

## **The 11<sup>th</sup> International Critical Management Conference**

**PRECARIOUS PRESENTS, OPEN FUTURES**  
**The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, UK**  
**27<sup>th</sup> – 29th June 2019**

### **CALL FOR SUB-THEME PROPOSALS**

The Department for People and Organisations at The Open University Business School, in collaboration with VIDA, the Critical Management Studies Association, will host the International CMS conference in 2019 around the theme of 'Precarious Presents, Open Futures'. This theme invites theoretical and empirical analysis of what it means for societies and organizations to be 'open' in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, what currently constitutes radical political, economic, cultural, historical and ethical openness, and how this openness is under attack from renewed discourses of individualized privilege and closure as well as physical violence.

It was once claimed that the new millennium would mark the 'end of history', characterized by the permanent victory of the free market and liberal democracy anticipated by neo-liberalism. Yet these triumphant visions have been profoundly challenged by the global financial crisis and the growing populist demand for radical change across the ideological spectrum. Rising inequality and the growth of the precarious economy, marked by zero hour contracts and other unstable and insecure working arrangements, have meant that for many, modern working life is tainted by material insecurity and psychological anxiety. Faith in democracy is being abused by the spread of oligarchy and the troubling return of nativism, racism and nationalism. Our identities are threatened in a present where personal data are routinely harvested and exploited, as exemplified by many recent scandals. And all of these concerns are exacerbated by fear of a hi-tech, automated, dystopian future of mass unemployment.

Still, these uncertainties may also prove to be the catalyst for creating new opportunities to profoundly reshape and reorganize our economies, politics and societies. Neoliberalist assumptions, once held sacred, are now threatened by new ideas, such as a universal basic income, while seemingly entrenched elites may be at risk. 'Industry 4.0' – a potentially unholy mix of the Internet of Things, cloud computing, artificial intelligence and cyber-physical systems, predicted to revolutionize manufacturing – is a very daunting possibility. However, it might be supplemented, dramatically transformed, even supplanted by ideas of 'democracy 4.0' and 'development 4.0'. Perhaps we can reimagine contemporary management thinking and organizations so that they are as radically 'empowering' as they are 'smart', challenging dominant interwoven paradigms based on patriarchy, racism, ethnic discrimination, ageism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism and colonialism.

For these reasons, it is more urgent than ever to ask: who is influencing these new histories and how do, and can, critical management academics participate in them? How can they be further democratized and owned by the many rather than the elite few, the 99% and not the 1%? In the western world, developments like the election of Donald Trump, Brexit, and Theresa May's 'confidence and supply' agreement with the Irish Democratic Unionist Party reveal a distinct politics of closure and exclusion in regard to geographic borders, 'facts' and hard-won progress around expanding social inclusion. On the other hand, in the southern hemisphere the election of Jacinda Ardern, a committed feminist who is passionate about the eradication of child poverty and homelessness, calls for a questioning of taken for granted, western-centric approaches to politics as well as an amplification of New Zealand's voice on the global stage.

At stake, then, is a resurgent need to radically reconceive the meanings and practices associated with openness. It is also vital that we critically assess how and in what ways they might actually be(come) open, rather than simply giving the appearance of openness. Open source creation, collaboration and information are recalibrating the potential for personal and collective interactions and knowledge sharing across the globe. In short, then, how can participants in CMS contribute to transforming our precarious presents into possibilities for genuinely open futures?

For the 2019 conference, we therefore invite stream and workshop proposals from diverse disciplines as well as interdisciplinary proposals which critically unpack new concepts including – but not limited to – digital inclusion, decolonizing data management, trans-human management, alternative human-animal relations, open source organizations, virtual progress, global solidarity and mobile organizing. These concepts (and many others) allow for an exploration of how technologies and emerging forms of organization can subvert established identities, and open the space for new and marginalized voices to shape our presents and futures. We are also interested in proposals, again from diverse disciplines within and without the field of management studies, that engage with the contemporary production and organization of knowledge – specifically its openness to alternative perspectives and traditionally marginalized voices - as well as how emerging techniques and technologies associated with ‘open information’ are reinforcing old or fostering new forms of ideological and social closure. Proposals which engage with the broader sociopolitical, economic and technological changes outlined above and how CMS can respond to them in order to help shape more open societies are equally welcome. These would require reflection on our own role as researchers, educators and intellectual activists, as well as the (changing) role of universities in producing both closures and openness in the contemporary context. Just as importantly, we are committed to ‘opening up’ how a conference is organized and managed, creating collaborative spaces for constructive knowledge sharing between academics, activists, practitioners, artists and policy makers, *inter alia*. These could include activist-led ‘unstreams’ or ‘nowshops’, performances, art sharing sessions and interactive installations involving virtual technology and mobile games.

Proposals should include an outline of the proposed sub-theme (500-750 words), as well as a short description of the team of convenors, including their backgrounds and experience. Ideally, convenors for streams will be drawn from different continents and disciplines, and be gender-balanced. We would also like to encourage the inclusion of early-career academics and Doctoral students as part of convener teams. We expect most of the submissions to be linked with the overall conference theme, but other submissions are welcome as long as they are likely to appeal to the wider CMS community and beyond. We are keen to encourage proposals from the range of management studies disciplines (accounting and finance, human resource management, industrial relations, marketing and consumption, organization studies, international business, etc.) and related disciplines including - but not limited to - sociology, human geography, cultural studies, anthropology and psychology. Cross-/multi-/interdisciplinary proposals are very much encouraged.

Please note that we will apply the principle of progressive stacking in the event that we receive more proposals than we can accommodate for the conference. This approach means that convenor teams including members of non-dominant gender, racial, ethnic, sexual, age, ability and regional groupings will be given priority over other teams whose proposals are deemed to be of an equally high standard.

The deadline for submission of sub-theme proposals is **17 September 2018**. Please send these to the local organising committee at **OUBS-CMS2019@open.ac.uk**. Convenors will be notified by **29<sup>th</sup> September 2018** of the outcome of their submissions. Any questions can be directed to the same email address.