In the popular imaginary, Pakistan seldom appears outside the framework of War on Terror – it has become the ‘theatre of war’ where ideological and actual battles are played out in everyday life. The very name ‘Pakistan’ is often no longer mentioned on its own, it is firmly hyphenated with Afghanistan: Af-Pak, an unbounded chaotic space defined by excessive violence and unending turmoil. It is, as if, no histories, geographies, cultural identities of this space existed prior to its global debut as a source of threat.

This workshop intends to examine this popular though ahistorical discourse that, at once, limits our understanding and forecloses any possibility of seeking alternative visions of this region. The aim is to bring together ideas that are not necessarily bound to the imperatives of terror/security, and in doing so address a vast social-political-cultural space that has remained unexplored so far. The intention is to gain a deeper understanding of Pakistan that goes beyond the rhetoric of ‘fundamentalism’ and ‘terrorism’ that currently defines it.

The workshop invites original research, both theoretical and empirical, on the themes related to contemporary Pakistan from as varied fields as development, anthropology, history, sociology and literature. Through their ongoing research, participants will be asked to address the question of popular imagination, discourses and narratives that provoke, inspire and even challenge their work in this region: and if one might ‘re-imagine’ Pakistan outside the current discourses?

Programme
10.00-10.15 Welcome and Introduction
10.15-11.15 Session 1: Urban Imaginaries
11.00-11.15 Coffee Break
11.15-12.15 Session 2: Literary and Diasporic Imaginaries
12.15-13.15 Lunch
13.15-14.45 Session 3: Sacred Spaces, Public Imaginaries
14.45-15.00 Coffee Break
15.00-16.00 Session 4: New Political Imaginaries
16.00-17.30 Reimagining Pakistan: A public debate

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