Socio-Technical Dynamics of Cost Systems

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Abstract:

Cost systems are fundamental to accounting, as they produce key information to evaluate the economic performance of the firm. This paper aims at investigating the socio-technical dynamics of a cost system. We examine how the inner configuration of a cost system, e.g. its cost pool structure and cost drivers, is influenced by multiple actors’ interactions across different time periods. Through an in-depth qualitative field study of the cost system of a French public sector housing organization association, we highlight that cost systems are not only the result of economic reasoning but is also influenced by a wider network of actors during different periods. We detail how organisational actors may not agree with the whole configuration of the cost system, but as far as they find some of their interests represented, they support it. Further, we show that framing may be persistent not only across time but also across actor networks.

Key words: cost systems, socio-technical, framing-overflowing

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