

Association for Information Systems AIS Electronic Library (AISeL)

ICIS 1998 Proceedings

International Conference on Information Systems
(ICIS)

December 1998

Out of Scandinavia: The History and Contributions of an IS Research Tradition

Dan Kim

State University of New York at Buffalo

M. Ramesh

Lucent Technologies

Raghav Rao

State University of New York at Buffalo

Follow this and additional works at: <http://aisel.aisnet.org/icis1998>

Recommended Citation

Kim, Dan; Ramesh, M.; and Rao, Raghav, "Out of Scandinavia: The History and Contributions of an IS Research Tradition" (1998).
ICIS 1998 Proceedings. 1.

<http://aisel.aisnet.org/icis1998/1>

This material is brought to you by the International Conference on Information Systems (ICIS) at AIS Electronic Library (AISeL). It has been accepted for inclusion in ICIS 1998 Proceedings by an authorized administrator of AIS Electronic Library (AISeL). For more information, please contact elibrary@aisnet.org.

INVITED SESSION

OUT OF SCANDINAVIA: THE HISTORY AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF AN IS RESEARCH TRADITION

Chair: Lars Mathiassen, Aalborg University, Denmark

Panelists: Gros Bjercknes, Avenir Consulting, Norway
Karlheinz Kautz, Copenhagen Business School, Denmark
Peter Axel Nielsen, Aalborg University, Denmark
Erik Stolterman, Umeå University, Sweden

This summer, the Scandinavian IS research community celebrated its 21st annual IRIS conference (**I**nformation systems **R**esearch **I**n Scandinavia), and from that point of view it is probably the oldest active IS research community in the world. Many important contributions have come out of this tradition: for example, the work of Börje Langefors on theories of information systems (1966), which contributed to the establishment of our field, and the controversial contributions of Kristen Nygaard (1971), emphasizing the political aspects and the strengths of action research approaches as integral parts of information systems studies.

One of the most common misconceptions about Scandinavian IS research is captured in the notion of “The Scandinavian Approach.” Research contributions from Scandinavia often have special features because they are created as part of societies with long traditions for democracy in the workplace, with an openness to debate and conflict, and with a strong tradition for design of artifacts. But there is no such thing as one shared approach to IS in Scandinavia. On the contrary, there have always been a great variety of competing approaches, some more technical than others, with a strong social orientation, some based on positivist traditions, and others based on interpretivist or action-oriented traditions.

It is the specific societal conditions, the richness and great variety in research approaches, and the open atmosphere of debate and mutual exchange that have influenced the contributions of the Scandinavian research tradition. The panel has been designed to provide an overview of and insights into this tradition by presenting different views of its history and contributions.

First, *historian* Gro Bjercknes will discuss key elements in the evolution of the tradition. Gro will outline some major schools of thought that have made key contributions, and she will also provide useful information about the published literature on the history of Scandinavian IS research.

Second, *design researcher* Erik Stolterman will describe examples of Scandinavian contributions to understanding IS as a design discipline. Erik will explore the Scandinavian traditions related to participatory design and work-oriented design of computer artifacts, and he will take a closer look at work related to the notions of metaphor and design rationale.

Third, *editor* Peter Axel Nielsen will review the publications from the Scandinavian Journal of Information Systems. Peter will discuss the profile and contents of papers that have been published over the past 10 years and compare this picture to corresponding profiles of other IS journals.

Finally, *participant observer* Karlheinz Kautz discuss the Scandinavian tradition from the point of view of the informed outsider. Karlheinz has a background in German academia, but he has been part of the Scandinavian community for a number of years and worked as a researcher in both Norway and Denmark.