

Collapse of the Imaginary



Collapse, from the Latin *collapsus*, past participle of *collabi*: to fall together.

Date	Venue	Proposals due
5 December 2026	Calthorpe Community Gardens, London	15 October 2026

The Imaginaries and Infrastructures Research Network invites participants to the roundtable workshop ‘Collapse of the Imaginary.’ We are particularly interested in how infrastructural systems and social imaginaries co-constitute one another, and what transformation happens when either or both enter into crisis.

Collapsology, the study of global industrial collapse and the resulting impacts on civilisation breakdown, is no longer a speculative field but a study of the present. Our historical conjuncture is conditioned by multiple collapses, a ‘poly-crisis’ of multiple iterations of societal and ecological breakdown. We are witnessing collapsing infrastructure with multi-causal origins including geological and climatic, but also related to capitalist exploitation and extraction, under-resourcing, environmental pressures from climate breakdown. These collapses can present themselves as acute and immediate events, such as the 2025 Iberian Peninsula blackout—a breakdown of electrical power infrastructure and an event of binational scale. They can also be a drawn out deterioration, such as the slow disintegration of public sector infrastructure in the UK. Yet, there is a paradox in how we use the word ‘collapse’ and what other meanings the word might actually invite. The colloquial use of the word ‘collapse’ often indicates the total breakdown of a system, like the political system of the USSR. When we mentally envisage the collapse of material forms, we often picture a total destruction, like a tower of blocks being knocked over by a toddler. Yet, these real-life usages of the term

‘collapse’ represent only part of its meaning: the English word ‘collapse’ derives from the Latin *collapsus*, the past participle of *collabi* meaning to ‘fall together.’ Collapse understood in this collective sense is more than a movement towards annihilation; it is also an invitation to change—particularly on temporal or geographic scales that exceed the individual. This workshop puts forward the idea that while humans and non-human ecologies may be living through multiple overlapping and simultaneous forms of collapse, to view collapse as *only* annihilation is a nihilistic interpretation that willfully forecloses any possible thinking on the future. Therefore, the Imaginaries and Infrastructures Research Network invites proposals to think about how adopting collapse as a framework in its more expansive sense—as something that is performed and experienced collectively, as both a destructive *and* generative mode of change—creates new or heretofore unconsidered openings across a range of debates and topics. The format of the workshop will consist of a series of thematic sessions consisting of 10-minute interventions from two to three participants, followed by a set of discussion questions or prompts. Participants will be asked to collaborate with one another on the preparation of their discussion questions to facilitate the conversation with the wider workshop group. Interventions can be in a range of formats: from standard spoken papers to multimedia presentations and more experimental interventions.

STARTING POINTS

Suggestions, not limits

01. Imaginaries of Ecological Collapse • Post-imaginaries, after the collapse. • Climate tipping points and non-linearity • Planetary habitability collapse • Extractivist infrastructures (mining, monoculture, fossil fuel extraction) • Climate denial and institutional postponement	02. Conceptual Collapse: Imaginaries as Conceptual Infrastructure • Concepts as infrastructure (progress, development, growth) • Conceptual collapse as invisible infrastructural failure • Chains of equivalence • Conceptual obsolescence (nature/culture, human/nonhuman) • Zombie concepts • Conceptual Engineering in an age of collapse • Epistemic transitions	03. Digital Infrastructures: Software Collapse • AI Slop • Future of the Internet • AI Bubble and late stage capitalism • Computational Bloat • Permacomputing • Digital sovereignty • Tech oligarchy
04. Methodological • How do we study collapse? • Collapsing things as a methodology	05. Ontological • Temporalities of collapse • Materialities of the imaginary	06. Imaginaries of Health and Healing • Conceptual collapse of the biomedical model of health • Public health infrastructure collapse • Imagining trauma-informed infrastructures • From personal to planetary health • Healing amidst collapse as creative practice

HOW TO PARTICIPATE

Prospective participants are invited to send a proposal (max. 300 words) and a short bio (150 words) to: Imaginaries_and_Infrastructures@proton.me by 15th October 2026. Notification of acceptance will be sent by 1st November, after which we will facilitate panel collaboration of discussion points and questions.

Travel and accommodation are free for members of the British Academy Early Career Researcher Network. Join the network here: <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/early-career-researcher-network/> Get in touch with us if you have any questions or want to discuss your participation. Lunch and coffee will be provided on the day.