

Stream Proposal for Critical Management Studies (CMS) 2017 Conference held from July 3-5, 2017 at Britannia Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool, UK and hosted by Edge Hill University Business School

Alternative ways of organizing – towards a new world order or conformity?

Conveners

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Experience in running streams at CMS and other conferences

Christian Schröder has organised a session at the World Social Forum in 2013 entitled “Decolonising the World Social Forum” at the Campus Al Manar in Tunis. Recently, he was elected as a Board member of the Commission ‘Organisational Pedagogy’ of the German Educational Research Association. In his new role he is part of the organising committee for the next conference of the commission “Organisations and Networks” to be held in 2017 at the University of Hildesheim and will be co-chairing a panel on social movement organising together with Mikko Laamanen.

Mikko Laamanen has previously attended CMS in 2015. He has experience of organising a track at the 2016 LAEMOS conference entitled “Networked Movements: Resisting Power without Formal Organization” as well as conference tracks at the 2015 CR3+ Conference and the 2014 Macromarketing Conference. He is co-chairing a panel on social movement organising at the upcoming 2017 Organizations and Networks conference.

Christopher Land has been attending CMS conferences since the first one in 2001. He has convened conference streams at CMS (2003), EGOS and LAEMOS, as well as organizing several smaller, boutique conferences on issues as diverse as ‘The Novel and Organization’, ‘Automobility’, ‘The Aesthetics and Politics of Organization’, and ‘Scaling Sustainability’. He was a member of the organizing committee for CMS 2015, when it was held at Leicester University.

Track description

It has become commonplace to claim that contemporary societies are marked by constant change and organizational innovation. In many areas of social life, traditional bureaucracies with their hierarchical role structures and preplanned operations appear outdated. Alternative forms of organizing, such as virtual, hybrid, partial, networked-formed, project-based or post-bureaucratic organizations, have been promoted to challenge traditional forms of organization. Whilst there have been many studies suggesting that these innovations have intensified control and domination in the workplace (Fleming, 2014), there is danger that analysts might throw the baby out with bathwater, rejecting the emancipatory and democratic potential in such organizational changes by focusing only on their negative aspects. Through their ephemeral nature and fluidity, emergent, alternative forms of organization may have the potential to engender creativity and radical innovation, serve the common good, and enhance democratic participation in organizations (Parker et al., 2014).

In contrast to most for-profit forms of network organization, social movements can be considered as prototypes of progressive alternative organizations, embodying forms of social (dis)order that challenge hegemonies. In their organizational forms, social movements struggle to balance between decided and emergent order (den Hond et al., 2015; Freeman, 1972) as tendencies on the trajectory between decentralization of networks and formality of organizations (Schröder, 2015; Sutherland, Land & Böhm, 2014). Formalization, while providing effectiveness of structure, can thwart movement ideals and goals by replacing these with a preoccupation of structure, leadership positions, and procedure (Michels, 1965), or by subordinating the lived processes of organizing to future goals and outcomes, thereby reproducing an instrumental logic of means-end organizing that has been inherited from more conventional political parties, as well as for-profit businesses.

In this stream, we want to examine and reflect on the potentials and pitfalls of ‘organizing otherwise’. Papers will draw upon the experiences of social movements and other alternative organizations, as well as hybrid organizations and more commercially orientated post-bureaucracies, to analyse the tension between tendencies toward ‘permanent’ organizational disorder, and emergent forms of stability; between the potential for creating more emancipatory organizational forms and practices, and the incorporation of ‘alternatives’ into a new, hegemonic organizational imaginary that produces conformity. We particularly welcome papers covering topics such as:

- Parallels and differences between the contemporary capitalist organisational forms in the business world, and anti-capitalist forms of organising in social movements;
- The promotion of individualism, competition, and private ownership, and the consequent erosion of social life and political participation evoked by these new organizational forms, and how these exist alongside, and in tension with, emergent forms of solidarity, for example communities of practice, brand communities, or corporate culture programmes;
- Comparisons of traditional and new alternatives, for new (and even newer) social movements compared with the old social movements, or political parties compared with the occupy movement, Black Lives Matter or social forums, or recuperated and occupied factories compared with more traditional workers’ cooperatives;
- Ways of balancing a certain stage of organizational transition between fragmentation and formalization that is marked by unlearning, dissolution, decomposition but also accompanied by processes of growth, transformation, and the reformulation of old elements in new patterns (Turner 1993, p. 49).

References

- den Hond, F., de Bakker, F. G. A., & Smith, N. (2015). Social movements and organizational analysis. In M. Diani & D. della Porta (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Social Movements* (pp. 291-305). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Fleming, P. (2014) *Resisting Work: The Corporatization of Life and Its Discontents*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Michels, R. (1965/1911). *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Parker, M., Cheney, G., Fournier, V., & Land, C. (Eds.) (2014). *The Routledge Companion to Alternative Organization*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Schröder, Christian (2015): *Das Weltsozialforum. Eine Institution der Globalisierungskritik zwischen Organisa-tion und Bewegung [The World Social Forum: An Institution of the Global Justice Movements between Organi-zation and Movement]*. Bielefeld: Transcript.
- Sutherland, N., C. Land and S. Böhm (2014) ‘Anti-leaders(hip) in Social Movement Organizations: The Case of Autonomous Grassroots Groups’, *Organization*, 21(6): 759-781.

Likely number of submissions

We estimate a likely submission of 30 papers to the proposed track.