

> Thursday, May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2022

13:00 - 14:30

MIS

**RESEARCH  
SEMINAR**



EMPOWERING CHANGEMAKERS FOR A BETTER SOCIETY

## **‘DIALOGUE OF FORCES’ BY KAVEH MOHAJERI, IÉSEG SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT**

### **ABSTRACT**



Power is barely associated with dialogue for many. Domination and coercion are much more common perceptions when thinking of power. In this paper, we investigate the dialogical face of power. We follow a novel, postmodern reading of Foucault, where the key notion, in contrast to most Foucauldian studies of power, is not disciplinary power, domination, or emancipation, but dialogue. We demonstrate the significance of the dialogical understanding of power concerning the phenomenon commonly referred to as digital transformation. We engage with and revise a preexisting Foucauldian conceptual model through a “theory elaboration” study. Our findings suggest that reactions to digital transformation can often turn out to be productive and even inventive exercises of power in their own right. Accordingly, we show that digital transformation occasions usually entail transversal (not just diametrical) and reversible (not unilateral) relationships between power and resistance. Further, and more importantly, we posit that it is open-ended, interdiscursive dynamics transpiring among rival discourses that constitute digital transformation, especially in terms of (i) the clashing power effects emanated from multiple discourses around transformation; (ii) the reinforcement or development of conflicting structures and control systems; and (iii) the emergence of counteracting individual reactions, appropriation moves, and practices. Finally, we emphasize some broader implications of our study to account for the interconnections between different faces of power, address the “life cycle” of organizational discourses, and enhance the relevance of IS research on digital transformation.