PhD Lecture

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

**Combining a System-Centred and a User-Centred Approach in the Development of Public Self-Service Applications**

on Tuesday 10th of April 2018, 13:00, in room 0.2.13 at Selma Lagerlöfs Vej 300

Abstract:
Since 2011, the countries in the European Union have implemented joint strategies for digitalising public services, such as communication between citizens and the government or municipalities, with the expectation that business would be enhanced and economies improved. In Denmark, the focus has been on implementing e-government and mandatory public self-service applications to be used by all citizens. However, the digitalisation of public self-service applications in Denmark has been criticised by the public, the media, and government agencies for lack of usability.

This thesis consists of six contributions used to answer a general research question along with two research questions on the current practices in the development process and the overall approach taken by the companies developing the public self-service applications in Denmark. The general research question was: “To what extent can companies developing public self-service applications benefit from combining a system-centred and a user-centred approach, and how does that affect the quality of the systems?”

This thesis provides the following three sets of conclusions:

1. First, companies developing public self-service applications are primarily using a system-centred development approach focusing on technical features and aspects. Citizens are perceived as lacking the motivation to use the public self-service applications. From the citizens’ perspective, the quality of the public self-service applications is poor.
2. Companies lack knowledge about user-centred design techniques such as Personas. Caseworkers were involved in the design and development process to some extent, which resulted in public self-service applications devoted to simplifying the work processes for the caseworkers and easing their workload. It was found that the interviewees from the companies developing the public self-service applications wanted to employ a more user-centred approach, but this approach is perceived as being too expensive.
3. Part of the motivation for the digitalisation of public self-service applications was to reduce administrative costs. A report from 2016 produced by the National Audit Office in Denmark showed that the digitalisation of mail sent from government agencies to citizens and companies has only produced 20% of the predicted savings. These savings came directly from not paying postage. The expected reduction in payroll costs has not been achieved.

Members of the assessment committee are: Professor Effie Lai-Chung Law, University of Leicester, Professor Ebba Þóra Hvannberg, University of Iceland, and Professor Peter Axel Nielsen, Aalborg University. Moderator is Associate Professor John Persson, Aalborg University. Associate Professor Jan Stage is Jane Billestrup’s supervisor.

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