Havstorm’s dissertation focuses on effective use of management techniques in software development organizations, by researching the challenges in succeeding with SDM use. To reach understanding of such challenges, Havstorm develops a theory in this dissertation called SDM cargo cult theory (SDMCCT), to identify, analyze, and describe the cargo cult phenomenon in agile SDM use. The journey of this dissertation takes its starting point in practitioners’ use of buzzwords when referring to flawed SDM use as cargo cult.

The term cargo cult has its origin in the field of social anthropology. It refers to a collective behavior when a group tries to imitate and perform certain rituals to reach the same outcome and success as others without adequately understanding the underlying reasons, i.e., goals and values, behind the actions.

The thesis consists of a longitudinal ethnographic study that took place at an international industrial manufacturing company in Sweden. One of the publications in Havstorm’s dissertation reveals the limited attention that the reasoning of software developers, when adopting and using software development methods, has received in prior research. To complement prior research, the ethnographic study consists of three years of data collection, including observations, interviews, and gathering of business documents. The study focuses on three SD teams and their daily work using agile SDMs.

The dissertation contains analysis, using the analytical framework on four agile SDM practices: daily scrum meetings, sprint demo, continuous integration, and visualization. The analysis uncovered 36 deviations classified as SDM cargo cult situations.

The results of the dissertation contribute to research and practice by proposing a theory called SDMCCT, that can be used to identify cargo cult behavior and to help in succeeding with SDM use.