

MGMT

of Innovation and Technology

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**IMIT – a major contribution
to research**

Fieldwork in practice

**A current example
- the research program**

40 years of future innovation

Av Martin Sköld

This issue with three articles is a special edition on the occasion of the foundation IMIT celebrating 40 years. The first article is written by Professor Christer Karlsson, IMIT's first director, who explains why the foundation was once formed, its purpose, business concept and working method. Then an article describing how research can be carried out in practice to create simultaneous benefits for academia and participating companies. Finally, a current example of the ongoing research school on 'Management of Digitalization'.

In the first article, Christer Karlsson gives a personal and historical look how IMIT's business concept was founded in an ambition to conduct research that simultaneously benefits academia and companies through concurrent knowledge development. An idea that is more up-to-date than ever when society is demanding research that creates benefits at all levels. The value is realized through simultaneous products such as research publications and improvements and innovation in companies' products and production. In addition to this overall purpose, IMIT is also portrayed as an organizational innovation with its five founders where representatives from IFL, the Stockholm School of Economics and the professors of industrial organization and economics at Chalmers, KTH and Lund technical universities are appointed as founders and in the statutes transfer the governing authority to the colleges.

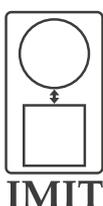
In the second article, IMIT's current director, associate professor and Scania assistant professor, Martin Sköld gives an example how research with simultaneous benefit can be conducted in practice. Martin uses a parable where a patient seeks medical expert help in a hospital to recover. In the same way, an organization can seek help to function better, become more profitable and more efficient and to strengthen its competitiveness. By working in this way, which is based on mutual interest and a common goal, a number of benefits can be achieved, such as (1) access to information, data and considerations that people in senior positions do not normally share unless the incentives are strong enough. (2) Data may also refer to documents, plans

for product launches, development projects and investment decisions for the future. Or (3) proximity and access to people for in-depth interviews. Also, values in the form of (4) funding as research requires funding to be implemented.

Article three is a current example that connects to both the first and second articles, in the form of the ongoing research school focused on 'Management of Digitalization'. A focus area that was created after a meeting between Scania's CEO Henrik Henriksson and IMIT's director Martin Sköld. The talk was about the industry's increased need for management, control and organization of digitalization. Several companies were contacted and Ericsson together with Scania decided that a research school had the best conditions for creating internal business experts in areas where the companies saw knowledge-based needs for the future. Now after one year, five doctoral students are enrolled in the program, which has been planned and designed in detail to ensure mutual maximum benefit for the participating companies and the academia.

The intention for the future is to increase the focus on the research school, which means that companies are welcome to join with more doctoral students who are enrolled at one of IMIT's primary partners. Please contact Martin Sköld for more information.

Regards



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IMIT – a major contribution to research

By Christer Karlsson

IMIT, the Institute for Management of innovation and Technology, is an institute for applied research in the area of management of innovation, product development, production (including services), production processes, entrepreneurship and all related functions. IMIT's operations are characterized by integrating academic and practical perspectives to benefit research, businesses and other organizations. Concurrent knowledge development makes IMIT the ideal platform for applied research projects. IMIT has fulfilled this vital function for 40 years after being established by the representatives of some of Sweden's leading Universities. We can see that its mission is as relevant today as it was then, if not more so, when society is demanding research that leads to gains at all levels of society, organizations, businesses, groups and individuals, as well as academia. IMIT has become an effective link between research and businesses and offers research initiatives and supporting functions for the academic and business worlds to work in collaboration.

Mission

In addition to integrating the fields of management, innovation and technology; it is important to stimulate research, education, and the researchers at the universities. Effective project administration should be offered as well as effective organization for the collaboration between business and academia.

IMIT was designed to create value for three stakeholders; businesses, academia and researchers. Research is more valuable for business and organizations if it is integrated into, and leads to development, within their own organization. Universities receive more funding and interesting empirical research. Researchers will have more opportunities to get funding and to participate in interesting research projects.

