

CfP Book Proposal – Discourse and Imaginaries: analyzing contingent trajectories of past, present and future societies

Deadline for abstracts: November 15th 2025

Contact: contactdnc6@gmail.com

Editors: Jan Zienkowski and Thomas Jacobs

Topic

Concepts of the ‘imaginary’ have so far occupied a relatively marginal position in the field of discourse studies. While the notion is not absent in (critical) discourse studies, other meta-concepts such as narrative, ideology, hegemony tend to be used far more frequently. The concept of the imaginary currently figures far more prominently in sociology, political philosophy, psychoanalysis, and media studies. In these disciplines we find competing and overlapping notions of the imaginary that merit discourse-theoretical and -analytical attention.

Discourse studies’ cold shoulder for ‘imaginaries’ is remarkable given its omnipresence. From the most mundane aspects of daily life to the most momentous historical turning points, imaginaries permeate our social existence. They shape how we relate to ourselves, to others, and to the world around us. When scrolling social media, we do not simply consume content – we engage with carefully framed understandings of social relations, knowledge, and belonging. Watching a work of art activates aesthetic, cultural, and symbolic imaginaries through which we understand what “art” means. Listening to political discourse draws us into ideological imaginaries that guide, constrain, and condition our responses.

This Call for Papers invites contributions that interrogate the discursive construction of social and political imaginaries. We seek to explore how imaginaries are mobilized, contested, and transformed across different media and social contexts, and how they inform the ways individuals and collectives envision their pasts, navigate their presents, and project possible futures. We welcome work that illuminates how social actors imagine and articulate alternative orders of society, culture, and politics, and how these imaginaries shape our shared worlds. These imaginaries can be vast, spanning societies and ages; or they can be very pointed and specific, to be studied in case studies looking at specific, delimited, and constrained orders of discourse.

This Call for Papers welcomes contributions that explore the ontological, theoretical, and/or methodological aspects of imaginaries. At the same time, we invite all contributors to engage explicitly with questions about what imaginaries are, how they relate to discourse(s), and how we can analyse them from a discursive perspective. All

contributions should explore the role imaginaries play in the discursive construction of our social, economic, political, economic, and/or technological reality.

This Call for Papers is open to discourse scholars from all disciplines, as well as to scholars from neighbouring disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. A non-exhaustive list of questions that may be addressed in the context of this Call for Papers is provided below:

- How are past, present, and future societies imagined in debates over culture, education, gender, migration, economy, climate change, AI, or robotics, ...?
- What are the building blocks of populist, neoliberal, environmentalist, radically democratic, reactionary and/or post-humanist imaginaries? How do these evolve?
- What role do media play in the production, distribution, and consumption of imaginaries? How do media impact on and reproduce the articulation of imaginaries? How are imaginaries of past, present and future expressed in different media types and genres?
- How do media figure with(in) discursive imaginaries of past, present and future societies? What socio-technical imaginaries inform existing and future mediascapes?
- How can one operationalize discourse-analytical approaches, concepts, and methods to investigate cultural, social, political and/or environmental imaginaries?
- How can we identify imaginaries in works of fiction, non-fiction, and science fiction? What are their characteristics and how do they evolve over time?
- How do discursively constructed imaginaries inform social identities and subjectivities? How do they impact on past, present, and future notions of citizenship?
- ...

Practicalities

Send your extended abstract (500 words max., including references) to contactdnc6@gmail.com before **November 15th 2025**.

Selected abstracts will then be submitted as part of a book proposal for the *Postdisciplinary Studies of Discourse* series, published by Palgrave Macmillan.

We expect to require full book chapters of about 7.000 words in the Spring of 2026. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out to contactdnc6@gmail.com.

This CfP is a spin-off of the sixth Discoursenet Congress (DNC6) about – *Discourse and the imaginaries of past, present and future societies: media and representations of*

(inter)national (dis)orders (Brussels, 2025). People who did not participate in this event may also submit abstracts for this book proposal.