**The 11th International Critical Management Studies Conference**

**Sub-theme Proposal**

**Title:**

When Critical Management Scholars Become Managers

**Convenors:**

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**Outline of Proposed Sub-theme**

As its name portends, Critical Management Studies is concerned with questioning, problematizing and even subverting the practice management in organizations. From its beginnings, CMS has focussed attention on the “other interests and perspectives than those immediately associated with the managerial position” (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992: 6). Those who have attempted to define CMS propose that it is in the business of ‘unmasking’ the power relations inherent in managerial activity (Fournier and Grey, 2000); relations that “structure and reaffirm the social, political and economic environment” (Tadajewski et al, 2011: 3). This includes (although underrepresents) structures that marginalise women, sexual minorities (Pullen, Harding and Phillips, 2017), people of colour and non-Western ways of knowing (Jaya, 2001).

Understood as a practice of power, management becomes the object of critical scrutiny, and studying it is commonly informed by a desire to undermine and resist the operation of that power. Even when CMS research takes the more upbeat position of “stimulating progressive practices” (Spicer, Alvesson Kärreman, 2009: 549) or searching for alternatives, it is generally about other people’s practices and how others might benefit if they would only listen to the lessons pronounced by the CMS scholar. The management critic mostly remains an outsider to management itself, often assuming a safe intellectual space from which to issue criticism, analysis or even condemnation. Only in some rare cases are CMS scholars called to take up active management roles in universities and show the importance of such work (Butler, Delaney and Sliwa, 2017:471)

In this conference sub-theme we turn to the question of what happens when critical management studies scholars themselves become managers; that is when they take on a role that they have previously invested their careers problematizing and criticizing. This is indeed an issue that each of us, as sub-theme convenors, has faced in our own professional practice as we chose, or felt compelled, to take up roles in academic management. To date there are just a few studies on this subject; and they are limited to the confessional tales of Western, male critical scholars who have also worked as academic managers. For example, Parker (2004) considers management struggles, especially as they relate to the vicissitudes in relationships with work colleagues that occur *after* becoming a manager, and the possibility of being seduced by power and authority.

Too few studies have addressed the complexities, contradictions and conundrums that might be expected when a person who has spent an academic career offering a criticism of management practice and managerial ideology, might be faced with the practical task of managing. Based again on personal experience, King and Learmonth (2015), for example, suggest that critical scholars can expect to experience struggle when attempting to work as a manager while maintaining fidelity to a critical sensibility. This raises questions about the possibilities for CMS managers to practice what they preach and to manage things differently.

The sub-theme wishes to draw on and extend such work by stimulating reflexive, ethnographic, and phenomenological self-accounts of CMS researchers who have become managers (cf. Jain’s (2017) ethnographic account of advocacy work). It also seeks to broaden this to consider the perspective and experiences those who have worked with CMS managers, as well as ways to theorise such experiences.

Papers could investigate, although would not to be limited to, the following questions:

* What does it mean to be an academic manager who is *also* committed to critical studies of management and organisation?
* What is the experience of being managed by a CMS manager?
* Is CMS management a masculine practice?
* How do CMS managers manage diversity, intersectionality, and discrimination?
* Is a commitment to CMS an anathema to being a manager?
* Can the seduction of managerialism be resisted by managers?
* How might CMS itself be enhanced by an insider view of management practice?
* What discourses and practices of management distinguish CMS managers from other managers, and in whose eyes?
* What happens when people step out of management and back into non-managerial work?
* Is the experience of CMS management gendered, racialized and/or classed?
* How do CMS managers deal with worker resistance?
* Are CMS managers hypocrites?
* Are CMS scholars deluded in thinking they can make change from the inside?
* What are the possibilities and limits of auto-ethnographic accounts of management?
* What is the nature of the emotional labour involved in being a CMS manager?
* How do CMS scholars perform being management?
* How do CMS scholars manage identity conflicts?
* How do CMS managers deal with reflexive struggles?
* Can CMS managers take pride in being a ‘good’ manager?

As well as individual papers, we also encourage proposals for themed sessions, panel discussions, and non-traditional formats.

**References**

Alvesson, M. and Willmott, H. (Eds.). (1992). *Critical Management Studies*. London: Sage.

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Jaya, P. S. (2001). Do we really ‘know’and ‘profess’? Decolonizing management knowledge. *Organization*, *8*(2), 227-233.

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Pullen, A., Harding, N., & Phillips, M. (2017) *Feminists and Queer Theorists Debate the Future of Critical Management Studies*, Bingley: Emerald.

Spicer, A., Alvesson, M., & Kärreman, D. (2009). Critical performativity: The unfinished business of critical management studies. *Human Relations*, 62(4), 537-560.

Tadajewski, M., Maclaran, P., Parsons, E. & Parker, M.(Eds.). (2011). *Key Concepts In Critical Management Studies*. London: Sage.

Please submit a 500 word abstract (excluding references, one page, Word document NOT PDF, single spaced, no header, footers or track changes) together with your contact information to leanne.cutcher@sydney.edu.au. The deadline for submission of abstracts is January 31st 2019, and we will notify you of our decision by the end of February.