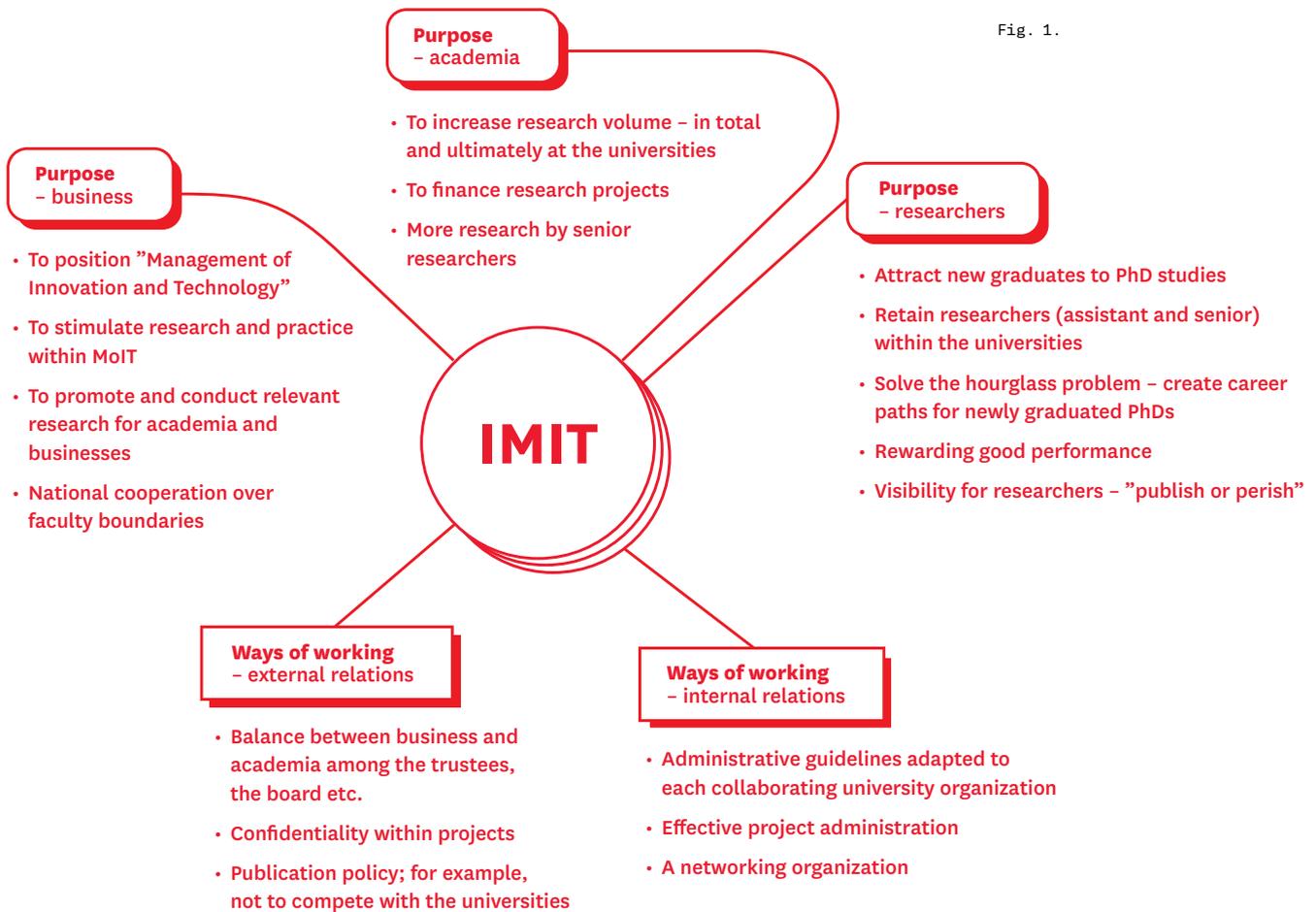
These purposes are vital in understanding IMIT's role and how it functions and are therefore presented in Figure 1, albeit, brief in point form.

Take a moment to reflect on these purposes and related

operating principles. They say a lot about what IMIT is and should be. Some may seem obvious, others are perhaps already well established and no longer necessary to express. For example, the area of MoT is now well established together with management of product development and production. It should be mentioned however, that when IMIT was founded there was only one professor in the world within the area of MoT, and that was Tom Allen at MIT. The fight is not over. At a lot of business schools, the subject is either non-existent or neglected.

