

# Narrating the Organization: Dramas of Institutional Identity (New Practices of Inquiry)

Barbara Czarniawska



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The most common social phenomenon of Western societies is the organization, yet those involved in realworld managing are not always willing to reveal the intricacies of their everyday muddles. Barbara Czarniawska argues that in order to understand these uncharted territories, we need to gather local and concrete stories about organizational life and subject them to abstract and metaphorical interpretation. Using a narrative approach unique to organizational studies, Czarniawska employs literary devices to uncover the hidden workings of organizations. She applies cultural metaphors to public administration in Sweden to demonstrate, for example, how the dynamics of a screenplay can illuminate the budget disputes of an organization. She shows how the interpretive description of organizational worlds works as a distinct genre of social analysis, and her investigations ultimately disclose the paradoxical nature of organizational life: we follow routines in order to change, and decentralize in order to control. By confronting such paradoxes, we bring crisis to existing institutions and enable them to change.

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