

Call for Abstracts

Social and Political Suffocations

Edited by Magdalena Górska (Utrecht University) & Milica Trakilović (Utrecht University)



Jason deCaires Taylor, *Cactus Man*, 2017. Sculpture. <https://www.underwatersculpture.com/>

About the book

Building on the understanding that the unequal distribution of wealth, privilege, infrastructures, social and political agency and recognition take place along intersectional power dynamics, this edited volume asks how these power dynamics operate in constituting whose lives, and what life forms, are un/breathable. By approaching this topic as an entanglement of structural, individual and quotidian operations of biopolitics and necropolitics, this edited volume will offer critical analyses and transformative interventions that can be developed to understand and challenge the suffocating and unliveable atmospheres of contemporary ways of existing. It will address experiences of social and political suffocations, as well as concomitant strategies of resistance, through chapters written by an interdisciplinary assembly of scholars, artists, and activists who are all embodied practitioners in their critical practice(s).

The call

With this call, we invite abstracts from scholars, artists, and creative writers whose work investigates the question of social and political suffocations and offers, from this starting point, an analysis of and an intervention into normative operations of intersectional power relations that take place in a quotidian, individual, and structural manner, and in local and global contexts. The book seeks to study experiences of breathing and suffocation in their discursive, material and affective enactments as well as their sociopolitical dimensions. Some exemplary (though not exhaustive) points of orientation that inform our thinking about the politics of breathability and suffocation in the current political moment are: everyday experiences of breathlessness such as daily negotiations of normative gender structures or forms of embodiment and subjectivity; political organizing around the processes of suffocation, demonstrated in the Black Lives Matter movement and decolonial activism; the violence of infrastructural constraints, exemplified by tragedies such as the 2017 Grenfell fire, as well as the bordering politics of current anti-migration regimes; suffocating effects of climate change in terms of climate disasters and climate-related displacements. This volume will encompass an expansive array of topics that analytically center recent local, global and political events, as well as everyday experiences of living and dying, through the lens of the politics of breathability and suffocation.

Topics may address (but are not limited to), for example, anti-racism, decolonial, queer, crip, feminist movements, activisms and scholarships; discussions related to the rise of conservatism, populism, anti-migrant and anti-feminist/anti-gender sentiments; climate change and climate activism; political corruption; border violence and border infrastructures. The volume aims to analyze suffocating practices of lived experiences and structures of intersectional social power relations, offer critiques of their effects and constraints, and suggest interventions that open up potentialities for change.

The structure of the volume will follow the dynamics of a respiratory process. Each breath is constituted by inhalation and exhalation; in between the two there are small pauses, moments of transition from one process to another. In breathing exercises, for example, this pause is accentuated as an important moment of stopping that, together with inhalation and exhalation, provides a necessary respite.

The volume's first INHALATION will focus on the issue of *suffocating socio-cultural norms of subjectivity and embodiment*. It will address how social norms are inhaled, metabolized, but also negotiated, re-framed, and resisted. We search for chapters that will analyze the toxic role of intersectional social power relations in formation of normative embodied subjectivities and offer a critique of such processes (e.g. suffocating normativity of hegemonic notions of embodiment, gender, mental health, living with respiratory conditions).

The STOP aims to provide a moment of respite, in a broad sense of the term. It can offer, for example, a moment of contemplation, of re-energization, or an affective engagement with suffocation (e.g. shame, anger, panic). We invite poets, writers, and artists to submit

work that would create such an intervention. We, however, do not want to frame the content or form of such an intervention too narrowly in order to leave the space to the authors' creativity. But we ask for the work to relate to the issue of suffocation and breathability and their own interpretation of it in relation to the role of the moment of transition between inhalation and exhalation.

The volume's first EXHALATION will address issues of *politics of death and suffocation*. While the first inhalation focuses on suffocation as a part of living, this part discusses loss of breath. We call for chapters that address, for example, caring for the last breath, re-framing loss as a process of breathing with the departed, and loss of breath in the context of violence (e.g. anti-racist, decolonial, anti-occupation protests; violence in relation to the coloniality of power).

The section will be followed by the second STOP of the volume.

The second INHALATION will focus on the theme of *suffocating toxicities*. While the first inhalation and exhalation focus on breath and its loss in the context of social toxicity, this inhalation will address suffocation by bringing together social toxicity and environmental toxicity. We call for chapters that will focus on socio-environmental breathlessness by discussing effects of inhalation due to, for example, environmental and occupational illness, air pollution, gassing, and displacement due to climate change.

The section will be followed by the third STOP of the volume.

The second EXHALATION will address the theme of *bordering and geopolitical suffocations*. It will come back to the suffocation as an exhalation, a loss of breath in a context of geopolitical struggle. It will entangle social and environmental toxicity with suffocating practices of making, negotiating, and reinforcing borders. We call for chapters that will address borders and practices of bordering in their geographical and national connotations (e.g. migrant deaths on European borders), in their cultural and social formations (e.g. navigating post-conflict societies).

We call for chapters that can contribute to the inhalations, exhalations, and stops outlined above by addressing themes such as (but not limited to):

1. Suffocating socio-cultural norms of subjectivity
2. Suffocating socio-cultural norms of embodiment
3. Unliveable socio-cultural norms
4. Politics of death
5. Politics of suffocation
6. Breathlessness
7. Breathful worlding
8. Social toxicity
9. Environmental toxicity
10. Borders
11. Biopolitics of suffocation

12. Necropolitics of suffocation
13. Coloniality of power
14. Poetics of un/breathability

Formats and deadlines

We invite abstracts of approximately 300 words. Please submit your abstract along with:

1. A short bio of approximately 150 words
2. A title of the proposed chapter
3. An indication of which inhalation, exhalation, or stop your work relates to

Please do not hesitate to submit work that addresses social and political suffocations even if it does not fit exactly our preliminary outline of the book or the themes discussed in this call.

Please send your abstract and accompanying information to Tobin den Blijker: t.r.denblijker@students.uu.nl.

The abstract deadline is: Friday December 3, 2021.

We will respond to your abstract by Friday December 17, 2021, and chapter submissions are due by Friday April 15, 2022. The length of the chapters is approx. 6000 words. The length and format of the creative pieces can be determined together with the book editors.

The expected publication date is end of 2022 and the edited volume will be part of the [Routledge Critical Perspectives on Breath and Breathing](#) book series edited by Lenart Škof and Magdalena Górska.