Let me illustrate this with an example. In 1993 the CEO of ASEA wrote a letter to the Stockholm School of Economics to say the education on offer was probably fine for the finance sector but was not suitable for the manufacturing industry. I was then called back from the EIASM (European Institute for Advanced Studies in Management) in Brussels to the Stockholm School of Economics, to head up a new section called "Industrial Production". Welcomed by some colleagues who appreciated, amongst other things, my arranging

CONTINUES 



fieldtrips to factories which was something entirely new. Marginalized by others however, who thought my subject was merely the application of their subjects. This story may be considered egocentric, but it illustrates something fundamentally important.

The area "Management of Innovation and Technology"

The area of MoIT, like other management areas, is interdisciplinary and overarching. It is built upon many disciplines such as organizational theory, finance, cost benefit analysis, marketing, amongst others. The narrow-minded professors were therefore partly correct. At the same time there was an explosion of interest from organizations and research financiers wanting to invest in research with both high academic content and practical relevance. IMIT entered into numerous contracts and could assign these research projects to the participating universities.

IMIT's role, organization and function - an organizational innovation

It was essential that IMIT should operate completely independently between organizations. IMIT was neither above, nor

below the universities, but between them. In today's management and strategy terms we could call it co-option, collaboration between competitors; for example, when two rival car companies collaborate to develop a new engine. New products of high quality are developed when knowledge and competences are combined in a resource-efficient way.

This could be achieved with a very small operation, supported by the collaborating organizations, the universities and businesses. As an example, Volvo's PR Director helped develop IMIT's first information sheet for business leaders; which we would now call a newsletter. The small administration team (1.5 people), were given two offices at Chalmers.

IMIT's organization has been talked about and described as an organizational innovation. The first obstacle was state-funded universities were not able to form independent research foundations. I looked into the legal and managerial aspects of foundations and came up with an idea. The founders and the governing body did not have to be one and the same. There are no shareholders in a foundation. So, the Swedish Institute of Management (IFL), the Stockholm School of Economics and Professors of industrial organization and economics from



the universities of Chalmers, KTH and Lund, came together as founders, and in accordance with statute, governing authority was transferred to the universities. IFL was able to donate a large amount of funding to IMIT, and Handel's Vice-Chancellor Per-Jonas Eliaeson, Professor Holger Bohlin from Chalmers, Professor Albert Danielsson from KTH, and Professor Hans Ahlman Lund from, as founders, all agreed to make a smaller, but still significant personal donation.

The principles for governing are also crucial. Business and academia were to have equal influence. A foundation does not have an owner, but instead the representatives from the governing organizations appoint trustees to form the board of trustees. Each University appoints two trustees from the business sector and one from their own University. They represent their organization at the highest level. The first chairman was the Chairman of the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise. Other company representatives were CEO, deputy CEOs and other business managers. This would prove to be very advantageous.

Operating principles

IMIT's operations should create simultaneous gains for both academia and the collaborating businesses. We can use the popular term business model, usually defined as consisting of value proposition, value creation and value capturing. The idea being that through research we can create value for the academic organizations, and at the same time, create value for the business or business. This is done through parallel knowledge development amongst the researchers and the employees in the business. Value can be realized through products; for the universities, this means published research, and for the companies it can mean improvements and innovation in their products and production. I have been stringent in adhering to the requirement for concurrent knowledge development, we are not consultants who sell solutions, nor academics in their ivory towers who fail to see what is relevant.

Ways of working

Based on the operating principles, we started discussing the approach we should take to ensure our principles were adhered to. In other words, we wanted consistency between our mo-

als and ethics. Hence, some 'guiding principles' were developed. Two such principles can be mentioned here concerning the sometimes-difficult role of complementing the universities operations, without it leading to conflict. First, IMIT facilitates the interface between the universities and is not a body which takes over the universities' identities. Therefore, a lot of material is published under each respective university's name, and when applicable, IMIT's name and that of the collaborating university or universities appear together on IMIT publications. Second, IMIT should serve as a complement to the systems within the collaborating universities, whilst at the same time promoting collaboration across boundaries. To avoid disrupting the systems in place at the respective universities, IMIT can therefore adapt rules or payments to reflect what is customary at each university.

