Dispossessed Presents, Open Futures: Deconstructing narratives of developmentalism and modernization

The year 2019 will mark 40 years since the publication of Lyotard’s *Postmodern Condition* (1979), which highlighted the growing incredulity towards metanarratives as a characteristic of postmodernity. Whilst many metanarratives have indeed been subject to questioning (and have faced public revolts in the context of ‘post-truth’, giving postmodernity a twisted new incarnation), many continue to shape the ways lives are managed. This includes grand narratives of modernity, modernization, development, progress, growth and management. We are interested in deconstructing this set of pervasive grand narratives.

Despite the body of work in CMS to problematize developmentalism (e.g. Banerjee, 2003; Cooke, 2004; Dussel and Ibarra-Colado, 2006; Imas and Weston, 2012), its practices go on. We would like to critically examine the darker side of developmentalism and modernization’s narratives. This can include connections to the persisting discourses and practices of coloniality, the role they play in the (re)production of global inequalities, injustice, violence, and poverty, and the ways in which they are implicated in the othering, exploitation and oppression of individuals, communities and minorities. We also seek to critically interrogate the role of management thought and business schools in sustaining the above dynamics, and to reflect on the potential role for CMS in helping to open up post-/non-developmentalist futures.

We invite contributions that address the above agenda. These could take the form of critical analyses (theoretical, historical, philosophical, empirical) of the tangle of narratives implicated in developmentalism and how these narratives relate to each to produce specific local effects. For example, contributions could explore how development, modernization and coloniality are entangled and overlap over time and space at individual, organisational, and wider societal levels. Development and modernization could be approached as exports that are peddled to the ‘Third World’ by the “development industry” (Escobar, 1995) ‘as a package trip to the promised land of happiness’ (Mignolo, 2007a: 452). We welcome papers that question the beliefs that non-western societies’ poverty and “underdevelopment” stem from their being caged into outmoded ways of living and institutions (Estrada-Villalta, 2017), and that ‘underdeveloped’ countries are incapable of autonomously evolving but eager to follow the wise guidance of Western countries (Wallerstein, 2005). Contributions that challenge the discourses that naturalize modernity, reproducing coloniality, and explore how coloniality survives past colonialism, influencing knowledge production and cultural, socio-political, and psychological levels of existence are also welcomed (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). From a postcolonial perspective, modernity is rooted in the erasure of alternatives to capitalism, and in coloniality of ontological, epistemic, cultural, political and social systems (Dussel and Ibarra-Colado, 2006; Ascione, 2014; Quijano, 2007). Modernity has a long history of othering and dehumanisation, which can result at its extreme in genocide (Bauman, 1991). We are thereby also interested in how modernisation and modernity have been transformed into forces of oppression and exploitation.

We invite contributions that engage with the role of management, managerialism and/or business schools in promulgating developmentalist, modernist discourses and practices. This includes critiques of the role of management thought in perpetuating mythical discourses that seek to emplace modern Western ideals in non-Western and Western contexts that have been earmarked for ‘development’. Contributions could explore the role of management in reproducing forms of modernity in the Global South (Cooke, 2004), and how modernity enforces Western management
discourse and practices upon the lives of those in the non-West, dictating how and what should be studied and practised (e.g. Imas and Weston, 2012).

We are interested in investigating the operationalisation of modernist developmentalist discourses and practices, with the associated ‘tyranny of participation’ (Cooke and Kothari; 2001), dispossession, exploitation and oppression, inside and across national borders. Papers are welcome to deconstruct the effects of developmentalism and modernity (and progress, growth, coloniality and management) in a range of locales and focus on the analysis of specific empirical cases such as Windrush, Tailings Dam disasters, or Grenfell Tower, where development and modernisation have brewed ‘a perfect storm of disadvantage’ (Boughton, 2017).

Finally, we call for pluriversality. There is little theorising from Indigenous and other disavowed epistemologies and ontologies in mainstream management and organisation studies. No matter how global, much of this discourse only represents the ways of thinking of certain people. We are dominated by theories that are implicitly masculine, white/Western and bourgeois/managerial. It is time to open up the debates to transmodern and pluriversal perspectives that challenge the dichotomisation of developmentalism into a fixed core/periphery positioning. As part of this, we seek to bring into CMS pluriversal understandings of ‘development’ that draw on local realities and Indigenous worldviews within which development, organisation and management, gender and identity, and community and familial structures, among others, are understood locally, and constructed in the margins and from the lived experience of otherness (see Faria, 2013).

**Submission guidelines**

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 tim.butcher@open.ac.uk. The deadline for submission of abstracts is January 31st 2019, and we will notify you of our decision by the end of February.

**Stream conveners**

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References


