COUNTERING THE ‘CORPORATIZATION’ NARRATIVE:
EXPLORING STRUGGLES FOR ORGANIZATIONAL HEGEMONY

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‘A discourse activist perspective on Organizational Storytelling’

This paper discusses the potential of combining the praxeology of Bourdieu (1990) with the concept of counter narratives (e.g. Bamberg & Andrews, 2004) when investigating power struggles in organizational change in the wake of privatization of a European telecommunications service provider. The study is underpinned by five months ethnographic fieldwork.

The paper explores how the ‘corporatization’ (Forssell & Jansson, 1996) of the organization initiated a power struggle between two distinct logics, identified in two conflicting narratives (Gabriel, 2017),(Jensen, Maagaard, & Rasmussen, 2016) the one of the public regime and the one of the private regime. The emphasis of the former being a shared idea of solidarity and job security, represented by a strong union, whereas the latter introduced a logic of economics; shifting the master narrative and the sources of power, towards profitability, represented by financialized management practices driven by performance and control systems (Chabrak, Craig, & Daidj, 2016).

For Bourdieu, organizations can be viewed as fields of struggles, and endless change, occupied by the dominant and the dominated actors continuously competing for positions to establish hegemony over the reproduction of the field and the type of power effective within that field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). The paper argues that the analytical categories of ‘master’ and ‘counter’ –
narratives (Bamberg & Andrews, 2004; Kuhn, Lundholt, & Frandsen, 2016) provide a useful framework for characterizing such positions and stances toward a logic that is voiced through narratives, and for the dialogic interaction, and ongoing struggle for positions that takes place between actors in social contexts (Jensen et al., 2016).