Growth

It was not easy for a new, almost virtual organization, to be accepted and become established. However, the structure where trustees were appointed from companies, was a huge help, and IMIT received applied research projects from these companies. The trustees believed in the concept and sold it to their colleagues who, like themselves, were also at senior levels. It was hard to comprehend, but IMIT became known to businesses and other organizations both within Sweden and internationally. One assignment we had was to collaborate with a car manufacturer to develop a new production system. Not long after this I was contacted by a CEO of a large company in Southern Europe. In broken English he said, "Hello, is IMIT?" Soon afterwards I was flying out to meet them and tasked with developing a whole new production system. We made it clear we were not a consultancy, so we were allowed a lot of time for research which led to several published articles.

Fortunately, research does not demand huge investments. The board thought we should make a point of being project financed, it would show how good we were. We had little capital, so it was necessary for us to secure advantageous contracts, often with up-front payment and then invoicing as the project continued. We did not receive any further donations, but I applied for research grants for project development.

Extensive strategic projects in large companies improved our revenues and, having few overheads, our capital slowly grew. Companies provided us with better terms than research grants did. Projects started coming our way at an increasing rate. IMIT became known as the researchers for New Production Systems. An international conference which I started at EIASM (European Institute for Advanced Studies in Management in Brussels), derived its name from this (The International Product Development Management Conference).

It wasn't the subject area that was important. We became known, even famous, for how we integrated research with problem solving in collaboration with businesses. The methods we chose were not based purely on observation, instead we chose

“We became known, even famous, for how we integrated research with problem solving in collaboration with businesses.”

action research and clinical management research. We looked after and treated the patient (business) whilst studying them.

Then came the big breakthrough. I was working with an internationally renowned professor from MIT in Boston. When he was in Gothenburg he stayed at my home, and one evening he mentioned that MIT were planning a huge project in the car industry; it was talked about as being the biggest in the world, which proved to be the case. He thought IMIT would be a good fit for the project and he invited me to MIT. IMIT and many others, including myself, were involved and we became renowned as researchers in the car industry. For a while IMIT had 50 researchers working more or less full time on the project.

Continued expansion and building networks

IMIT underwent a generic development. More and more researchers wanted to work with IMIT, as did other universities. A faculty, perhaps we could term it a virtual faculty, with associated researchers was established. Local offices were acquired, and a researcher who represented IMIT was based there. It was all still simple, but things had moved on. New activities emerged, such as the PhD School.

It may sound like everything just runs smoothly, but things do not happen by themselves. IMIT has to constantly initiate and develop new research projects. The work takes place in universities, so this little organization needs to continuously demonstrate their academic entrepreneurship. Creating new projects and developing networks. Therefore, in addition to its continuously-creating Director, IMIT needs people with a real driving spirit. Sometimes people have been assigned specific roles for this purpose and called program managers. Occasionally new areas of research appear.

Challenges and the future

For research which is on the whole publicly financed, there is always a threat that government will make budget cuts and reduce funding to universities and related activities. The effects of which are not felt in the short term. I worry when I see businesses not investing in research and fear this reveals businesses no longer value their operations as much. A balance between public and privately financed research has been a strength.

Another challenge comes from changes within academia. Are the more traditional universities and their development programs losing out to the more virtual network-based organizations? Are some points in the Mission perhaps irrelevant now? IMIT must accept and react to new challenges, but with its flexible organization, this is achievable.

Continuous creation is necessary, but this is happening. Being able to achieve academic excellence and practical relevance are key, but this is also happening. It's all about "just" finding new all the time. Forever young makes forever new.



CHRISTER KARLSSON

IMIT's creator and first Director, professor

ck.om@cbs.dk

Christer Karlsson is IMIT's creator and first Director. As a young researcher at Chalmers, he was assigned to investigate and plan IMIT, by Chalmers professor, Holger Bohlin and Per-Jonas Eliaeson, the Principal of the Stockholm School of Economics. At its conception in 1979 they saw Christer as being well qualified to become IMIT's first Director. IMIT's success led to his becoming associate professor at Chalmers in 1981 and 1984 Professor at the European Institute for Advanced Studies in Management (EIASM), Brussels. In 1994 when the Stockholm School of Economics wanted a Professor in Industrial Management, it was Christer they appointed, and he also became the Director of IMIT for a second time, where he remained until 2004. He then became a Professor at the Copenhagen Business School, a role he holds currently. Christer is awarded Honorary Fellow at EIASM and European Operation Management Association and in 2019 Christer received the Product Development and Management Association (PDMA) Crawford Fellow Award.

