

Sustainable Digitalization – A European Perspective

Call for Papers: GAIA Open Access Special Issue

A GAIA special issue will focus on Sustainable Digitalization. The guest editors hereby invite the growing research community on sustainable development and digitalization to submit papers and to share their reflections, experiences, and, in particular, their empirical insights.

Background

Over the past few years, the nexus of digitalization and sustainability has become a central topic in both public debate and scientific research and is being addressed by an increasing number of players and disciplines. For instance, the two overarching narratives of the European Union at the moment are the ‘Green Deal’ and the ‘Digital Decade’. While politics and business emphasize digitalization’s potential for improving efficiency and its enabling effects, focus is increasingly also being paid to the other side of the coin: the challenges posed by its disruptive nature, its resource use and rebound effects, and its increasing contribution to power asymmetries and inequalities. Further opportunities and challenges arise from, for example, alienation due to technological approaches (e.g., issues of internet availability) and societal implications (e.g. new opportunities for influencing and participating). In addition, different dynamics of technological development and political processes have caused implementation and democratic legitimacy to drift apart.

Digitalization impacts the goals and strategies of the sustainability agenda at many levels. In addition to questions related to low-carbon development and preserving ecosystem services, these impacts affect quality of life and social participation. Furthermore, the discourse on ‘human enhancement’ discusses fundamental changes in the relationship between humans, machines, and the environment. Given the potentials and risks of digitalization as a complex and dynamic process of economic, social, and cultural change, there is a clear need for sustainability strategies and concepts, especially at the political level, to create conditions that place digitalization at the service of sustainable development (see the report “Towards our common digital future” of the German Advisory Council on Global Change). Besides the Chinese and the US-American models of, respectively, a digital-born surveillance state and ‘surveillance capitalism’, the question remains open as to whether a specifically European ‘third way’ of digitalization can emerge.

With regard to issues at the intersection of digitalization and sustainability, this ‘third way’ of a socially embedded digital agenda that respects planetary boundaries raises multiple new research questions that need an interdisciplinary approach. Importantly, the answers to those questions could inform various ongoing political processes, including those based on the EU Council decision “Digitalization for the Benefit of the Environment”.

Aims and Scope

The special issue of *GAIA on sustainability and digitalization* aims to contribute to seizing this window of opportunity and carving out a European way of interconnected developments in sustainability and digitalization in science, politics, and civil society. We invite contributions that suggest practical paths for sustainability and digitalization efforts to effectively work towards common goals.

This special issue takes current publications, such as the special issue 'Digitalization and Sustainability' of the journal *Ökologisches Wirtschaften*, as a starting point but invites authors to deepen analysis and provide new contributions relevant to the scientific, public, and political debates around the ongoing legislative processes in Europe. In particular, we invite contributions that connect research and civil society work and aim to deliver specific insights and solutions based on transdisciplinary collaborations and processes of co-creation.

Deadlines, Submission, and Review Process

GAIA offers different peer-reviewed article formats, in particular, Forum contributions and Research articles (see <https://gaia.oekom.de/index.php/gaia/focus-scope>). Authors are encouraged to choose one of the two formats and submit extended abstracts to the guest editors (max. 1000 words). Upon acceptance, authors will be invited to submit full manuscripts. The full manuscripts will be peer-reviewed, and, upon acceptance, published under Open Access. No author fees will be raised. The publication language is English – papers must be written in good English.

Please submit abstracts to kira.cieslewicz@leuphana.de **and** gaia@oekom.de.

Important Dates

- 24th January 2022: deadline for submission of extended abstracts (500 to 1000 words) to kira.cieslewicz@leuphana.de **and** gaia@oekom.de.
- 14th February 2022: deadline for invitation for full paper submission (please follow *GAIA* author guidelines at <https://gaia.oekom.de/index.php/gaia/Authors>)
- 16th May 2022: deadline for submission of full papers via journal management system (<https://gaia.oekom.de/index.php/gaia>)
- End of September 2022: communication of decisions by co-editors on acceptance, rejection, or recommended revisions to authors
- Autumn 2022: revisions, rebuttals, potential second round of reviews
- December 2022: final decision on manuscripts
- Spring 2023: publication of special issue

Guest Editors

The guest editors are Prof. Daniel J. Lang, Prof. Tilman Santarius, Prof. Matthias Barth, and Dr. Maike Gossen.