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

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**Undermining the Fortresses of Socioeconomic Disparities Through Critical Accounting and Management Research**

**Conveners**

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Socioeconomic disparities now prevail, perhaps to a greater extent than ever experienced in “modern” history (World Inequality Lab, 2018). There is today a relatively large consensus regarding the range of economic inequalities ensuing from the spread of a globalizing neoliberal agenda, in the name of apparently neutral global markets. Persuasive accounts of the matter have been sustained through influential studies (Harvey, 2005; Rose, 1999; Stiglitz, 2002). Even some organizations traditionally associated with the globalizing establishment, such as the OECD and the World Economic Forum, increasingly recognize that today’s range of economic disparities constitutes a significant social problem – not only an economic one. Why is it, then, given the above-mentioned consensus, that the growth in socioeconomic discrepancies is not seriously disrupted?

Through their activities, discourses and practices, organizations (including a number of not-for-profit organizations – see Chowdhury, 2017a) both contribute to the spread of disparities – and are impacted by it (Hamann & Bertels, 2018). Within the organizational field, ways of thinking and doing are centrally involved in the production and promotion of an established order that presumes the unavoidable nature of disparities. Concepts of meritocracy and Darwinism are often used to enrol audiences in claims about the inescapable “realities” of neoliberal, socioeconomic life. Further, apparently mundane organizational technologies, such as accounting and risk management templates (Power, 2004), are deeply involved in producing a range of representations that quite often (but not always) sustain a neoliberalization agenda (Chiapello, 2017; Dillard & Vinnari, 2017). Importantly, the spread of inequalities is not only a structural phenomenon which is sustained at the macro level; it intertwines with micro processes and local events and practices. State authorities are not immune from this network of influences (Morales et al., 2014).

Despite advances in understanding how the fortresses of socioeconomic disparities are sustained and reproduced, much remains to be done in developing a thorough understanding of their power foundations, in elaborating alternative views of the world, in reporting resistance initiatives, and in analyzing the impact of activist agendas aiming to destabilize the order of things. In short, our stream invites researchers from the domains of organization studies, accounting research, and related areas to participate in an interdisciplinary conversation aiming to develop a better understanding of the power foundations of those fortresses, explore ways to undermine them, and reflect on the nature and implementation of alternative worldviews – which may or might be conducive to a fairer society. This research agenda calls for intellectual and paradigmatic openness yet we tentatively identify the following questions as being particularly (but not exclusively) relevant:

* How do managerial practices and accounting technologies exert subtle influence on people’s mind? How can they shape mentalities and anchor a naturalization of neoliberal principles in people’s minds, while simultaneously eroding the position of these peoples in organizations and society?
* Drawing on writings such as Nussbaum (2010), could it be that university education in business schools participate significantly to the spread of socioeconomic disparities, for instance in instilling certain ideas in undergraduate, MBA and even doctoral students?
* Extending current research which is critical of corporate sustainability disclosures (Gray, 2006; Gray & Milne, 2015), are disclosures mere symbolic devices aiming to reassure people that progress is being achieved on the social and economic front – while the backstage instead indicates inertia and regression? What does “meaningfulness” imply in terms of disclosure initiatives, and how could organizations aim for a kind of substantive meaningfulness?
* How do managerial practices, accounting technologies, and risk management templates participate to the production and diffusion of inequalities? Could such practices, technologies and templates be used in alternative ways, in order to undermine the “facticity” of dominant ideas surrounding the fortresses of inequalities?
* Building on work such as Chowdhury (2017b), through what mechanisms are “discomforting” findings and “threatening” research relegated to the periphery? How does business research participate to the neoliberalization of social life and the perpetuation of socioeconomic disparities?
* How is politics carried out in spheres surrounding the formal institutions of accounting (e.g., International Accounting Standards Board) and influential economic organizations (e.g., International Monetary Fund) in order to ensure that these institutions remain servants of neoliberal power?
* Etc.

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**Key dates**

**Deadline for submission of abstracts: January 31, 2019**

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 stream convener Yves Gendron, at yves.gendron@fsa.ulaval.ca. The abstract should indicate the research question, theoretical approach, methods, and main findings (if applicable). Note that this stream requires full papers (or well advanced papers) to be submitted by June 1, 2019 (same e-mail address).

**Decision on selected abstracts: February 15, 2019**

**Deadline for full paper submission: June 1, 2019**