrations of the 500th Anniversary of Thomas More's *Utopia* (see <https://connected-communities.org/index.php/about/utopia-500/>). The research will culminate in a high profile exhibition in the J Edmond Safra Fountain Court at Somerset House.

The project is conceived as research co-creation, with close involvement from different communities in Lancaster and Birmingham. The interdisciplinary group of researchers led by Nick Dunn, Professor of Urban Design, includes Monika Büscher, Lynne Pearce, Nicola Spurling, and Carlos López Galviz. We will carry out a range of activities, including two workshops and a final exhibition.

This is an open call for proposals from artists on the theme of Mobile Utopia 1851-2051. We are looking for an individual or a group of artists who can mobilise the idea of utopia in a fun, playful and inclusive way that will encourage participation from, and increase sharing of insights with, communities, that will transgress boundaries between past and future, and bring scholarly enquiry into deep conversation with everyday expertise, art and design, industry and policy. This could involve a wide range of visual, sculptural, multimedia, performance, spoken word or digital practices.

The ambition of the project is to increase engagement with communities in and around Lancaster, Birmingham and London through a series of small-scale engagements, several workshops and a stall at the Utopia Fair on 24-26 June, in the Edmund J Safra Fountain Court, Somerset House, London. Co-creating output should produce a participatory artwork that can travel between the three locations. This project will take place between April and September 2016 (over 6 months).

The opportunity is open to artists based in and around Lancaster, or artists who are able to spend at least one month (broken into shorter stays) at Lancaster University. Applicants should be able to demonstrate a strong commitment to their artistic practice and evidence of a body of work and strong track record. Applicants should ideally have experience of leading and delivering workshops.

Please find a detailed artist brief on the subsequent pages.





Application process

To apply please send the following information to Amanda Fenwick no later than 5pm on 1st April 2016 – Email: a.fenwick@lancaster.ac.uk:

- A written statement detailing (a) how your past and/or current practice connects to the theme of Mobile Utopia 1851-2051 and (b) your concept for a participatory artwork on the same theme. Please include details in your statement of how you would consider replicating, transporting and displaying the artwork in different settings. (1000 words maximum).
- An up-to-date 2-page CV including contact details for two referees.
- Up to six images of your previous work or workshop outputs (Jpegs no larger than 1MB each) with the titles of the work/workshop as the file name.

Useful Resources

- AHRC Connected Communities Festival 2016 <https://connected-communities.org/index.php/about/utopia-500/>
- The call for research proposals <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/documents/calls/2016-connected-communittees-eoi-call/>
- Utopia 2016: A Year of Imagination and Possibility <http://utopia2016.com/>
- The Utopia Treasury at Somerset House: <http://pleasedonotbend.co.uk/client/somerset-house/>
- Somerset House Floorplan (the Fair will be in the Courtyard) – attached as Appendix I
- Further Information on Mobile Utopia <http://wp.lancs.ac.uk/mobility-futures/mobile-utopia/>



Artists' Brief

Mobile Utopia 1851 - 2051

Introduction

Utopias of mobility are back. From the well known examples of Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Münster and Bogotá through to the more recent progressive plans for Helsinki, Hyderabad and Davis, the Festival of the Future City (Bristol 2015) and the Car-free city thought experiment Birmingham, cities are taking the lead in re-imagining physical, communicative mobilities of people, food, information, ideas, capital and resources. Common to these are ways of thinking about a future where CO2 emissions are no longer the norm. Structures of governance, policy, everyday practice and communities are key to the success or failure of this kind of initiatives. Critically, 'mobile utopias' are not transport utopias. Communicative, imaginative, embodied and disembodied, utopian and dystopian mobilities of information, people, goods, ideas as well as practices of immobilising, obstructions, borders, stasis, slowness intersect in the making of pasts, presents, futures.

The Institute for Social Futures is an interdisciplinary hub for futures research focused on the essential social dimensions of futures, inspiring the need to narrate the utopian everyday and its varied mobilities, and identifying their relationships to past utopias, path dependencies and unrealised past futures. Its Methodology Lab provides a physical space and methodological hub that deploys an innovative understanding of utopia as method in combination with art and design methods, mobile, inventive, and co-creation methods, and historical and literary methods for engagement. By connecting the utopian everyday as it may be narrated by specific communities with commercial and policy concerns and practices, Mobile Utopias allows us to mix a range of methods in order to identify the opportunities and challenges of emergent and desired futures as they become available to people through their own experiences. Our approach is designed to facilitate leaps of imagination and actionable creativity, bridging different perspectives from communities, academics, industry and policy; joining the social and the technical, the virtual and the material, the imagined and the engineered. The Centre for Mobilities Research (Cemore) and Mobilities.Lab provide theoretical and methodological resources and equipment for mobile research. The Insight Centre and Imagination, a design and innovation hub at Lancaster, provide applied design research methods and artistic creative research. The Disability Centre is a vehicle for widening and deepening engagement with communities with special needs and capabilities.

