



# Doing Otherwise. Direct Action and Collective Practices between Culture and Organization

Bologna, 11-12 December 2026

## Call for abstract

Across scholarly accounts of entrepreneurship and public imaginaries alike, taking action is often framed within what is labelled as “hustle culture”, a productivist, individualistic and fundamentally moralized celebration of doing and working for economic success (see for example Levie and Autio, 2011; Müller et al., 2023; Wettermark and Berglund, 2025). Accordingly, the entrepreneur is constructed as a jack-of-all-trades capable of governing the complexity of a business venture (Lazear, 2005), the “agency fuelled [...] creator, seducer, aggressor” (Nicholson & Anderson, 2005: 168) who risks and succeeds alone, and who is hegemonically attached to organizational practices that are ultimately individual and market-oriented. The economic framework that subsumes this entrepreneurial vision under the same logic of individualized freedom and market validation is nothing but the new spirit of capitalism (Boltanski & Chiappello, 2005), based on the disengagement from the social and public domain in favor of privatization and the free market for the rational economically self-interested subject (Olssen & Peters 2005). Within this dominant frame, alternative traditions of direct action – collective, conflictual, and materially grounded forms of doing and working (Graber, 2009) – remain largely neglected or misrecognized, and are rarely granted the same ethical or moral recognition afforded to the hustling entrepreneur.

This tendency of elevating the hustling entrepreneur as a positive moral archetype, grounded in neoliberal assumptions about value creation, individual responsibility, and market validation, has travelled well beyond its canonical sites (e.g. the Silicon Valley), permeating other economic and cultural contexts. The cultural sector, once imagined as a privileged site of positive societal change (Kropotkin, 2002; Landauer, 1997), now often reproduces the very logics of hustle culture it was expected to resist (de Peuter, 2011; Pratt, 2002). Even craftmaking, often celebrated for its slowness (Rennstam & Paulsson, 2025) and invoked as a space of alternativity (Bell et al., 2021), is increasingly absorbed into this entrepreneurial framing. The *homo faber* morphed already into *homo entrepreneurus* (Da Costa & Saraiva, 2012), as making is affirmed only insofar as it can be rendered economically productive. Following this logic, craftmaking finds large space in luxury brands, where the value of doing is less in the hands of masters, than in those of the “enlightened” entrepreneur (Brogioni, 2012) to exploit and recognize those skills, as capable of adding economic value to their exclusive product (Tosi, 2015). Similarly, the maker movement, a networked DIY innovation culture grounded in grassroots community exchange (Dougherty,

2012) and emerging from the intrinsic pleasure of tinkering with peers, was rapidly recast as a reservoir of economic potential to be tapped for profit (Browder et al., 2017).

At the same time, organization and management scholarship has shown growing interest in alternative forms of organizing emerging from grassroots and collective movements (e.g. Dahlman et al., 2025; Augustine et al., 2025), which challenge dominant narratives and discourses of individual success, relying on slower and participatory organizing practices (Luyckx et al., 2022), informed by collectivist and democratic values, and aimed at social and managerial transformation in favor of the common good (Jourdain, 2022; Vijay et al., 2025), explicitly rejecting capitalist relations (Caffentzis & Federici, 2014). The cultural field has proven to be a particularly fertile arena for experimenting with the governance of the cultural commons and the self-management of collective goods (e.g. Bianchi, 2018; Borch, 2018; Magkou et al. 2025). Instead of the *homo oeconomicus*, these collectivist settings assume the *homo reciprocans*, who base his action not on rational individualism but on rational solidarity and cooperation, or we-rationality (Candela & Senta, 2017).

In *Doing Otherwise* we focus on direct action, intended as a prefigurative practice (Schiller-Merkens, 2024; Maeckelbergh, 2011) in which the means embody the ends pursued, that does not merely symbolize change but seeks to enact it directly, containing in partial and practical form the social relations it aims to bring about (Franks, 2003). The recent rise of technocratic entrepreneurial-based celebrated forms of power (Chayka, 2025; Cohen, 2025; Farkas & Mondon, 2025), makes it increasingly urgent to question the dominant neoliberal framework, and to discover and engage with communal practices of direct action in the domain of labour and entrepreneurship, collective management, and self-organized collectives. Direct action appears particularly valuable as both a concrete intervention in an existing situation and as lived anticipation of a broader transformative vision, undertaken by those directly affected rather than mediated through hierarchical representation. It opens to commoning practices of labour in occupied factories for wage negotiations or against closure plans, squatting, sabotage (Malm, 2021), and other forms of collective withdrawal or disruption carried out directly “with and for the beings involved in courageous ways of life” (Ordóñez, 2018: 77).

This conference calls the entrepreneurship, organization, and management studies community to explore alternative forms of organizing where direct action is conducted otherwise relative to its entrepreneurial, social and cultural dimension, i.e. the dominant hustle culture ideology, its individualistic nature and extractivist vision.

It is precisely to address these counter-hegemonic practices that *Doing Otherwise* explores experiences of commons and materially situated collectives, labour and practices, to highlight communal non-profit, and anti- or post-capitalist actions that, rather than seeking integration within existing structures, often adopt an openly antagonistic stance (Parker & Parker, 2017). It particularly welcomes contributions that address practices operating at a structural and material level, rather than those whose political dimension remains primarily confined to micropolitical subjectivation.

The conference also welcomes documented and theorised forms of refusal and opposition to the imperative to act, produce, and constantly generate value, recognising that in a context where action is moralised and economised, choosing not to do, to slow down, or to obstruct can unsettle a regime that equates agency with ceaseless activation and thereby preserve a distinctly political charge (Tronti, 1998; Weiss, 2016). We invite contributions that engage with these themes both as practice and organization, as

well as narrative and discourse, intended as subversive modes of action on the social imaginary (pointing to the possibility of the impossible).

Submissions may address, but are not limited to the following areas of inquiry:

- Alternative organizational practices in cultural and creative sectors that contest dominant power relations and experiment with new forms of social organisations: DIY, grassroots and underground organizing, collective craft-makers, informal networks, collectives, etc.
- Commons and self-managing experiences: organizing the commons, self-management as direct and collective form of management, commoning labour, we-rationality, digital commons, autonomous infrastructures, anarchist organizing, direct action, commoning labour, mutual aid practices, common uses of public space etc.
- Refusal of doing: sabotaging, anti-work instances, resisting, prefigurative breakdowns, collective resilience, etc.

## **Submission guidelines**

Please submit your abstract in PDF format to [doingotherwise.lab@proton.me](mailto:doingotherwise.lab@proton.me) naming the file with the author's surname. Abstracts should be a maximum of 600 words (excluding references) and should include a short list of references. No submission fee is required.

Deadline for abstract submission: **1 September 2026.**

The conference is linked to a forthcoming thematic issue of *puntOorg International Journal*. Papers presented at the conference will be eligible for a fast-track route for consideration in the thematic issue, while still undergoing the journal's regular double-blind peer review process.

More information on [the website](#).

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