The 11th International Critical Management Studies Conference: Precarious Presents, Open Futures   
The Open University, Milton Keynes, UK, 27-29th June 2019

**Sub-theme: Contending materialities and affective relations in work and organisation – Exploring the ethics and politics of new materialist thinking**

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The starting point of ethics… [is] the recognition of human participation in a shared, vital materiality. We *are* vital materiality and we are surrounded by it, though we do not always see it that way. The ethical task at hand here is to cultivate the ability to discern nonhuman vitality, to become perceptually open to it. (Bennett, 2010, p.14, *emphasis in original*)

In this subtheme we invite contributors to take up the challenge posed by new materialist thinkers to think and act as if matter *mattered* (Bennett, 2010), and to explore the ethical and political implications that arise from this engagement. We intend to bring together recent thinking on affect and organisations (Fotaki et al., 2017) with, as Bennett (2004, p.347) proposes, the importance of returning to ‘the vitality, wilfulness, and recalcitrance possessed by nonhuman entities and forces’. Affect has been defined as a body’s capacity, or power, to affect and be affected (Massumi, 2002) and the bodily intensities that arise from these encounters. Affect is understood as a visceral force, an automatic and non-reflective bodily response (Blackman & Venn, 2010) that is created between, and through, bodies which are both human and more-than-human (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010). These approaches draw attention to relationality and indeterminacy where objects and subjects are seen to be in a continuous process of becoming within webs of sociomaterial relations. Affect is continuously created between bodies – human and non-human – as a pre-reflexive sensation, intensity, energy, or pulse, providing an excess, which escapes the logic of cultural systems such as language.

‘Thing-power materialism is a speculative onto-story, a rather presumptuous attempt to depict the nonhumanity that flows around but also through humans’ (Bennett, 2004, p.349). In the context of critical management studies, these perspectives open up the ethics and politics of organisations and enable us to explore differences, for example, between our sense of self and the social position that is marked for us. Butler (1997) emphasizes the working of power within our intersubjective relations and highlights how subjects come into existence through passionate attachment to their own subordination. Affect can thus be a source of knowledge about unequal power relations between people, providing a source of dissonance that can drive us towards change (Hemmings, 2012). Hence, although affect is socially conditioned, it holds promise to unsettle us into new states of being and thus provides capacity for destabilizing normative practices (Hemmings, 2012; Pullen, Rhodes & Thanem, 2017; Vachhani and Pullen, 2018).

This sub-theme invites submissions that explore the potential of affect theory and new materialism to generate new insights into our ‘precarious presents’ and possibilities for transformation in organisations. We also encourage contributors to consider how dominant social orders can be challenged and changed through affect and materiality into more ‘open futures’. We invite contributions including but not limited to the following themes:

* Thing-power and materialities in organisational life
* Object-orientated ideas of transforming organisations
* Affective thinking that enables compassionate and ethical relations
* New materialism and reconstructing relations of domination and subordination
* Ordinary affects in various spheres of work and life
* Sociomaterial practices of organizing that open up possibilities for rethinking ethics and politics in organisations
* Co-existence and becoming in an era of vast differences created by climate change, misogyny, Trump and Brexit, for example.

**Submission details:**

Please send abstracts or any questions to convenors via: Emma Bell [emma.bell@open.ac.uk](mailto:emma.bell@open.ac.uk)

Abstracts should be a maximum of 500 words (excluding references), single spaced, 12-point font, Word document not PDF. Please include author’s contact information, including email addresses and affiliation.

Abstract submission deadline: **January 31st 2019**

Notification of paper acceptance: **28th February 2019**

**References:**

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