



iSM SEMINAR

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Speaker: Professor Jens Dibbern, The Institute of Information Systems, University of Bern, Switzerland

Title: Towards a Process Theory of the Governance of Application Software Offshore Outsourcing Relationships

Date: Wednesday 14th September 2011

Venue: Room B3.09, WBS, Scarman Road

Time: 14.30 - 15.30

Abstract: Despite the increasing prominence of application offshore outsourcing, there is considerable variation in the extent to which particular offshore outsourcing endeavours are successful. In fact, measuring the success during the life time of a particular offshore outsourcing engagement is nontrivial, as success or failures often develop over time. For example, an offshore project that may initially be successful may turn into failure because some important conditions on which prior success was based may no longer be valid. In view of these dynamics, it is surprising to see that most research on IS outsourcing and offshoring has taken a rather static view in examining success and its key determinants. For example, certain dimensions of contractual and relational governance, such as the completeness of a contract or the level of mutual trust, were found to determine IS (offshore) outsourcing success. However, in the same way as IS outsourcing success often evolves and changes over time IS outsourcing governance likely changes over time as well. In fact, it is the relationship between contractual and relationship governance, i.e. whether they substitute or complement each other, that may change over time.

In recognizing the dynamics of IS outsourcing governance this research seeks to develop a process theory on IS outsourcing governance. Thereby, the distinction is made between two phases during the life of an IS outsourcing contract; the transition phase, in which the key objective is to transfer knowledge from the client personnel to the vendor personnel, and the delivery phase, in which the key objective is to perform the services in the expected manner, while adapting to changing contextual circumstances. An initial framework for understanding the dynamics of knowledge transfer as well as the dynamics of IS outsourcing governance will be presented and illustrated. The framework acknowledges the different units and modes of change in both phases. Moreover, a research plan to further examine both processes based on qualitative empirical data will be outlined.

Biography: **Jens Dibbern** is a Professor and Co-Director of the Institute of Information Systems at the University of Bern, Switzerland. He received his Ph.D. in information systems from the University of Bayreuth and habilitated at the University of Mannheim, Germany. His research focuses on various aspects of the division of work in information systems and through information systems, such as outsourcing, offshoring, and design of collaborative systems for supporting distributed work. He has previously published in *MIS Quarterly*, *IEEE Transactions on Engineering Management, Information & Management*, *ACM SIGMIS Database*, *Business & Information Systems Engineering*, and others. He is on the editorial boards of *MIS Quarterly* and *ACM SIGMIS Database*.

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