

Call for abstracts

Alternative Management and Business Education – Tracing Histories, Mapping Contemporary Practices, Imagining Possible Futures

Critical Management Studies beyond the Academy? 30th June – 2nd July 2027, Lancaster University

Session Type:

An in-person stream with some hybrid presentations. The stream will be designed as a learning process that maximises participation and facilitates inquiry and dialogue into these, and other, questions. Therefore, there will be an emphasis on discussing papers in small groups rather than on traditional, frontal presentations. Ideally the stream itself will attempt to experiment with alternative forms of learning and education rather than just discussing them. Although there will be an openness to a range of ways of contributing to the stream including art works, performances and digital media. The stream may also venture outside the conference room and engage with the Lancaster community as part of the learning process. In support of conference sustainability ideally stream participants would travel by ground transportation to physically join the stream, consequently hybrid/online support will be given to participants as is required/requested.

Organiser Information:

[Stephen Allen](#) (he/him), Lecturer in Organisation Studies, University of Sheffield, UK - stephen.allen@sheffield.ac.uk

[Nivedita Kothiyal](#) (she/her), Lecturer in Management, University of York - nivedita.kothiyal@york.ac.uk

[Laure Leglise](#) (she/her), Lecturer in Sustainability and Strategy, Manchester Metropolitan University - L.Leglise@mmu.ac.uk

The primary interest of this stream is to explore the challenges of, and possibilities for, alternative forms of higher education and the implications for critical management learning and education. The stream will consider themes associated with the temporal, spatial and cultural dimensions of higher education (business and management) alternatives, including the definitions and values that underpin them; the role of social movements in creating them; and, the contextual challenges that inform how they are organised.

Alternative, or heterodox, universities have been suggested to be premised on a rejection of “modernity (modern industrial production system, standardisation, ‘scientific’ knowledge etc.) and colonialism” (Kothiyal, 2018, p. 206). In the face of the “near-hegemony of the

marketised and corporatised forms of higher education” alternative universities have been researched and considered as “resources for hope” (Butcher, 2017, p. 66). The need to reimagine and reinvent higher education has never been greater with, for example, in the UK intensifying funding crises in universities. There are increasingly alarming announcements about universities merging to save costs the consequences of which are expected to reduce the quality of the education and jobs that they offer¹.

There are many examples of alternative education institutions and initiatives. For example, the Ecoversities Alliance² is a network that has been created to rethink education in times of climate and biodiversity crises. These alternative forms of education vary significantly with some rejecting becoming formalised as institutions as core to their alternativeness. And, others reject the formalisation of qualifications as a foundation of their different approach. However, alternative universities, like other forms of organisation, can become riddled with contradictory policies and practices which can challenge any claims to alternative-ness (Ivancheva, 2023).

In this stream we will seek to “move CMS beyond the academy” by tracing histories of ideas about alternatives to the ‘University’ and ‘Academy’ while considering alternative possibilities for organising (business and management) education to be socially and ecologically sustainable, especially in times of creeping crises (Karam et al., 2025). We believe recognising these histories enables a more critical and inclusive understanding of education today (Fairless Nicholson, 2023).

We invite contributions that explore the organisational and educational challenges and possibilities for alternative forms of higher education as well as their historical and theoretical foundations. To do so we are particularly interested in contributions relating to the following questions by exploring ideas and practices across as wide a range of contexts as possible:

- What are the histories of ideas about alternative (management and business) higher education? What have been the key theorists and theories for understanding the problems of dominant forms of education and the possibilities for alternatives? Which contributions have been marginalised or forgotten, and which have dominated debate? What are the (forgotten) histories of social movements as productive ‘laboratories of [alternative] learning’ (Novelli et al., 2024)? What new ideas can be developed to reimagine alternative educational possibilities?
- What qualifies an education in business and management as “alternative”? If these alternatives reject neoliberal capitalism, what principles and values guide their approach (Solitander, 2022)? And, how are these principles and values expressed: institutionally, in the curriculum, and pedagogically?
- What have we learnt from studying alternative education institutions and initiatives? How can interdisciplinary approaches (Fairless Nicholson, 2023) help us examine the ways alternative educational practices are shaped by space, place, and historical context? What are the organisational challenges and tensions which are exposed

¹ For example, ‘Staff see King’s merger as start of ‘bifurcation’ of sector’ - <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/staff-see-kings-merger-start-bifurcation-sector> (Accessed May 20th, 2026)

² See <https://ecoversities.org/> (Accessed May 20th, 2026)

and attempted to be navigated within higher education alternatives? What forms of researching can be valued and fit within alternatives? How do these institutions and initiatives thrive within, completely ignore or become significantly compromised by existing in relation to neoliberal market capitalism?

