Keynote
Case Study Research in Information Systems Engineering: How to Generalize, How Not to Generalize, and How Not to Generalize too Much

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Abstract. Case studies are detailed studies of a small number of real-world cases in order to understand the mechanisms that play a role in creating phenomena in the case. Case studies have been performed in the information systems discipline for at least twenty years. In this talk I will show what role case studies play in the problem investigation and artifact validation tasks of the design cycle, giving examples of the various kinds of case studies that can be used in these tasks: observational case studies, problem-driven action research, and technical action research. Second, I will discuss how not to generalize from case studies: by statistical inference or by variable-based similarity. This will clear the stage for how to generalize from case studies: by architectural similarity. In order not to raise expectations of generalizability too much, I will also indicate the limitations of this kind of generalization.