Stream proposal

Landscape Commons: Organizing Livelihoods for a Sustainable Presence

Timeline:

Calls for papers, open from: 1 September 2026

Deadline for paper abstract submissions: 1 Dec 2026

Communication of decisions: 31 Jan 2027

Deadline for full papers: 31 May 2027 (we don't desire full papers but if you want to hand in a more substantial outline or a full paper for feedback, this is the deadline)

Pre-conference activities (optional) 29 June 2027

Conference 30 June – 2nd July 2027

Call for abstracts

Landscapes – understood not as a mere pictorial scene but a naturecultural expression of human-environment interactivities – emerge in "complex processes in which human beings (with the history and culture) and their environment are mutually defined." (Menatti 2017, 641). Organized and emergent in –complex processes between commons and privatized activities, landscapes intersect with an understanding of the commons, or commoning, as relational social process, that has gained renewed interest in Management and Organization Studies (Bauwens, et al. 2019; Brandtner, et al. 2023; Fournier 2013; Mandalaki & Fotaki 2023; Peter & Meyer 2023). Yet, it seems that most of these perspectives engage only loosely with the material dimension of commons.

Taking on a commons perspective on natural systems, we find that our myriad privatized economic activities are still interlaced with commons on different levels of aggregation – local, national, regional and planetary or global (for instance Corti, et al. 2026; Gibson-Graham, et al. 2016). However, as the level of aggregation increases, awareness of this interconnection appears to become more difficult. Planetary or global commons, such as atmosphere, global water circles or biodiversity, especially of migratory species, are at the center of the tragedy of planetary commons that are largely imperceptible. Engaging with organizing a particular commons, instead, often predominantly addresses the commons as a well-defined and circumscribable territory or source of resource with too little focus on the interconnectedness of the socio-cultural with wider bio-physical systems. Landscapes, we propose constitute a meso-level commons that materializes in the interstices of local human activities and systemic implications. This analytical move parallels how global climate change is first noticed on a local scale — a meadow that browns earlier each year, a species of bird no longer heard at dawn, species that suddenly thrive where they once struggled or were non-existent — modest, particular details in which a larger imbalance becomes visible - and brings into focus the multiple entanglements of the naturecultural with global commons within which different forms of organizing commoning and privatized activities emerge.

Mainstream academic engagement with ecological phenomena often contributes to a blindness towards global commons by re-producing onto-epistemologies focused on disembodied, rational knowledge. We argue that this blindness renders landscape commons vulnerable, thereby enabling what Val Plumwood (2008) described as 'shadow places' that are prone to exploitation. It is precisely these ways of interacting and knowing — which cast rationality and efficiency as the only legitimate modes of engaging with our natural habitat — that Critical Management Studies has critiqued for some time (Davis & Riach, 2019; Ergene, et al., 2021; Mandalaki & Fotaki, 2020; Phillips, 2015; 2019; 2020).

Building upon this critique, we argue for going beyond traditional ways of researching and knowing in academia – and especially in organization studies. The materiality of landscape can only be adequately grasped through an embodied way of researching (Allen & Strauß 2026; Mandalaki & Fotaki 2020). Further, landscape knowledge – especially traditional one - is to be found in cultural artefacts, such as stories, songs, poems and others. These convey affective intensities, collective interconnected identities, history and memories, and imagination. In order to account for these situated, embodied and landscape-sensitive ways of knowing, we look for theories in Management and Organization Studies that integrate and legitimize such ways of knowing, thereby furthering our understanding of how to organize livelihoods sustainably (García-López, et al. 2021).

Going beyond conventional academic engagements, we welcome artistic collaborations, presentations and performances like story telling or poetic narrations to our stream as a journey into noticing landscapes as commons and acknowledge the commoning of landscapes by different actors and positionalities. We also invite insights that go beyond notions of communities taking care of a commons to engage with landscape commons that emerge in interactions with various actors, practices and situations, like migration, (re)organizing of work, and art, that enable and construct lives and livelihoods. Highlighting whose and how landscapes and interactions with landscapes are (de)legitimized allows discussing landscapes with regard to the underlying exercises of power in these acts of (de)legitimizing and its implications for various actors confronted with profound changes of the landscapes they belong to (for instance, through land-use changes or changes of the climatic conditions that make certain livelihood practices possible).

Finally, we would like to highlight the particular role of affect as an often-overlooked dimension of landscapes, their constitution as commons as well as associated caring practices (Singh 2017; 2018). This opens up the opportunity to discuss landscapes as a right, a value (beyond resource) and the result of a coming-together or human and non-human livelihood practices (Velicu, I., & García-López, 2018; García-López, et al. 2021).

Transversal questions of interest:

- How can we reconceptualize landscapes as commons?
- How can landscapes as a natureculture be researched in embodied or affective ways?
- How do academic landscapes and their adjunct onto-epistemological practices render (landscape) commons (in-)visible?
- What forms of organizing emerge around artefacts (such as stories, art, songs, rituals, etc.) to contribute, share and reproduce the significance and meaning of a landscape commons?
- How are landscapes interconnected with, organized and mediated through affectivities?
- How are landscape commons entangled with privatized land-practices (such as farming but also tourism, renewable energy production, etc.)
- What alternative ways of evaluating landscapes exist beyond considering nature exclusively as a resource? How is the value of common landscapes mediated?

- How are livelihoods organized that actively interconnect with landscape care (and provide livelihoods for more than humans)?
- How do or could cultural artefacts inform collective practices towards more embodied and relational forms of organizing with landscapes? (e.g., what if instead of a statute or manifesto a collective is seeking to introduce its identity and scope through a poem or a song or a theatrical play?)

We would like to invite scholars to dust off their unconventional side projects and join in this panel to:

- Share embodied and other forms of knowing and learning with landscapes
- Share interactions of living, moving, emerging communities that are commoning landscapes

The contributions can take many forms like:

- Ethnographic work (including historical material)
- Art-based methods
- Collective projects or participative methods
- Engaging with materiality of Lancaster area

We kindly ask the proposals to include:

1. Main driving question of the contribution
2. Explicit connection to landscape commons topic
3. Preliminary plan for the presentation - what will happen, what needs to happen before the presentation (sharing a video, a question with the audience). In case you need an expanded timeframe, please get in touch.
4. Full-papers are not required in advance, however, we are happy to engage with the existing work in any format.
5. The expected length of the proposal is around 800 words without references.

In case of any doubt, please reach out to the organizing collective (landscapecommons@proton.me) in advance to clarify the fit of your contribution to the panel.

Abstracts to be sent by 1st December to: landscapecommons@proton.me

References

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