

40 years of IMP Research – the evolvement of the IMP network

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Abstract

IMP is in business research today used as an acronym in combination with words like group, research, approach and methodology. It seems in this way to be something rather distinct. Despite this, 40 years after the first project meeting in 1976, it is rather difficult to describe what IMP is in a simple way. We know that related to the acronym IMP there has been 37 international conferences, that there is a journal and that there are more than 2 500 papers published on the IMP webpage. On the same page there are also more than 30 books presented and also some of the more than 200 Ph.D. thesis that over the years have been completed connected to IMP.

This paper is an attempt to make a network analysis of the development by applying the ARA-model. We will describe how the actors, activities and resources have developed over the 40 years including how relationships have been developed between different research groups. In this way we can relate some artefacts that all are different kinds of concrete outputs of the development process toward each other. From the start IMP was obviously a project involving researchers in five countries. But already during this project there were important complementary activities and resources related to the project. A process was initiated where several researchers and research groups in different countries became related in what they were researching in a number of different ways. Several projects – more or less international – but always with international connections – were completed. Researchers have met, discussed and found ways to cooperate around a theme that in turn is related to how companies evolve through more or less cooperative business relationships.

In the analysis we identify the key actors, activities and resources in the different time periods. We begin in the process leading up to the first project that consisted of a large international research project. Then the process will be much more complex and multifaceted

why we will have to use a classical research approach – to select out some parts in the process in order to analyse these in more detail. This is our suggestion to give one answer to the basic question – what is IMP?

1. IMP – what is it?

This year (2016) the 33rd annual IMP conference will take place in Poznan. IMP started as an international research project in 1976 and the first conference was held in 1984. Over the 40 years IMP expanded substantially. Today, a huge number of researchers and research groups identify themselves as belonging to the IMP community by applying IMP models and concepts in their research. As shown in this paper the members of the IMP community have published numerous books and journal articles that are highly cited. In addition more than 200 doctoral dissertations are based on the IMP approach. Furthermore, IMP is today visible through a journal published by Emerald and through a website (www.impgroup.org). From this website 2700 papers (mostly from conferences) and 75 books and dissertations can be downloaded.

Another sign of the increasing interest in the IMP idea is the occurrence of several publications discussing IMP in more explicit ways; what IMP is and what it is not and the characteristics of IMP as a research field. Some of these publications have relied on papers from specific conferences, such as Gemünden (1997), Easton et al. (2003), Windishofer et al. (2004). Others have focused on the researchers in the IMP community and how they are connected through joint publications, for example, Morlacchi et al. (2005) and Henneberg et al. (2007). Some authors have discussed the development in broader terms, such as Turnbull et al. (1996), Håkansson & Snehota (2000), Wilkinson (2002), Ford & Håkansson (2005), Mattsson & Johanson (2006) and Cova et al. (2009). Finally, a number of researchers have compared the IMP perspective with other approaches, for example, Johanson & Mattsson (1987), Mattsson (1997), Ford (2004), Ford (2011), Hunt (2013) and Olsen (2013), or with the development of industrial marketing in general, such as Backhaus et al. (2011) and Vieira & Brito (2015).

Some authors have been critical to certain aspects of the development of IMP, or to IMP in general. Such publications have been presented by Lowe (2001), Harrison (2003), Cova & Salle (2003), Cunningham (2008) and Möller (2013). One particular facet of this criticism is that the creativity that featured the initial IMP research has been replaced by “increasing uniformity, repetition and stereotyping of the IMP style in recent years” (Cunningham, 2008, p. 48). A list of publications discussing the development of IMP is provided in appendix 1.

All these publications indicate that researchers find an interest in analysing IMP and its development. These reasons occur because over time IMP has generated a certain substance worthy of discussion. For example, in an extensive study of the conferences 1984-2012, Wuehrer & Smejkal (2013) conclude that IMP research features quite a strong stability over time. The bibliometric analysis describes a clear and consistent picture over the entire time span. The core research dimensions continue to be the same, implying that IMP is characterized by certain continuity with regard to substance and identity. Deep probing analysis of extensive business relationships was a driving force in the first IMP project and this phenomenon has attracted the main interest also at the following conferences. Business relationships were impossible to explain with mainstream theories available when the project started and continue to represent an important challenge from a theoretical point of view.

We conclude from the above description that over 40 years there has been a continual development of something that can be interpreted as “IMP”. Moreover, scholars within and outside the IMP community have identified this phenomenon interesting enough to explore

and analyse in more detail. The first aspect for consideration is that we can relate to artefacts representing various types of concrete output from IMP activities in terms of research results presented in books, journal papers and doctoral dissertations. The second issue of interest is to analyse the features of the processes that created this output. In the beginning, IMP was a project involving research groups in five countries. But already during this project, complementary activities and resources were related to the project. A process was initiated where several researchers and research groups in different countries became connected through their research interests and research agendas. Over time, several projects – more or less international, but always with international connections – have been completed or are currently on-going. Researchers have met, discussed and found ways to cooperate around an empirical phenomenon related to how companies evolve through more or less cooperative business relationships embedded in network constellations. Thus, the development of IMP can be described and analysed as the development of a research network consisting of a large set of activities, resources and actors. This will be the path we will follow here.

Historical analyses of research tend to focus on two aspects. One is to emphasize the researchers – the research community in terms of individuals and roles. The other is to concentrate on the development of ideas, in terms of knowledge features and connections to other knowledge areas. This paper follows none of these two routes in the analysis of the development of IMP. Instead we rely on the tools that have been developed within IMP to analyse business development. In other words: we examine the development of a research network and focus on the interplay and the combinations of activities, resources and actors. This separation of three layers in the business reality is a central approach applied in IMP research (Håkansson & Johanson 1992). It is identified as the ARA model for analysis of industrial networks in terms of the activities undertaken by actors through the utilization of various resources. The focus is on inter-organizational processes forming the business landscape – or as in this case the research landscape.

The ambition with the paper is to provide some preliminary suggestions about what has characterized the development of IMP. We do this by applying a network approach based on the ARA model. The main mission is to investigate the features of actors, activities and resources that have been combined during the development of IMP. We begin by describing the process leading to the first IMP study – a joint international research project. Then the process became much more complex and multifaceted. Therefore we rely on a classical research strategy – to select some aspects of this process to enable more detailed analysis. This approach is what will be used in order to provide one of the potential answers to the basic question – What is IMP? The answer will be formulated as a research stream from a network community embedded in a wider network of science with three layers – researchers (actors), artefacts such as books and articles (resources) and research projects (activities).

2. Method and framing

Once the ARA-model had been selected for the framing of the paper, the methodological problems were focused on identifying relevant activities, resources and actors and the connections between them.

Activities

The initially most significant and important activities are two major joint international research projects, which together provided the basis for IMP. The two projects will be described in terms of the ways in which they were organized and conducted, as well as regarding the research outcome. A few other large research projects have been organised on

national bases and we bring up those that have created major effects such as books or other publications that have been widely cited. The number of doctoral projects including field research and research interactions based on the IMP approach is another indicator for describing the activities performed by various research groups.

The annual IMP conference is the most important continual activity organised by the group. It would be too immense a task to try to illustrate the evolvement over time of IMP by describing all the conferences. We needed therefore to select some of them to elucidate the IMP development. The first IMP conference in Manchester in 1984 was the natural starting-point. We began working with this paper in the spring 2013. The latest conference at that time was the one organized in Rome in 2012, which therefore was chosen to represent the other end-point of the time spectrum. Since the Rome conference was the 28th, we selected the 14th IMP conference organized in Turku, Finland, in 1998 as the ‘middle-point’.

The three conferences serve as reference points for the activity layer providing three pictures of the development of IMP. The conferences are important meeting points for researchers where research ideas, research issues and research results are presented and discussed.

Resources

The most important resources in the IMP network are the research frameworks and research findings presented. These resources are both produced and used by the researchers belonging to the IMP community. The most visible and available resources are the publications in books and journals. These resources can be regarded as inspirational sources, but also as documents of research themes and issues that have been significant over time.

It might be problematic to assume that the publications that have been most cited are those that have been most influential from a knowledge point of view. Despite that we use the number of citations as a measure in the resource dimension because this factor provides an indication of how the actors in the network have used the publications. In order to identify these publications we relied on the database ‘Publish or Perish’ which is based on Google Scholar. Our interest was not only to provide an account of the most cited of the IMP publications, but also to assess the broad impact of IMP research in general. Therefore, we traced all the publications that had been cited more than 100 times in August 2013 authored by researchers that were identified as belonging to the ‘IMP community’.

To illustrate the development over time of the resource layer we relied on the time periods identified through the selection of the three conferences for analysis of the activity layer. These demarcation lines in time determined two time periods of IMP development:
Period 1: covering the development between the 1984 and the 1998 conferences.
Period 2: covering the development between the 1998 and the 2012 conferences.
The phase before the first conference in 1984 is identified as ‘the start of IMP’.

Then we grouped the publications into four categories with regard to the number of citations they had received in 2013. The included the top scoring publications with more than 1,000 citations. The three other categories represented publications in the intervals 500-999, 200-499, and 100-199. We also analysed the research themes covered in the publications and the development of these themes over time through a detailed examination of abstracts and in some cases the full text.

Actors

In historical accounts, individual researchers are often identified as the most important actors. These actors are clearly visible through the authorships of books and publications. In ‘true IMP spirit’ we have supplemented this aspect of the actor level with analysis of the impact of collective forces such as research groups and universities to which the individual actors are connected. This classification caused some problems since some researchers have moved between universities in the middle of a time period. We used the affiliation registered on the publication for the classification into research groups, although the actual work might have been conducted several years before, in another research setting. In some cases we have merged researchers from the same city into one group although they might represent different universities in this city.

The significance of the research groups is demonstrated through the number of citations their publications have achieved. In order to identify the relationships between the groups we have also analysed the co-authorships across research groups and how these joint publications developed over time. Moreover, we provide an account for the number of doctoral dissertations presented by the research groups.

The evolution of IMP will thus be described as the development of activities, resources and actors over two time periods where we use the three conferences as reference points – see Figure 2.1. The description of the two time periods is illustrated by the variables listed above Period 1 in Figure 2.1, while the text below Turku shows what aspects of the conferences are presented.