Fieldwork in practice

By Martin Sköld

A few years ago, I developed a slipped disk. A condition which crept up on me as a result of too much sitting still and not enough exercise. I therefore had a specific problem and sought expert medical help at the hospital. I was admitted as a patient and remained in the orthopedics department for 8 days. There I received the medical treatment I needed. I also contributed to their research during this time. The doctors who treated me were involved in a research project to compare two groups of patients; those who were operated on and those who were not. They wanted to find out how the groups were two years after first seeking help for their condition.

Mutual gains

My experience from the hospital reminded me of Edgar Schein and his 1987 book, "The clinical perspective in fieldworks". There he suggested a method for carrying out research which lead to mutual gains; a method which has gained significance. The expert, in my case the doctors, help a patient who has a problem. The patient receives treatment, recovers and at the same time, contributes to research in the form of data.

IMIT is not a medical practice, but a significant part of its work over the past 40 years has consisted of projects based on this method, known as clinical management research. In a project with IMIT the patient is the organization requiring help from the academic experts. The expert is typically a researcher who has a PhD and is an expert in a certain area such as Lean Production, Digitalization, AI or Modularization, and can contribute with their knowledge to benefit the organization who has approached them. At the same time, the expert is carrying out research which can be used for future academic publications. This leads to mutual gains and values for both parties.

Taking the initiative

Just as a patient seeks treatment from a hospital to help them recover, an organization seeking help wants to function better, increase profitability and become more efficient in order to increase its competitiveness. Who it is that takes the initiative regarding "the problem" has shown to be of significance in the design and execution of the study:

- **Clinical management research** is characterized by the

patient, for example the CEO or Head of Research, initiating the contact with an academic expert and asking for help.

- **Action research** is where academic experts initiate contact with a person within an organization and suggest a study.

The difference between these two methods or approaches therefore lies in who initiates the contact and this can have great significance for how a study is conducted, often in terms of access to data, which in the long run will determine how well the expert understands the problem.

Access to unique data

What makes clinical management research unique, is with regards to "wanting to get better". A patient with agonizing back pain who is prevented from living the life they want, is probably more inclined to make sacrifices in terms of time and money in order to get better. In the same way, a CEO who has promised the board and shareholders better returns, has a strong personal incentive to succeed.

To achieve this the patient has to be honest, set aside time and commit the necessary resources, all under the guidance of the expert. This provides a number of advantages for the expert. From a scientific point of view this means, (1) access to information, data and observations from senior level employees who would not normally share unless the incitement was sufficient, (2) data can comprise of documents, plans for new product launches, development projects and future investment projects, or (3) opportunities for in-depth interviews with people who would normally prioritize other things. It can even add value in the

¹ As a footnote in this context, it can be mentioned that IMIT protects the client, and the researcher does not have to disclose data if an outside party does not wish it. However, ultimately, clinical management research, like other types of research, relies on a shared ethical and intellectual contract where sensitive data remains confidential between the parties.

form of (4) funding, as funds are needed to conduct research¹.

Clinical management research is often carried out as a longitudinal study, over a long period of time. This type of project lends itself to studying: (i) the introduction of new philosophies, (ii) new investments in product or service development, (iii) the implementation of change, as well as (iv) comparative studies of different processes.

Advantages and value

The goal of clinical management research is to, (a) improve how an organization functions, and (b) for the researcher to develop within their field. This is achieved through access to proven and documented competence with a researcher who is well established in their field, who is able to design and plan a longer study, and who has the ability to translate, interpret and analyze results. The value perceived can be in terms of concrete

“In addition to being small, effective and a nonprofit organization, it is guided by the exciting vision: that IMIT shall contribute to renewal within the *Management of Innovation and Technology* to provide gains for academia, business and society.”

or simplified social constructs, models, reaching consensus and verbal reasoning, anything which allows the patients to understand their needs and enables them to translate the advice into action.

