



Call for papers for an *ephemera* special issue on:

## Crawling from the wreckage: Does critique have a future in the business school?

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**Deadline for submission:** 1 August 2020

Survival itself has something nonsensical about it today, like dreams in which, having experienced the end of the world, one afterwards crawls from the basement.

T.W. Adorno, *Minimal Moralia*.

Critique is always a critique of some instituted practice, discourse, episteme, institution, and it loses its character the moment in which it is abstracted from its operation and made to stand alone as a purely generalizable practice.

Judith Butler, *What is Critique? An Essay on Foucault's Virtue*.

Moralistic reproaches to certain kinds of speech or argument kill critique [...] by configuring political injustice and political righteousness as a problem of remarks, attitude, and speech rather than a matter of historical, political-economic and cultural formations of power.

Wendy Brown, *Politics Out of History*.

Critical thinking in the business school has reached a decisive and alarming impasse. Despite nearly thirty years of Critical Management Studies, the wider world of work, corporations and the economy has never looked

bleaker. If critical thinking once harboured the optimistic hope of making a practical difference, in the face of such a brutal reality it now risks being an inept moralising bystander grimacing at others' attitudes as the ship goes down. This special issue explores how critique, criticality, and critical thinking, reflection and action may be conceived of in a world of Harvey Weinstein, the impending ecocide, and a triumphant global elite that have almost reduced radical politics (and society more generally) to a burnout wreckage of pointless complaint.

The business school itself has embraced 'extreme neoliberalism', with rampant managerialism and edict-issuing technocrats in full bloom. Sadly, even the institution that critical scholars call home is often touted as one of the more extreme emblems of all that is wrong with late capitalism. When it comes to keeping our own house in order, it is almost as if Critical Management Studies has been fiddling while Rome burned.

The necessity of critique, as well as our obligation to revisit the state and practice of critique was one of the founding principles for *ephemera* in 2001 (e.g. Böhm et al., 2001; Boje et al., 2001; Böhm and Spoelstra, 2004). Since then, *ephemera* has continued to explore matters relating to critique in the business school (Just, Muhr, Risberg, 2019; Butler, Delaney, Sliwa, 2017; Beverungen, Dunne, Sørensen, 2008) and neoliberalism (Birch and Springer, 2019; Davies and Dunne, 2016; Harney, 2009). Building on these efforts, as well as recent attempts to renew discussions of critical thinking in organization studies more broadly (e.g. but not limited to, Vachhani, 2019; Tyler, 2019; Pullen and Rhodes, 2014; Fotaki and Harding, 2017; Gilmore et al., 2019), this special issue will provide scholars with the opportunity to reimagine how critique can emerge from the business school in light of the dismal actuality that we find ourselves in. Can we crawl from the wreckage of a devastated neoliberal order?

Where to start? We could begin by revisiting, what it means to offer critique? What does it mean to critique from a particular position and place? What does achieving critique amount to? How will critique manifest and mutate as we move forward in scholarship and praxis? Is the practical revitalisation of critical thinking commensurate with the business school in its present form? Indeed, if it is true that the old order is now dying and

the new one is struggling to be born, then we welcome papers that seek to bring about a renaissance of criticality in the business school and beyond. What would it mean to think about critique as embedded in our everyday academic work life (Ahmed, 2016)? How to conceive of new forms of critique and care beyond anthropocentrism (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017)? What will it mean to practice critical thinking and action on a damaged planet (Tsing, Swanson, Gan and Bubandt, 2017)?

Although by no means inclusive, possible topics could include:

- Critical thinking, its origins and future in the business school and university.
- De-neoliberalizing the business school in an era of high-technocracy.
- Capitalism and the future of the university.
- Leftist Critique and radical politics in a Trumpian nightmare.
- Gender and critical thinking in the post-Weinstein era.
- The role of critical performativity in critique.
- Laying bodies on the line through embodied critique.
- The places and spaces of critique.
- The ethics of critique.
- The co-optation of critique into capitalist business school metrics, practices and ideologies.
- The death (and rebirth) of radical democracy in the business school.
- Decolonising critique.
- What comes after critique?
- Exploring common projects, collective imaginations and experimental futures for action and change
- Connection to land and Indigenous knowledge within critique.
- Critique from marginal thought.
- Critique as methodological approach.
- Critique as activism.

### **Deadline for submission: 1 August 2020**

All contributions should be submitted to the special issue editors at Peter Fleming (peter.fleming@uts.edu.au), Alison Pullen (Alison.pullen@mq.edu.au); Lena Olaison (lo.mpp@cbs.dk); Mie Plotnikof (mp@edu.au.dk) and Justine Grønbaek Pors (jgp.mpp@cbs.dk). Please note that we invite three categories of contributions for the special issue: research papers, notes, and reviews. Furthermore, we are indeed

open for discussing the potential of other types of submissions, e.g. interviews, interventions or documentations. More information about the different types of contributions that *ephemera* is interested in can be found at: <http://www.ephemerajournal.org/how-submit>. Contributions will undergo a double-blind review process. All submissions should follow *ephemera's* submissions guidelines, available at: <http://www.ephemerajournal.org/howsubmit>. For further information, please email the special issue editors.

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