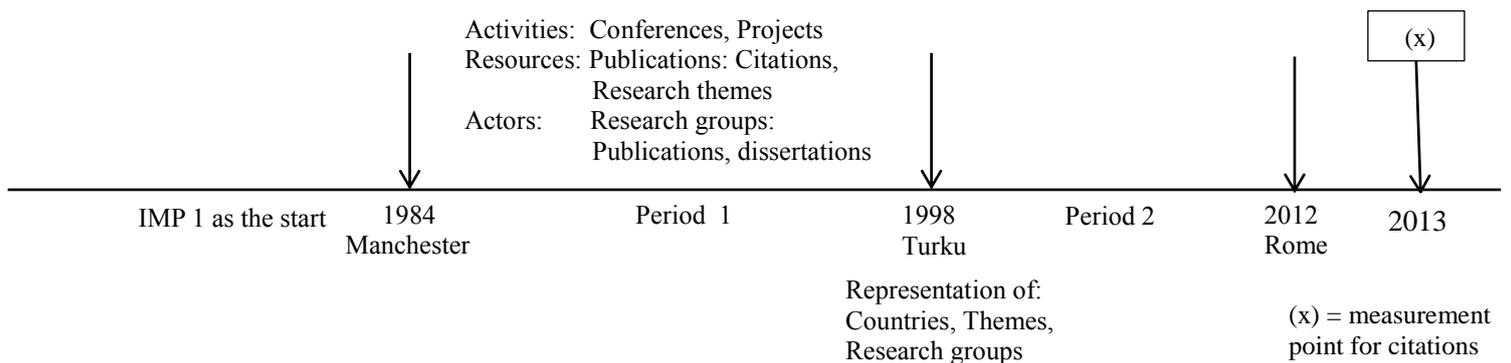


Figure 2.1 Activities, resources and actors illustrating the development of IMP.

It is important to note that the two authors of this article have both been involved in the development of IMP – one during the entire period and the other from the first conference. It means that two ‘insiders’ have made all limitations and selections, which leads to both positive and negative consequences. On the positive side we have been able to use our personal insights and experiences. The negative one is that we cannot claim to be neutral or objective in the selection and the focusing. We have tried to handle the consequences of participating observations by using, for example, citations measured by an external search engine or descriptions fetched from publications as indicators, instead of more soft quality indicators.

The outline of the article follows the basic structure of Figure 2.1. We begin by illustrating the start of IMP with a short resume of the initial IMP project, inaugurated in 1976, by describing activities, resources and actors in this phase (section 3). This is followed by the

presentation of the first conference in Manchester (4), the first period between 1985 and 1998 (5) and the conference in Turku (6). Thereafter we describe the development between 1999 and 2013 (7) and finalize the empirical account with the Rome conference (8). Section 9 summarizes the development of IMP in network terms and brings up positive and negative aspects related to these dynamics. In addition to the conclusions, some implications and thoughts about IMP's future potential are discussed.

3. The start of IMP

3.1 Network situation at the start

The start of IMP through the initiation of the joint international project can be explained by three factors related to resources, activities and actors, respectively. Firstly, there was dissatisfaction, shared by several European researchers, regarding the availability of realistic and relevant text books and research reports. The existing literature lacked descriptions, conceptualizations and analyses of buying and selling, as well as exporting and importing of industrial goods. Empirical studies conducted during the 1960s and early 1970s indicated that models available at that time were not adequate for explaining business reality or providing normative recommendations. Simply speaking, the economic landscape showed features that were different from what was assumed in the contemporary literature, which called for further exploration of this significant phenomenon.

Secondly, in the early 1970s, several attempts were made to initiate international cooperation and coordination of research activities. One of these examples related to EIASM (European Institute for Advanced Studies in Management) in Brussels that organised international seminars and workshops where young researchers were provided with opportunities to meet for discussions. Through such arrangements of research activities, new international contacts were stimulated and meeting spots were designed where spontaneous discussions and coordinative attempts could be made.

Thirdly, within business administration and marketing, faculties expanded substantially due to the massive increase of students at universities and the growth of management education. The actor level was affected considerably when huge numbers of young and ambitious researchers were employed and new research units were created. These conditions made it difficult for senior researchers to maintain control of the research operations. Consequently, there was a free space to take advantage of for the young actors.

All these three features contributed considerably to the launching of the first IMP project. The initiators were young researchers in the early phases of their development. They were internationally oriented and eager to do something jointly with others. They actively kept senior researchers outside the project ('no professors' was the rule!) at the same time as they actively encouraged young researchers from several countries to get involved. They also found a common interest in aggressively challenging the mainstream way of investigating buying and selling of industrial goods. They all had empirical experience from the research field and this experience indicated features that were hard to explain given the contemporary theoretical models.

3.2 Activities

In this way, several specific circumstances provided the opportunities for the establishment of a joint international research program. The researchers involved had no ambitions related to more long term cooperation. But all wanted the program they implemented to become

something unique. However, it was certainly a long way to go to complete such a program. The first step was to mobilize a group of researchers representing several countries. At the end, researchers from five European countries became involved.

The project was directed toward investigation of the features of marketing and purchasing of industrial goods in international settings, i.e. to characterize international business exchange. On this basis, an extensive European study was designed and carried out in industrial companies in UK, Sweden, West-Germany, France and Italy. Both the buying and the selling sides were investigated. The sample of companies was based on selection matrices distinguishing three types of products (raw materials, components and equipment) and three types of technologies (unit production, mass production and process production). For each company the most important customers and suppliers in the five countries were identified. Thus, for a selling company in Sweden the most important customers in the UK, West-Germany, France and Italy together with domestic customers in Sweden were selected for interviews. For each company, data was collected regarding the way individual customers were handled, the history of the relationship, how the business processes had developed over the years and important events in terms of specific adaptations or projects in these processes. The same type of procedure for data collection was used on the buying side. Furthermore, for each interviewee, a personal attitude study was conducted regarding the perceptions related to the country of the specific counterpart involved in the relationship. Thus, data were collected about the company in general, its sales to, and purchases from, the countries involved, the business relationship with the most important counterpart in each (or at least some) of the countries, and the attitudes of the manager being interviewed about the relationships with counterparts in the specific country.

The empirical investigation covering the five countries turned out to be a massive undertaking, requiring huge efforts from the project members. Moreover, the openness of companies in relation to researchers varied over the countries. Consequently, both data collection and analysis were time-consuming processes and required huge amounts of research resources. In the first book that reported the study (Håkansson ed., 1982), an account for the methodological issues is provided in chapter 3. In particular, the group emphasized the process thinking that had been central during the project, as well as the fact that each country study had to find domestic financial resources. Progress, or at least the feeling of progress, was vital. Even if unsolved problems sometimes were at hand, the group always tried to continue to the next step in the research process in order to show the members that progress was made and that the project evolved. Furthermore, each country group had to report back to their financial sources about progress in the own country.

The empirical results were very distinct across firms and countries. All companies showed to be working within established long-term business relationships with the most important customers and suppliers. But the results also showed that the relationships varied in many dimensions, such as number of persons involved in both the selling and buying companies, occurrence, level and type of adaptations, relationship duration, and the handling of the monetary terms. These findings strongly contrasted the contemporary view of marketing and business processes. Therefore, in the introduction to the 1982 book the perspective offered in mainstream research and teaching was challenged in four respects:

- a) “We challenge the concentration of the industrial buyer behaviour literature on a narrow analysis of a single discrete purchase”.
- b) “We challenge the view of industrial marketing as the manipulation of marketing mix variables to achieve a response from a passive market”.

- c) “We challenge the view of an atomistic structure, assuming a large number of buyers and sellers that easily can change business partners”.
- d) “We challenge the separation which has occurred in analysing either the process of industrial purchasing *or* of industrial marketing”.

The basis of the contrasting IMP framing was then formulated in the following way:

- “We emphasize the importance of the *relationship* which exists between buyers and sellers. This relationship is often close and may be long term and involve a complex pattern of interaction”.
- “We believe it necessary to examine the *interaction* between individual buying and selling firms where either firm may be taking the more active part in the transaction”.
- “We stress the *stability* of industrial market structures, where the parties know each other well and are aware of others’ movements”.
- “We emphasize the similarity of the tasks of the two parties. Industrial marketing can be understood only through simultaneous analysis of both the buying and selling sides of relationships”.

The interactive view of industrial marketing and purchasing was formulated in a theoretical model – the interaction model – containing five sets of variables characterizing the short term episodes, the long term relationship, the involved parties, the interaction atmosphere and the environment (Figure 3.1).

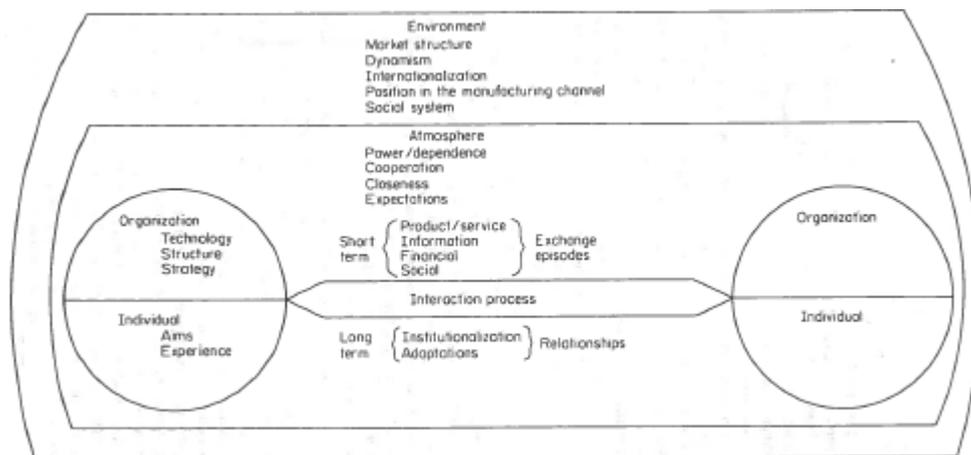


Figure 3.1 The Interaction Model (Håkansson, ed., 1982, p. 24).

The main part of the 1982 book is devoted to presentation of 23 company cases. In each of these cases the most important business relationships for the company are described and analysed from either the marketing or the purchasing side. The cases are organized according to the basic technology of the focal company. The business relationships between companies in the five countries were described in terms of duration in time (in average around 13 years), extensiveness in contact pattern, adaptations in products, production or logistics and the degree of social exchange. The differentiation of the companies, with regard to their basic technologies and the type of business their products represented, provided a broad view of the business reality. In total, a very detailed and extensive picture was presented about how a whole set of industrial companies behaved with regard to their selling and buying activities in which the business relationships are basic ingredients.

The cases were used as input to further analysis of significant themes related to the basic variables of the interaction model. Consequently, the themes regarded variation in the processes of interaction, variation in the features of the parties involved in interaction, variation in interaction environment, and the atmosphere in which interaction occurred. In total, 14 researchers from the participating countries were involved as authors of cases and themes, individually and in various combinations. The main contribution of the first IMP book is a very strong empirically grounded argument for the importance of including interaction and business relationships in all systematic studies of industrial settings.

