



The Swedish Research School of Management and Information Technology

All former Ph.D. candidates from the Research School of Management and Information Technology (MIT) that have ended their participation at the research school with a licentiate or doctoral degree receive this bi-annual letter. The Alumni Letter offers information about MIT activities, alumni members, and other information related to the research school. Peter Ekman*, MIT Deputy Dean and Alumni Letter Editor, appreciates alumni information that can be of interest to its readership ■

Alumni Letter



2021:1

MIT doctoral thesis #128

One of our latest alumni, Andrea Geissinger, defended her thesis titled *Platforms in Liquid Modernity: Essays about the Sharing Economy, Digital Platforms and Institutions* at Örebro University April 29, 2021.

Hi Andrea – can you shortly describe your thesis?

My thesis explores the phenomenon of the sharing economy in Sweden at the peak of the trend starting from 2016 onward. In the cover essay, I set out to combine the individual papers of the thesis in a meta-theorizing approach to understand how digital sharing platforms are becoming a taken-for-granted part of our social lives. By analyzing predominantly social media data, I find that sharing platform companies today often act as societal organizers in different shapes and forms. Our lives today are filled with uncertainty, unstable structures, and anxiety for the future, especially in a highly individualized country like Sweden. As a result, we often long for community and belonging. This longing may be one of the reasons why sharing platforms have become so popular: They have been tailored to seem to meet this need and – for better or worse – utilize community ideas at their core, such as, for instance, leaving reviews to facilitate trust between strangers.

Most academic works were online last year – did it affect your thesis process and defense?

I think there is probably no one that has not been affected by the pandemic. I have been lucky, I guess, that I mostly had worked on my cover essay left in the last year. While this usually is a lonely task anyway, some MIT Ph.D. colleagues, and I got together regularly for Zoom-Pomodoro sessions to work on our theses together. It made a tremendous difference, and I am very grateful for the time each of them has spent helping me brainstorm ideas and overcome writer's block or stopped me from procrastinating.

What are your plans now?

I work now as a postdoctoral researcher at the Ratio Institute in Stockholm, continuing my interest in exploring the platformization of society. Right now, I am also looking into the possibility of finally being able to visit Stanford (SCANCOR) as a Visiting Researcher in the fall. I was supposed to spend a semester there when the pandemic hit, and like everyone, I hope that postponed plans become a reality again soon.

Andrea Geissinger ►
(private photo)

Finally, is there any main lesson you have brought from the research school?

Right away, Christina Keller's words at the beginning of each MIT conference come to my mind: *Be critical friends!* It is such a simple but powerful reminder that even though we must engage in critical thinking in academia, we should do so with an open mind, an open heart, and even an open soul. We never know where and when we might find friends for life if we debate with kindness.



Good luck with your continued career!

Thanks a lot, Peter! I am excited to continue to be part of the MIT family, and I am curious to see what the future has in store for all of us. ■

MITSC at Linnaeus University Online

The MITSC conferences was – in line with previous conferences – offered online due to the pandemic

This year's spring conference was hosted by Linnaeus University and took place online May 18-19. The conference's five tracks were filled with critical and constructive discussions and collegial feedback. Belén Casales Morici from Uppsala University had her final seminar with Christina Keller, professor at Lund University and Uppsala University, as an opponent. Jakob Westergren, a Ph.D. student at Uppsala University, was awarded the MITSC 2021 Best Reviewer Award. Professor Anita Mirijamsdotter had together with colleagues at the Linnaeus University, also arranged so that the conference had three international keynotes: their guest professor Gerald Midgley from Hull University held a presentation titled *An Introduction to Systems Thinking for Tackling Wicked Problems*, Jim Sphorer from IBM presented *Future of AI: A Service Science Perspective* and Professor Frantz Rowe from the University of Nantes presented insights from studying a Stop-COVID app in France ■



Alumni Letter

MIT Alumni Update

Hi Peter Dahlin – you defended your Ph.D. thesis in 2007 (MIT #13). I know you left academia for a while – what did you do?

After a two-year post-doc at JIBS, I spent five years with the Swedish Security Service (Säpo) as the chief analyst leading a team of analysts working with big data to discover and stop terrorism, subversion, and espionage. It was a subject area far from my research, but I could use the analytical mindset from doing research, my knowledge in social network analysis, and experience of working with large datasets. It was an interesting time, and I learned a lot, but being so close to the dark side of society was also very demanding.

And you are currently not in Sweden; can you tell us your whereabouts?

Yes, I am in Exeter, in the beautiful southwest of England. Since 2019 I have been an honorary visiting scholar at the University of Exeter Business School and the Institute for Data Science and Artificial Intelligence. It is a fantastic opportunity to be in this environment where I have developed my research through collaborations, research groups, and seminars. The people doing network analysis, computational modeling, and studying societal aspects of data have been – and will be – important for my future work. I highly recommend spending time at a university abroad if you get the chance.

You have also edited the second Routledge book written by MIT scholars. What was the original intention with the book?

Since the first anthology (2012), digitalization has progressed and matured. It may be a cliché that has been repeated throughout the years. Still, organizations today generate and process much more data than earlier, whether from sensor-packed devices, automated processes, or human behavior. Combined with access to computing power through virtualization, and extremely powerful tools, this



enables advanced analytics and hyper-dimensional models. Whereas digitalization may be a concept of the past, there is a lot to learn about the opportunities and challenges for organizations after digital transformation. In the second book, such opportunities and challenges are described in a wide range of businesses and organizations. The anthology will be published in September if all goes well, and we are thrilled to have over 60 contributing authors – many that are part of MIT.

Finally, do you have any great memory from the research school?

It was amazing to have the opportunity to visit different universities and to get to know fellow Ph.D. students and senior researchers all over Sweden. There was a strong sense of community within MIT during the early years. Later, I remember noticing that when walking through the corridors of universities in Sweden, there were always some names I knew from MIT, and it felt like there was some sort of connection through MIT. For me, such connections have been the foundation of several opportunities and collaborations through the years.

Thank you for the update and memories!

Thank you, Peter, for your commitment to MIT ■

◀ Peter Dahlin (private photo)

The upcoming MIT book

The second edited book produced by MIT scholars will be available this fall

The second book produced by MIT scholars (seniors, alumni and Ph.D. students) are planned to be released by Routledge in September and can be pre-ordered already now ■



The National Research School of Management and Information Technology Universities

