

News Flash

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Innovation Journalism Gets Academic Research Funding

How does journalism link innovation with the public interest? How do innovation ecosystems engage journalists? These questions are at the heart of a research initiative recently funded by VINNOVA, the Swedish Government Agency for Innovation Systems. The project will set the agenda for an international research workshop scheduled for February 2007 at Stanford University.

The academic research study is led by Professor Marc Ventresca of Oxford University (PI, coordinator) and Dr. David Nordfors at Stanford University and VINNOVA (Program Director), with Dr. Turo Uskali from the University of Jyväskylä, visiting scholar in innovation journalism at Stanford, and Dr. Antti Ainamo at the Helsinki School of Business. The group of researchers standing behind the mission, which includes faculty and expert practitioners from leading U.S. and European universities, convened in April 2006 for a workshop hosted by the Innovation Journalism program run by Stanford and VINNOVA. They recently co-published an essay identifying 'Innovation Journalism' as a useful theme through which to explore the interplay of journalism in innovation ecosystems¹. Nordfors noted, 'While academic work on innovation involving journalism has been done, journalism's role in innovation ecosystems remains to be established as a research theme within the academic community.'

Uskali added: "Few studies have focused on how journalists contribute to the innovation process and how public interests engage innovation.' No distinct 'beat' includes innovation, for example." According to Ainamo: "We want to understand how journalists cover innovation processes and innovation ecosystems, the incentives that drive innovation journalism and how news organizations may be organized to cover the innovation process more effectively."

Ventresca, a strategy professor and cultural sociologist, noted: "Recent studies of innovation and entrepreneurship reveal complex social and institutional ecosystems that shape the way in which inventions become innovations, transforming industry landscapes—indeed entire societies. We know too little about social and political intermediaries of all sorts in processes of technological and social innovation."

VINNOVA will fund a focused literature review of existing studies in strategy and organization studies, entrepreneurship and innovation, in journalism as a profession and the social organization of news media. This project will provide a necessary base for designing relevant research to develop the research agenda around Innovation Journalism and the Role of Journalism in Innovation Ecosystems.

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¹ D. Nordfors, M. Ventresca et.al. 2006. "Innovation Journalism: Towards Research on the Interplay of Journalism in Innovation Ecosystems", *Innovation Journalism* 3(2). <http://www.innovationjournalism.org/archive/INJO-3-2.pdf>