3.3 Resources

Significant resources activated in the start of IMP were rooted in two research contexts and particularly at Uppsala University the cross-fertilization of these contexts was favourable. The first was research on internationalization of businesses and the second regarded studies of marketing and purchasing issues that increasingly devoted the attention to business relationships between customers and suppliers. On the basis of the assumption that the numbers of citations reflect the utilization of publications, the ten most significant resources before the Manchester conference are listed in Table 3.1.

Publications cited more than 1,000 times:

Johanson, J. and Vahlne, J-E., The internationalization process of the firm. *Journal of International Business Studies*. 1977.

Håkansson, H. (ed.). *International marketing and purchasing of industrial goods*. Wiley. 1982.

Johanson, J. and Wiedersheim-Paul, F., The internationalization of the firm – four Swedish cases. *Journal of Management*. 1975.

Ford, D., The development of buyer-seller relationships in industrial markets, *European Journal of Marketing*. 1980.

Publications cited between 200 and 500 times

Blois, K., Vertical quasi-integration. *Journal of Industrial Economics*. 1972.

Håkansson, H. and Östberg, C. Industrial marketing: An organizational problem. *Industrial Marketing Management*. 1975.

Rosson, P. and Ford, D., Manufacturer-overseas distributor relations and export performance. *Journal of International Business Studies*. 1982.

Ford, D. and Ryan, C., Taking technology to market, *Harvard Business Review*. 1981

Fiocca, R., Account portfolio analysis for strategy development, *Industrial Marketing Management*. 1982.

Håkansson, H. and Wootz, B., Supplier selection in an international environment – an experimental study, *Journal of Marketing Research*. 1975.

Table 3.1 Top-cited research in 2013 published before the 1984 conference.

Accordingly, in 2013 four publications had been cited more than 1,000 times: two of which are dealing with internationalization and two with business relationships. Altogether, ten publications had been cited between 200 and 500 times and another nine accounted for more than 100 citations. This means that 19 books and papers published before the Manchester conference had been cited more than 100 times in 2013. The publications from the 70s can be seen as major inputs into the project while those published in the early 80s are more a result of the first IMP project.

Throughout this paper we present short summaries of the publications with more than 1,000 citations. Of the four publications in the start of IMP, the 1982 book was described above. The paper by Johanson & Wiedersheim-Paul (1975) is based on four Swedish firms' internationalization processes. By investigating how these firms established themselves in

foreign markets (year and type of establishment) a typical internationalization process is identified. The typical pattern found was that firms start with neighbouring countries (at a short psychic distance). They also tend to begin with forms of entry needing minor investments. Thus, the internationalization of a company is a gradual process in relation to type of establishment (from agent to producing subsidiary) and to type of country (successively entering countries on a larger psychic distance).

The empirical material in Johanson & Wiedersheim-Paul (1975) is one important base in the development of the model of the internationalization process, formulated in Johanson & Vahlne (1977). The gradual process that showed to be so significant in the empirical cases is in this paper explained by a basic mechanism relating two state aspects to two change aspects. The two state aspects are market knowledge and market commitment while the change aspects regard commitment decisions and current activities. Market commitment is composed of two factors: the amount of resources invested and the degree of commitment. Market knowledge consists of explicit knowledge (that can be taught) and experiential knowledge that only can be learned through personal experience.

The paper by Ford (1980) draws the attention to buyer-seller relationships that, until then, had received scant attention in the literature on industrial marketing. In the paper, a five-stage model of the development of buyer-seller relationships is launched, from the pre-relationship stage to the 'final' stage. The features of a relationship in these stages are described and analyzed with regard to the increasing experience between the parties, the reduction of their uncertainties and the distance between them, the growth of their commitment and the formal and informal adaptations between the two, as well as the mutual investments and savings.

It is of interest also to analyze the development over time of the research themes covered in the most cited publications. Considering the text above it was natural that the categorization of themes included 'internationalization' and 'business relationships', together with studies of marketing (labelled 'customer side focus') and purchasing and supply ('supplier side focus'). It goes without saying that this classification was not always easy to apply strictly. For example, sometimes it was unclear whether a specific publication should be categorized as business relationship or customer side focus. However, in our statistics, each publication represents only one theme. Themes that appeared significant already from the beginning were strategy and technology/innovation (combined into one common category). Table 3.2 shows the themes covered in the top-cited publications. The number of publications are reported in intervals – a principle applied also in most other tables.

<i>Number of publications</i>	<i>Themes</i>
More than 5	Business relationships Customer side focus
Between 1 and 3	Internationalization Supplier side focus Technology/innovation Strategy

Table 3.2 Themes of the most cited publications published before 1984

3.4 Actors

Six research institutions were involved in the first IMP project and then also in the production of the first IMP-book: Uppsala University, UMIST in Manchester, Bath University, Lyon Business School, Munich University and ISVOR-Fiat in Italy (See table 3.3).

France	Sweden	UK	West-Germany
<i>Lyon Business School</i>	<i>Uppsala University</i>	<i>Bath University</i>	<i>Munich University</i>
Jean Paul Valla	Håkan Håkansson	David Ford	Michael Kutschker
Michel Perrin	Lars Hallen		
Robert Salle	Jan Johanson	<i>Manchester UMIST</i>	Italy – Isvor-Fiat
Claude Marcel	Björn Wootz	Peter W Turnbull	Ivan Snehota
		Malcolm Cunningham	
		Elling Homse	

Table 3.3 The research groups involved in the first IMP project

It is quite natural, therefore, that the most cited IMP publications before the 1984 conference emanated from these research groups. As illustrated in Table 3.1, Uppsala University contributed with the majority of the highly cited publications. Similar conditions characterized the publications with lower citation rate, some of which were co-authored with researchers at Stockholm School of Economics. These groups were connected because researchers moved between the two universities. The two other significant research communities with highly cited publications were located at Bath and in Manchester – see Table 3.4. (In this table – as well as in others – we adopted the principle to include only research groups that later have shown to be significant in the IMP development).

<i>Number of publications</i>	<i>Research group</i>
More than five	Uppsala university
Between 2 and 4	Bath University
	Manchester
	Stockholm School of Economics

Table 3.4 Top-cited publications by research groups before 1984.

In several cases the PhD theses of the involved researchers served as important input to the project that in turn directly resulted in several PhD dissertations.

4. The first IMP-conference in Manchester 1984

Following on the first IMP book (Håkansson ed., 1982) and the joint work the IMP-researchers were putting into further publications, the group in Manchester invited to an international workshop in 1984 under the heading “Research Developments in International Marketing”. This invitation resulted in the first annual conference that became the most visible feature of the IMP research stream over time.

20 papers were presented at the Manchester conference. Full details of these pioneering papers are provided in Appendix 2. The papers involved 30 authors from 8 countries – 21 European and 9 coming from overseas – see Table 4.1. So already from the beginning IMP was more than a European affair.

<i>Papers</i>	<i>Country</i>
More than five	UK
3-4	Sweden USA
1-2	France Australia Ireland Japan

Table 4.1 Countries represented with papers at the 1984 conference

The most important contributions to the Manchester conference came from the two research contexts described in the previous section: business relationships and internationalization. Business relationships represented the main theme and here the results from the first IMP study provided particular input to the discussions at the seminar. These results were presented in the two joint books, but also in some journal papers¹ that documented the importance of dyadic business relationships between customers and suppliers. The features and the significance of these relationships, both from marketing and purchasing points of view, were discussed in a number of the papers at the conference with particular focus on which new concepts should be used to characterize these relationships and their functions.

Since the topic of the conference was Research Developments in International Marketing it is natural that considerable interest was devoted to internationalization. In the debates at the seminar the Uppsala model of internationalization² played an especially important role. A third theme that was intensively discussed during the seminar concerned “networks of business relationships” and “network effects”. These issues emerged as several papers and comments regarded the connections between relationships. The papers highlighted the significance of relationships and directed the attention to how relationships are related. These connections were conceptualized as issues of both relationship portfolios and networks.

A fourth theme that emerged regarded technological aspects of relationships. Technology was central in IMP1 and surfaced as significant also at the seminar since almost 50% of the papers showed some connections to technology. Technological issues thus appear crucial for both seller and buyer in almost all B2B situations and the technological content of the business relationships is substantial and often critical. The significant role of business relationships for technical development is an important conclusion of the IMP1 study.

¹ The second joint book was in progress at the conference and published in 1986: Turnbull P. & Valla, J-P (eds.): Strategies for International Industrial Marketing, Croom Helm.

Papers are exemplified by Ford’s publication in Table 3.2 and Cunningham, M.: International marketing and purchasing of industrial goods. Features of a European research project. *European Journal of Marketing*. 1980.

² Presented in the papers by Johanson & Vahlne and Johanson & Wiedersheim-Paul in Table 3.1

The themes of the papers presented at the conference (Table 4.2) show close correspondence to those of the most cited publications in the period before 1984 (cf. Table 3.2).

<i>Number of papers</i>	<i>Theme</i>
More than five	Business relationships Internationalization
Between 2 and 4	Customer side focus Supplier side focus
1	Networks Technology/Innovation

Table 4.2 Themes of the papers at the 1984 conference

Regarding the participation of research groups, those involved in the IMP project contributed with most attendees at the conference: Manchester 6, Uppsala 5, and Lyon 4. The papers presented by different research groups are shown in Table 4.3. Here we have included the research groups involved in the IMP project as well as those that later evolved as significant parts of the IMP community.

<i>Papers</i>	<i>Research groups</i>
More than five	Manchester
2-3	Uppsala Lyon Stockholm School of Economics
1	Among others: Lancaster, Penn State and Sydney

Table 4.3 Papers by research groups at the 1984 conference

5. Period 1: The development 1985-98

5.1 Activities

During this period the most important activity besides the conferences was the joint international project IMP2. This project involved researchers from the five European countries participating in IMP 1, but also scholars from several other countries. European researchers from The Netherlands, Norway and Poland joined the group and involvement of researchers from the US, Japan and Australia made the project increasingly global. In this way the empirical base expanded substantially and provided opportunities for analysis of cultural and regional differences.

The underlying reason for starting the second IMP study was a feeling of dissatisfaction by some of the researchers regarding the way the business environment, or context, was treated in the first study where the main attention had been directed to the development of dyadic business relationships involving two active and reflective counterparts. The context had been registered but not given any structural dimension or role. However, in the empirical descriptions there were ample examples showing that a specific customer-supplier relationship was related to other relationships. Thus, the environment of the individual

relationship was not diffuse or atomistic, but featuring specific other relationships. Consequently, rather than explaining the development of each relationship only through the actions of the two focal firms, there seemed to be reasons to investigate the context in terms of interdependencies in relations to other, connected, relationships. Five types of interdependencies were analyzed in the study: technology, knowledge, social, administrative and legal. Relationships were found important means for handling these interdependencies and it was evident that a business relationship had to be seen as an element embedded in a network of relationships.

