



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

## **Dis/organization and mis/management: exploring relations of order and disorder in critical organization studies**

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Relations of disorder and disorganization have typically been peripheral in organization theory. As a result, the messy sides of organization and management – and their impact on establishing order in contemporary organizational life – are often overlooked. But, as Cooper (1986) tells us, order and disorder are inseparable and co-constitutive features of all organizational life. In line with this approach, critical organization studies is beginning to explore how organization/disorganization and management/mismanagement may be understood as mutually dependent and dynamically interwoven (Böhm & Jones, 2001; Burrell & Parker, 2016; Cooper, 2001; Hassard, Keleman, & Cox, 2008). For example, studies have developed this critical line of thought by conceptualizing the unmanaging organization (Munro, 2001), ‘spectres’ of disorganization (Knox, O’Doherty, Vurdubakis, & Westrup, 2015), the dark spaces of organization (O’Doherty, De Cock, Rehn, & Ashcraft, 2013), the un/doing and performativity of gendered dis/organization (Ashcraft & Mumby, 2004; Pullen & Knights, 2007; Trethewey & Ashcraft, 2004), the communicative constitution of dis/organization (Kuhn & Burk, 2014; Vásquez, Schoeneborn, & Sergi, 2016), the dis/order of managerial bullshit (Spicer, 2013), and the disrupted workplace (Snyder, 2016).

Such studies, located in diverse research fields such as organizational discourse and communication studies, critical management studies, and feminist and gender studies, foreground the power and performativity of tensions, contradictions, paradox and dilemmas as constitutive of everyday organizational life in contemporary capitalism (Putnam, Fairhurst, & Banghart, 2016). As such, these studies echo an empirical reality in which order and chaos are intertwined in day-to-day organizational life. For example, in nonprofit organizations, which are characterized by a market/mission tension, volunteer managers will often struggle between increasing the standardization of volunteer practices and keeping volunteer's autonomy. Activists engaged in social movements or alternative organizations will recurrently face the dilemma between maintaining a flat and more open participatory structure that allows for direct representation, with establishing a hierarchy and formal or official spokesperson. Social entrepreneurs will quickly learn that to brand their products or services they will have to navigate between presenting a "unique selling proposition" and showing the messiness of their innovative, and therefore, uncertain work.

It is necessary to question the taken-for-granted, dominant assumptions of order and rationality as the primary and most optimal state of affairs in contemporary organization theory and practice (Munro, 2001; Parker, 2016). Such assumptions typically overlook the not so innocent and often oppressive everyday work of performing, communicating, and representing the idea(l)s of an orderly, rational and well-functioning management and organization. Indeed, such apparent order belies the current neoliberal model of capital accumulation that underlies much contemporary organizing. Here, "fast failure," "heroic disruption" (Snyder, 2016) and insecurity are defining, deliberately managed, and ongoing features of work and organization rather than temporary conditions that only marginalized members of society experience. In this sense, as Lorey (2015) suggests, disorder and insecurity are defining features of neoliberal governmentality. Thus, assumptions of order underestimate the severe and precarious effects on the quality of work life, the conditions of possibility, and the identity work required of actors involved in such reality constructions (Kuhn, Ashcraft, & Cooren, 2017; Miller & Rose, 2008; Mumby, 2016; Mumby & Plotnikof, 2019).

In this special issue we wish to push this agenda further. We therefore call for papers that explore the premise that organization and disorganization, management and mismanagement are intimately related. What might it mean if we start to consider them as mutually constitutive in creating the present and future social, organizational, political and economic dis/order of

the day? Thus, we invite papers to theorize, explore methodologically and/or empirically the constitutive dynamics and effects of dis/order, dis/organization, and mis/management, and their role(s) in contemporary neoliberal capitalism. Topics considered through relations of dis/order, dis/organization and mis/management may include, but are not limited to:

- New economy and alternative organizing
- Organizational tensions, paradox, dilemma, irony
- Precarious work, insecurity and identity struggles
- Dark sides and spaces of in-between and informality
- Discursive and communicative constitution of dis/organization
- Managerial bullshit and organizational stupidity
- (Un)manageability, performativity, gender and body
- Organizational rituals, routine and mundane activities
- Future forms of dis/organization and mis/management

## Contributions

All contributions should be submitted to the special issue editors at [mp@edu.au.dk](mailto:mp@edu.au.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/how-submit>. For further information, please email the special issue editors.

**Deadline for submissions: January 20, 2020.**

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