Aims

The project activities pursue three aims. First, we want to engage communities and partner organisations creatively and critically in mobility futures and the role that utopian thinking can play in the process. Second, we want to document and learn from the experience, and build upon existing and ongoing collaborations in Lancaster through the Catalyst project and Birmingham through the Liveable Cities project (<http://www.catalystproject.org.uk>, <http://liveablecities.org.uk/>), and in Lancaster and London through the Creative Exchange project (<http://www.thecreativeexchange.org>). Third, we wish to develop sustainable collaborations and a follow-on project - Mobility Futures, an international interdisciplinary project led by Lancaster's Institute for Social Futures and Centre for Mobilities Research, addressing national RCUK calls and H2020 calls from the European Commission.



The Commission

The Institute for Social Futures will commission an individual artist or a group of artists over the duration of the project (March – September 2016) to co-design and participate in a series of inspiring, thought-provoking, insight-enabling and fun set of activities. The artists will create a participatory artwork in the context of this research. Plans include the activities below. Artists would be expected to spend time at Lancaster to prepare for activities and to debrief after the events.

Small-scale engagements (March – June 2016)

Researchers are undertaking interviews and conversations with at least one individual in 6 different community and 6 industry and policy organisations, in some instances through small group creative research encounters (such as go-along interviews). Artists would be expected to participate in some of these engagements. 10 community participants will be invited to participate in the Mobile Utopia 1851-2051 workshop in Lancaster on 19 April 2016 and 4 will be asked to co-host the participatory art exhibition at the Utopia Fair on 24-26 June 2016.

Mobile Utopia 1851-2051 Workshop, Lancaster, 19th April 2016

Participants will be academics from different disciplines, artists, representatives from communities and policy or industry organisations. The commissioned artist and a Lancaster based design fiction team will participate in the organisation and running of the workshop and develop ideas for an artwork and design fictions with the participants and from the content and material produced. In our current plans, the workshop combines different activities, including short presentations, discussions and creative work in small groups, consideration and production of objects and visualisations. We will use utopia as a method to generate a research roadmap and a set of utopias. Ideas include asking participants to bring (or choose) an object to gift to the project that signifies mobility utopia for them and to narrate everyday utopias around them. This could be a supermarket loyalty card, a toy garage, a globe, - ideally the object should be small (please see <http://wp.lancs.ac.uk/mobility-futures/mobile-utopia/> for first results from experiments with this method), co-production of material for the artwork and design fiction and an 'instant journal' with visual material.

Campus in the City, Public Exhibition, Lancaster 18th May 2016

This is an exhibition and co-creation activity with members of the public, adding to the artwork and design fictions. It could take shape along the following lines (to be agreed with the artist(s)):

- A (part of a) rusty car or some other artefact, defined in cooperation with organisers of the campus in the city event and the artists and designers will be placed in a public shop space in Lancaster for ca 2 hours. It invites contributions, in a number of ways. Current ideas include:
- Participants will be asked one or several questions 'Where do you live in 2051?', 'Where do you shop?', 'Who do you speak to in the day?' Short recordings may be made.
- The shop space will feature photographs, maps, plans and slide shows illustrating the changing face of Lancaster as a public space as well as the changing nature of the home, domestic life and transport 1851-2051.
- People may be asked to bring or leave an object, or pick an object (which may already have a narrative associated with it) and narrate their own utopian everyday. Drawing material, Playdoh and Lego are provided to allow people draw/build their mobility future.
- Researchers involve members of the public in conversations about mobility futures, each tasked to document a key insight visually
- Bring an object to gift to the project that signifies mobility utopia for you.

The overall aim is to map out dimensions, dreams and everyday practices of mobility utopia.



