My background
I have a “hybrid degree” in management and industrial engineering from the Polytechnic University of Milan. After my graduation, I worked at one of the “Big Four” management consultancies, Ernst and Young (EY). I was doing what many management consultants are doing right now: information system integration across several departments of a company or a supply chain. Thus, I played a bridge role between IT and business. This was different from what I knew from my university education, however, it was exciting to learn a lot of new things at a fast pace. The drawback of such a high pace was that I was getting too absorbed by individual tasks and I was not learning or thinking in a bigger and bolder way. I always liked studying and at that point I thought: “Maybe I could give academia a try”. Trying to find a place where I would fit in, I had a type of orientation chat with my former supervisor in Milan. He suggested that I should have a look at the research that Chalmers University was doing. I applied, flew here for an interview and was hired. I dropped everything in Italy and moved to Gothenburg. It was the right choice.

A typical day for me at work
I wish there was such a thing as a typical day! Luckily, some things usually stay the same. First, after I wake up, I have a look at the news of the day, and read the ones that interest
me the most. Since the research that we do in the department has high industrial relevance, it’s good to know what is going on in the field that you’re addressing. In this stage of my career, I am working on my doctoral thesis and my last journal manuscript, so I’m spending most of my time writing. Before this fully-immersive writing time, there used to be several typical office tasks such as answering emails and attending meetings for alignments or exchange of ideas. I wish I would be the type of person who does “first things first” instead of getting lost in emails and minor requests in the morning, but I am getting better at addressing this productivity flaw.

What I wanted to be as a child
When I was a child, I was always undecided about what I wanted to be. I changed my mind almost every week. Because of this, I don’t remember every option that I contemplated, but I do remember wanting to be a psychologist, a journalist and at some point a medical doctor. I ended up becoming an engineer and researcher.

When I was 18, I still didn’t know what type of systems I wanted to improve in the future. The reason why I chose management and industrial engineering was because of the broad spectrum it provided. The degree could have been applied on a manufacturing shop floor, a health care center or a wastewater system. Knowing the tools that are needed in order to improve the performance of a certain system seemed like a good idea to get started with. Engineering is fascinating as a discipline: it allows you to create and test something new or improve what is already existing.

Being an engineer and what area I work in
Engineering entails that you are able to break down a complex problem into different components. It’s a mindset. However, I wouldn’t necessarily say that it’s the best way to approach every problem, but there are fields where this way of thinking is applicable. I am realising now that there are so many other disciplines or competences that are needed when tackling a complex problem. This realisation comes from working in a multidisciplinary field.

I am a member of the production systems division and specialized in sustainability assessments in manufacturing. I evaluate methods to improve energy management in production, methods to assess sustainability impact on new technologies in production. I also looked at the organisational side of sustainability, for example what factors make manufacturing companies prepared to run operations sustainably. My research started in 2014 and it was about energy management in production. Now it has expanded into management and organisational theories, but still with sustainable operations at its core. I am a multidisciplinary researcher in that sense. Since I am exposed to the latest technical developments in my research I started a podcast about digitalisation. It’s called The Digitalk Pod.

Why I chose Chalmers
In truth, I did not know about Chalmers University when I was a university student in Italy. After my masters, I was so focused on getting work experience that I did not contemplate the idea of becoming a PhD student. Even though, as I said, my supervisor suggested that I should have a look at Chalmers work, I had a strong intention not only to experience
academia, but also to work in an international environment. Because of that, Chalmers appeared extremely suitable.

Nevertheless, the transition from Italy to Sweden was not rosy, as I arrived in Gothenburg in January (2014). The PhD program is five-year long, so at least I knew that I would have enough time to get acclimatized to the environment (both physical and professional). The time here has elapsed quickly, as I have almost completed my last year. Living abroad is a fun adventure. I would recommend it to anyone who wants to try a new, challenging experience.

Three words I associate with Chalmers
Applied, Young, Innovative