The outcome of the project was presented in another IMP book (Håkansson & Snehota 1995). The most important theoretical result from the study is an analytical scheme for development effects of relationships that is described in Figure 5.1, best known as the ARA model.

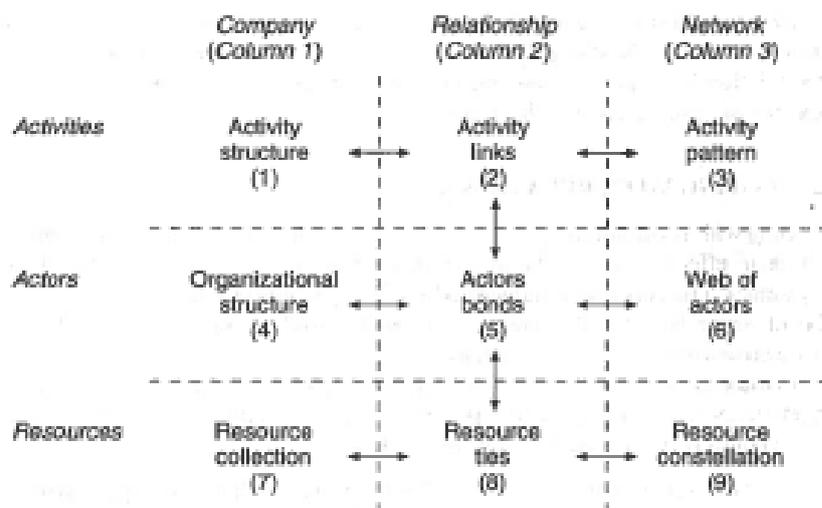


Figure 5.1 The ARA model (Håkansson & Snehota, 1995, p. 45)

The basic dimensions in this model were used to structure the empirical observations. The book contained chapters dealing with the functioning of relationships as activity links, resource ties and actor bonds. Each chapter is based on cases that illustrated the conceptual development. The cases represent joint undertakings and were authored by research groups at Uppsala, Lyon, Poznan, Penn State, Eindhoven, Bath and Chalmers in Gothenburg. The study shows that connections within a relationship enabled enhancement of the internal structure of the involved companies, as well as the collective activity pattern, resource constellation and web of actors in the entire network. The cases revealed that relationships are costly, but can provide positive effects for (1) the dyad – the two actors seen as a “team”, (2) individually for each of the two involved actors, and (3) third parties, connected to the two. Findings of the project suggest thus that business relationships have a central role for positive economic results for single firms, but even more in a collective way for networks of companies. These results led to the conclusion that the functioning of the connected business relationships represent important economic phenomena that must be considered in all business analysis. Thus, the conclusions from the first IMP study were strengthened and further developed. The book also contained contributions from scholars advocating other approaches which were compared with the IMP view, dealing with technical development (University of Groningen) and the transaction cost approach (Norwegian School of Economics and Business in Bergen). Another research project aiming at a joint publication was organized in the late 1980s, involving researchers from UK and Sweden. After four years and three seminars in different countries the book was published in 1992: “Industrial Networks – a new view of reality”,

edited by Björn Axelsson and Geoff Easton. The book contains 13 chapters written by 11 authors in various combinations, representing Uppsala University, Lancaster University, Stockholm School of Economics, Huddersfield Polytech and Chalmers University of Technology. Five of the chapters were co-authored, some across university and country boundaries. The book's second chapter presented "A model of industrial networks" by Håkan Håkansson and Jan Johanson.

Furthermore, an important publication project was the establishment of a journal based on IMP research that lasted for three years. It was launched in 1986 (Industrial Marketing & Purchasing) with Peter Turnbull as editor and MCB University Press as publisher. There were also some important collaborative projects with important effects for the future. One research program in Sweden involving Uppsala University and Stockholm School of Economics resulted in important conclusions focused on the technological dimension of business networks. In the middle of the 1990s, collaboration was initiated between Chalmers, Uppsala and Trondheim, with focus on case studies analyzing single companies and their local and global networks. This joint research program established links between the three schools that still remain in 2016.

Regarding conferences, the first Manchester seminar was not intended to be followed by other arrangements. However, the idea with a joint international seminar turned out to be fruitful and already from 1985 the IMP conference became an annual event (except for 1987 when no conference was organized). The first conferences were arranged by institutions involved in IMP1, but from 1989 other universities entered as hosts. In total 12 conferences were organized in Period 1, presenting an average number of 66 papers (Table 5.1).

<i>Year</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Number of papers</i>
1985	Uppsala	40
1986	Lyon	39
1987	--	
1988	Manchester	30
1989	Penn State US	40
1990	Milan	55
1991	Uppsala	55
1992	Lyon	68
1993	Bath	90
1994	Groningen	101
1995	Manchester	72
1996	Karlsruhe	83
1997	Lyon	114

Table 5.1 IMP-conferences in Period 1

5.2 Resources

Several books and articles published during this period have been highly cited. No less than ten publications had been cited more than 1,000 times in 2013 – see Table 5.2. The top-cited publication was the book edited by Håkan Håkansson and Ivan Snehota that reported the IMP 2-project.

Publications cited more than 1000 times

- Håkansson, H. and Snehota, I (eds). *Developing business relationships in networks*. Routledge. 1995.
- Anderson, J., Håkansson, H. and Johanson, J. Dyadic business relationships within a network context. *Journal of Marketing*. 1990.
- Wilson, D. An integrated model of buyer-seller relationships. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*. 1995.
- Johanson, J. and Mattsson, L-G. Internationalization in industrial systems – a network approach. In Hood, N. & Vahlne, J-E (eds) *Strategies in global competition*. Routledge. 1988.
- Håkansson, H. (ed.) *Industrial technological development: a network approach*. Croom Helm. 1987.
- Ford, D., Gadde, L-E, Håkansson, H. and Snehota, I. *Managing business relationships*. Wiley, 1998, 2003, 2011.
- Ford, D. (ed.) *Understanding business markets*. Thomson Learning, 1990, 1997, 2002.
- Axelsson, B. and Easton, G. *Industrial networks – a new view of reality*. Routledge. 1992.
- Johanson, J. and Mattsson, L-G. Interorganizational relations in industrial systems. *International Studies of Management and Organization*. 1987.
- Håkansson, H. and Snehota, I. No business is an island. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*. 1989.

Table 5.2 Top-cited publications in Period 1

It is noteworthy that no less than six of the ten most cited works are publications in books. In this period Routledge was the main publisher of IMP books. Wiley, that later became significant as an IMP outlet, published the first edition of the books on ‘Managing business relationships’ (Ford et al. 1998). Of the top-cited publications, the books by Håkansson & Snehota and Axelsson & Easton have already been presented above.

In the paper by Anderson, Håkansson & Johanson (1984) the network effects of changes in dyadic relationships are in focus. These effects can be both positive (constructive effects) and negative (deleterious effects). The positive effects can appear in other actors’ resources, in other actors’ activities and in relation to the perception of other actors. The same is the case for the negative effects. Both positive and negative effects were illustrated in two network cases and were shown to be related to cooperation and commitment.

The paper by Wilson (1995) presents an integrated model of buyer-seller relationships that ‘blends the empirical knowledge about successful relationship variables with conceptual process models’. The 13 relationship variables include, among others, trust, commitment adaptations, mutual goals and interdependencies. The process model involves five stages: Partner selection, definition of purpose, setting relationship boundaries, creating relationship value and maintaining relationship. The paper provides research directions on the concept and model levels, as well as for process research and concludes with managerial implications.

The 1988 publication by Johanson & Mattsson is a book chapter with the aim to illustrate the usefulness of the network approach in analysis of internationalization. The authors develop a 2x2 matrix with the degree of internationalization of the firm and the degree of internationalization of the market as the two dimensions that both can score low or high. Each cell in the matrix identifies a form of internationalization with specific features and its particular situation with regard to advantages and disadvantages. The network approach for internationalization is then compared with the theory of internalization and the Uppsala internationalization model.

The article by Håkansson & Snehota (1989) provides a theoretical discussion of how a company can handle the strategic issues within an environment characterized by continuous interactions with counterparts. Three central issues of the strategic management doctrine are discussed from the viewpoint of the network model: (a) organizational boundaries, (b) determinants of organizational effectiveness and (c) the process of managing business strategy. One main conclusion is that a network context requires different assumptions in all three aspects. In a networked environment the focus of management has to move away from allocating internal resources and structures towards the way a company relates its own activities and resources to those of important counterparts.

Håkansson (ed.1987) is a joint publication by five authors based on a research program focused on technological development within the steel industry network. Separate chapters are devoted to process and product development, to the importance of supplier relationships and to the existence and importance of a personal network among technicians. The basic network is identified as the web of contacts and relationships between suppliers, customers and producers in the industry. Altogether, this means that no firm can embark on technical innovation without carefully considering how such efforts may affect all others involved. There is a need for coordination of technical research and development between all firms involved.

The book by Ford et al. (1998) is an attempt to apply IMP thinking to managerial issues. The basic aim is to illustrate the consequences for management when the business reality is analyzed from a network perspective. The main focus of the book is on the managing of relationships with suppliers and customers. Particular attention is directed to the role of technology in these processes and what ‘strategy’ actually implies if considered from a network view. In later editions of the book, strategy is conceptualized as an interplay between network pictures, networking and network outcome.

In their 1987 paper, Johanson & Mattsson compare the industrial network approach with that of transaction-cost. In the first section of the paper, basic characteristics of the two approaches are described. After that they are compared with regard to: theoretical foundation, problem orientation, basic concepts, system delimitation and the nature of relationships. Furthermore, the authors provide an illustration that contrasts the features of the two approaches in the analysis of a specific issue. This example concerns the internationalization of business and it is concluded that the divergences of the two ‘indicate the relative usefulness of the two approaches for different purposes’. Finally, the book edited by Ford (1990, 1997, 2002) represents a volume containing previously published papers by researchers belonging to the IMP community.

In the method section we declared that a further interest was to demonstrate the broadness of the impact of IMP research. This impact showed to be really impressive since no less than 101 publications from this period had been cited 100 times or more in 2013 (Table 5.3).

<i>Number of citations</i>	<i>Number of publications</i>
1000 -	10
500 - 1000	7
200 - 500	32
100 - 200	52
TOTAL	101

Table 5.3 Publications in Period 1 with more than 100 citations in 2013.

We also investigated the distribution of authorship in the publications cited more than 100 times and distinguished between papers that were single-authored, those that were written by two authors and those co-authored by three or more authors (Table 5.4).

<i>Authorship</i>	<i>Share of total</i>
Single-authored	34%
Two authors	53%
Three or more authors	13%

Table 5.4 Authorship of the publications in Period 1 (cited more than 100 times).

