

**Call for Papers (deadline for 3000 words short paper is 7th Jan. 2025, 23:59 CET)**

## **Responsible Innovation of Digitalization and the Digitalization of Responsible Innovation (Sub-theme 46)**

### **Convenors:**

Andreas Georg Scherer, University of Zurich, Zurich, [andreas.scherer@business.uzh.ch](mailto:andreas.scherer@business.uzh.ch)

Christian Voegtlin, ZHAW, Winterthur, [christian.voegtlin@zhaw.ch](mailto:christian.voegtlin@zhaw.ch)

Olga Hawn, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, [Olga\\_Hawn@kenan-flagler.unc.edu](mailto:Olga_Hawn@kenan-flagler.unc.edu)

### **Description of sub-theme:**

*Digitalization* simultaneously collects, analyses, and manipulates data on social interaction in real time, and significantly influences individual or collective behavior. A lot of creativity goes into new digital technologies and flows out of the use of digital tools resulting in innovations, with positive and negative effects. To date we are part of a ubiquitous societal transformation process that transcends borders and connects more and more people and social spaces via digital information and communication technologies (ICT), such as the Internet, artificial intelligence (AI), big data, machine learning etc. As a result, digitalization fundamentally changes social practices in the private, economic, and public life, and in human interactions with the natural environment. Yet, innovations need to be properly governed to do good to and avoid bad for people and planet (*responsible innovation*). Consequently, we aim to explore the beneficial and detrimental effects of digitalization and its systematic relationships with responsible innovation.

With regard to the negative effects, scholars frequently point to the 'dark sides' of digitalization (Trittin-Ulbrich et al., 2021), analyze fundamental changes in the organization of work (Lindebaum et al., 2022), address the implications of the IT infrastructure for individual freedom and autonomy (Scherer & Neesham, 2023; Scherer et al., 2023), explore violations of privacy rights through the processing of personal data (Martin, 2016), identify an increase in societal division due to fake news, hate speech, and conspiracy theories (Vosoughi et al., 2018), and scrutinize the erosive systemic effects of 'surveillance capitalism' (Zuboff, 2019) on democratic society and the ecosystem.

On the positive side, scholars emphasize the economic and societal benefits of digitalization, big data, and AI, making economic production and coordination more efficient (Varian, 2010, 2014), and fostering innovations in products, processes, and services in a wide range of sectors (Schwab, 2017). Yet, there are also benefits with regards to digital technologies' contributions to sustainable

development by effectively addressing grand challenges such as minimizing greenhouse gases by saving energy with intelligent tools (George et al., 2021), curing diseases with digital technologies (Musk & Neuralink, 2019), preventing starvation by better coordination of food production and distribution (Tzachor et al., 2022), or improving business decisions and sanctioning corporate irresponsibility based on information reported on digital media and (financial) news channels (Hawn, 2021).

This suggests digitalization per se is neither positive or negative for people and planet, rather digital technologies, their application and the effects depend on context, purpose and the way the development and application of new technologies are governed. Obviously, the *governance* of digitalization and ICT is not a trivial task. Digital technology is a means for accomplishing predefined ends. Yet, technology's ends in capitalist societies are not collectively agreed upon but are determined by 'free' entrepreneurs or managers, restricted only by legal rules and market forces. Any new technology has potential side effects that are difficult to calculate and anticipate, so that there are risks that even a tool explicitly directed at avoiding harm and doing good for people and planet may turn out to result in the opposite effect and produce negative externalities. Consequently, acknowledging its ambiguous role in peoples' life, the digital transformation itself has been identified as a grand societal challenge (see George et al., 2016).

In the past few years responsible innovation has become the primary framework in practice and academia for governing and evaluating innovations with regard to their potential harmful or beneficial consequences for sustainable development (Owen et al., 2013; Stilgoe et al., 2013; Voegtlin et al., 2022). Voegtlin and Scherer (2017) suggest that responsible innovation consists of three types of responsibility: (1) the responsibility to do no harm (Lee and Petts, 2013), (2) the responsibility to do good (Stahl and Sully de Luque, 2014) and (3) responsible governance (Scherer and Palazzo, 2011), which involves structures and procedures on multiple levels that facilitate innovations realizing (1) and (2) (Buhmann & Fieseler, 2023; Scherer & Voegtlin, 2020).

To date the role of responsible innovation and its interplay with digitalization have not been well understood, both in theoretical and empirical terms, nor are there any ready-made solutions for digital technologies that would facilitate responsible innovations. With this sub-theme, we want to encourage research on responsible innovation and its systematic relationships with digitalization and ICT. The aim is to develop the necessary theoretical and empirical groundwork around responsible innovation and the governance of digitalization: How can we creatively govern digitalization to avoid harm and ideally do good? How can we direct the creativity that goes into digital innovation to make ICT a success story that feeds into responsible innovations for protecting a desirable future for people and

planet? How can we foster digital innovations that are responsible rather than detrimental to society and the environment?

