

**Leave a Message After the Tone: Understanding Organizational Answers to
Whistleblowing through the Lens of Boltanski's Critique**

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Résumé :

Whistleblowing is increasingly considered to be an institutionalized practice and today's organizations routinely set up tools and processes to help their employees raise corporate issues. However, whistleblowers often fail to raise their concerns within their organizations and sometimes turn to external whistleblowing following their unsuccessful internal attempts. This article investigates the organizational answers that are produced and addressed to the whistleblower. We suggest that, rather than being straightforward replies, the organizational answers provided to whistleblowers take the form of a continuum of "signs" perceived by whistleblowers that inform them whether their claims are intelligible within the corporate environment. We draw on Luc Boltanski's (2011) conditions of critique in our analysis, specifically focusing on his proposed concepts of "truth and reality tests", through which, we argue, the organization displays these signs. Our analysis of a high-profile tax case, in which the corporation was found guilty, illustrates this argument. By understanding organizational answers in terms of critique – specifically as engagement in "truth and reality tests" – we provide insight not only into the hurdles that stand in the way of critique, but also into institutions' motivations for quelling critique and maintaining the status quo.

We contribute to the whistleblowing literature by building on Kenny and Bushnell's latest work on hegemony (2020) to show how organizations manage to maintain the status quo, preventing whistleblowers from having their version of reality accepted by others. We also provide an empirical exploration of the concepts proposed by Boltanski. As we argue in our findings, the whistleblowing context leads to "truth and reality" tests in which the organization seeks to confirm its narrative and defend its vision of the truth.

Mots-clés : Boltanski, critique, parrhesia, reality tests, whistleblowing