

# Critical Legal Conference 2018

## Regeneration

6<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> September, The Open University, Milton Keynes, UK

### Call for Streams

We invite proposals for streams to the 2018 Critical Legal Conference hosted by the Open University Law School within the theme of *regeneration*. Further details of the conference, including registration, accommodation and travel, can be found on our conference webpage: <http://law-school.open.ac.uk/events/CLC-2018>

Proposals should contain the title of the stream, the names and contact details of the convenor(s), and a short outline of the stream that does not exceed 500 words.

Please send all stream proposals to [OULS-CLC2018@open.ac.uk](mailto:OULS-CLC2018@open.ac.uk).

The closing date for streams is the **23 March 2018**. Submitters will be notified within a few days of the deadline and the call for papers will open in mid-March.

### Conference theme

*I always thought eternity would look like Milton Keynes.*

JG Ballard

Drawing inspiration from the visions, strategies and conflicts that engendered the creation of Milton Keynes and The Open University at the end of the 1960s, and reflecting on recent conference themes at Kent and Warwick, CLC 2018 will consider the theme of *regeneration*. In all instances of regeneration are tensions between new and existing visions and strategies, and the laws, regulations and forms of standardisation that seek to govern the pace and nature of regeneration in a given space and time. Equally there can often be a lack of legal attention and intervention where sometimes it is needed or demanded, as well as forms of de-regulation that actively seek to attenuate the role and authority of law in favour of, for example, a desire for innovation. Within the general theme of regeneration we propose the following as illustrative of what may be considered or included:

- Technology and law's regeneration
- Teaching legal education critically in the neoliberal age
- Hope, belonging, futurity and other ideologies of regeneration
- Cultures of gentrification and community marginalization
- (Re)imagining law, justice and the political in extra-terrestrial colonisation
- Loss, memory, and post-traumatic growth
- Radical urbanism and brutal culture
- A psychoanalytic politics of preservation
- Regenerative possibilities in the Anthropocene

As Milton Keynes celebrates 50 years in existence new programmes of regeneration are being devised by a consortium of public and private actors aimed at creating 'opportunities' for the people that live there, 'as well as building and maintaining their homes'. The Milton Keynes project of regeneration is determined not only by spatial impetus but also the (re)imagining of particular forms of being shaped by the politics of the event of the place, or what the late Doreen Massey succinctly termed 'throwntogetherness'.

Milton Keynes provides a modest example of the city as a negotiation between heterogeneous trajectories of culture, being and the material limitations of space and structure. The city and the Open University once represented a political commitment to social justice and mobility in the aftermath of World War II. A shift from these ideals and practices is recognisable in the face of post-Thatcherite, anti-socialist individualism and an upsurge in the neoliberal dominance of social life. Milton Keynes reflects many of the tensions existing within the present cultural, political and economic moment in the global north. As a species of the ceaseless politico-economic urban regeneration seen around the globe however, to what extent can or does any future vision of Milton Keynes account for where people *are* and thus acknowledge what Stuart Hall, former professor of sociology at the Open University, called 'the imaginative resistances of people who have to live within capitalism – the growing points of social discontent, the projections of deeply-felt needs'?

As a means of reimagining, reseeded and transforming space in and over time regeneration is a global phenomenon which always replicates, reveals or encapsulates an economic and political moment as it might reflect particular trends in architectural design and aesthetic taste. It is as such that regeneration asserts significant force on social life. As a contemporary process regeneration often occurs at points where private commercial interest and public need and vulnerability meet, blurring the two and bringing into question the nature of the duties and obligations owed to communities. Prior to the types of rebuilding and reshaping that define projects of urban regeneration for example, do we always already find regeneration as ideology? As a force at play between infrastructure and superstructure regeneration can open space to new cultures, technologies and ways of being, but equally it is capable of delimiting, excluding and overruling the social in favour of privileged communities and groups. Thus regeneration may not always be positive but can instead describe harmful socioeconomic and ecological impacts that drive inequality, dampen democratic influence, countermand basic human rights and ignore or fail to take seriously climate change.

Following the animated and rich reflections at CLC 2017, we can ask whether regeneration is a means to ward-off catastrophe or be a force for good in overcoming catastrophic events. Indeed, how does regeneration fit into and shape post-catastrophic narratives and discourse? As a temporal force regeneration signifies an active process with connotations of the past, present and future and the dynamic relationship between them. Regeneration might be thought of as revolutionary or apocalyptic on that account, whereby the past is ploughed into future ideals with the aim of creating meaning and stability for a present moment. In that sense, is regeneration arguably always already utopian?

Beyond this, regeneration is more than spatial or geopolitical. It is a term indicative of the computational and scientific where it speaks to processes of feedback, regrowth, renewal, and the contingency of the human experience on techno-scientific developments. Moreover, it speaks to notions of learning, memory, information and the (re)construction of systems and processes. As with the spatial and geopolitical these instances of regeneration have the potential to reorder the social and drive a progressive and imaginative social agency. A notable example would be the development and deployment of cyber-social spaces enacting the negotiation with tensions and contradictions produced by capital.

In the third 'opening proposition' to her 2005 book, *For Space*, Doreen Massey claimed space to be 'always under construction' and thus constitutive of 'relations which are necessarily embedded material practices which have to be carried out', which are 'always in a process of being made [...] never finished; never closed'. Regeneration as a concept or material implementation indelibly marks the notion of what it means to be 'always under construction' and therefore the relations that process both creates and destroys. Regeneration, like Massey's space, is 'a simultaneity of stories-so-far ...'