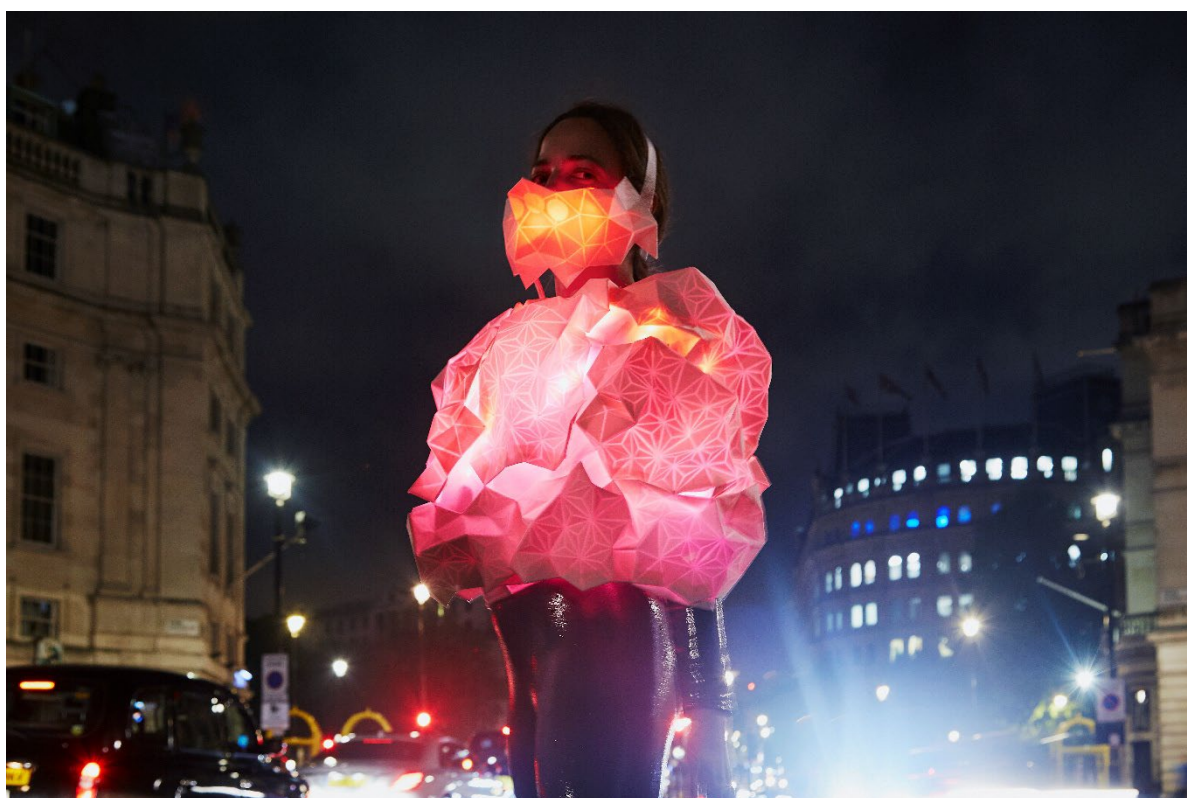




Communicating Air Quality: Physical, digital, and theoretical advances



Thursday 13th March 2025

The Royal Academy of Engineering, London

In partnership with:

IMPERIAL
Environmental Research Group



Conference Summary

British Academy/Wellcome Trust Conferences bring together scholars and specialists from around the world to explore themes related to health and wellbeing.

This conference will bring together experts from the fields of sociology, science technology and society, public health, air pollution science, data science (visualisation), and data art to uncover how air quality is communicated in the public realm. Featuring cutting-edge research on the 'air quality information landscape', it will unpack how 'the air' is communicated in digitally mediated space. By convening individuals from across disciplines, this conference will create new opportunities for collaboration and will highlight how disciplinary restrictions may hinder collaborative thinking and approaches to air quality communication.

Conference participants will be invited to co-design a short film to highlight its key themes and outcomes.

Conference Convenors

- **Dr Kayla Schulte**, Imperial College London
- **Andrew Grieve**, Imperial College London
- **Karl Dudman**, University of Oxford

Schedule

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|-----------------|-------------------------------------|
| • 9:00-9:30 | Registration |
| • 9:30 – 10:30 | Keynote & logistics |
| • 10:30 – 11:00 | Coffee/Tea Break |
| • 11:00 – 12:30 | Session 1: Communication Breakdown? |
| • 12:30 – 13:30 | Lunch |
| • 13:30 – 15:00 | Session 2: Depicting the Air |
| • 15:00 – 15:30 | Coffee/Tea Break |
| • 15:30 – 17:00 | Review & closing remarks |
| • 17:00 – 19:00 | Reception & refreshments |

Introduction and Keynote

9:30-10:30

Al Qasimi Room

Keynote speaker: Agnes Agyepong - *founder and CEO of Global Child and Maternal Health*

Agnes Agyepong is the CEO of Global Child and Maternal Health (formerly Global Black Maternal Health) and a renowned advocate for health equity and environmental justice. Her groundbreaking initiatives, including the Black Child Clean Air report, highlight intersectional challenges in air quality and health. Agnes is passionate about amplifying diverse voices to cultivate impactful change.