Regarding the themes of the cited publications, ‘business relationships’ strengthened considerably the position as the theme that accounted for most of the publications. ‘Internationalization’ continued to be well represented and ‘networks’ entered the list of highly cited themes (Table 5.5). The themes with 5-10 publications in Table 5.5 kept their positions from the start period. Three new themes emerged in this period: services, research methods and knowledge exchange and learning.

<i>Number of publications</i>	<i>Theme</i>
More than 25	Business relationships
Between 10 and 15	Internationalization Networks
Between 5 and 10	Technology and innovation Strategy Customer side focus Supplier side focus
Between 1 and 3	Services Knowledge exchange and learning Research methods

Table 5.5 Themes of the publications cited more than 100 times in 2013

The significance of the focus on business relationship was also illustrated in the list of the 10 top-cited publications (Table 5.2). Business relationship is the theme four of the ten publications, of which three appear at the top of the list. The enhanced attention to networks is illustrated by three publications, while technology/innovation and internationalization are represented by one each.

5.3 Actors

In this period, the research group at the Department of Business Studies at Uppsala dominated the research arena and accounted for about one third of the total number of publications cited more than 100 times, and more than 50% of the top-cited ones. The distribution on research groups of the publications cited more than 100 times is shown in Table 5.6.

<i>Number of publications</i>	<i>Research group</i>
More than 40	Uppsala university
9-11	Stockholm Lancaster university
More than 5	Bath Manchester Business School Chalmers University in Gothenburg
Between 1 and 4	Lyon Sydney Georgia State Turku Helsinki Karlsruhe

Table 5.6 Cited publications by research groups in Period 1

Stockholm School of Economics, Manchester and Bath continued to deliver well-cited publications and Lyon started to be represented on the list. In this period the horizon of IMP publications expanded considerably. Two newcomers accounted for publications with high citation scores: Penn State University in the US, and Lancaster University in the UK. Chalmers University of Technology in Gothenburg entered the list followed by other newcomers from Australia (Sydney), the US (Georgia State), Finland (Helsinki and Turku), and Germany (Karlsruhe).

As stated in the method section we were interested in analyzing the co-authorships between research groups. Here we used the publications cited more than 100 times and investigated which of them were co-authored by representatives of different research groups (Figure 5.2.)

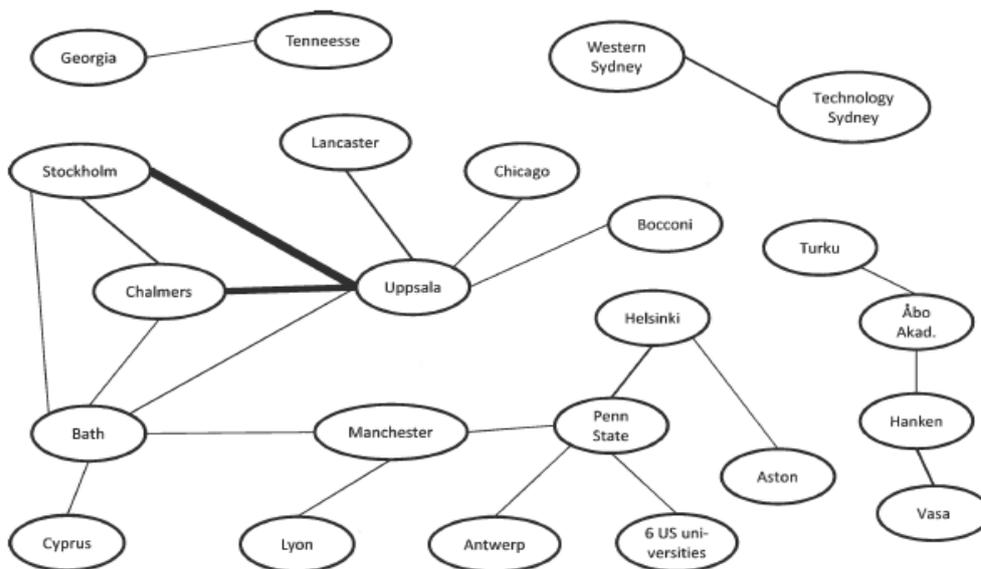


Figure 5.2 Co-authorships between research groups in Period 1



The total number of co-authored publications amounted at 41, involving 23 research groups in 11 countries. Considering Uppsala's dominant position in publications it is not surprising that this university acts as the spider in this network. The most significant connections relate to Stockholm School of Economics and Chalmers in Gothenburg, but concern also Bath, Lancaster, Chicago and Bocconi. The UK connection between Bath and Manchester is linked to US through Penn State and through this university to Helsinki Business School. In Finland four other research groups are connected through joint publications but there is yet no link to Helsinki. Two other national co-authorships are not connected to the rest of the network through joint publications – one in the US and one in Australia.

The number of dissertations is another output that describes the performance of research groups. Up to 1998 we identified 57 dissertations related to IMP. The research groups with more than 3 dissertations are listed in Table 5.7.

<i>Dissertations</i>	<i>Research groups</i>
More than 10	Uppsala
4-5	Manchester Bath Stockholm Chalmers Karlsruhe
3	Turku Trondheim

Table 5.7 Number of dissertations by research groups 1984-1998

6. The 14th IMP conference in Turku 1998

The fourteenth IMP conference was organized by Turku University in 1998. At this conference, 108 papers were presented, which was the second highest number of papers so far. The papers were written by 136 authors from 19 countries. Researchers from Finland were the main contributors, followed by UK and Sweden. Other countries that were well represented included Germany, France, Norway, The Netherlands, and United States. These countries together accounted for 82% of all papers (Table 6.1).

<i>Number of papers</i>	<i>Country</i>
+ 30	Finland
15-20	UK Sweden
7-10	Germany France Norway
3-5	The Netherlands USA
1-2	Australia

Table 6.1 Countries represented with papers at the 1998 conference.

Industrial Marketing Management published a special issue (the first one dealing with IMP) from the 1998 conference (Vol. 28, Issue 5), including ten of the papers presented in Turku. In the editorial, Kristian Möller and Aino Halinen grouped the papers into three interrelated sets. The first set addressed issues related to “network operations and their management”. Papers in this group dealt with generating value in business relationships, learning in networks and the determinants of network competence, i.e. “the skills and qualifications that a firm must master to manage relationships effectively”. The papers in the second set examined how “resources are created and managed in buyer and supplier relationships”. These papers were concerned with adaptations in business relationships, the role of interfaces with suppliers for the productivity and innovation in relationships and the effects of customer partnering for new product development. The third set focused on “the organizational and implementation aspects of managing business relationships”. The three papers in this group illustrated various aspects of management of customer relationships: the need for internal coordination in the supplier firm, the functions of a “relationship promoter” and the role of teams and team design in these processes.

Business relationships continued to be the main research theme, accounting for one third of all papers at the conference (Table 6.2).

<i>Number of papers</i>	<i>Themes</i>
+ 30	Business relationships
7-12	Internationalization Networks Customer side focus Supplier side focus Overviews/frameworks/conceptual
4-6	Technology/innovation Strategy Research methods Services Knowledge exchange and learning

Table 6.2 Themes and number of papers at the 1998 conference

Internationalization and networks also kept their positions as major IMP themes. At this conference, issues related to the customer side of the firm received significant attention, including papers dealing with project marketing, system selling and distribution systems. In a similar vein, the supplier side and purchasing issues were the subjects of several papers. As will be shown later, both the customer and the supplier side came to account for substantial numbers of cited publications in the period following the Turku conference. Furthermore, two other themes in Table 6.2 showed later to be significant regarding number of publications, as well as citations: research methods and knowledge exchange/learning.

When it comes to research groups, the domestic ones from Helsinki and Turku accounted for most papers. Moreover, Oulu University contributed with three papers from a newly established research group. The founding research groups at Uppsala, Bath, Manchester and Lyon continued to be well represented, as was Stockholm School of Economics. The research groups that entered with cited publications in period 1 participated also with papers at the

Turku conference: Lancaster, Chalmers, Karlsruhe and Sydney. The US representatives at Penn State and Georgia State also delivered papers at the conference. So did also some research groups that became more established in the period 1999-2012: Copenhagen Business School, Erasmus in Rotterdam, NTNU in Trondheim and Corvinus in Budapest (Table 6.3).

<i>Number of papers</i>	<i>Research groups</i>
8-10	Helsinki Turku
4-6	Bath Manchester Uppsala Lyon Trondheim
2-3	Oulu Lancaster Karlsruhe Stockholm School of Economics Chalmers Sydney Erasmus Copenhagen Corvinus
1	Among others: Penn State, Georgia State

Table 6.3 Number of papers by research groups at the 1998 conference

7. Period 2: The development 1999-2013

7.1 Activities

The most important collective effort in this period was probably the establishment of the IMP Journal. The first issue was launched in February 2006. Three issues have been published per year with a total amount of 100 papers in the first eight years. From 1 January 2015 the journal was taken over by Emerald. In order to stimulate contributions to the journal, a new activity was introduced in the form of IMP Journal Seminars. The first one was organised in Oslo 2005 and the second in Gothenburg the year after. In addition to the collective effort of stimulating submissions to the IMP Journal, these seminars provided practice and training in formulating and interpreting reviews. Each of the seminars involved specific themes. In total, ten seminars have been organized in Oslo, Gothenburg (2 times), Trondheim, Lancaster, Padova, Lugano, Uppsala, Marseille and Milan through to 2013.

The IMP webpage was also launched in the second period. Among other things, doctoral dissertations and conference papers can be downloaded from the site. More than 2700 papers are available covering most of the conferences. The papers from the remaining conferences (1984-1999) are located in the library of Manchester Business School.

In the second period there have been several attempts to conduct collective research, but no one has succeeded in organising a major joint data collection effort. One of these attempts, involving researchers from Sweden, Norway, Holland and Italy, took the starting point in the furniture industry, focusing on the role of resource interfaces (Baraldi & Bocconcelli, 2001). However, there have been a number of substantial national studies with distinct influence on later publications. One was focused on the interplay between science, technological development and industry, undertaken in Uppsala and reported in Håkansson & Waluszewski (2007). Two others were conducted in Norway. One of them applied a network perspective on logistics with particular focus on resources (Jahre et al., 2006). Another one investigated the business network for the global fishing industry (Olsen, 2012). Finally, a major study in Finland paved the way for the development of a framework for analysis of strategic nets (Möller et al., 2005).

After Turku in 1998, 13 conferences followed between 1999 and 2011 distributed across Europe (Table 7.1). The average number of papers per conference in this second period amounted to 164 (compared with 66 in the first period).