For me it took six years of recovery before I was able to go out for a run. I had been through a comprehensive rehabilitation program, from firstly making sure we knew what “the problem” was, to finally eliminating it. This followed a sequence beginning with acute medical intervention and medical care to later focusing on rehabilitation and physiotherapy and regular checkups. I am now at a level where I can self-diagnose and can interpret my symptoms as well as being confident I am doing the right things.

The researcher, on the other side, has access to data they would otherwise be unable to attain, meaning the value of the study increases due to its exclusiveness. In turn, it can lead to the publication of scientific articles in international journals. It can also provide input for teaching in forms of real examples and cases, or in the form of academic opinion in the media and other forums in society; the so-called science outreach. Finally, financing is also necessary in academia in order to carry out research.

Fig. 1.



IMIT's vision

IMIT has a unique tradition, among other things, of conducting this type of clinical study. In addition to being small, effective and a nonprofit organization, it is guided by the exciting vision: that IMIT shall contribute to renewal within the *Management of Innovation and Technology* to provide gains for academia, business and society.

Renewal is achieved through research projects which can be translated into relevant results for academia and business. Research projects are carried out in collaboration with national and international experts who have leading knowledge within the scientific disciplines. Results are shared through publications, seminars and workshops.

Management (leadership and control) of *Innovation* is about creating new value for industry, academia and other sectors of society. We see innovation as being closely linked to knowledge development and new ways to combine existing knowledge to create this value.

Management (leadership and control) of *Technology* is about the knowledge and utilization of technology, tools and systems. Our ambition is to contribute to increased understanding for how emerging technologies, for example digital technologies and AI, can be used to increase sustainability and competitiveness.

Gains can be economic, social or ecological at the individual, organizational or societal level.

RECOMMENDED READING

> Schein, E.H. (1987), *The Clinical Perspective in Fieldwork*, SAGE Publications, London.



MARTIN SKÖLD

martin.skold@hhs.se

Martin is an associate professor of business administration and Scania Assistant Professor at the Stockholm School of Economics and the director of the foundation IMIT. Martin's research is largely about business and business strategies.

A current example - the research program

In 2018 four industrial PhD students began their research studies at the Stockholm School of Economics. This was the result of a long process which began with a meeting between Scania's President and CEO, Henrik Henriksson and IMIT's Director, Martin Sköld. They talked about industry's increased need for management, control, organization and digitalisation. Several companies were contacted and Ericsson, together with Scania, decided that a research program focusing on "Management of digitalization" would provide the right conditions to create internal company experts whose knowledge would be necessary for the future.

Three research areas

"Management of digitalization" focuses on three specific research areas: (1) the challenges of new business models, (2) management and skills development for digital transformation, and (3) the management and organization of changing external relations with suppliers, customers, competitors and partners. The companies were involved in the recruitment of four Industrial PhD students, supervised by professors from Stockholm School of Economics, Chalmers University of Technology, and Linköping University, see fig. 1

Implementation in practice

The research program is designed to ensure mutual gains for academia and the participating companies, and to avoid pitfalls. The companies' motivation for investment is having doctoral students who would become internal experts in the areas requiring knowledge and impact. This would be achieved through:

- Access to academic knowledge such as theories, models and tools which directly or indirectly can be applied to the student's company
- Exposure to an academic environment to encourage different ways thinking and the development of new perspectives, in contrast to the business environment with a more practical focus

rent ways thinking and the development of new perspectives, in contrast to the business environment with a more practical focus

- PhD courses are part of their further education
- Close collaboration with leading professors, supervisors and experts
- Interaction with other researchers and PhD students to widen their network

