



ISM SEMINAR

Spring Term 2014-15

Speaker: Professor Jonny Holmström (Umeå University, Sweden)

Title: Tracing Cascades of Digital Innovation: Cognitive Change and Identity Collapse in a Newspaper Organization

Date: Wednesday 04 February 2015

Venue: M2, WBS Teaching Centre

Time: 11.00

Abstract: Over the last 30 years, relentless digital innovation has resulted in displaced product markets and new organizing forms. To explain these disruptive effects, innovation scholars have typically attended to singular, seemingly unrelated events of digital technology adoption. By focusing on single discontinuations, however, research has failed to theorize how path dependent firm-level assimilation of digital technologies generates cumulative cascading process and product innovation over time. To address this gap, we conduct a historical case study of a Swedish newspaper that adopted and innovated around a string of digital technologies over 30-year period. In tracing the changes associated with these events of digital technology adoption, we identify three innovation rifts that pierced differentially and with a deepening effects four organizational layers – technology, structure, cognition, and identity. We note an increased velocity of change as the newspaper’s core business processes – news production, distribution, and acquisition – were consecutively digitized. While each rift generated extensive innovation outcomes, this experience failed to produce sufficient knowledge to prepare the firm for the next cascade. Ultimately, consecutive digital innovation cascades culminated in deep sociotechnical change that encompassed a radical reconsideration of the firm’s products and markets, generating a firm-level disorientation when the CEO had to question the firm’s identity. Generalizing from our study, we sketch a theory of cascading digital innovation that explains path dependent assimilation of digital technologies at the firm-level.

Biography: Jonny Holmström is a professor of Informatics at Umeå University, Sweden. He is director and co-founder of Swedish Center for Digital Innovation and co-founder of Remus Technologies. His research interests include IT’s organizational consequences, digital innovation, and open innovation methods for university-industry collaboration. Holmström’s work on these topics cuts across the fields of Information Systems Studies, Organization Studies, Communication Studies, and Science and Technology Studies and has been published in leading journals in these fields, such as Communications of the AIS, Convergence, Design Issues, European Journal of Information Systems, Industrial Management and Data Systems, Information and Organization, Information Resources Management Journal, Information Systems Journal, Information Technology and People, Journal of the AIS, Journal of Global Information Technology Management, Journal of Strategic Information Systems, Research Policy, Scandinavian Journal of Information Systems and The Information Society. Holmström serves on the editorial boards for Communications of the AIS, European Journal of Information Systems and Information and Organization.

Contact: Alison Solman, ISM Group
Alison.solman@wbs.ac.uk or on 024 7652 4101