



# Managing in Uncertainty: Complexity and the paradoxes of everyday organizational life

*Chris Mowles*

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The reality of everyday organizational life is that it is filled with uncertainty, contradictions and paradoxes. Yet leaders and managers are expected to act as though they can predict the future and bring about the impossible: that they can transform themselves and their colleagues, design different cultures, choose the values for their organization, be innovative, control conflict and have inspiring visions. Whilst managers will have had lots of experiences of being in charge, they probably realise that they are not always in control.

So how might we frame a much more realistic account of what's possible for managers to achieve?

Many managers are implicitly aware of their messy reality, but they rarely spend much time reflecting on what it is that they are actually doing. Drawing on insights from the complexity sciences, process sociology and pragmatic philosophy, Chris Mowles engages directly with some principal contradictions of organizational life concerning innovation, culture change, conflict and leadership. Mowles argues that if managers proceed from the expectation that organizational life as inherently uncertain, and interactions between people are complex and often paradoxical, they start noticing different things and create possibilities for acting in different ways.

Managing in Uncertainty will be of interest to practitioners, advanced students and researchers looking at management and organizational studies from a critical perspective.

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