CMS Sub-theme Proposal: Organizing and Organizations of Death

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Death is universal truth that spans across time, socio-political terrains, cultures, and research disciplines. The interpretation of the finitude of life or the experiences that colour death and near-death traumas is however, open to debate and critique. In recent years, many of these discussions has taken place within the field of sociology (e.g. Howarth, 2007; Kellehear, 2007) against a backdrop of on-going tensions associated with the medicalization of death, or deliberate prolongation of life through medical interventions or alternatives (Seymour, 2007). The post-modern conceptualization of ‘the good death’ interconnects the individual, expert authority on health, emotional and spiritual life, the community and home (Walter, 2012). However, the juncture of death and work or working life remains unclear. Not surprisingly, death has received less direct attention in organizational studies. Death often acts as a metaphor for momentous events or crises in organizational settings where individuals have to deal with profound changes or loss in their work relations (Bell & Taylor, 2011). Instances of actual death and near-death traumas, however, have been studied more tangentially.

For example, there is a large body of work on the identity and work experiences of body work and care workers (see Lawler, 1997; McMurray, 2012), those who are charged with the responsibility to care for bodies in decline (from nursing to funeral directing). Death and near-death traumas have also been theorized using the lens of sensemaking (Weick, 1993; Pearson and Clair, 1998) whereby the business imperative of bureaucratic rationality is jolted by emotionality (Stigliani & Ravasi, 2012). Additionally, Bell and Taylor (2016) have emphasized the socio-material artifacts and rituals of death and dying in organizational settings. Further the organization has been implicated as ‘culprit’ of death or near-death trauma due to health and safety infractions causing to gross misconduct, leading to disaster (e.g. Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015) or mismanagement due to work intensification, leading to exhaustion or even suicide (e.g. Collinson, 2003; Fleming, 2014). Instead of maintaining death as a peripheral narrative to organizational studies, this sub-theme unites and develops these themes, experiences, and practices. We invite contributions that critically consider, but are not limited to the following themes and topics that may either that take place in the workplace or have an impact on the workplace:
Macro discourses and local narratives about death and near-death trauma
Terror, fear & the social construction of risk in contemporary organizations
The paradox or practices of compassionate managerialism in navigating episodes of trauma, near-death and death
(Life and) death-related technologies and their use/misuse
Reactions to death and dying
Ethical controversies related to death (physician assisted suicide, organ donation)
Methodological challenges in studying trauma, near-death, and death

Submissions are expected to consist of a 500 word abstract with the author’s(s’) contact information. The deadline for submission of abstracts is 31 January 2017. We will notify authors of decisions by 28 February 2017.

Please email your abstracts to Dr. Marcos Barros at marcos.barros@grenoble-em.com and/or Amanda Peticca-Harris at Amanda.peticca-harris@grenoble-em.com

References:


