

**Atmospheric adventures in the Aerocene:  
Heterotopias of Aerial Mobility**

**Call for Panel Contributions**

A themed panel for the conference Mobile Utopia: Past, Presents Futures, 2-5 November 2017, Centre for Mobilities Research, Lancaster University, United Kingdom

This panel is devoted to exploring how we might develop an ethical and sustainable relationship with our planet's gaseous shell through vernacular ways of sensing, understanding and collaborating with the macro and micro-dimensions of air and atmosphere. In the context of the rapid expansion of fuel-intensive air travel and the militarisation, securitisation and commercialisation of atmospheric space, such a relationship is not only a desirable project, but, we suggest, an urgent one.

Our approach to critical atmospheric utopias is inspired in part by the Aerocene project (<http://aerocene.org/>), an open-source initiative founded by artist Tomás Saraceno and released into the wider circulation of environmental consciousness-raising, citizen science and university research. The Aerocene invites a tactile, unmediated skilling of atmospheric awareness, but in its name also deliberately evokes the possibility of an epochal shift in humanity's relation with its home planet, and indeed in the very way that the Earth populates its atmosphere with moving things.

The panel would be animated by the following questions. How can we invent and employ accessible, modest aerial experiments to arrive at an ethical engagement with the atmosphere? How can we populate the volume of the air above us with entities that move living things, objects or points of view on micro and macro-scales in ways that enhance rather than diminish atmospheric affordances for different forms of life? What tools, skills and imaginaries do we need to develop?

As an example, contributions might take as a starting point the task of thinking and feeling the urban 'canopy layer' - the layer of air beneath the tops of the highest buildings, which is being increasingly compromised in many dimensions, including the chemical, biological, mechanical and legal. We might think and work with the relatively small scale, intimate, everyday, gentle (but also complex) turbulences and circulations of air and atmosphere in the urban context. We might challenge ourselves to SENSE, FEEL and ATTUNE to atmosphere in novel and memorable ways in order to refocus on critical dimensions of the atmospheres of the cityscape.

In this way we critically position a heterotopia atmospheric mobility in urgent dialogue with the rise of consumer drones, the development of swarm technologies and the privatization and securitization of atmospheric volumes, the auctioning of bandwidths of the electromagnetic spectrum, and the sharing of space with other forms of organic and 'nonorganic' life (Delanda). We invite further contributions to the triple task before us: to experiment, investigate and comprehend; to imagine, create and make; to manifest, agitate and resist.

**Submission**

Because of the need for a quick turnaround, please send a 300-word abstract and 100-word

biographical note to *both* Sasha Engelmann ([sashaengelmann@gmail.com](mailto:sashaengelmann@gmail.com)) and Bronislaw Szerszynski ([bron@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:bron@lancaster.ac.uk)) by 14 April.

### **Panel Organisers**

Sasha Engelmann, Department of Geography, Royal Holloway University of London  
Bronislaw Szerszynski, Department of Sociology, Lancaster University