10:30-11:00 Tea and coffee

ERA Foundation Room

Session 1: Communication Breakdown?

11:00-12:30

Al Qasimi Room

This session will explore whether a communication breakdown is occurring throughout the air quality information landscape. It will examine who is involved in producing, contributing to, and consulting the global-to-local air quality information landscape, and how this has transformed over time. The session is motivated by academic and political critiques dating back over 30 years, most recently reinforced in the UK specifically by a House of Commons report and a Defra special report (AQIS), regarding the ‘inaccessibility’ and ‘incoherence’ of air quality information. A core aim of this session is to unpack what is behind the perception of a ‘communication breakdown’ with respect to air quality. Looking closer at the dominant forms of language and framings used to communicate about the air and its qualities raises critical questions: who is crafting messaging about air quality and for what audiences? Where do (or should) the public fit in? What makes for trustworthy communication? And how should we talk about uncertainty? In exploring some of these questions the session will pay careful attention to digital and sociodemographic inequalities, varying motivations for engaging with the topic of air quality, and notions of self-efficacy surrounding air pollution exposure mitigation at the individual level.

The speakers have been invited to structure their talks in response to the following questions:

- *Do you believe there is a communication breakdown is occurring throughout the air quality information landscape?*
- *If so, where has this breakdown occurred and how is your work addressing it?*

Chairs: Dr Kayla Schulte & Andrew Grieve

Speakers:

- Dr Gary Fuller - *Senior Lecturer at Imperial ERG and UK Clean Air Champion*
- Dr Karine Leger - *Director at AIRPARIF*
- Dr Maria Neira - *WHO Director, Public Health, Environmental and Social Determinants of Health*
- Professor Javier Lezaun - *Associate Professor of Anthropology and Director of the Institute for Science, Innovation and Society at University of Oxford*

12:30-13:30 Lunch

ERA Foundation Room and Michael Bishop Foundation Room

Session 2: Depicting the Air – Is seeing believing?

13:30-15:00

Al Qasimi Room

The aim of this session is to unpack how air pollution is being depicted in communications between institutions (governmental, commercial & academic) and publics. From rendering modelled pollution data into colourful public displays, to the challenges of talking about something dangerous but invisible, sight has been a dominant means through which air quality is communicated. But scholars have raised important questions about sight: are visual forms of evidence taken as more reliable than others, and why? How can visual art enable more expansive and non-hierarchical modes of communication? How are digital technologies transforming communication possibilities? Have we been neglecting our other senses, and would attention to the smells and sounds of the air bring about new opportunities for communication and management? This session will explore such questions by inviting both researchers and practitioners into the same space and leveraging their diverse collective experience to arrive at new answers.

The speakers have been invited to structure their talks in response to the following question:

- *Is seeing believing?*

Chair: Professor Gillian Rose FBA - *Professor of Human Geography, University of Oxford*

Speakers:

- Professor Nerea Calvillo - *Associate Professor at University of Warwick*
- Love Ssega – *Artist & Composer, LIVE + BREATHE*
- Dr Heather Price - *Senior Lecturer in Environmental Geography at Stirling University*
- Akshay Joshi - *COO at Ambee*

15:00-15:30 Tea and coffee

ERA Foundation Room

Review and Closing Remarks

15:30-17:00

Al Qasimi Room

Chair: Professor Benjamin Barratt - *Imperial College London*

Ben Barratt is a Professor in Environmental Exposures & Public Health in the School of Public Health at Imperial College London. He is also Director of the Convergence School of Sustainability and Deputy Director of the Environmental Research Group.

This session will summarise the key themes that have come out of the discussions during the day, drawing on audience reflections.

17:00-19:00 Reception and refreshments

ERA Foundation Room

Collaborative film & conference participation (in person and online)

Throughout the conference, attendees will have the opportunity to contribute to a series of short films. A crew will be filming during each of the sessions, and during coffee breaks and lunch attendees are invited to visit 'confessional booths' and share 1–2-minute reflections on key themes raised over the course of the day.

In person conference attendees will also be invited to add 'post-its' to a collective mind map printed on a large poster board containing the conferences key questions

(is a communication breakdown is occurring throughout the air quality information landscape? And how is air pollution depicted?). Online attendees will be invited to contribute to online versions of the mind map.

Live voting on key questions of interest to be raised at the end of each session for online attendees. Online attendees will also be invited to submit 2-minute videos or voice note reflections. The online submission box will be open for 36 hours after the conference in case any attendees, in person or online, want to submit additional 2-minute video or voice note reflections.

If you do not wish to be filmed, please let one of the British Academy staff members know.