

PhD Lecture

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

Imagination from Evaluation: A Design Theory for Creativity Enhancing Systems

on Friday 5th of February 2016, 13:00, in room 0.2.13 at Selma Lagerlöfs Vej 300

Abstract:

Creativity is a complex endeavor for most organizations. Creativity Enhancing Systems (CES) help organizations collect and organize ideas, whereas idea evaluation allows organizational actors to identify the value of the collected ideas. However, idea evaluation accounts for a small proportion of the Information system (IS) literature on creativity. Moreover, management research has criticized existing idea evaluation approaches for discouraging creativity by imposing strict management regimes. Idea evaluation is known to only encourage convergent production (that narrows many ideas into a few tangible alternatives) while ignoring divergent production (resulting in many different ideas from wild and unconventional thoughts patterns). This PhD study reports on how CES can help organizational actors use the knowledge obtained during idea evaluation and use it to encourage divergent and convergent thinking. This research is based on two literature reviews on, respectively, creativity in the IS research field and an extended review on CES. Moreover, the PhD thesis reports on extensive theory development related to idea evaluation. To support the propositions from the theoretical development, the PhD study also reports on a multiple case study that illustrates the developed theory in practice. In addition, a laboratory experiment measures the effectiveness of CES using knowledge from idea evaluation to encourage divergent production. Finally, a field experiment reports on the development of a CES prototype that uses idea evaluation to encourage divergent and convergent production. To merge the findings from the PhD study into one unit, the individual research articles are synthesized into a design theory for CES-supported idea evaluation.

The PhD study adds several contributions to the current understanding of idea evaluation and CES. Among these contributions is a new design theory that increases the limited amount of CES design theories within the IS literature. Centered on design science, this PhD study demonstrates how a theory-focused conceptualization of the initial problem leads to theory development and creates the foundation for design theory. This approach offers new inspiration to future studies within design science. Theory development in the PhD study also includes a new theory on organizational creativity based on Scandinavian institutionalism and a unified operationalization of creativity that is free from ambiguity. Moreover, the PhD study includes an alternative idea evaluation approach. By encouraging both divergent and convergent production, this approach challenges the common belief that idea evaluation only supports convergent production. Through these findings, the PhD study shows that conventional idea evaluation approaches are designed specifically to encourage convergent production and exclude divergent production. Overall, this PhD study provides new insights into idea evaluation, organizational creativity, and CES. These insights are synthesized into a design theory that may contribute to future work in the above areas of research.

Members of the assessment committee are Professor Maung Sein, University of Agder, Professor Michel Avital, Copenhagen Business School and Professor Jesper Kjeldskov, Aalborg University. Professor Peter Axel Nielsen is Frank Ulrich's supervisor. Moderator is Associate Professor Jeni Paay, Aalborg University.

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