Innovation Track

Track Chairs:

Dr Nick Marshall, University of Brighton
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Track description:

This year's conference focuses on the challenges and opportunities of encouraging positive transformation in the face of a range of urgent challenges that manifest themselves at a range of geographical scales, from the global to the local. Innovation has a clear connection with transformation, being a key engine of change. What are less clear are the implications of innovations for the quality of transformations and the extent to which they offer the potential for societal benefits that are broadly and equitably shared. As the history of innovation shows us, the complex interplay of technological, economic, political, and social dynamics driving different waves of transformation, make it difficult to predict the precise outcomes of change and the potential benefits that may result. As with previous socio-technical shifts, we are currently facing major uncertainties in the trajectories and consequences of key areas of technological innovation. This makes it increasingly important to include an inseparable axiological dimension to the understanding of innovation, which considers the different forms of value created or destroyed, and how they are distributed.

Exploring the relationship between innovation and value/values is a concern that has permeated the innovation conference track in various guises for the last few years. As always, we take as inclusive an approach as possible, recognising that there are multiple perspectives on the potential benefits and problems of innovation, and that it is important to create opportunities for a genuine dialogue between them, so that we are continually subjecting the core assumptions of innovation studies to critical reflection, and opening up the possibility for renewal where needed. The transformative potential of innovation is unquestionable, but views on the pace, direction, and outcomes of change are contested. For the techno-optimists, the fourth industrial revolution, extending the connective potentials of digitalisation through artificial intelligence, the internet of things, machine-to-machine communication, augmented reality, and associated developments, offers pathways to redefining organisational, industrial, and societal dynamics in more sustainable and responsible ways. Those more sceptical raise concerns about the perpetuation or even acceleration of unstainable growth, non-democratic concentrations of corporate power, and social inequalities in the current trajectory of interlinked global capitalism that technologically-led solutions not only are unlikely to address, but actively perpetuate and extend. These differing visions offer alternative views on the key participants, purposes, supporting

conditions, drivers, and outcomes of innovation. It is also evident that this is about much more than technology, having implications for all varieties of innovation, from products and processes to organisational configurations and business models, policy recipes, and institutional arrangements, interlinked in complex and geographically varied ecosystems.

We invite papers from all perspectives, including those that are optimistic about the capacity of innovation to effect positive transformation, as well as those that are more sceptical or critical. We welcome contributions across the range of innovation types and activities, from the technological to the organisational, as well as those driven by different value frameworks, not only economic, but also political, social, and environmental. We also encourage studies focusing on a range of geographical locations and scales. Papers may be empirical or theoretical and a range of methodological approaches are encouraged.

Possible and by no means restrictive themes are as follows:
- The socio-economic shaping of innovation
- The implications of innovation for social and economic development and the generation and distribution of wealth and wellbeing
- Innovation in the digital economy and the post-COVID organisation
- Generative artificial intelligence and other potentially disruptive innovations
- The challenges and opportunities of the fourth industrial revolution
- Innovation in high-tech or high-growth industries and (large or small) firms
- Innovation in low- or medium-tech sectors and (large or small) firms
- Innovation in services, knowledge intensive services and creative industries
- Open Innovation in both large and small firms
- Social innovation and innovation in social enterprises and other not-for-profit organisations
- Innovation and entrepreneurship: management practices and policy challenges
- User-led and community-based innovation and crowdsourcing and crowdfunding activities
- Eco-innovation and the environmental challenge
- Intra- and inter-organisational networks and collaborative innovation
- University-industry links and innovation
- The role of groups and peer-to-peer interaction in innovation
- Innovation in Strategic Alliances and Joint Ventures
- 'Illegal' innovation such as cyber-crime and hacker innovations
- Practice-based theories of innovation, knowledge, and learning
- Innovation, dynamic capabilities and routines
- National and regional innovation systems
- Policy experimentation and accountability – false failures and false successes
- Innovation metrics and indicators
- Innovation in newly emerging and developing economies