

# Un/Building the Future: The Country and The City in the Anthropocene

WARWICK

15 & 16 June 2023 | University of Warwick, UK

## Call for Papers

Due 20 February 2023 to [unbuildingthefuture@gmail.com](mailto:unbuildingthefuture@gmail.com)

The climate crisis is inextricably bound up with the divide between the country and the city. It is no accident that the burning of fossil fuels and the urbanisation of the world have advanced in lockstep in recent centuries, while the demands of agribusiness, especially livestock farming, have simultaneously displaced sustainable farming practices and contributed to the emission of greenhouse gasses. The imagination of climate futures is also shaped by the shifting contours of the urban and the rural. Whether it be visions of flooded cities or scorched forests, the future seems to hold destruction for both the city and the country.

Just as the climate crisis has disturbed some of the other dualisms of the modern world (human/nonhuman, nature/culture, and so on), the dichotomy between the city and the country also seems to be increasingly precarious. One thinks of climate fiction imaginaries of abandoned cities being slowly rewilded or experiments in new modes of living (like urban community gardening) that introduce the rustic into the town. Moreover, the conventional connotations of the urban and rural are coming under strain in the Anthropocene; it appears that neither the modernity associated with the city nor the tradition of the countryside will survive the encounter with the wild weather of the future unscathed.

Our interdisciplinary conference, Un/Building the Future: The Country and the City in the Anthropocene, will explore the co-constitution of the urban and rural in the face of the Anthropocene. Raymond Williams's iconic *The Country and the City* (1973), which our title alludes to, scrutinised how the emergence of capitalism in the nineteenth century capsized ingrained narratives of urban and rural life. Un/Building the Future is concerned with whether the shifting environmental contours of the twenty-first century are having a similarly radical effect.

We are interested in contributions that examine how the unfolding environmental catastrophe is disturbing and reforming the symbolisations of the country and city, producing new locales, both real and imaginary, that are not quite contained by our traditional spatial horizons. How are the categories of the country and the city morphed by the ecological crisis? What does thinking these concepts together help us to understand about current climate trajectories? Are these ideas of the urban and the rural even viable, or must they be radically rethought? How are the spatial imaginaries of the Anthropocene approached from different perspectives in the field, whether that be feminist, queer, anti-racist, decolonial, Marxist or posthumanist?

Possible topics include but are not limited to:

- Post-apocalyptic spaces
- Climate resilience
- The rural and the (neo)pastoral

- Suburbia and suburban futures
- The future city; eco- and/or smart-cities
- Multispecies design, including urban design and wildlife corridors
- Cultural representations of un/built futures, including in climate fiction, science fiction/speculative fiction, solarpunk, Afro- and African futurism, Indigenous futurism, Chicano futurism, etc. in any media (novel, short story, graphic novels, podcasts, videogames, fanfiction, fine art, etc.)
- Gender and sexuality, race, dis/ability, class, and/or national identity and the un/built environment
- Un/built environments in utopias and dystopias, including ecodystopias
- Green transitions/transformations
- Collapse and breakdown

Please submit an abstract for a **15-minute in-person paper** (up to 300 words), which will be followed by 5 min Q&A, and a **short bio** (up to 150 words) using our application form by **20 February 2023** to [unbuildingtheworld@gmail.com](mailto:unbuildingtheworld@gmail.com). This event is open to participants from all disciplines whose research engages with the themes of the conference. There is no conference fee for this event. If you would like to discuss your proposal or you would like to submit work in another form (e.g. art, music, film), please get in contact.

For more information, please see [https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross\\_fac/ias/calendar/event/](https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/ias/calendar/event/)

We very much look forward to receiving your submissions!

### **Conference Convening Team**

#### **Dr Emrah Atasoy**

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#### **Nora Castle**

Early Career Fellow, Dept. of English and Comparative Literary Studies & IAS  
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#### **Dr Joe Davidson**

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