About AHO

The Oslo School of Architecture and Design (AHO) is a specialized university and a leading international architecture and design school that provides education within architecture, landscape architecture, urbanism and design. AHOs fields of knowledge focus on design in all scales, objects, buildings, urban areas and landscaping. AHO is organized into four institutes, and has approx. 700 students and 145 employees.

The Institute of Design adopts a broad, holistic approach to design that emphasizes the relevance and importance of design within our contemporary society. It teaches and researches within the fields of industrial design, interaction design, service design, and systems oriented design, as well as themes that go across these disciplines, such as healthcare or maritime industry. Our perspective is that good design creates aesthetic and functional products, services, and experiences that delight and improve the lives of their users.

PhD Position in System Oriented Design - Designing for very complex systems

Systems Oriented Design

Systems Oriented Design (SOD) is a subject developed at AHO in the emerging field of Systemic Design. It is a designerly way of dealing with systems and systems thinking. Its aim is to help designers and researchers to become better at coping with very complex situations. SOD is an overarching methodology that reaches across all design fields and specializations from products to services, and beyond the design field.

See: www.systemsorienteddesign.net

Background

The modern world is increasingly interdependent and connected in planned and unplanned ways. Technology development cannot be seen isolated but has huge societal and cultural implications, a situation that applies to the development of big data, AI as well as the autonomous technologies these permit. In government, degrees of entanglement and fragmentation seem impossible to overcome. Expansions in measurement and documentation regimes meant to help government are turning into dysfunctional and overloaded systems.

Society is in dire need of deep understanding of processes and interrelations, and design has emerged as a promising field of methods and perspectives to create overview and holistic solutions for areas such as public services and government. However, traditional design approaches are not adequate to meet such needs. A user centric design approach alone is far from sufficient. What is needed is a deeper understanding of systems, how they work and how to integrate systems theories in design. Non-anthropocentric design perspectives are needed in a world experiencing climate crises.

Against this background, the field of systemic design emerged with the initiative of the SOD group at AHO in 2012. In 2018 this recently formalized as the Systemic Design Association (SDA). The Association is an inclusive and pluralistic framework for different approaches to the application of systems thinking in design and vice versa.

See: www.systemic-design.net

The research framework for the development of SOD consists of four elements:

1)   Development of practice research and research by design through research-based teaching and teaching-based research at AHO and some other universities.

2)   Research conducted through the PhD program at AHO and other universities.

3)   Research and development projects financed by external sources in collaboration with industry and other universities.

4)   Collaboration and discussion through the SDA network and its conference series Relating Systems Thinking and Design (RSD), publication activities and participation in other relevant networks and publication channels relevant to the subject.

Theory building - A PhD field for SOD

SOD aims to develop new methodologies. It draws from a vast literature in the two fields of design and systems thinking concerning reflection in practice, design thinking, visual thinking and gestalt theory, soft systems theory, systems architecting, systems engineering, critical systems thinking as well as parts of systems dynamics and second order cybernetics. Most importantly, these methodologies relate to practice-based research. Theory development here is bottom up through research by (and through) design, fieldwork, and methods related to action research and enquiry grounded in real life experiences.

The PhD project should develop SOD methodology and practice further to meet the challenges from high-level complexity defined as multiple nested and interlinked "problematiques" or problem networks, involving multiple owners and affecting a range of bystanders, stakeholders and other actors.

The research will be conducted within SOD's research, teaching and the case of the Stimulab Program and project portfolio.

To increase public sector use of service design and to bring forward more examples of public innovation, the Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation initiated the program in 2016. The task of developing the program was assigned to the Agency for Public Management and eGovernment (Difi). Due to the emphasis on design, they entered into a partnership with DOGA. The result of this collaboration is the experimental program StimuLab.

The Stimulab program provides cross-disciplinary support, guidance and financial resources for innovative public projects, testing new ways of working to improve services, systems, procedures, regulations or the exercise of authority on state- and municipality level.

Norwegian page for Stimulab is found here:

https://www.difi.no/fagomrader-og-tjenester/innovasjon/hva-tilbyr-difi/stimulab

The program is financed by the Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation, and has received an increase in funding. StimuLab looks into high-level complex issues in Norwegian government.

Improving such issues can lead to substantial socioeconomic benefits as they tend to be left untouched due to their level of complexity, e.g. sectoral responsibility, lack of financing and coordination challenges. Through DOGA StimuLab has been aware of how SOD approaches and competencies can bring a much needed and richer understanding of a complex challenge, including relationships and regulations embedded in such issues. This has partly shaped priorities in the program.

Part of the doctoral inquiry is to assess the effect of SOD methodology in StimuLab projects and to disseminate, criticise and scrutinize SOD. The research may also connect with other design domains at the Centre for Design Research at the Institute of Design.

List opp kvalifikasjonskrav og eventuelt ønskede personlige egenskaper

Academic requirements

Applicants must hold a:

- Master's degree or equivalent in a field of relevance for the call. Especially relevant are applicants from product- interaction- or service-design, information design or similar design fields.
- Applicants who do not have English or Scandinavian language as their mother tongue must submit documentation of their proficiency in English by the deadline of the application (TOEFL test or similar). Students with university studies where English comprised the major component of the studies are exempted from the requirement.

Evaluation criteria

Applications will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- The formal academic requirements for the position
- Experience and expertise in the field of Systemic Design including SOD.
- Former research and fieldwork experience
- Former relevant practice
- The quality of the project description and its relevance for the call
- The academic competence of the applicant and the applicant's suitability within the context of the institutes' research environment.

Application

A letter of application describing why the applicant is qualified for this position (maximum two A4 pages.)

- A project proposal (maximum 5 A4 pages) which must address one or both of the above contexts, the topic of the proposal, relevant theory, methods or practise, and a timeline for the project. Applicants are expected to be able to complete the project during the appointment period. Special needs in terms of for instance technical equipment or association with national or international institutions or partners should be mentioned.
- CV with a full summary of education, practice and academic employment, list of publications, projects and academic work that the applicant wishes to be considered by the evaluation committee (Max 5 A4 pages).
- Copies of educational certificates (foreign applicants must attach an explanation of their university's grading system).
- One example of written work that the applicant wishes to be considered by the evaluation committee, maximum 10 pages.
- One presentation (where relevant) of practice-based work that the applicant wishes to be considered by the evaluation committee (can be online).

Please note that all documentation must be in English (or a Scandinavian language). Applications who do not fulfil the formal requirements will not be considered.

Attachments beyond the required documents will not be taken into consideration

The application deadline is February 20. 2019.

Please apply through our website or directly at www.jobbnorge.no

We offer

The PhD scholarship is fully funded and there is no tuition fee.

The salary is NOK 449 400 for a full position, extensive relevant experience can give a higher start salary. From the salary, there will be a mandatory deduction of 2% as a contribution to the State Pension fund (SPK). Standard employment conditions for state employees in Norway apply for the position.

An annual sum of 20 000 NOK is provided for literature and other necessary academic activities. Office space if provided in a professionally stimulating working environment.

Attractive welfare benefits and generous pension agreement are included, in addition to Oslo's family-friendly environment with its rich opportunities for culture and outdoor activities.

Formal regulations

The educational component in the AHO PhD Programme is mandatory and requires fulltime attendance. Residency in Oslo for the employment period is mandatory. A research stay at a relevant international academic institution is encouraged.

This PhD fellowship will start on 1 September 2019.

More information about the PhD Programme at AHO can be found at https://aho.no/en/studier/phd/386-phd

For information about the project and the position, please contact: Professor Birger Sevaldson birger.sevaldson@aho.no

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