

D.Sc. (Tech.) Eija Raussi-Lehto
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Arvoisa dekaani, hyvät kunniatohtorit, tohtorit, hyvät juhlavieraat.

Perustieteiden korkeakoulun, ja sen Neurotieteen ja lääketieteellisen tekniikan laitoksen Biodesign -ohjelma on huippuesimerkki Aalto-yliopiston yhteisöllisyydestä, jossa jäsenten yksilöllisyyden arvostus johtaa parhaimmillaan uusien, monialaisten innovaatioiden syntyyn.

Apulaisprofessori Heikki Niemisen luotsaama Biodesign -ohjelma on ollut perustavalla tavalla vaikuttamassa siihen, että seison tänään tässä onnittelemassa kaikkia valmistuvia tohtoreita, ja kiittämässä kaikkia meitä tukeneita professoreita, ohjaajia, opiskelijakollegoita sekä läheisiä!

My midwifery background gives me the opportunity to describe this PhD journey, as a journey from the planning of pregnancy, to the post-partum examination. Of course, now, from a slightly new perspective, because, this academic journey is quite possible for everyone; it's not influenced by gender or sexual orientation.

Just as every child has the right to be born wanted, an informed choice is also required, for a doctoral project. The rejection of all mental contraception, and the eagerness to jump towards the unknown is needed. The journey is full of surprises – and after so many months – we are finally ready, or as ready as we can be, to give birth to something completely new and unique!

The beginning of the dissertation process, is marked by the search for information — even at an absurd level — you want to believe, that your offspring will be perfect, and at first, you will dig up all the information you can, to be prepared in the best possible way to support your dissertationfetus. Your supervisor and professor try to support you quietly in the background — you don't have to try to include all the information, in the world, into your dissertation — we have had doctoral theses, and children, before, too — and we're going to have them after yours, too. So, hold your horses, take a deep breath and relax...

Then the nausea of the early pregnancy hits! You are almost throwing up, when you look at the material you are working on! You wonder, if you could cancel it all, maybe you aren't the right parent for this doctoral thesis, after all.

The professors, supporters and fellow students around you encourage you and make you believe, that this phase will pass. And so it does.

During the second trimester and in the beginning of the third trimester you are full of confidence again. You are producing a lot of new text and your thesis is getting fatter – and you are blooming!

Until, you realize that your expected date of delivery is nearly there - and then, the panic hits! There is no way to get out of this alive. At least not for me. You find yourself thinking that you just cannot do this... but it is too late to back down now, you have to finish the job! Support troops and your professors encourage you — push, push, you are doing fine, just fine — and with their support you are able to push through very last labor contraction!

And then — you certainly couldn't be more surprised; astonishment may also shine from the face of your supervisor, when you get that newly printed doctoral baby, with the covers of

your choice, for the first time in your arms. The dissertation is born, your fruit of productivity (a midwife would say reproductivity!) and you are the parent! You are willing to defend it, against the whole world, like every parent is ready to defend their newborn!

At the latest, in the post-partum examination, you will find, not only the opponent's comments, but also the typos, just like that cranky aunt Eleonora remembered to mention, that it's a shame that the poor child has such big ears...

But You did it – and I hope, you have managed to turn your entire thesis process, into an empowering birth experience of getting to know more, developing new methods and delivering them further, and that will carry you far!

- and now, when the post-partum depression begins to subside — it is time to thank all those who believed in you, the whole unified Aalto community, who keeps up a sense of togetherness, and supports the diversity, that makes each of its doctoral children unique, and supports us, **newborn doctors**, on our journey towards new challenges!

Omalta osaltani haluan kiittää erityisesti Aalto professori Risto Ilmoniemeä, jota eräs toinen arvostettu professori kuvaa sanoilla ”Superprofessori”, ”Mestari Risto”, ”yksi yliopistomme uudistavuusrakentajista”; hän oli minulle se akateeminen doula, tuki ja kannustaja tällä omalla matkallani – sekä professoreja Mika Gissler ja Elina Hemminki Terveiden ja hyvinvoinnin laitokselta, kuten myös omia läheisiäni, jotka ovat aina olleet tukemassa kaikkia hulluimpiakin ideoitani, kuten sitä, että tavoitteena on joskus tulevaisuudessa saada vaihdettua opiskelijakorttini suoraan eläkeläiskorttiin!

Onnea meille kaikille vastasyntyneille tohtoreille ja kiitokset kaikille meitä tukeneille!