

The 11th International Conference in Critical Management Studies
PRECARIOUS PRESENTS, OPEN FUTURES
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Conference Sub-theme Proposal:

Flexible working arrangements – boundary work or boundless work?

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The past decades have witnessed an increase in flexible working practices, which have been largely induced by advances in mobile information and communication technologies. Flexible working involves the reshaping of traditional modes of working and include a re-arrangement of, and re-orientation on, (spatiotemporal) boundaries (Fleming and Spicer, 2004). Recently, the predominance - and at times extremes - of flexible working has triggered backlash. Examples of direct interventions include the French law enabling staff to be offline after official working hours and obliging employers to negotiate work-life balance or the explicit restrictions of flexible working practices put in place by companies such as BMW and Yahoo (Boell et al., 2016). As such, the risk of flexible working becoming 'boundless' is increasingly being recognized and addressed.

The spatiotemporal flexibilization of work has potentially significant impact on individuals' boundary work (Kingma et al., 2018). Between the classic modes of arranging work physically, behaviorally and conceptually by integrating or segmenting work and nonwork (Nippert-Eng, 1996) lies an ever-expanding swathe of hybrid boundary management strategies (eg Koslowski et al., 2017). In the technology-driven 'new age of organization and management', new forms of teamwork and cooperation emerge, virtual organizations blossom, and contingent employment is intensified. As the global population becomes more mobile, the once firm association between a place of work and its content becomes problematized. For many employees becoming physically mobile involves reorienting their spatial and temporal attachments towards working at different times and in multiple spaces across a working day or week (Duxbury et al., 2014), including 'teleworking' (Sewell and Taskin, 2015;), 'hot desking', 'co-working' or 'nomadic working' (Hirst, 2011) as well as 'mobile working' in a variety of locations (i.e. 'third space') (Kingma, 2016). Consequently, the concept of work itself, decoupled from time and space (Gajendran and Harrison, 2007), becomes increasingly malleable and 'liquid' (Bauman, 2000).

The possible effects on life-work balance are significant (Villadsen, 2017). As traditional boundaries between work and nonwork erode and blur, individuals striving to preserve a distinction between work and private life employ a variety of techniques focused on time (Tietze and Musson, 2003), technology (Nansen et al., 2010) as well as the spaces and objects in it (Fonner and Stache, 2012). Yet, the perception of being in control of one's time, space or technology does not necessarily curb the overflow between work and nonwork (Izak and Reissner, forthcoming). Frequently mobile communication devices foster contagion between these domains (Reissner et al., forthcoming) as employees who have more autonomy may, paradoxically, be inclined to work harder or longer hours (Evans et al., 2004; Kelliher and Anderson, 2010).

In the spirit of exploring organizational futures, we seek to discuss the following themes:

- How do individuals configure the boundaries between work and nonwork? Which strategies do they use in negotiating work-life balance?
- What kind of meanings and (unintended) consequences do individuals associate with flexible working?
- How are power relations, legitimations and identities affected by flexible spatio-temporal arrangements (such as hot-desking, teleworking, mobile working)?
- What are the explicit and implicit constraints, possibilities and (un)intended consequences generated by material and technological software and hardware designs used for flexible working?
- Which ideologies and strategies are used to further and legitimate flexible working?
- How do organizations contribute or respond to exigencies of flexible working and which ethical dilemmas arise as a result?
- What are the opportunities and challenges of flexible working for organizations and employees? Can both be considered using a single frame of reference?
- What are the main methodological issues when researching boundary work and boundary workers?
- Which existing theories best inform our understanding of reshaped landscapes of modern work? Or are we in need of a new theory?
- We also would appreciate more general contributions about the renewed interest in the material dimension of organizations (Aroles and McLean, 2016; Beyes and Steyaert, 2012; de Vaujany and Mitev, 2013; de Vaujany and Vaast, 2014; Dale and Burrell, 2008; Kingma, Dale and Wasserman, 2018; Kornberger and Clegg, 2004; Orlikowski and Scott, 2008; Wasserman and Frenkel, 2011).

Please submit a 500-1000 word abstract (excluding references, one-two page, Word document NOT PDF, single spaced, no header, footers or track changes) together with your contact information to michal.izak@roehampton.ac.uk. The deadline for submission of abstracts is January 31st 2019, and we will notify you of our decision by the end of February.

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