We therefore invite conceptual and empirical submissions drawing on a range of theoretical perspectives and diverse methodologies to shed further light on these issues. The following topic areas highlight exemplary questions and research themes:

- **Theory development:** What theories can help us better understand and explain responsible innovation and its relation to digitalization? What are the drivers, outcomes and boundary conditions of responsible innovation and their relations to digitalization?
- **Empirical research:** How can we measure interrelationships between responsible innovation and digitalization and their impact on sustainable development? What are the conditions that help digitalization contribute to sustainable development?
- **Research across levels-of-analyses:** What facilitates responsible innovation across levels-of-analysis? How does individual behavior, organizational structures or business-society relations contribute to the digitalization of responsible innovation, and vice versa? What role do global governance mechanisms like the UN Global Compact play? What role does state regulation play (e.g., by the EU)?
- **Incorporating recent societal developments:** What are the implications of recent societal developments (e.g., emerging nationalism, fundamentalism, populism, and hate-speech or the post-fact/post-truth era) for the relationship between responsible innovation and digitalization?
- **Digital transformation of business and society:** Under what conditions can responsible innovation contribute to the challenges of a digital society? What are the potential positive and negative implications of digital innovations?
- **Creative forms of innovating:** Under what conditions can new forms of doing business and new forms of innovation (e.g., open innovation, collective innovation, sharing economy, etc.) contribute to solving sustainable development challenges? What is the impact of different (and novel) organizational forms on responsible innovation (e.g., MNCs and SMEs, new corporate ventures, hybrid organizations, state-led firms, purpose driven corporate forms and benefit corporations, etc.)?
- **Incorporating stakeholder concerns:** Strategic decisions and risk management increasingly include cybersecurity and data privacy policies. On the one hand, new regulations impose transparency and accountability in this domain (e.g., GDPR). On the other hand, the rise of digital technologies and social media, data breach, and other digital conduct issues are becoming increasingly salient and impactful. Consequently, research needs to understand: What are the stakeholder concerns, effects and interrelationships in this context and how can they be incorporated in the governance of responsible innovation in a systemic manner?

## References

- Buhmann, A., & Fieseler, C. (2023): 'Deep Learning Meets Deep Democracy: Deliberative Governance and Responsible Innovation in Artificial Intelligence.' *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 33, 146–179.
- George, G., Howard-Grenville, J., Joshi, A., & Tihanyi, L. (2016): 'Understanding and Tackling Societal Grand Challenges Through Management Research.' *Academy of Management Journal*, 59 (6), 1880–1895.
- George, G., Merrill, R. K., & Schillebeeckx, S. J. (2021): 'Digital Sustainability and Entrepreneurship: How Digital Innovations are Helping Tackle Climate Change and Sustainable Development.' *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 45 (5), 999–1027.
- Hawn, O. (2021): 'How Media Coverage of Corporate Social Responsibility and Irresponsibility Influences Cross-border Acquisitions.' *Strategic Management Journal*, 42 (1), 58–83.
- Lee, R. G., & Petts, J. (2013). 'Adaptive Governance for Responsible Innovation.' In: R. Owen, J. Bessant, J., & M. Heintz (eds): *Responsible Innovation: Managing the Responsible Emergence of Science and Innovation in Society*. Sussex: Wiley, 143–164.
- Lindebaum, D., den Hond, F., Greenwood, M., Chamberlain, J. A., & Andersson, L. (2022): 'Freedom, Work and Organizations in the 21st century: Freedom for Whom and for Whose Purpose?' *Human Relations*, 75, 1853–1874.
- Martin, K. (2016): 'Data Aggregators, Consumer Data, and Responsibility Online: Who is Tracking Consumers Online and Should They Stop?' *The Information Society*, 32, 51–63.
- Musk, E., & Neuralink (2019): 'An Integrated Brain-machine Interface Platform with Thousands of Channels.' *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 21(10), e16194.
- Owen, R., Stilgoe, J., Macnaghten, P., Gorman, M., Fisher, E., & Guston, D. (2013): 'A Framework for Responsible Innovation.' In: R. Owen, J., Bessant, & M. Heintz (eds.): *Responsible Innovation: Managing the Responsible Emergence of Science and Innovation in Society*. Sussex: Wiley, 27–50.
- Scherer, A. G., & Palazzo, G. (2011): 'The New Political Role of Business in a Globalized World: A Review of a New Perspective on CSR and its Implications for the Firm, Governance, and Democracy.' *Journal of Management Studies*, 48, 899–931.
- Scherer, A. G., & Voegtlin, C. (2020): 'Corporate Governance for Responsible Innovation: Approaches to Corporate Governance and their Implications for Sustainable Development.' *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 34, 182–208.
- Scherer, A. G., & Neesham, C. (2023): 'Organized Immaturity in a Post-Kantian Perspective: Toward a Critical Theory of Surveillance Capitalism.' *Organization Theory*, 4, 1–25.
- Scherer, A. G., Neesham, C., Schoeneborn, D., & Scholz, M. (2023): 'New Challenges to the Enlightenment: How Twenty-first-century Sociotechnological Systems Facilitate Organized Immaturity and How to Counteract It.' *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 33, 409–439.

