In the dynamics of science and technology, the spawning grounds of theory and the hatching grounds of application are divided by an ocean of experience and time - and it is across this metaphorical ocean we aim to swim. In reality, products, processes or ideas are the end-results of the vast interplay between individuals, firms, universities and environments. It takes concerted effort to follow and trace these paths, be it at a fine-grained level of two individuals communicating, or a supra-national policy level. In the research that has been produced on knowledge transfer, many questions remain regarding the operationalisation of knowledge transfer. We still do not know what knowledge is transferred, from where and to whom, how exactly the transfer and reception work, and the conditions surrounding the transfer. The research question of this study, ‘What knowledge elements are transferred from academia to industry, how are they transferred, and what factors influence this?’ aims to provide a methodological toolbox to address this.

Key results of this research address the concurrent nature of knowledge transfer, specifically the data employed to measure knowledge transfer, access to resources by actors when creating and disseminating knowledge, and the environment in which knowledge transfer processes occur.

The lines of questioning and research provided in this study are of interest to industry, and this study addresses the value to society in terms of innovation and innovation policy, higher education and science policy.