

Anticipatory Infrastructures

Hosted and co-organised by

the School of Social Sciences and the Emerging Technologies Lab at Monash University,
and the Academy of Mobility Humanities, Konkuk University

23 - 24 February 2026

Monash University, Caulfield Campus, Melbourne, Australia

Call for Participation

It seems hard to be certain about much. Without having to tell us definitive versions of what the future will be, anticipatory practices don't have to predict but can feel out, imagine, and allow us to inhabit and orientate towards multiple possibilities, sometimes even making the future felt in the present as ways to deal with uncertainty and crisis. Societies rely on a whole host of voices and actors who do some of this anticipation and gain significant authority in doing so. The ways, then, that infrastructures are written, spoken about, represented and communicated matters greatly. Infrastructures – especially large, heavy and expensive material ones - work anticipation particularly hard. They are often understood to come with significant 'promise' of what they can bring into being, and necessarily so given that they can involve significant personal and financial investment and debt, and investments of social, political, and cultural capital. Infrastructures have time implications for societies who may have to wait decades to see them, or never will because they can be cancelled, paused or 'mothballed', and even sink into the background, quite literally. Solar farms, batteries, or data centres - beyond their presence as investment opportunities or controversial planning concepts – are often withdrawn by their remoteness, invisibility, ordinariness and technical banality. Despite this, infrastructures are ways to lure 'development, progress, and modernity' (Appel et al 2018: 5), to the extent that the Cambodian government - seeking financial investment into a national infrastructure plan - has labelled infrastructure a 'critical catalyst', a veritable 'backbone and lifeblood of all socioeconomic activities' - a kind of skeletal and circulatory system of expressive national affects (Merriman and Jones 2017; see also Bosworth 2023). Infrastructures *promise* wealth, security, inclusion, status, jobs, aspiration, sometimes with scant tethering to how realistic or how *just* they might prove to be (Kinsley 2025).

Almost all infrastructures, then, are anticipatory and anticipated. They *anticipate* making something possible – from data and digital architectures underpinning emerging energy systems, to emerging mobilities participating in low-carbon transport networks, to the geoeconomic onshoring of manufacturing supply chains, and even to the space bases enabling inter-planetary travel. And they are highly *anticipated*: loaded with expectation and promise as (infra)structures of feeling that almost hardwire anticipatory potential through different temporal and spatial forms of storage, release and mobility: from multiverses of possibility firing off in different directions and versions, to slower, narrower and longer-term accretions of energy and change. Infrastructures carry the past into the future too. They mediate temporalities through their material legacies which shape the affordances around which futures are anticipated, while channelling how pasts are remembered.

In this symposium we seek to move with multiple forms and relations of anticipatory infrastructure. Infrastructures can give assurance or hope that industries or specifically jobs will survive a green transition. Many anticipations fail, where more negative feelings commonly circulate. Certainly stories of infrastructures not living up to their promises of smoothness and efficiency – consider the disruptions from cyberattacks at European airports in 2025 - are familiar. Certain infrastructures have proven highly vulnerable in disaster and war. Infrastructure developments are often divisive and amplify concern and resentment over their scale and presence and even their toxicity, to the extent that their failure can seriously undermine the status and position of whomever is responsible for them. Some infrastructures are seen as gimmicky, pointless and white elephants, merely 'promises, promises' found in the cynicism of a suspended present (Carse and Kneas 2019: 20) of infrastructural delay. Certain infrastructures set up disappointment and negativity, or even apathy.

Our symposium welcomes interdisciplinary and multidimensional approaches to infrastructure and anticipation particularly at the cross-section of social science, arts and humanities approaches to mobility, energy and digitalisation.

List of suggested topics

- The roles played by emerging technologies - such as artificial intelligence (AI), Generative AI (GenAI) and Quantum technologies - as anticipatory infrastructures across energy, mobilities, cybersecurity and other infrastructural sites and practices.
- Established and emerging storage technologies - such as batteries, data centres - as anticipatory infrastructures
- Affective infrastructures of anticipation
- Improvised anticipatory infrastructures emerging from everyday life situations
- Narrating, mobilising, and experimenting and engaging with anticipatory mobilities and infrastructures

A keynote presentation will be delivered by Associate Professor Malini Sur (Western Sydney University)

Important Dates and Deadlines

Abstracts are to be submitted **before Monday 8th December 2025** (approximately 300 words, excluding name, affiliation and references). Please include a short bio along with your abstract submission.

Abstract should be emailed to peter.adey@monash.edu, sarah.pink@monash.edu, gespenst@konkuk.ac.kr

References

- Anand, N., Gupta, A., & Appel, H. (Eds.). (2018). *The promise of infrastructure*. Durham, N.C., Duke University Press.
- Bosworth, K. (2023). What is 'affective infrastructure'?. *Dialogues in Human Geography*, 13(1), 54-72.
- Carse, A., & Kneas, D. (2019). Unbuilt and unfinished: The temporalities of infrastructure. *Environment and Society*, 10(1), 9-28.
- Kinsley, S. (2025). Narratives of labour as infrastructure and the automative imagination. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/02637758251320>
- Merriman, P., & Jones, R. (2017). Nations, materialities and affects. *Progress in Human Geography*, 41(5), 600-617.
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