The claim that we are in an interregnum has framed, and to an extent justified, the After Oil project from the beginning. The AO3 prompt's characterisation of *interregnum* as "a unique opportunity for new epistemologies and ontologies and a reformation of social forms that make use of energy and the purposes for and the principles by which it is used" is a rephrasing of AO1's earlier characterisation of *impasse* as "a situation of radical indeterminacy […] a condition of possibility for action […] an optimistic space, a liminal space, a space of hope in which we can attempt on many different levels and social registers to begin to articulate the outcomes of less energy-intensive lifestyles." (AO1: 18). AO1 strategically redefined impasse – more usually understood as "foreclosure of possibility" (AO1: 18) – as interregnum, and from this narrated the possibility for radical change and our role in it that motivates and validates the After Oil project.

However, the concept of interregnum might not be the best way to capture the reality of the present. We might ask ourselves to what extent the old is dying. If the interregnum is a narrative which mobilises and makes possible in specific ways, then there are other narratives being authored at the highest levels of state and corporate power that are mobilising powerful actors and substantial flows of capital. The Paris Agreement, perhaps the keystone narrative shaping global transition, contains sub-narratives like Article 10, which declares a united and collective vision of a desirable future. This vision is one of "fully realizing technology development and transfer" that will answer the environmental demands of the moment: "to improve resilience" and "reduce greenhouse gas emissions." In this narrative, climate change is reduced to a technical question of adaptation and mitigation, which allows for a technological solution facilitated and shaped by the Technology Mechanism and Framework (Article 10.3 & 10.4) and elaborated through state and market mechanisms. Article 10.5 facilitates a neo-colonialism of sacrosanct intellectual property rights, reduced import tariffs, and a welcoming embrace for international capital in developing countries: a Structural Adjustment Program for the climate emergency. All this activity is well underway and accelerating. Rather than dying, we might say that the old is impressively busy colonising the future.

If we are to do more than stand paralysed, we need a narrative that allows for hope and action in the present. In this regard the interregnum is fruitful in so far as it allows us to believe that something can be done. But in its structuring of temporality and change as *rupture* between now and next, it also frames our search for what to do in ways that obscure important realities and potent possibilities. This then informs our approach to the key question and desire undergirding After Oil: can *energy humanities* do something? Can academia? And if so, what?

To begin to answer this question, it's better to start with another: what kind of thing is energy humanities? What manner of beast is academia? Its self-image is typically as a site of production and dissemination of knowledge, and this is certainly the understanding that informs the AO3 prompt. It asks us to "think", to produce "responses" open to "creative" alternative mediums beyond the written word but which are nonetheless modes of *communication*. We are to think, and write, and read, and gather for an experiment in

"small group knowledge making." This is our productive means, this is what we, as academics, understand ourselves to *do*. The results will be disseminated, potentially in some speculative or creative or experimental mode. The prompt names the fears we have over the "value and efficacy" of our "work and communication of knowledge" being lost in the "noise" that fills contemporary discursive spheres. To overcome this situation where the experts are no longer listened to, or worse are simply ignored – our considered and well-meaning signal lost in the deluge of noise – we are pushed to be more creative in our communication. This impulse is matched by the creativity increasingly demanded in the sphere of knowledge production, as the wicked problems of the day – *impasse* for one – refuse to yield to our traditional tools, and our matters of concern migrate to the future, where there are no archives. Hence the calls to imaginative and speculative forms of knowledge production, the obsession with science fiction, the repeated demand for new narratives, new ways of thinking. All this agitation, however, remains within the rarefied realm of knowledge production and communication.

In slightly unfair summary: the AO3 prompt asks to us to respond to a situation framed as *rupture* within a space of possible action framed as *discursive*. Against this, what happens if we frame the situation as one of *continuity*, and our space of possible action as *infrastructural*? The prompt asks us to "articulate your version of what happens next," and I'd like to lean into that word, *articulate*. It can mean, on the one hand, *to pronounce, clearly and distinctly,* and on the other *to join, to form a joint*. The model of rupture and discursive praxis limits my response to *pronouncing.* There is, of course, value and strength in this, but also weakness, and its image might be the current state of the energy humanities: it has done a powerful job of articulating extant petroculture and the entanglements of impasse but appears unable to think its way into inscrutable transition. What then, of a model of duration and infrastructural praxis?

