

Constraints of Digital Transformation

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Abstract

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Digital transformation is viewed as instrumental in coping with organizational and societal challenges. In the public sector, these challenges include diverse issues, such as demographic changes, constrained financial resources, increasing complexity, and digital legacy. While there are opportunities for the public sector to benefit from digital transformation, there are also important constraints to consider. The aim of this thesis is to offer insights into these constraints and conceptualize how they impact digital transformation in public sector organizations. To address this aim, I apply a clinical inquiry approach focusing on two specific cases from the Swedish public sector during the period 2019–2021. Both organizations (County Administrative Boards and Sundsvall Municipality) have ongoing digital transformation initiatives with the research endeavor directed at actively supporting these initiatives. The thesis brings together five publications stemming from the clinical inquiries and presents a synthesis of the findings. This thesis contributes to research and practice by identifying and describing three mechanisms related to IT Governance, the funding model, and digital infrastructure that constrain digital transformation in public sector organizations by imposing a biased approach to digital transformation in which short-term goals take precedence over organizations' long-term sustainability.