- Schwab, K. (2017): *The Fourth Industrial Revolution*. Geneva: World Economic Forum / Penguin Books.
- Stahl, G. K., & Sully de Luque, M. (2014): 'Antecedents of Responsible Leader Behavior: A Research Synthesis, Conceptual Framework, and Agenda for Future Research.' *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 28, 235–254.
- Stilgoe, J., Owen, R., & Macnaghten, P. (2013): 'Developing a Framework for Responsible Innovation.' *Research Policy*, 42, 1568–1580.
- Trittin-Ulbrich, H., Scherer, A. G., Munro, I., & Whelan, G. (2021): 'Exploring the Dark and Unexpected Sides of Digitalization: Toward a Critical Agenda.' *Organization*, 28(1), 8–25.
- Tzachor, A., Sabri, S., Richards, C. E., Rajabifard, A., & Acuto, M. (2022): 'Potential and Limitations of Digital Twins to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.' *Nature Sustainability*, 5 (10), 822–829.
- Varian, H. R. (2010): 'Computer Mediated Transactions.' *American Economic Review*, 100 (2), 1–10.
- Varian, H. R. (2014): 'Beyond Big Data.' *Business Economics*, 49 (1), 27–31.
- Voegtlin, C., & Scherer, A. G. (2017): 'Responsible Innovation and the Innovation of Responsibility: Governing Sustainable Development in a Globalized World.' *Journal of Business Ethics*, 143, 227–243.
- Voegtlin, C., Scherer, A. G., Stahl G. K., & Hawn, O. (2022). 'Grand Societal Challenges and Responsible Innovation.' *Journal of Management Studies*, 59 (1), 1–28.
- Vosoughi, S., Roy, D., & Aral, S. (2018): 'The Spread of True and False News Online.' *Science*, 359 (6380), 1146–1151.
- Zuboff, S. (2019): *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*. New York: PublicAffairs Books.

### **Convenors' short biographies:**

**Andreas Georg Scherer** holds the Chair of Foundations of Business Administration and Theories of the Firm at the University of Zurich. He is interested in the social welfare implications of Technology & Innovation Management and the political role of MNCs. He has published in *AMR*, *ASQ*, *JMS*, *Organization Science*, *Organization Studies*, and other journals. He is an associate editor of *BEQ* and member of several editorial boards.

**Christian Voegtlin** is a Professor of Business & Society at the ZHAW School of Management and Law in Winterthur, Switzerland. His research activities are in the field of sustainability and corporate social responsibility, with focus on responsible leadership, responsible innovation, and business ethics. He has published in *AMP*, *BEQ*, *JMS*, *JoBE* and other journals. He currently serves as associate editor for *Business & Society*.

**Olga Hawn** is an Associate Professor of Strategy and Entrepreneurship at the Kenan-Flagler Business School, University of North Carolina Chapel Hill. Her research interests include corporate social responsibility, sustainability strategy, and international business. Her work examines business responses to ESG issues, including digital (mis)conduct, racial inequality, the metoo movement, and LGBTQ issues. Olga has published in journals, such as *SMJ*, *Research Policy*, *AMJ* and *AMR*. She is currently an associate editor of the *SMJ* and serves on several editorial boards.

**For submissions to the 41<sup>st</sup> EGOS (European Group of Organization Studies) annual colloquium see (3000 words short paper by 7<sup>th</sup> January 2025, 23:59 CET):**

[https://www.egos.org/2025\\_Athens/SUB-THEMES\\_Call-for-Papers](https://www.egos.org/2025_Athens/SUB-THEMES_Call-for-Papers) (scroll to sub-theme 46)

[https://www.egos.org/2025\\_Athens/SUB-THEMES\\_Call-for-Papers\\_Important-Information](https://www.egos.org/2025_Athens/SUB-THEMES_Call-for-Papers_Important-Information)

AGS, 17<sup>th</sup> October 2024