One of the key developments in contemporary critical theory has been the theorising of the politics and poetics of infrastructure. It has been of particular importance to the energy humanities, as energy impasse and transition are narratives written in and sustained by infrastructure more than anything else. Through its form, function, and aesthetics we understand infrastructure to articulate more-than-discursively; it articulates political content, financial flows, social relations, and socio-technical imaginaries. Further, it articulates these in the sense of communicating but it also *articulates* them in the other sense: *joins them together, acts as a joint*. It also, crucially, sustains them; one of the important qualities of infrastructure is that it is durable. Not only in terms of materials and life cycle but almost the reverse – in the way it becomes the undergirding of so much else, and demands maintenance, ploughing path-dependencies in finance, governance, manufacture, and logistics, as well as in public expectations, demand, and habit. In this way does infrastructure designed and built now – through the legal and financial infrastructures of the Paris Agreement, for one, or the Belt and Road Initiative, for another – *articulate* the future in the present: *pronounce* it clearly and distinctly and bring it into being by *joining* it to the present. There is no rupture here, and agency is found both in the discursive and far beyond it, in the constant making of the future through instantiating durable articulations in the present.

To turn to the question of our *praxis* then. I am not dismissing the potency of discourse or knowledge production. After Oil's redefinition of the present from impasse to interregnum was a discursive strategy with real effects. In this way the After Oil project and the energy humanities more broadly were able to write themselves into institutional being and grow swiftly over the years by exciting numerous academics and funders and enrolling them to the cause. Excellent scholarly work has been produced, and the contours of petroculture mapped in ever-greater detail. But as the AO3 prompt recognises, this activity articulates rather differently in the discursive as against the infrastructural. Which is to say, what does the energy humanities, and academia more broadly, articulate more-than-discursively? What do its form and function and aesthetics pronounce, and what nexus of politics, finance, social relations and imaginaries does it hold together and sustain? This is to ask us to look at ourselves infrastructurally as an institution, a system of values, a mechanism, a social and political actor, which is constantly articulating beyond the discursive content of its knowledge production.

This is not a new idea, and there are examples out there of these critiques of academia. The specific task of energy humanities would be, firstly, to consider how academia speaks in a particularly petrocultural mode: the carbon-hungry activities and values of academia, the priorities of internationalisation, the energy-intensive promotion criteria, the way we organise ourselves, our career desires, and much more. Because, to enrich a claim I made previously, *this* is also our productive means, *this* is what we, as academics, *do*. This is the realm of the clichéd complaint that "we all flew here to talk about climate change," but it is also taking that seriously, because that comment pinpoints precisely the gap between what we pronounce and what we durably join.

Secondly, coupled with this moment of critique must then be the moment of strategy. It is vital to understand what we *do* beyond the discursive, because here the possibilities for intervention multiply enormously, and the fears of being lost in the noise become irrelevant (replaced, no doubt, by other fears, hopefully more surmountable). In asking ourselves, what do we *join*, we ask a strategic question, about our political strengths and weaknesses; about our leverage, where and with whom or what; about our relative position on the game board, and our range and types of action. As academics we teach, we set departmental rules, we edit publications, we design calls for papers, we organise conferences, we influence the kinds of knowledge being mobilised, we establish research groups, centres, and institutions, we collaborate with the private sector, communities, and policymakers, and we influence the terms and outcomes of those collaborations, we win funding, perhaps we design funding calls, and we influence the shaping and framing of projects and outputs. This list is provisional and I'm sure missing much, but the point is that these examples highlight the infrastructural – durable, political – elements of our work (without even going into the broader ways we can act outside our strict academic roles, or work as saboteurs within them) that both have the capacity to form a joint with forces beyond academia, and to reshape academia and those other forces into something that acts as an infrastructure for a better future.

As always with these calls to action the examples at the end are disappointingly minor, but hopefully that appears good and proper in this case. To close, I'll list some concrete ideas of the kind of thing that might be considered 'infrastructural' praxis, to provide a starting

point. Some are ongoing projects; others are pure hope and desire. I am looking for things that articulate a sustainable infrastructure with a new community politics, a radical future imaginary, and even new models of ownership and engines of redistribution:

- An online course aimed at engineers, city planners, and other infrastructural professionals, in which they are taught a pragmatically packaged critical theory approach to sustainable (energy) infrastructure which surfaces the essential role of engaged and empowered diverse communities. The growing body of alumni of this course to be encouraged to form a community through social media pages, regular meetings, discussions, and special events.
- Intervene in the early stages of large-scale climate research projects and attempt to shift the narrative, parameters of success, and evaluation metrics, and promote outcomes that achieve genuinely sustainable goals involving mechanisms for redistribution of political power and wealth, such as establishing Public-Community-Partnerships as a direct goal.
- Begin to enact sustainable and just models of academia, to improve our capacity to further imagine and develop them.
- Propose alternative conference models, such as a distributed format, where simultaneous national conferences are linked by shared online plenaries and discussion mechanisms.
- Create toolkits and archives of ideas and strategies and innovations for others to use.
- Train younger academics.
- Rewrite promotion criteria to be climate friendly.