<i>Year</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Number of papers</i>
1999	Dublin	215
2000	Bath	111
2001	Oslo	143
2002	Dijon	126
2003	Lugano	168
2004	Copenhagen	130
2005	Rotterdam	130
2006	Milan	207
2007	Manchester	158
2008	Uppsala	165
2009	Marseille	167
2010	Budapest	219
2011	Glasgow	195

Table 7.1 IMP Conferences 1999-2011.

Besides the annual IMP conferences, some related international conferences and workshops have been organized. One example concerns the “Nordic Workshop on Relationship Dynamics” with a centre in Finland that has been organized nine times. Another example is the “IMP Asia conference” with its centre in Australia, organized seven times.

7.2 Resources

The numbers of publications produced during Period 2 that had been cited more than 100 times in 2013 were about the same as in Period 1 – 105 to be compared with 101. However, in reality the numbers of citations have increased substantially. What needs to be taken into account is that it takes some years before a publication has reached the level of 100 citations. On average the time period when the publications from Period 2 have been available for citing is 15 years shorter than for those in Period 1. Similarly, the figures for highly cited papers are lower than in Period 1, due to the shorter life time of the publications. From this

period there is only one publication that reached the level of 1,000 citations. The ten most cited publications in the second period are listed in Table 7.2.

Publications cited more than 1000 times

Dubois, A. and Gadde, L-E: Systematic combining. An abductive approach to case research. *Journal of Business Research*. 2002.

Publications cited more than 500 times

Håkansson, H. and Ford, D: How should companies interact in business relationships. *Journal of Business Research*. 2002

Walter, A., Ritter, T. and Gemunden, H-G.: Value creation in buyer-seller relationships. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 2001.

Gadde, L-E. and Håkansson, H.: *Supply Network Strategy*. Wiley, 2001.

Publications cited more than 400 times

Möller, K. and Halinen, A.: Business relationships and networks: managerial challenge of network era. *Industrial Marketing Management*. 1999.

Holm, D., Eriksson, K. and Johanson, J.: Creating value through mutual commitment to business network relationships. *Strategic Management Journal*. 1999.

Ritter, T. and Gemunden, H-G.: Network competence, its impact on innovation success and its antecedents. *Journal of Business Research*. 2003.

Sharma, D. and Blomstermo, A.: The internationalization process of born globals: a network view. *International Business Review*. 2003.

Halinen, A. and Törnroos, J-Å.: Using case methods in the study of contemporary business networks. *Journal of Business Research*. 2005.

Easterby-Smith, M. and Araujo, L.: Organizational learning: Current debates and opportunities. In M, Easterby-Smith, J. Burgoyne, and L. Araujo (eds.) *Organizational learning and the learning organization*. Sage. 1999.

Table 7.2 Top-cited publications 1999-2013

In this period, eight out of the ten most cited publications appeared in journals. One possible explanation is that the basic frameworks had been presented in books published in the previous periods. Moreover, the IMP Network Book (Håkansson et al.: Business in networks) was published in 2009 and had not yet reached the top list of citations. The highly cited papers appeared mainly in *Journal of Business Research* (4) and *Industrial Marketing Management* (3). In several cases they were part of special issues.

The paper by Dubois & Gadde (2002) is an attempt to examine methodological challenges in case research that are not addressed in mainstream textbooks on research methodology. The approach labelled systematic combining, involves the interplay of two simultaneous processes; one dealing with the matching between business reality and theoretical models and concepts, the other with the direction and redirection of a study through the adjustments of the framework and the empirical case that evolves during the process. The paper also suggests alternative ways to evaluate research quality.

The total picture of scientific resources made available in period 2 is illustrated by Table 7.3 presenting publications cited more than 100 times.

<i>Number of citations</i>	<i>Number of publications</i>
1000 -	1
500 - 1000	3
200 - 500	42
100 - 200	59
TOTAL	105

Table 7.3 The number of citations and publications 1999-2013

Also for this period we investigated the distribution of authorship in the publications cited more than 100 times. The statistics are presented in Table 7.4, including also a comparison with the first period.

<i>Authorship</i>	<i>Proportion</i>	<i>Period 1</i>
Single-authored	10%	34%
Two authors	52%	53%
Three or more authors	38%	13%

Table 7.4 Authorship of the publications in Period 2 with 100 citations in 2013.

These figures indicate substantial changes. The proportion of papers written by two authors is about the same in both time periods. The proportion of single-authored papers decreased by about two thirds, while the papers with three authors or more increased by about two thirds.

Regarding the themes of the cited publications, business relationships kept the position as the most common theme also in this period (Table 7.5).

<i>Number of publications</i>	<i>Theme</i>
More than 20	Business relationships
Between 10 and 15	Networks
	Customer side focus
	Supplier side focus
	Knowledge exchange and learning
Between 7 and 10	Research methods
	Value creation
	Internationalization
Between 1 and 5	Technology and innovation
	Strategy
	Services
	Supply chain management
	Accounting
	Network pictures

Table 7.5 The themes of the publications in Period 2

Networks together with the papers focusing on the supplier and customer sides ranked highly as they did both in Period 1 and at the Turku conference, while internationalisation accounted for fewer publications than previously. Knowledge exchange/learning and research methods had become more significant than before. Of the new themes, value creation showed a

particularly significant impact when it comes to citations. The three other emerging themes can be expected to become increasingly important in the future: network pictures, accounting and supply chain management.

7.3 Actors

In this period substantial changes occurred regarding the citation impact of the various research groups. The dominant position of Uppsala was broken, because several of the highly cited researchers had moved to chairs at other universities. The three research groups accounting for most of the cited publications were now BI in Oslo, Chalmers in Gothenburg and Copenhagen Business School (Table 7.6).

<i>Number of publications</i>	<i>Research groups</i>
More than 13	BI Norwegian Business School Chalmers Copenhagen Business School
Between 9 and 11	Uppsala Bath Lancaster Helsinki
Between 5 and 7	Manchester Stockholm Sydney Turkku Erasmus-Rotterdam
Between 1 and 3	Lugano Lyon Penn State Georgia State Karlsruhe Trondheim Oulu

Table 7.6 Cited publications by research groups in Period 2.

All research groups with cited publications in period 1 were represented also in period 2. There is thus a core of universities with research groups that continuously contribute with publications that become highly cited. Trondheim and Oulu that presented several papers at the Turku conference now appear on the list of cited papers. Other newcomers on the list are Copenhagen, Rotterdam and Lugano. In all three cases these advances were due to established researchers moving to these universities.

Also for this period we were interested in analyzing the co-authorships between research groups. Here we used the publications cited more than 100 times and investigated which of them were co-authored by representatives of different research groups (Figure 7.1)

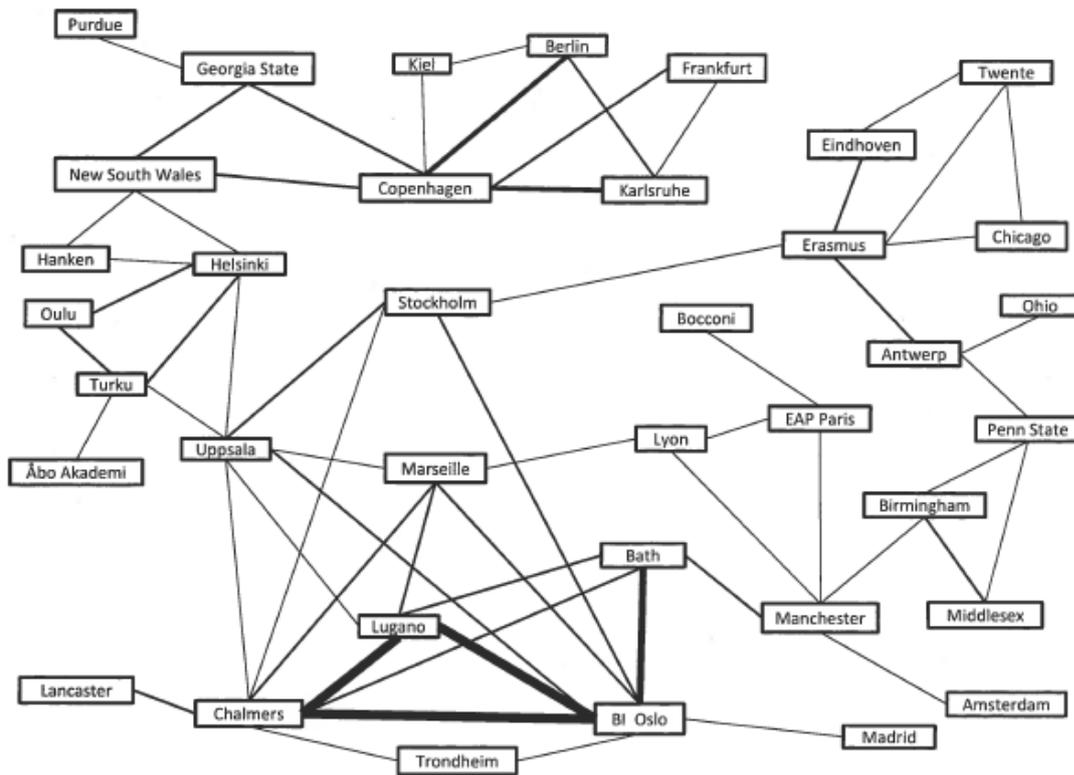


Figure 7.1 Co-authorships across research groups in Period 2



Figure 7.1 indicates a substantial expansion of co-authorships in comparison with period 1. In period 2, the research groups presented 151 joint publications, compared with 41 in the first period. The authors represented 37 research groups from 14 countries and in this network no parts are unconnected. The most significant collaborative efforts when it comes to joint publications occur between BI, Chalmers, Lugano, Bath and Marseille. Uppsala is connected to the five and constitutes a significant link to Helsinki and the other Finnish research groups that are now connected. Helsinki, in turn, is an important connection to the University of South Wales which is linked to Georgia State and Copenhagen Business School. The Copenhagen group is strongly connected to German universities, in particular Berlin. Stockholm School of Economics is also linked with the group of the five at the bottom of the figure and provides the connection to researchers in Holland and Belgium through Erasmus. This cluster is related to Penn State which in turn connects with Birmingham. Birmingham provides a link to Manchester and Lyon, which are both related to the 'big five' through co-authorships with Bath and Marseille.

Another aspect of the actor dimension concerns the dissertations presented by the research groups. The number of dissertations traced by us increased from 57 in Period 1 to 92 in this period. Uppsala continued to be main producer of doctoral dissertations, closely followed by BI, Lancaster and Chalmers. Stockholm School of Economics and Karlsruhe did not appear on the list for the this period, mainly because of faculty changes. Copenhagen and Western Sydney entered the list which reflects the presence of these universities at the Turku conference. The other universities appeared on the list also in Period 1 which accentuates the

significance of the core groups. Table 7.7 shows the research groups with more than three dissertations.

