Digital Transformation
The material roles of IT resources and their political uses

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Akademisk avhandling

som med vederbörligt tillstånd av Rektor vid Umeå universitet för avläggande av filosofie doktorsexamen framläggs till offentligt försvar i
MA121, MIT-huset,
Fredagen den 30 Oktober, kl. 13:00.
Avhandlingen kommer att försvaras på engelska.

Fakultetsopponent: Professor, Suprateek Sarker,
McIntire School of Commerce, University of Virginia, USA

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Abstract
As IT became ubiquitous, we recognized that IT was everywhere but in our theories. Despite significant efforts, Information System (IS) research is still in desperate search for the IT artifact. Recent reviews show that IS research first and foremost considers IT resources as a socio-technical and managerial concern. Analyses of inertia are restricted to cognitive limitations or technical challenges of IT development and use as separate activities. Hence, IS research assumes that more development resources, extended training, and better management could turn most failures into success. In this thesis, I posit that IS strategy research often treats normal failure as unexpected to maintain the rational idea that managers are in control and that IT does not matter in and of itself. I argue that planned and convergent views of change work well under stable and unitary conditions but in this way fail to account for the complexity of current IS strategy practice. To substantiate this claim, I demonstrate how IS research routinely neglects the material IT use story in the context of digital transformation (DT) studies and social informatics. Political conflict is a constant theme in IS strategy implementation research, yet few studies provided explanation for the apprehension that managers and workers display during the introduction of new IT resources; even as most managers remain men I found also no study that theorized gender politics as related to IS strategy outcomes. I argue in particular that the IS fields routine adherence to borrowed assumptions about the pace, linearity, and sequence of radical change have limited IS scholars to marginally improve on received DT narratives in which IT plays little or no part as IT appears as an agent mostly before and after DT. Though much is said about how IT triggers and enables organizational change, the actual processes and mechanisms that underlies IS strategy change enactments are thus poorly understood. To examine how the material roles of IT resources and their political use can be captured and explained, I summarize and synthesize insights grounded in empirics from four appended research papers. In this way, I chart avenues for material theorizing of micro-affordances and institutions, and develop an IS strategy-as-practice lens that attends IT use as a material practice. After developing this lens, I discuss how material practice perspectives afford deep understanding of the materialities through which actors create, sustain, and transform organizational practice with digital material, and highlight some opportunities to observe the social consequences of IT use in the context of critical studies on men and masculinities and digital gender.