

DOING AIRBORNE EXPOSURE: STORIES, DEVICES, KNOWLEDGES AND PRACTICES

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Abstract:

In this panel, we invite colleagues exploring current problematizations of airborne exposure as hazardous for human and nonhuman bodies. Most research on ‘bodily exposure’ focuses on how class, gender, race and space determine levels of exposure among human populations. Not losing sight of such structural lines of environmental burden, we are interested in collectively understanding how ‘exposure’ is made or, better, enacted through situated practices of knowing, sensing and articulating bodily impacts. The need to understand exposure as a practical achievement and political performance becomes particularly evident in relation to airborne mechanical and electromagnetic waves, such as ambient noise, sun radiation, 5G networks, light pollution, and others. We invite discussions that address the challenge of becoming exposed in two regards: stories of how bodies and groups learn to be affected and of how it is articulated and contested within various knowledge-practices.

We are interested in discussing how affected bodies and groups ‘attune’ themselves to airborne exposure and learn to articulate its effects on their health, well-being and on other non-human bodies. We are interested in stories about how exposed individuals become such, re-learning their bodies, their environments and themselves as exposed subjects. These stories might touch upon:

- How affected and concerned groups share and assess personal experiences of exposure
- The use and invention of personal devices and sensing techniques that make visible and/or protect the body from potentially harmful exposure
- The ways in which exposure becomes embodied (across different types of bodies, human and nonhuman)
- Everyday routines, practices and tactics to avoid unwanted exposures
- How ignorance is contested, and uncertainty and risk are collectively produced
- How affected groups organize in collectives, both online and offline
- Methodological challenges of negotiating “exposure” in the field.

We also invite contributions that approach exposures to such airborne phenomena, affecting individuals and populations in slow and invisible modes, as well as practices of problematizing and redrawing the line that separates and articulates bodies and environments. We are thereby interested in papers that outline how knowledges about bodily effects are produced and mobilized by public health experts, embodied health movements, affected populations and environmentalist groups.

Contributions might address different aspects and dynamics:

- Modes of sensing – ranging from direct sensorial perception over the use of sentinel devices, measurement equipment and sensors that enhance sensorial perception to modelling methods
- Modes of representing airborne pollution and exposure – ranging from graphics, maps, numbers, public displays, and apps
- Public controversies, contestations of techno-scientific expertise and research-in-the-wild about exposure and its effects on human bodies
- Tensions between epistemological-political values, such as the ‘burden of proof’ – the obligation to provide proof beyond reasonable doubt of a direct relationship between two variables; and the ‘precautionary principle’ – the obligation to act cautiously when conclusive evidence about a potential harm is lacking

We welcome various types of contributions, such as papers, artistic performances, interactive formats and other creative suggestions.

Key words:

bodily exposure, sensing techniques, environmental risk