

## Ph.D. Lecture

Under the Collaboration Agreement on Ph.D. Studies within Information Systems between the University of Agder and Aalborg University, and in partial fulfilment of the terms for obtaining the Ph.D. degree,

**Stig Nordheim**

will lecture on

# Implementing an Enterprise System: A dialectic perspective

and afterwards discuss the dissertation with the committee

Wednesday April 1<sup>st</sup> 2009, at 14<sup>00</sup>-17<sup>00</sup>

Auditorium B2 003 (building B)  
University of Agder  
Gimlemoen, Kristiansand, Norway.

### **Abstract:**

This thesis reports on a study of the process of implementing an enterprise system in an organization. The implementation process is viewed from a dialectic perspective which means thinking in terms of contradictions. This thesis raises the following research questions:

1. What are the main contradictions when implementing enterprise systems?
2. How can we understand contradictions in enterprise system implementations?
3. How can we constructively deal with contradictions in enterprise system implementations?

To answer these questions, an interpretive research approach was chosen. The main empirical part is a longitudinal case study of the implementation of an enterprise. The system was in this case an innovative combination of collaboration and information management technologies. Data collection and analysis occurred between 2003 and 2007. The data consisted of interviews and documents. In addition a vendor perspective has been explored through the study of other case studies. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. The data analysis consisted of several iterations, with document analysis in parallel with interview analysis. This included deductive analyses based on the interview guides and inductive analyses of themes and categories occurring in the data.

To answer the first research question, the main contradiction found in this case was between an as-is implementation of standard software, and an implementation fulfilling the organizational requirements of solution integration and user experience. Termed a dialectic of adaptation in

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this study, the rest of this thesis focuses on the implication of this dialectic. The second research question is answered from three different perspectives. These are (i) a pre-implementation perspective, (ii) an early chartering phase perspective, and most important, (iii) a project phase perspective. From a project phase perspective, the dialectic of adaptation was emergent and occurred in combination with other drivers of change. The dialectic of adaptation is further understood on the basis of diverging viewpoints among user groups from different domains. The latter understanding constitutes a lead for answering the third research question.

The answer to the third research question came from a special role that was established in this case, called the corporate user representative. This was a key role in the dialectic of adaptation. Essential characteristics for this role are described in terms of two social actor dimensions, the interactions and identities dimensions.

In summary, this thesis contributes to understanding how the dialectic of adaptation may emerge as an enterprise system is implemented. This thesis further contributes by addressing how the dialectic of adaptation may be constructively dealt with in an enterprise system implementation. The answers provided to the three research questions of this thesis contribute both to the existing research literature on organizational implementation of enterprise systems, and to the practice of managing enterprise system implementations.

Supervisors have been Professor Peter Axel Nielsen, Aalborg University, Denmark and Professor Maung Kyaw Sein, University of Agder, Norway. Members of the assessment committee are Professor Michael Newman, University of Manchester, UK; Associate Professor Keld Bødker, Roskilde University, Denmark; and Associate Professor Jeremy Rose, chairman, Aalborg University, Denmark.

All interested parties are welcome.

After the defence the Department of Information Systems, University of Agder is hosting a small reception.