

Play It Again, Sam – Bringing Men Back In

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to explore the role of human agency in large scale organizational change. In doing so, I open the black-box of agency. Organizational change research is pre-dominated by a structure perspective and this paper answers the recent calls for an increased focus on agency. More specifically it investigates where human agency resides, who the actors are and how they exercise agency during organizational change. These questions are explored by following the telecom company Ericsson's global transformation of its F&A unit (Finance and Accounting) from a decentralised structure into a so-called shared-service-center structure. The data collection consists of in-depth interviews and observations. An extensive amount of archival records were gathered from the respondents and observations were conducted. The analysis process was inspired by a grounded theory approach where both induction and deduction was employed iteratively until the point of saturation. The findings exhibit the importance of situated knowledge, cognitive and emotional elements of receptivity and moderating factors such as tools for global organizational change. The case-study also underlines the significance of applying both top-down and bottom-up approaches regarding organizational change. The paper concludes by illustrating how the result invites for a more complex understanding of agency in large-scale global organizational change.

Keywords: human agency, actor, organizational change, change agent, case-study, globalization.