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Håkan Håkansson<sup>1</sup>

Alexandra Waluszewski<sup>2</sup>

## “Methodomania”?

### On the theoretical and methodological challenges of (IMP) business research.

Håkan Håkansson<sup>3</sup>

Alexandra Waluszewski<sup>4</sup>

#### Abstract

In the wake of mass education and the growing number of PhD programs in social science and humanities – with business studies as one of the most expanding – methodology has lost its traditional role of being an integrated part of the research handicraft and a consequence of choice of research problem and theoretical point of departure and emerged as an own subject, which by learning could be rationalized through the use of handbooks and manuals. (Gustavsson, 2013; Brady, 2003) The IMP research is not unaffected by the contemporary ‘methodomania’ trend – despite that already in the first joint IMP group publication: Håkansson, ed (1982), the methodology was explicitly explained to be a consequences of the overall research question and how it was approached theoretically.

The aim of this paper is to outline: a) What’s specific with the general object as approached in the IMP setting, and b) what characterizes the theoretical and methodological challenge of IMP research as compared to business research in general? These questions are highlighted through a distinction made by Galison (1987), where he outlines two basic types of research approaches: I) Those based on ‘image’, which allows data in its original form. II) Those based on ‘logic’, which require the translation of original data to some assumed paths. In order to

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<sup>1</sup> Norwegian School of Management, BI, Department of Innovation and Economic Organisation. Email: hakan.hakansson@bi.no

<sup>2</sup> Uppsala University’s Centre for Science & Technology Studies. Email: alexandra.waluszewski@sts.uu.se

<sup>3</sup> Norwegian Business School, BI, Department of Innovation and Economic Organisation. Email: hakan.hakansson@bi.no

<sup>4</sup> Uppsala University’s Centre for Science & Technology Studies. Email: alexandra.waluszewski@sts.uu.se

illustrate what changes in outcome changes in the relation among theory and methodology produces, we will utilize a study presented in Cantillon and Håkansson (2009).

In the concluding discussion we stress that in order to identify how 'logic' based theoretical models impacts on the content and effect of the exchange process, there is a need to be aware of the impact of models in relation to methodologies – in a double sense. Firstly, the researcher have to be aware of the relations among what theoretical and methodological requirements the ambition to investigate a certain research problems address; i.e. of the relation among the theoretical and methodological approach applied by the researcher. Secondly, the researcher have to consider how to catch the blend of models embedded into the investigated exchange; i.e. the models which is more or less consciously embedded into the research object, including how this impact on the content and effect of the exchange.