<i>Number of dissertations</i>	<i>Research group</i>
More than 10	Uppsala
Between 7 and 9	BI Lancaster
4-5	Chalmers Manchester Copenhagen Trondheim
3	Bath Western Sydney Turku Åbo Akademi

Table 7.7 Number of dissertations by research groups

8. The 28th IMP Conference in Rome 2012

At the Rome conference, 161 papers were presented, implying an increase with 50% compared to the Turku conference. 24 countries delivered papers which represented a 25% increase. Table 8.1 presents the statistics regarding countries with most papers.

<i>Number of papers</i>	<i>Countries</i>
More than 25 papers	Finland Sweden UK
More than 15 papers	France Italy Norway
More than 4 papers	Germany Australia Hungary Portugal Ireland

Table 8.1 Countries represented with most papers at the 2012 conference

Finland was the country contributing with most papers, closely followed by Sweden and UK. As always the hosting country was well represented, so Italy was the fifth country when it comes to numbers of papers. France and Norway substantially increased their participation in comparison with the Turku conference. The three top countries continued to account for a substantial proportion of the papers (48%). Together with the contributions from France, Italy and Norway they covered 73% of the total number of papers.

IMM's special issue from this conference (Volume 42, Issue 7) included 16 papers. The editorial team³ categorized these publications into five groups. The first contained papers dealing with "network structure and its dynamics". These papers dealt with competition in business networks, initial relationship development in new ventures, strategizing in new ventures and features of a service network. The second group involved issues related to "understanding interaction". The papers in this group were concerned with the role of contracts, managing in conflict, and assessing and reinforcing internal alignment of new marketing units. The third group was labeled "Actors: Identity and role" and included papers dealing with actor identity in networks, how salespeople facilitate buyers' resource availability and the changing role of middlemen in distribution networks. The fourth group contained papers on "solutions and value creation". These contributions were concerned with value co-creation, development and implementation of customer solutions and the transition from products to solutions. The fifth and final group involved papers on "business behavior in networks". The three papers in this group dealt with enablers and inhibitors of network capability, analysis of organizational networking behavior and joint learning in R&D collaboration.

The themes of the papers at the conference are presented in Table 8.2.

<i>Number of papers</i>	<i>Theme</i>
More than 60	Networks
Between 30 and 40	Business relationships
Between 20 and 30	Technology and innovation
Between 10 and 20	Customer side focus Supplier side focus
Between 7 and 10	Services
Between 3 and 6	Internationalization Strategy Key account management Market making Supply chain management Network pictures Research methods

Table 8.2 Themes of the papers at the 2012 conference

Business continued to be a strong theme, but the top position was now overtaken by 'networks' that was the main theme in around one third of the papers presented. Technology and innovation considerably improved its position, while customer and supply side, as well as services, were well represented among the themes. The observation from the publications in Period 2 that supply chain management, accounting and network pictures were receiving increasing interest was confirmed by their representation at the conference. Internationalization, strategy and research methods were still on the list, while market making appeared as a new theme.

³ Chiara Cantù, Daniela Corsaro, Renato Fiocca and Annalisa Tunisini.

The representation of research groups at the conference is illustrated in Table 8.3. Here we included research groups that have not been so visible previously. Since they participated with several papers at the conference they might become more influential in the future.

<i>Number of papers</i>	<i>Research group</i>
More than 9	Manchester BI Helsinki Chalmers
Between 5 and 7	Oulu Lappenranta Lancaster Lyon Cattolica
3-4	Uppsala Stockholm Turku Trondheim Porto Glasgow Tampere Firenze Corvinus Marseille Bordeaux Vasa MidSweden Linköping Jönköping
1-2	Among others Sydney, Perth, Copenhagen, Georgia State, Bath

Table 8.3 Number of papers by research groups at the 2012 conference

In comparison with the Turku conference, Helsinki was again among the top paper deliverers. Manchester had doubled their paper representation and even greater increases were shown by BI and Chalmers. Among the research groups from Finland, Oulu continued to manifest strong presence. Lappenranta, Tampere and Vasa appeared much stronger than in 1998, while Turku had less representation than when they organised the conference. From Italy, Cattolica and Firenze contributed with most papers.

Some research groups showed clearly lower representation than in 1998. The most prominent example was Bath, but similar tendencies were observed for Karlsruhe and Penn State. In all three cases the reason was that senior researchers had left the universities. Most other research groups in Table 8.3 had kept their positions as their figures are quite comparable between 1998 and 2012.

Compared to the citations in the period between 1998 and 2012, Helsinki, BI, Chalmers and Lancaster seemed to present adequate numbers of papers at the conference with potential to

maintain their strong positions. Manchester, Lyon and Oulu can be predicted to improve their positions, considering their conference representation. Of great interest will be to observe what will happen with publications and citations from the “new” research groups in Finland and Italy, as well as with Bordeaux and Marseille in France. Being the organizer of a previous IMP conference seems to have stimulated participation from research groups from Glasgow and Budapest. It seems more difficult for Bath to keep its position in the near future since this research group has been reduced substantially, indicated by the fact that only one paper was presented at the conference.

9. Concluding discussion: Development of an IMP Research Network

The description of the development of IMP in the activity, resource and actor dimensions provides a distinct conclusion: IMP has evolved into quite a developed network around common research themes, of which business relationships and business networks are the most significant. A number of research actors have evolved; some for limited time periods, others over several decades. Moreover, research groups have expanded over time and new researchers have advanced within these groups. A substantial set of resources in terms of books and articles have been produced as well as used. Research activities such as conferences, seminars, joint projects and the establishment of an own dedicated journal have been identified.

The study shows that IMP research activities at various universities and business schools have become increasingly interlinked through joint research programs, annual conferences and the launch of a specialized journal. The resources dedicated to these research issues central to IMP have successively become greater in terms of researchers and publications. The number of individuals has increased and research groups have been able to raise additional resources to enable enlargement. Furthermore, the relationships between these research groups have evolved and become stronger through joint arrangements and shared resources.

The illustration of the development of the IMP group is certainly interesting and thought-provoking for those that have been involved. But the description of this process is also of general relevance as a representative example of how research ideas can develop and become established in terms of a distinct research network.

The development of a quite substantive IMP network gives some important effects both on the collective level as well as for individual researcher. If we start with the individual researcher we can use earlier network studies to identify some of the positive and negative effects. Three network paradoxes have earlier been identified (Håkansson & Ford 2002). Transformation of these paradoxes from the situation of a company to the situation of a research actor leads to the following three paradoxes.

- 1) A research network is the basis of a research actor's operations, growth and development. But the same network also restricts the freedom of the researcher and may become a cage that imprisons the actor.

- 2) The relationships of a research actor are to some extent the outcome of its own actions. But the researcher is also outcome of these relationships and what has happened in them.
- 3) A research actor aims at influencing (and sometimes controlling parts of) the research network. But the more the actor achieves this ambition to control, the less effective and innovative the network will become.

The first paradox illustrates the situation of a young researcher starting a project in one of the central research groups within the IMP network. The existing network provides lots of ideas and possibilities, but also some obvious limitations. The contemporary network of activities, resources and established research actors creates a very fruitful environment with plenty of new ideas and opportunities for research. But this environment tends to drive research in certain directions because of established, within-group, ways to formulate and frame research problems. These conditions are not specific to IMP, but a feature of all research traditions. Availability of dedicated journals and other joint publications as well as the use of the peer review system are important ingredients in creating this double effect. There are always some openings that are much easier and more favourable to research than others, given the contemporary network. This network will also provide established researchers with secure positions and better opportunities to attract external funding.

The second paradox concerns what the research actor needs to do in order to develop. The researcher will benefit from relationships with specific partners. In these processes the actor will try to affect the research partners in ways that are favourable to its own ideas and research activities. But the research partners have the same ambitions, implying that the research actor will be affected by them. Therefore, to be able to become involved in the network and affect others, the actor must accept to become affected by them. Attempts to affect from the outside will not be successful in general; such actors will be perceived as outsiders.

Finally, network evolution is outcome of joint actions of network actors. It is the total ambition by all involved actors that drives the development. Therefore, research actors need to try to influence and control the network. But if one actor becomes too dominant, the development force of the network will weaken. Thus, ambitious actors trying to become influential are needed, but if they are too successful, problems will arise. Well-functioning networks require several centres – they are multipolar.

The three paradoxes together provide an interesting illustration of positive and negative aspects of network dynamics. The network certainly facilitates the research operations of the single researcher who can build on the existing activities, resources and actors. At the same time the network constraints and limits what the single researcher can do. The network promotes opportunities, but these opportunities are attained within the border of a certain frame.

In a second step we can discuss what role such a substantive research network has in relation to the broader scientific landscape. It certainly gives a picture of how the basic ideas have

been embedded into the larger landscape in terms such as stability, identity and variety in the interfaces. Researchers belonging to other research networks can see and relate to it. The existence of this network can be an important explanation to the stability that Wuehrer & Smejkal (2013) in their study could see in terms of research theme. The network gives both stability and continuity. It becomes a base but also an important reference point both for those working inside as well as outside the network. But as it works as a network also gives large opportunities for variations. There will be a large number of very different interfaces to other research networks. There will be many opportunities to develop the interfaces – to combine the basic ideas with a large number of complementary ideas and concepts.

In summary, the process of emergence of a ‘research network’ described in this paper illustrates some features that are very similar to those found in studies of business networks. The ‘network’ is an outcome of a networking process where several actors, individually and through research groups, interacting and jointly creating the basic structure that remains fluid. The structure and the process are typical from a network point of view since they include some actors that have been involved the entire period, while others have joined over time; some for becoming very stable actors, while others came and left.

IMP has been instrumental in building up an impressive empirical base about business relationships in different contexts and with different functions or roles. This empirical base is not complete – there are still new contexts to investigate. But the base is already so extensive that it demands further theoretical conceptualizations and model constructions in order to explain in a more comprehensive way the features and dynamics of business landscape. Therefore, the empirical base forces the IMP community to continue the research focused on inter-organizational economic relationships to explore potential theoretical implications.

The future IMP research opportunities reside in continuous combining and recombining of basic empirical phenomena, such as business relationships and network structures, with empirical fields such as internationalization, innovation, learning and value generation, in order to identify managerial and policy implications. Such combining efforts require additional empirical studies, preferably in international settings, as well as development of theoretical constructs and new theoretical frames.

In these efforts, IMP researchers should consider the network paradoxes discussed above. Firstly, they should rely on established research networks, but be open for innovative reconsidering of some of the basic cornerstones. As shown in the description of the Rome conference, several new research phenomena were introduced, such as value creation, key account management and market making, all with their particular requirements for conceptualization and modelling. Secondly, researchers should do their best in trying to affect the research partners in favourable directions, but also accept to be affected by their ambitions. The analysis of authorships across research groups showed a substantial increase between Period 1 and Period 2. These joint activities are likely to foster such acceptance in true network spirit.