24-26th June 2016 Utopia Fair

At the Utopia Fair in the Somerset House courtyard, an artwork and a design fiction will be exhibited to engage the general public in a way that invites further co-production. It will include handing out a cultural probe package. Visitors to the Mobility Utopia Stand will be able to assemble this package themselves. They will choose one object from a pool of small objects (plastic toys, everyday objects, model cars, drawings or photographs), collected from the previous events and associated with narratives. These will be curated by the project team, the artist and the designer. Utopia Fair visitors will be given a memory stick to store digital contributions and a self-addressed envelope with a postcard. They will be asked to take pictures of their chosen object in a way that expresses their mobility utopia and use this to narrate their utopian everyday. They will be asked to explain the object on their postcard and post the postcard and the memory stick with their photograph back to the research team.

Consideration should be made of both the nature of the space, and the audience at Somerset House. The Edmund J Safra Fountain Court is a large, open, public space, which will be filled with stalls for the weekend of the Fair. Many of Somerset House's visitors are highly culturally literate; others simply visit Somerset House to enjoy the courtyard. Over the course of a weekend, visitor numbers average over 8,000 on a Saturday and over 5,000 on Sunday.

Reflections September 2016

The fourth event is a reflection workshop. In the lead-up, the research team will analyse and produce an online exhibition of the posted mobility utopia object stories against the backdrop of the series of research co-creation events. The objects will connect distant participants, as the ones who donated the objects will be able to trace where 'their' object went. Academic speakers will be invited to return and an open call for papers will be issued. Depending on interest, this could become a larger open Symposium.

The purpose of the reflection workshop is twofold. First, it aims to make concrete plans for a programme of activities to continue collaboration and build on the work discussed throughout the collaboration (e.g. through PhD and MA community projects and development of a nationally or EU funded Mobility Futures research project). Secondly, we will curate a special issue for an academic journal (such as Leonardo).

Partners

We are currently waiting for confirmation from the individuals/institutions below. Please note that the list is not exhaustive and is meant to give a sense of the range of potential participants in the project.

- National Autistic Society with branches in Lancaster and Birmingham (Damian Milton)
- Lancaster Dynamo, a group campaigning for better cycling facilities
- Communities and local authorities in Birmingham involved in the Liveable Cities project
- Lancashire County Council
- Birmingham City Council
- Small and medium sized businesses such as Commonplace, a start-up company which uses a location app currently working with Google, involving driverless cars (David Janner-Klausner).
- The UK Catapult Cities and Transport Centres
- Innovate UK.



The Venues

Lancaster University: Mobile Utopia 1851-2051 Co-Creation Workshop 19th April 2016

Lancaster City Open Campus: Exhibition and public co-creation, 18 May 2016

Edmund J Safra Courtyard, Somerset House, London: Utopia Fair 24-26 June 2016

Useful Resources

- AHRC Connected Communities Festival 2016 <https://connected-communities.org/index.php/about/utopia-500/>
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- Further Information on Mobile Utopia <http://wp.lancs.ac.uk/mobility-futures/mobile-utopia/>

Eligibility

The opportunity is open to all artists. Applicants should be able to demonstrate a strong commitment to their artistic practice and evidence of a body of work and strong track record. Applicants should ideally have experience of planning, leading and delivering co-creation workshops.

Timescale

Mobile Utopia 1851-2051 takes place from March – September 2016 (over 7 months)

Accountability

Nick Dunn and the project team at the Institute for Social Futures will be the main point of contact for the project. The artist must also work closely with at least 2 chosen communities.

Budget

A fee of £4,500 is available for the artist or group of artists. This should cover research and production of an artwork to be exhibited at the Utopia Fair 22-24th June 2016, and an online exhibition by September 2016, as well as participation in the planning, delivery and debrief for the activities listed under 'The Commission'. A prototype of the artwork must be available for the Campus in the City event on 18th May. In addition to this £1,500 is available for travel.





Application process

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- An up-to-date 2-page CV including contact details for two referees.
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For any questions please contact Amanda Fenwick - Email: a.fenwick@lancaster.ac.uk

Applications will be assessed by a panel that will include the project team and representatives from partner organisations. Shortlisted applicants will be invited to discuss their proposals in more detail at an interview, taking place on Wednesday 6th April 2016.

Application check list

Please make sure to follow this checklist as we are be unable to consider incomplete applications.

- Artist statement
- Artist CV
- Up to 6 images (with title as file name)



Appendix I Floorplan of Exhibition Area at Utopia Fair 2016

