

# Foreword

For many management academics, critical management studies (CMS) is virtually unknown. If I look at my own academic journey of more than 20 years, CMS was something I was only exposed to about four years ago. Yet, I believe it is an underexplored area of inquiry within the broader academic discipline of management, and it is certainly an area that warrants deeper investigation.

In many respects, CMS can be seen as a new kid on the block with the seminal article of Mats Alvesson and Hugh Wilmott published in 1992 representing the first work around which a critical scholarly mass gravitated, which today is termed CMS. However, CMS does not represent a singular thesis. Instead, it can be seen as an umbrella term that incorporates many points of view with the common denominator of challenging mainstream convention and striving toward radical transformation. By so doing, CMS might not always present concrete answers but rather poses many questions for management academics to consider, which resonates with Immanuel Kant's notion that '[t]he world appears to me through the questions that I ask.'

It is encouraging to see that, even at the southern tip of Africa, the seed of CMS has been planted. This book represents the current state of CMS in South Africa. We acknowledge that this attempt to establish something concrete in terms of CMS in South Africa might not necessarily conform to the purists' conception of CMS. Nonetheless, as a team of authors, we are quite proud of this book as it represents the first formalised work on CMS in South Africa. It also represents the South African internalisation of CMS, exhibiting the issues with which we as South African management scholars are grappling and indicating where we think CMS can help in redefining these issues as we head towards an increasingly uncertain future.

We hope that this book will incite debate and discussion and create further awareness amongst South African management academics regarding the purpose and place of CMS within the broader academic discipline of management. We realise that the radical, and often cynical, position portrayed by CMS will not find favour with all, but we hope that readers will appreciate that we often need to ask difficult questions and enter into uncomfortable discussions in an effort to be geared for a future where it will most definitely not be 'business as usual'.

The economic difficulties facing not only South Africa but the world as a whole in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis and the calls for the decolonisation of the curriculum by student organisations as part of the #FeesMustFall movement are but two instances that illustrate that the scholarly endeavour of management in South Africa is on the verge of entering a new era and that we need to cast our nets wider with our scholarly endeavours. We are of the opinion that CMS can offer us a new lens through which to prepare for the challenges that await us. Transformation is a reality from which we cannot hide in South Africa. It is a multifaceted and complex issue that cuts through every sphere of our society, including the academic discipline of management. There might not be immediate answers, but a good starting point is to problematise the burning issues, and it is our firm belief that CMS is the perfect mechanism through which to do this.

I have been fortunate enough to be a product of the 1980s. I embraced the very ethos of the decade, and to a certain degree, I am still stuck in the 80s. The 80s generation is one that broke the mould of convention. They constantly challenged and asked 'Why?' They were never satisfied with 'this is how it has always been done.' This, to me, lies at the very heart of CMS. In the true spirit of the 80s, I wish to end off with an extract from *Genesis - Land of Confusion* (1986), which (purely coincidentally) was playing in the background when I started writing this introduction:

I won't be coming home tonight

My generation will put it right

We're not just making promises

That we know, we'll never keep.  
Too many men  
There's too many people  
Making too many problems  
And not much love to go round  
Can't you see  
This is a land of confusion.  
Now this is the world we live in  
And these are the hands we're given  
Use them and let's start trying  
To make it a place worth fighting for.

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