



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



2023:1

A Recent Alumni

One of our latest alumni, Gideon Mekonnen Jonathan, defended his thesis *Information Technology Alignment in Public Organisations: Towards Successful Digital Transformation* at Stockholm University May 11, 2023.

Hi Gideon, you are one of the research school's latest alumni. Can you give me a brief description of your thesis?

My Ph.D. thesis is about digital transformation and how it should be pursued to help organisations improve their value propositions. Even though the phenomenon has attracted unprecedented attention across disciplines, we still have much more to learn about it. One of the gaps in the literature I closely looked into is the relationship between IT alignment and digital transformation. Recognising the strong causal relationship between the two constructs, my study resulted in a framework for action that could be used to improve the degree of IT alignment, enabling successful digital transformation in public organisations.

Do you have any great memory from your participation in the research school?

Indeed, I have a lot. Meeting the whole community and presenting my work at the bi-annual conferences felt good. The relaxed and collegial setting made me comfortable, to

raise my doubts. I was very fortunate to be surrounded by those with the expertise and the will to help me. I will never forget the first PhD courses I took in Uppsala at the beginning of my study. These turned out to be invaluable as I progressed further to carry out my empirical studies. Perhaps the most fun times were the laughter I shared with fellow PhD students over after-work beer following serious discussions (on publications, courses and other responsibilities). We had many of those as the MIT courses took me to Gotland, Lund, Västerås and Uppsala.

Do you have any fun anecdote from your time as a Ph.D. student?

I remember my first course in Uppsala, Perspectives on Science and Research. It is undoubtedly one of the most interesting courses. Our discussions were very stimulating but sometimes difficult to comprehend fully. Even though I was eager to learn philosophy of science and how research is conducted, my curiosity and quest for answers turned to fear and anxiety when I heard how well my fellow PhD students

articulated their thoughts. I felt I was in the wrong crowd and saw myself as an imposter. What gave me comfort and courage to start engaging in the discussions was when I found out that the most active students were third and fourth-year Philosophy students.

Finally, what are your plans now?

In the last five years, I enjoyed the dynamic, intellectually stimulating and rewarding academic environment. So, I will continue to teach and conduct research in the area of digital transformation. My participation in many international conferences and other academic events has provided me with opportunities to expand my network in the research community. I plan to strengthen the collaborative works with colleagues within and outside Sweden, actively participate in academic events, and publish my findings in reputable journals.

Thanks for your time!

Thanks a lot for having me, Peter! I would also like to extend my gratitude to all senior researchers and fellow PhD students for welcoming me to the community. I look forward to seeing you all at future events ■



◀ Gideon Mekonnen Jonathan
(Photograph by Åse Karlén)

MITSC2023 was held at Mälardalen University, Västerås campus

This year's spring conference was hosted by Mälardalen University (MDU) and took place April 18-20. Keynotes was Peter Alvmo from SAP who presented SAP's developments and future challenges and Professor Shahina Begum from MDU who presented MDU's ongoing research on Artificial Intelligence. Ph.D. student Ali Hamidi from the Linnaeus University had a licentiate pre-seminar with Professor Christina Keller and Senior Lecturer Nicklas Holmberg (both from Lund University) as opponents. Best Reviewer Award was given to Panagiota Peggy Koukouniyou from Umeå University.

You know that...

...as an alumni, you can apply for travel and accommodation costs for MITSC or MITAC participation (e.g., being a track chair). Contact Christina Keller** or Peter Ekman* for more information.

MIT Alumni Update

Congrats Janina Hornbach, you defended your thesis 'Accounting for Accountability: Theoretical and Empirical Explorations of a Multifaceted Concept' at Uppsala University this spring. Can you offer us a brief description of your thesis?

In my dissertation, I have investigated different manifestations of accountability that are involved in the emergence of stress and dysfunctional organizational behavior. In accounting discourse, accountability is typically seen as a control mechanism that needs to be formally imposed on individuals to steer and control their behavior. However, the results of my dissertation suggest that accountability mechanisms are also very much engrained in what humans naturally do, that is, to self-regulate their emotions and behavior, and to anticipate, and mentally prepare for, potentially threatening situations, such as performance evaluations and justification requirements. My results, therefore, have important implications for the design of control systems, as well as their possibilities and limitations in managing individuals' accountability.

Janina Hornbach ►
(private photo)

And rumors says that you got a premium publication already during your time as a Ph.D. student; which journal was it and what was the topic?

Yes, in 2021 one of my papers, co-authored with Lars Frimanson (at Uppsala University's Department of Business Studies and a MIT alumnus) and Frank Hartmann (Radboud University), got published in the renowned



journal *Accounting, Organizations, and Society*. I would say that the writing and publication process of this paper has been one of my most valuable learning experiences during my research education. The paper challenges the predominant view in the accounting literature that frequent performance evaluations are stressful. Based on a one-year field experiment in a Swedish public organization, we find that individuals who were evaluated every 12 weeks had in fact higher baseline stress hormone levels than individuals who were evaluated every 6 weeks. We therefore concluded that frequent performance evaluations can also relieve stress because individuals are likely to be discharged of their accountability more often, get potentially more timely feedback on their performance, and spend less time in mentally preparing for upcoming evaluations.

Reflecting upon your Ph.D. studies; was there any extra value from being part of the research school?

Yes, the MIT research school has contributed enormously to my development as a researcher. The biannual conferences provided a great opportunity to train my reviewing and discussion skills and to get feedback on my work-in-progress from other Ph.D. students and senior researchers. I have always been grateful for the great sense of community that being part of MIT created for me. Going to conferences and courses was not only educational, but also a lot of fun!

What will you do next?

That is still open. I would like to continue doing research, that's for sure! Either in academia or in terms of more applied research and analytical work within the public sector. I am also keen to work more with education and pedagogical questions.

Thanks for your time!

Thank you, Peter. It was an honour to be included in the MIT Alumni newsletter. I wish you, and everyone at the MIT research school, a nice, and well-deserved, summer vacation ■

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