The Counter-University (Copenhage, 12-14 Feb 25)

University of Copenhagen, Feb 12–14, 2025
Deadline: May 16, 2024

Susanne Schregel

The Counter-University. Histories, Movements, and Ambitions.
The declaration of “counter-universities” has been part of activists’ repertoires for many decades. The practice became known primarily through the student movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Since the mid-1960s, numerous “free” universities have emerged in the USA in the context of protests for “free speech” and against the Vietnam War. At the latest, the transnational protest events of 1967/1968 made the declaration of “free”, “critical”, “political” or “autonomous” universities common practice in many Western European countries. Since then, the creation of counter-universities has served as an in-fluential tool of developing critique of science and higher education, as well as imagining potentially more satisfactory approaches to higher learning and knowledge formation.
This conference invites scholars interested in the history and present of the counter-university to share their ideas on this significant yet under-researched transnational phe-nomenon. Despite the wide spread and centrality of the counter-university, research so far has hesitated to approach the phenomenon and its diverse manifestations as spatially as well as temporally connected. Therefore, this conference is dedicated to open a dis-cussion about counter-universities’ pasts and presents and to assess their role in world-wide struggles for social and educational reforms.
In particular, we are looking for case studies as well as broader comparative and analyti-cal papers that situate the phenomenon in the history of protest, counterculture and higher education. Among others, we welcome papers from history, history of education, history of science, art history, cultural studies, sociology, and social movements studies.

We particularly welcome contributions addressing the following topics:
- “Political”/”Critical”/”Free”/”Anti”-universities of the 1960s and 70s, and their offshoots
- Women’s universities; feminist university projects; gay and queer counter-universities
- Counter-universities and learning spaces in art (historical and contemporary)
- Democratic”/”citizens’”/”people’s” universities; counter-universities and trade unions
- Ecological and green counter-universities’ past and present
- Mobile/Travelling Universities
- Populist and right-wing counter-universities
- Counter-universities and social struggles of the present
- PLEASE NOT: state reform projects in higher education, if there is no direct connection to movement’s / artists’ activities

Analytical angles may be, but are not limited to:
- Creating the counter-university: constitution, protest forms, ambitions and aes-thetics

- Critique of universities, higher learning and science (as it is/was); concepts of im-proving learning and research; utopias of scientific communities and knowledge formation
- Counter-universities' everyday; content and forms of learning and teaching; didac-tics, exams and certificates; impact on/interaction with individual disciplines and curriculum development in the regular university
- Media usage; media formats; modes of communication
- Relations to social movements; relation to reform projects inside academia
- Interactions/conflicts with regular universities and politics; relation to state level politics /state reform projects
- Impact/consequences, both to individual biographies and science/education at large

The conference will take place at the University of Copenhagen, February 12–14, 2025, and is organized by Susanne Schregel and Detlef Siegfried (both Department of English, Germanic and Romance Studies, University of Copenhagen).
If you are interested in participating, please submit your abstract (of no more than 500 words, for a presentation of about 30 minutes) to susanneschregel@hum.ku.dk by May 16, 2024.
Decisions on the acceptance or rejection of proposals will be announced by the end of May 2024.
We intend to publish the outcomes.
The organizers will apply for funding to assist with travel and accommodation costs.
In case of any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the organizers via email.

Overview:
Deadline for abstracts: 16 May 2024
Decisions by: 31 May 2024
Conference Date: 12–14 February 2025
Conference Venue: University of Copenhagen
Contact: susanneschregel@hum.ku.dk

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