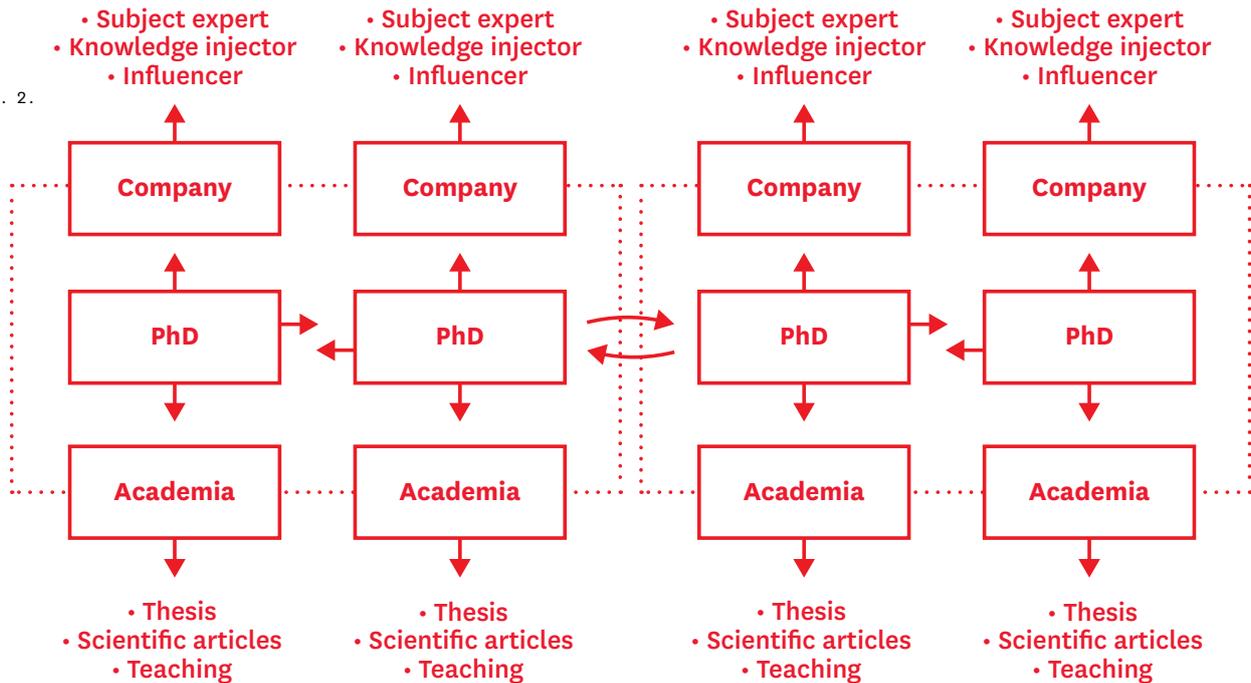
PhD studies are full-time, but each PhD student retains their job at the respective company. It is therefore important the employer, in this case the PhD student's direct line manager, understands and accepts the student is active in two environments simultaneously. A balance which can be maintained with the help of a few principles:

- Managers in the company need to fully understand, appreciate and value the arrangement.
- Clearly defined schedules, for example, 4 days per week at the university, and 1 day per week in the company.
- Regular meetings between representatives from the company and the university
- Clearly visible deliverables in terms of internal workshops to provide further education.

Fig. 1.

PHD STUDENT	Mathias Larsson Carlander , Business Concept Manager Connected Services and Solutions, Scania	Marie Bemler , Senior Engineer Intelligent Transport Systems, Scania	Mats Pettersson , Principal Researcher Business Models, Ericsson	Rebecka Cedering Ångstrom , Principal Researcher Consumer and Business Lab, Ericsson
SUBJECT	Digital offerings	Future Transportation systems	Business model innovation	AI and organizations
SUPERVISORS	Docent Martin Sköld , Stockholm School of Economics, Professor Magnus Mähring , Stockholm School of Economics	Professor Karl Wennberg , Linköping University, Professor Sarah Jack , Stockholm School of Economics	Professor Joakim Björkdahl , Chalmers University of Technology, Professor Sarah Jack , Stockholm School of Economics	Professor Martin Wallin , Chalmers University of Technology Professor Magnus Mähring , Stockholm School of Economics

Fig. 2.



“In this way a strong triad is formed which ensures scientific quality and progress.”

To formally follow a PhD program, each student must be enrolled at university, in this case the Stockholm School of Economics. Students will be required to take the School’s compulsory courses as well as two elective courses which combined equate to 1.5 years full-time studies. The elective courses are chosen carefully to match each student’s individual needs, methods and research question. In addition, research is carried out with an assistant supervisor, someone who has PhD and is an expert in their particular area, and who is available to offer guidance and discuss things with on a weekly basis. Finally, all PhD students

have a Senior Supervisor who they can check in with, together with their assistant supervisor, on a monthly basis. In this way a strong triad is formed which ensures scientific quality and progress.

