Keynote Abstract: Trine Syvertsen

Thursday 9 January

Ambivalence, resistance and digital detox

How to live happily, responsibly and ethically in an intensely mediated environment?

Online and social media have begun to shape even our most mundane activities and present us with constant dilemmas about our online and offline presence. The question of how to manage online and offline involvement produces tensions in peoples’ private lives and is debated in the public sphere. While digital and social media are often studied from the perspective of user engagement, this talk discusses ambivalence, resistance and attempts at withdrawal and disconnection.

Based on research on users, organisers of digital detox events, and policy, industry and media debates, the keynote addresses current concerns about digital media overuse. The talk points to presence, productivity and privacy as key reasons for self-restricting digital and social media use and shows how a concern for sustainable media consumption is becoming more prominent. Furthermore, the talk addresses how problematic aspects of media in the 21st century tend to be conceptualised as individualistic issues – disconnecting from digital media is often presented as a lifestyle choice akin to a juice-fast, a weekend of decluttering, or a mindfulness course. In conclusion, the talk discusses broader societal aspects of disconnection and digital detox.