

Call for Applications

2026 ARL International Summer School on

New perspectives on Urban Infrastructures

University of Amsterdam

8-10 July 2026



Organized by

ARL ACADEMY FOR
TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT
IN THE LEIBNIZ ASSOCIATION



UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM

RSA Europe

The topic

The field of urban and regional studies has witnessed an “infrastructural turn” in which urban and regional transformations are examined through the lens of infrastructures. This research has highlighted the profound complexities associated with current infrastructural solutions to contemporary urban challenges. While earlier work centred on ‘hard’ infrastructures – i.e. the pipes, cables and roads – we currently see a divergence of what constitutes infrastructure. To illustrate, recent research examines how natural and environmental elements can be conceived of as infrastructures. Similarly, infrastructure is increasingly found in the ‘air’, such as cyber infrastructures working as a ‘cloud’, while the operational landscapes required for these infrastructures (e.g. datacenters) are increasingly contested. Finally, we also see more relational understandings of infrastructures that foreground practices of labour and care. These new directions bring new conceptual and methodological challenges for studying urban infrastructures.

This Summer School will provide a platform to explore and discuss new conceptualisations and methodologies for studying urban infrastructures.

Potential contributions

Participants are PhD students who study urban infrastructures in the fields of human geography, urban and regional planning, or related disciplines in the social sciences. Participants can look at different infrastructural domains (e.g. energy, water, transportation, and Digital/IT), or the integration of them (e.g. nexus-thinking) in their research.

We invite applications from PhD candidates internationally, and we aim to cover empirical research conducted in both the Global North and Global South.

We are in particular interested in contributions that link to one of the following themes:

- **The multiple temporalities and rhythms of infrastructure configurations:** with new elements being ‘infrastructured’ (e.g. nature, bodies, collectives), linear conceptions of infrastructures can be questioned: they are not physical artefacts that deteriorate over time, but can in fact regenerate and repair. We welcome contributions that investigate and conceptualize these dynamic temporalities and rhythms, and reflect upon the emancipatory or transformative potential of these temporalities.
- **The politics of infrastructuring:** contributions are asked to examine the governance of urban infrastructure moving beyond the acknowledgement of the systemic problems of late neoliberal capitalism. We welcome contributions that explore infrastructures as tools of (geo)political power, as well as contributions that investigate more plural, i.e. non-western, understandings of politics and institutions, and their transformative power.

- **Co-creating alternative infrastructural systems:** what are new, radical imaginaries of urban infrastructures that acknowledge the agentic capacities of other-than-humans, bodies and everyday practices? We welcome contributions that engage in more transdisciplinary, normative research on envisioning alternative infrastructural futures. Examples of research could relate to futuring, prefigurative planning and urban experimentation.

The themes are not meant to be exhaustive, encouraging applications to contribute innovative and cross-cutting ideas.

Programme & speakers

Our aim is to stimulate discussions, gain insights and develop new research questions around the subject of this year's summer school.

Participants will have the opportunity to present their research and receive individual feedback from the participating international scientific experts. In addition, a keynote speech offers the opportunity to intensify the debate and develop further research ideas. The Summer School will also offer a field trip and several social activities complementing the academic programme.

- **Keynote speaker:** Prof Colin McFarlane (Durham University), based on his recent publication "Infrastructural extensions" in the [International Journal of Urban and Regional Research](#)
- **Mentors:** Prof Antje Bruns (ARL), Prof Jochen Monstadt (Incoming Director of the German Institute of Urban Affairs / Vice President of the ARL), Prof Karin Pfeffer (University of Twente), Dr Fran Meissner (University of Twente), Dr Jannes Willems (University of Amsterdam)

Eligibility

The Summer School is open to all PhD students whose work addresses issues related to urban studies, sustainability, political sciences, human geography, and related fields. It is particularly aimed at 2nd and 3rd year candidates.

Submission Guidelines

Your application should include a motivation letter (max. one page), a short CV (max. two pages) and an extended abstract (max. 600 words) addressing one or more of the abovementioned themes. The abstract should clearly present the research gap, research question, methodology, and expected / preliminary outcomes. Selected participants are expected to submit an academic text (max. 7000 words) before the summer school. The text should synthesize the main aspects of the presentation that you are expected to give during the Summer School. As academic institutions, the organizers encourage academic publications and aim to compile a special issue in an international peer-reviewed journal on the theme of the summer school. Hence,

participants are asked to develop afterwards their academic texts into an academic journal paper.

Key Dates:

- Abstract submission deadline: 15 February 2026
- Notification of acceptance: mid-March 2026
- Full paper submission deadline: 15 May 2026

Please email your applications to nicola.pilling@regionalstudies.org

Fees and Scholarships

The ARL will cover the accommodation and travel costs for all participants. A participation fee will not be charged. The Centre for Urban Studies at the University of Amsterdam may be able to provide a limited number of travel bursaries for participants without access to institutional funding or external research grants.”

For further inquiries, please contact Dr Jannes Willems (University of Amsterdam): j.j.willems@uva.nl or Dr Britta Bockhorn (ARL): britta.bockhorn@arl-net.de

We look forward to receiving your contributions!