The research program has two doctoral students from each company. This means each student will have someone who not only understands the organizational context and issues they face, but also someone who can encourage and motivate them, as being a researcher can be a lonely and isolating experience. This structure therefore provides a “buddy” in the same situation for extra support. Furthermore, there are two other PhD Students in a similar situation in another company. The group meet regularly for joint coaching and to provide an important sense of belonging.

Continuation ahead

The intention for the future is to increase the scope of the research school by welcoming more companies with doctoral students. Please contact IMIT’s director Martin Sköld for more information.

The PhD students' research areas



MATHIAS' research deals with the challenges facing industrial companies who need to complement a more traditional offering with the increased demand for software and connectivity, in order to be more dynamic and adaptable to users' needs. Something which can create opportunities for new business models provided companies collaborate with new and established partners for the future.



MATS' research is about business model innovation in manufacturing companies. Digitalization and servitization offer both opportunities and challenges. Integrating products and services, and thereby delivering added value, leads to increased competitiveness. However, for this to be possible, the company's business model needs to be transformed. How are the company's management, organization and processes affected by this transformation?



MARIE is interested in why we talk about the infrastructure of the future in a way that sees the products themselves providing the solutions to the problems. Instead, she suggests we look at these future scenarios we envision and start now to develop the infrastructure for the future. In particular, how do we design future transport systems? What and who will perform what tasks? In what way, and maybe most importantly, to what purpose and to what aim?



REBECKA studies the impact adopting artificial intelligence has on organizations. When AI systems replace or enhance human activities, workflows, processes and work roles need to be reassessed. But despite changes being planned in advance, there can be unforeseen consequences. In her research, Rebecka focuses on how increasingly intelligent systems affect autonomy, responsibility and authority within organizations.

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Mats Magnusson, *KTH, professor*
Peter Magnusson, *KAU, professor*
Thomas Magnusson, *LiU, docent*
Daniele Mascia, *University of Bologna, associate professor*
Jan Mattsson, *RUC, professor*
Maureen McKelvey, *GU, professor*
Magnus Mähring, *HHS, professor*
Pejvak Oghazi, *SH, docent*
Malin Olander Roese, *LTH, doktor*
Annika Olsson, *LTH, professor*
Vinit Parida, *LTU, professor*
Magnus Persson, *Chalmers, docent*
Birger Rapp, *IMIT, professor*
Anders Richtnér, *HHS, docent*
Sören Sjölander, *Chalmers, professor*
Martin Sköld, *HHS, docent*
Alexander Styhre, *GU, professor*
Per Svensson, *Chalmers, doktor*
Jonas Söderlund, *BI/LiU, professor*
Fredrik Tell, *UU, professor*
Lotta Tillberg, *IMIT, docent*
Lars Trygg, *Chalmers, docent*
Martin Wallin, *Chalmers, professor*
Joakim Wincent, *LTU, professor*
Mats Winroth, *Chalmers, professor*
Rolf Wolff, *EBS, professor*
Karl Yden, *Chalmers, doktor*
Pär Åhlström, *HHS, professor*
Anna Öhrwall Rönnbäck, *LTU, professor*
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ADJUNCT:

Armand Hatchuel, *Ecole des Mines, professor*
Anders Ingelgård, *AstraZeneca, DU, docent*
Paul Lillrank, *Aalto University, professor*
Bertil I Nilsson, *Resursbruket AB, tekn lic*
Rami Shani, *CaI Pol Tec, professor*

ORGANIZATION

DIRECTOR: Martin Sköld

ACCOUNTING: Carina Blomkvist

PROJECT AND ADMINISTRATION:

Maria Christiansen

OUTREACH: Lucas Hörte

OPPORTUNITY TO APPLY FOR FUNDS FOR NEW RESEARCH PROJECTS

You as a researcher in the field of "Innovation and Technology Management" can apply for funding from IMIT for work on major applications, pilot projects, or other types of activities aimed at starting up new projects and which can be difficult to find other funding for. IMIT has no formal call for these funds, but applications can be submitted at any time during the year. Applications containing project description and budget should not exceed three pages and be sent to IMIT's director Martin Sköld (martin.skold@imit.se). Funding decisions are usually made at subsequent board meetings. There are no lower or upper limits for project funds, but a normal level of applications so far granted is 100-300 kSEK.

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