

CAOS
CONTESTING CAPITALISM: PRACTICES AND STRATEGIES

One day Workshop, Wednesday 18 May 2005
Collective for Alternative Organisation Studies (CAOS)
University of Leicester Management Centre

Workshop Theme

Following the success of CAOS inaugural workshop in June 2004, we are organising a second event to coincide with Katherine Gibson (University of Massachusetts) and Julie Graham's (Australian National University) visit to the University of Leicester Management Centre.

Building on the ethos of CAOS (see www.le.ac.uk/ulmc/caos), the aim of the workshop is to go beyond critiques of capitalism and consider alternatives. We want to respond to those who believe that 'there is no alternative' by waving the weight of evidence to the contrary. By documenting the alternatives created by those who refuse to be trapped by the supposed omnipotence of global capitalism, we hope to open up a space where the very possibility of non-capitalist practice can be taken seriously.

However, we recognise that neo-liberal fundamentalism has become immune to empirical evidence. It tends to close the space for imagining alternative organisation by re-inscribing any existing alternative within an inevitable path towards failure or cooptation. Thus contesting global capitalism not only requires pointing to evidence of alternatives, but also developing strategies for re-thinking the economy and organisation in ways that do not systematically condemn alternatives to the suffocating grip of global capitalism. To borrow a phrase from Gibson-Graham, we need to develop conceptual frameworks that challenge capitalocentric representations of the economy. This entails destabilising the presumed hegemony, totality and unity of capitalism by pointing to its historical, social, political specificities and contingencies. Thus we need to dispel the myth of a singular capitalist essence and instead reveal the multiplicity of concrete practices that make up capitalisms. The explosion of *Capitalism* into a set of fragmented, multiple, contingent sites of *capitalisms*, in turn, opens up the space for (recognising) non-capitalist practices. Alternatives no longer have to establish themselves against, defend themselves against, or resist, some a priori hegemonic force of capitalism.

If we follow Gibson-Graham, breaking free of 'capitalocentrism' also means thinking differently about the 'economy'. Thus we need to develop a vocabulary of economic (and organisational) difference by freeing 'exchange', 'work', and 'organisation' from the capitalist grip within which they have been trapped as 'commodity market', 'waged labour' and 'capitalist enterprise'. This may involve for example abandoning the concepts that have dominated our understanding of the economy and organisations (e.g. management, performance, competence, growth...) and choosing others (e.g. justice, dignity, sustainability, values...)

In short, the workshop will engage with the following themes:

- ▣ Exploring past and present alternative forms of organising (e.g. alternative forms of work, alternative forms of exchange, alternative organisational forms: cooperative, communes...)
- ▣ Exploding the myth of capitalism as an omnipotent and monolithic force, and highlighting the breaks, disjunctures, differences in the making of contemporary economies.
- ▣ Reconceptualising 'organisation' and the economy, or to paraphrase Gibson-Graham developing a vocabulary of 'economic / organisational difference'.

CAOS is an open community and we would like to extend the invitation to the workshop to all those who share our commitment to broaden the imagination and practice of organisation. We welcome academics at all levels, as well as from those involved in shaping alternatives (activists, politicians, NGO workers and others). This openness will also be reflected in the different formats of the sessions; some may follow the paper presentation format, whilst others may take the form of more open discussion forum.

Time and venue

The workshop will open at 9.30 with registration and close at 5.15, although it may continue informally for those who want to stay for a drink afterwards. It will take place in the Charles Wilson Building (2nd Floor) at the University of Leicester, University Road. For directions to the university and the Charles Wilson Building,

Attendance: Attendance at the workshop is FREE, however we need to know how many participants there will be in order to book lunch and refreshments. So if you wish to attend, please complete the registration form attached and email to Jenni Hern (j.hern@le.ac.uk) by the 15th of April 2005.

Accommodation in Leicester: If you need accommodation for the night before or after the workshop, there are two hotels close to the University campus: Regency Hotel www.the-regency-hotel.com Belmont Hotel www.bw-belmonthouse.co.uk

Workshop programme: We are currently finalising the programme and it will shortly be available on our website (www.le.ac.uk/ulmc/caos). A provisional programme is included below.

9.30	Registration and Coffee	
10-10.45	Katherine Gibson and Julie Graham	
10.45-12.15	<p>Alternative perspectives on work</p> <p>Do_an Göçmen, Sense and Senselessness in the Organisation of Labour: A critical account of the debates in the 19th century</p> <p>V. Vandelacluze and R. Hoop, In search of sustainable work</p> <p>Stephen Sheard, Key challenges in managing people over the next 5 years</p>	<p>Reflecting the diverse economy</p> <p>Nadia Johanisova, Survival Strategies of rural social enterprises in Britain and the Czech Republic</p> <p>Adrian Smith and Alison Stenning, Beyond Household Economies: Articulations and Spaces of Economic Practice in Post-Socialism</p> <p>Mark Banks, Moral Economy and Cultural Work</p>
12.15-1.30	Lunch	
1.30-3.00	<p>Practising alternatives</p> <p>Diane Skinner, Food production within a community</p> <p>Martin Buttle, Creating a hybrid socio-financial organisational narrative: the case of Charity Bank</p> <p>John Courtneidge, Cooperative Socialism: Theory and Practice</p>	<p>Resisting capitalism</p> <p>Andy Pike, Fighting Closures: the limits and prospects of social agency</p> <p>Labour Reform Network Project (Rosemary Stock), Building Ideology: A cooperative approach</p> <p>David Byrne and Sally Ruane, Resisting Bolkstein: Knowledge is not power</p>
3.00-3.15	Tea Break	
3.15-4.15	<p>Alternative Currencies</p> <p>Mary Fee and Rosamund Stock: LETS (Local Exchange Trading Schemes): why do some fail and others succeed?</p> <p>Peter North: Scaling alternative economic practices? Some lessons from alternative currencies.</p> <p>John Rogers, Convincing, Consensus and constructed currencies: the past, present and future of the complementary currencies movement.</p>	<p>Representing the economy</p> <p>Martyna Sliwa and George Cairns, Beyond dichotomies of capitalism and its alternatives: Language games and the implications of social groups for which 'capitalism' has no meaning</p> <p>Colin Marx, The role of poverty studies in placing the poor outside of the economy</p>
4.15-5.15	<p>Engaging with / in Activism</p> <p>Jenny Pickerill and Paul Chatterton, Living between worlds: Autonomous activists in the city. Leicester Social Forum</p>	

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Participant Details

Family Name: _____
First Name: _____
Institution: _____
Department: _____
Address: _____
_____ Post Code: _____
City/Country _____
Telephone: _____
Email: _____
Dietary Requirements (e.g. vegetarian): _____

Please return this Registration Form by the **15th of April 2005** by email to Jenni Hern (j.hern@le.ac.uk) or print and post to Jenni Hern, University of Leicester Management Centre, University Road, Leicester LE1 7RH, UK.

If you have any queries about the workshop email Professor Colin Williams (ccw3@leicester.ac.uk)