

In partial fulfillment of the terms for obtaining the PhD degree, Alisa Ananjeva will give a lecture on the following subject:

RECONCILING THE COMPETING PROCESSES IN A DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY

on Friday 30th of June 2023, 13:00, in room C2-209 FRB 7 building C

Abstract:

In this dissertation, Alisa investigates how system development organizations navigate competing processes in a digital transformation towards sustainability. Climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time. Digital transformation can help mitigate climate change by showing how digital technologies can (re)define our sustainability practices. However, the literature on digital transformation towards sustainability is dispersed and characterized by multiple competing processes or tensions that arise from different viewpoints. These different points of view offer alternative explanations for the role of digital technology in solving the wicked problem of climate change. The contradictions and competition are inevitable in this process because there are no right or wrong answers - only answers that are better or worse from different points of view. Thus, there is no clear path to guide us in developing sustainable digital solutions. Thus, the research question of this dissertation is: how do system development organizations navigate competing concerns in a digital transformation towards sustainability? In answering this research question, Alisa has identified four different process views on digital transformation that compete with one another: Optimization, Eco-feedback, Reflection, and Participation. These views are based on different assumptions regarding environmental sustainability, the problem at hand, and the solution. Based on this understanding, Alisa proposes a framework for recognizing and understanding these competing views. Furthermore, through a longitudinal case study, she found that navigating competing concerns in a digital transformation towards sustainability involves a process of reconciliation. This process involves legitimizing and addressing the competing concerns and is crucial for a successful digital transformation towards sustainability. Alisa found that practitioners engaged in this transformation do not follow a single predominant process view but instead collaborate and reciprocate to navigate their journey towards sustainability. She proposes that the reconciliation process is ongoing, and practitioners continuously review and adapt their past actions to fit current problems and future plans. The notion of reconciliation emphasizes that solving the problem of climate change through digital transformation is a complex and ongoing process that does not always result in a clear resolution.

Members of the assessment committee are Professor Margunn Aanestad, University of Oslo (Norway), Associate Professor Nina Boulus-Rødje, Roskilde University (Denmark), and Associate Professor Niels van Berkel (chairman), Aalborg University (Denmark). Supervisor for the thesis has been Professor Prof. Peter Axel Nielsen, Aalborg University. Co-supervisor for the thesis has been Associate Prof. John Stouby Persson, Aalborg University. Moderator Associate Professor Anders Bruun.

All interested parties are welcome. After the defense the department will be hosting a small reception in cluster 5.