Thirdly, researchers should strive for influence and control of the network, but at the same time ensure that no one is allowed to dominate the network. Considering the roots in the first IMP project it is quite natural that representatives of these research groups have had a strong impact on the development of IMP. However, the analysis of joint publications showed that several new constellations became established in Period 2. In the current Period 3 it is most likely that many of these connections between research groups, illustrated in Figure 7.1, will be marked by even ‘thicker’ lines than in Period 2. Moreover, at the Rome conference, several ‘new’ research groups entered the IMP arena with considerable numbers of papers. Hopefully these newcomers will contribute to the establishment of additional IMP centres.

Appendix 1: Publications discussing the development of IMP

- Backhaus, K., Lugger, K. and Koch, M. (2011) The structure and evolution of business-to-business marketing: A citation and co-citation analysis. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 40, 940-951.
- Baraldi, E. and Bocconcelli, R. (2001) The quantitative journey in a qualitative landscape: developing a data collection model and a quantitative methodology in business network studies. *Management Decision* 39(7), 564-577.
- Barth, P. (2008) The history and the development of the IMP Group reasoning: A bibliometric approach. Doctoral dissertation. Johannes Kepler Universität, Linz.
- Cantù, C., Corsaro, D., Fiocca, R. and Tunisini, A. (2013) IMP studies: A bridge between tradition and innovation, 42(7), 1007-1016.
- Cova, B. and Salle, R. (2003) When IMP-Don Quixote tilts his lance against the Kotlerian Windmills: BtoB marketing deeply changed during the last 25 years. IMP Conference 2003
- Cova, B., Ford, D. and Salle, R. (2009) Academic brands and their impact on scientific endeavor: The case of business market research and researchers. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 38, 570-576
- Cova, B., Pardo, C., Salle, R. and Spencer, R. (2014) Coping with recurring issues in BtoB research: The Sisyphus effect? Or a “rolling stone” syndrome? *IMP Journal*, 8(3), 101-106.

- Cova, B., Pardo, C., Salle, R. and Spencer, R. (2015) Normal vs spectacular science: The IMP Group and BtoB marketing. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 49, 80-83
- Cunningham, M. (2008) Pictures at an exhibition of business markets: Is there a case for competition? *IMP Journal*, 2(1), 46-57.
- Engvall, L., Pahlberg, C. and Persson, O. (2016) The emergence of the business network approach. In P. Thilenius, C. Pahlberg and V. Havila (Eds.) *Extending the business network approach – New territories, new technologies, new terms*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Easton, G., Zolkiewski, J. and Bettany, S. (2003) Mapping industrial marketing knowledge: a study of an IMP conference. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 18(6/7), 529-544
- Ford, D. (2004) The IMP Group and international marketing. *International Marketing Review*, 21(2), 139-141.
- Ford, D. (2011) IMP and service-dominant logic. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 40, 231-239
- Ford, D. and Håkansson, H. (2006) IMP – some things achieved: much more to do. *European Journal of Marketing*, 40(3/4), 248-258
- Ford, D. and Håkansson, H. (2006) The idea of interaction. *IMP Journal*, 1(1), 4-27
- Gebert-Persson, S., Mattsson, L-G, Öberg, C. (2014) The network approach – a theoretical discussion. Proceedings of the IMP Conference 2014, Atlanta.
- Gemunden, H-G (1997) The development of IMP – an analysis of the conference proceedings 1984-1996. In H-G Gemunden, T. Ritter and A. Walter (Eds.) *Relationships and networks in international markets*. Pergamon/Elsevier, Oxford, pp. 3-12.
- Håkansson, H. and Snehota, I. (2000) The IMP Perspective: Assets and Liabilities of Business relationships. In Sheth, J.N. and Parvatiyar, A. (Eds.) *Handbook of Relationship Marketing*. Sage, Thousands Oak, pp. 69-94.
- Håkansson, H. and Waluszewski, A. (Eds.) (2007) *Knowledge and innovation in business and industry. The importance of using others*. Routledge, London.
- Harrison, D. (2003) IMP as fashion: Past, present and future. IMP Conference 2004
- Henneberg, S., Jiang, Z. and Naudé, P. (2007) The network researchers' network. A social analysis of the IMP Group 1984-2006. IMP Conference 2007
- Hunt, S. (2013) A general theory of business marketing: R-A theory, Alderson, the ISBM framework and the IMP theoretical structure. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 42, 283-293.
- Jahre, M., Gadde, L-E, Håkansson, H., Harrison, D. and Persson, G. (2006) *Resourcing in business logistics*. Liber and Copenhagen Business School Press, Malmö.
- Johanson, J. and Mattsson, L-G. (1987) Interorganizational relations in industrial systems – a network approach compared with the transaction-cost approach. *International Studies of Management and Organization*, 17(1), 34-48.
- Lowe, S. (2001) The ideational dynamics of cultural interaction and actor bonds. IMP Conference 2001.
- Mattsson, L-G (1997) Relationship marketing and the “markets-as-networks approach” – A comparative analysis of two evolving streams of research. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 13(5), 447-461.
- Mattsson, L-G and Johanson, J. (2006) Discovering market networks. *European Journal of Marketing*, 40 (3/4), 259-274

- McLoughlin, D. and Horan, C. (2002) Markets-as-networks: notes on a unique understanding. *Journal of Business Research*, 55, 535-543.
- Möller, K. (2013) Theory map of business marketing: Relationships and networks perspectives. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 42, 324-335.
- Möller, K. and Halinen, A. (1999) Business relationships and networks: managerial challenge of a network area. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 28(5), 413-427.
- Möller, K., Rajala, A. and Svahn, S. (2005) Strategic business nets—their type and management. *Journal of Business Research*, 58(9), 1274-1284.
- Morlacchi, P., Wilkinson, I., Young, L. (2005) Social networks of researchers in B2B marketing: a case study of the IMP Group 1984-1999. *Journal of Business-to-Business Marketing*, 12 (1), 3-34.
- Olsen, P-I (2012) Below the surface: How (seafood-)networks work – and how they change. *IMP Journal*, 6(3), 186-193.
- Olsen, P-I (2013) IMP theory in light of process- and system theories. *IMP Journal*, 7(3), 159-170.
- Turnbull, P., Ford, D. and Cunningham, M. (1996) Interaction, relationships and networks in business markets: an evolving perspective. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 11(3/4), 44-62.
- Vieira, F. and Brito, C. (2015) Science mapping in industrial marketing. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 30(1), 105-115
- Wilkinson, I. (2002) A history of network and channels thinking in marketing in the 20th century. *Australasian Journal of Marketing*, 9 (2), 23-53
- Windishhofer, R., Järvelin, A-M and Mittilä, T. (2004) A review of IMP Conferences 1998 and 2003 with special focus on dynamics. IMP Conference 2004
- Wuehrer, G. and Smejkal, E. (2013) Diversity in homogeneity – a longitudinal bibliometric review of Industrial Marketing and Purchasing (IMP) Group Conferences from 1984 to 2012. *IMP Journal*, 7(3), 140-158.
- Young, L. (2002) Whither IMP? Or is it wither IMP? A commentary on the plenary session of the 18th IMP Conference. *Journal of Customer Behaviour*, 1(3), 309-316.

Appendix 2: Papers presented at the first IMP conference

- Arnaud, J.M., Salle, R., Valla, J-P., The components of the complexity of international supplier-customer relationships, Groupe Ecole Superieure de Commerce de Lyon (themes: relationships features, technology, internationalisation, interorganizational complexity, interpersonal contacts)
- Axelsson, B., Håkansson, H., The development role of purchasing in an internationally oriented company, University of Uppsala and Stockholm School of Economics (themes: purchasing, development, rationalization, network role, networks of suppliers)
- Barrett, N., Wilkinson, I., Internationalisation behaviour: Management characteristics of Australian manufacturing firms by level of international development. The New South Wales Institute of Technology and University of New South Wales (Themes: Internationalization, managers' features and activities)
- Bradley, F., Developing communications strategies for foreign market entry, University College Dublin (themes: communication, countries, attitudes, industrial buyers)
- Campbell, N., The structure and stability of industrial market networks: Developing a research methodology, Manchester Business School (themes: business relationships, features, networks of relationships, countries, technologies)
- Cunningham, M.T., Contemporary issues in international marketing, University of Manchester (themes: business relationships, interaction, technology, strategy, internationalisation, portfolio of customers)
- Dorey, F., Valla, J-P., The mulistrat model. A new framework for industrial marketing strategies, Groupe Ecole Superieure de Commerce de Lyon. (Themes: Buying centre, interaction, business relationships, technologies, marketing mix)
- Gadde, L-E., Changing distribution strategy on foreign markets, Stockholm School of Economics (themes: international distribution, communication, change process, coordination, control, MNC)
- Hallen, L., Johanson, J., Dimensions of customer relationships of Swedish and British industrial suppliers, University of Uppsala (themes, business relationships, information exchange, technical complexity, interfirm dependence)
- Johanson, J., Wootz, B., A framework for the study of market investment processes, University of Uppsala, (Themes: interaction, business relationships, investments, country markets)
- Johnston, W., McQuiston, D., Buyer-seller interactions in an advanced-technology industry, Ohio State University, (buying centre, selling centre, transactions, interactions, buyer-seller relationships, technology)
- Lancaster, G., Wells' product life cycle theory for international trade revisited, Huddersfield Polytechnic (themes: product life cycle, international trade, textile production)
- Paliwoda, S., Thompson, P., Industrial product classification and market behaviour: a study in the French packaging market, University of Manchester (Themes: relationships, legal, technical, social, time, knowledge)
- Reid, S., Migration, cultural distance and international market expansion, University of New Brunswick (themes: cultural distance, cognitive property, ethnic groups, export policy)

- Suzuki, N., Japanese catch-up effort of market research skills with US: But for whom?
University of Illinois (Themes, market research, international comparison, research techniques)
- Tesar, G., An audit of the international robot industry and its impact on product development.
University of Wisconsin (Themes: technology, international production, product development)
- Thomas, M., Araujo, L., An assessment of theories of export behaviour, University of Lancaster (themes: internationalization, export behaviour, innovation adoption behaviour)
- Turnbull, P., Ellwood, S., Tri-partite interaction: The role of sales subsidiaries in international marketing, Manchester University (Themes: interaction, business relationships, tri-partite interaction, sales subsidiary, internationalization)
- Wilson, D., Ghoneim, A., Transferring organizational buying theory across cultural boundaries, Penn State University (Themes: organizational buying models, international comparison)
- Yorke, D., An interaction approach to the management of a portfolio of customer opportunities, University of Manchester (Themes: Interaction, business relationships, portfolio of relationships)