- How are alternatives socially and ecologically sustainable in how they operate in terms of their consumption and curriculum? How might alternatives be more socially and ecologically problematic than dominant forms of higher education? What can we imagine that socially and ecologically restorative higher education involves?

We welcome submissions of academic papers (traditional formats as well as more creative writing) and alternative forms of presentation including art works, performances and digital media. Potential stream participants can contact stream convenors with any questions at stephen.allen@sheffield.ac.uk, nivedita.kothiyal@york.ac.uk and L.Leglise@mmu.ac.uk. Please submit an abstract (about 500 words) by email to the convenors by December 1st 2026 and we will communicate acceptance decisions by January 31st 2027.

References:

Butcher, C. N. (2017). Resources for hope: Ideas for alternatives from heterodox higher education institutions. *Learning and Teaching*, 10(1), 66–86.

Fairless Nicholson, J. (2023). Historical geographies of alternative, and non-formal education: Learning from the histories of Black education. *Geography Compass*, 17(11), p.e12724.

Ivancheva, M. P. (2023). *The Alternative University: Lessons from Bolivarian Venezuela*. Stanford University Press.

Karam, C.M., DeJordy, R., Creed, W.D., Daouk-Öyry, L., Scott, S.P., Geha, C. and Daou, A. (2025). Resourcing agency for sustained collective action amid creeping crises. *Organization Studies*, 46(7), 967-994.

Kothiyal, N. (2018). Swaraj: An Alternative University. In D. Vijay & R. Varman (eds), *Alternative Organisations in India: Undoing Boundaries* (205–224). Cambridge University Press.

Novelli, M., Kutan, B., Kane, P. et al. (2024) *Laboratories of Learning: Social Movements, Education and Knowledge-Making in the Global South*. London: Pluto Press.

Solitander, N. (2022) The reflexive impotence and neoliberal neurosis of the responsible business school. In: Örtenblad A, Koris R (eds), *Debating Business School Legitimacy: Attacking, Rocking, and Defending the Status Quo* (87–104). Cham: Springer International Publishing

Information on the Convening Team

We are UK based academics working in different business and management schools. There is some diversity in our backgrounds: Stephen grew up in England; Nivedita is an immigrant academic from India; and, Laure is French and has lived and worked for many years in Portugal.

Stephen has previously convened a stream at ICMS 2017 'Reimagining social researching: Taking critical action seriously' and ran an activist workshop at ICMS 2025 'The Alternative University: What is it? And, how do we create it?'. He has attended and presented papers at six ICMS conferences and has organised various symposiums and conferences during his academic career. The three intersecting focuses of his research which explores socio-ecological sustainability are: sustainable forms of organisation; reflexivity and learning; and critical leadership. He has published a range of journal articles ([Google Scholar](#) profile, [ResearchGate](#) pages) and his book '[Being and Organizing in an Entangled World: Sociomateriality and Posthumanism](#)' is available open access.

Nivedita has over 20 years of experience working in cross-cultural and international contexts, including research and consulting across the corporate, NGO, and cooperative sectors. Her work focuses on gender, diversity, and critical pedagogy, drawing on postcolonial theory and critical management studies. A widely published scholar, her research appears in top-tier journals such as the *British Journal of Management*, *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, and *Business History*. Her current research projects focus on the Pedagogy of Vulnerability; Hindsight, Serendipity, and Reflexivity; and Responsible and Subaltern Feminist Leadership. She has contributed chapters to edited volumes including *Alternative Organisations in India: Undoing Boundaries* (Cambridge University Press); *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Business and Management Research Methods*; and *Doing Pedagogy Creatively* (Springer *Doing Academia Differently* series).

Laure has co-organised the ICMS conference at Manchester Metropolitan University in 2025 and has presented papers several times at ICMS conferences in the past. In relation to the stream focus, she has published in *Management Learning* and has contributed a chapter titled *Exploring the (im)possibilities of organizing for sustainable development in business schools.* in *The Elgar Companion to Management Education and the Sustainable Development Goals*.