



## Special Issue – Call for Papers: Digital Innovation for Social Development and Environmental Action

### Special Issue Guest Editors

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### Abstract:

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This is a call for papers on inclusive and sustainable social development and environmental sustainability.

**Keywords:** Digital innovation, Social development, Environmental action, Sustainable development goals.

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## Call for Papers

The Information Systems (IS) community has the opportunity to advance inclusive and sustainable social development and to transform human behaviors and business practices that have become environmentally unsustainable (Corbett & Mellouli, 2017; Walsham et al., 2007; Watson et al., 2021). However, affecting such positive change is a 'wicked problem' with many interacting components, many uncertainties and equivocalities, and many views on methods, even where there is agreement on the end goal. These are grand global challenges (Hovorka & Corbett, 2012; Sahay et al., 2017) that are complex, multi-layered, transdisciplinary, and socio-technical in the sense of fundamentally involving humans and how we do things.

The United Nations (UN) has provided a framework for measuring progress through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which comprise 17 goals and 169 targets. The UN, diverse organizations, and governments have done significant work to collect data and build indicators for measuring progress. The 2021 Sustainable Development Goals Report (United Nations, 2021) suggests that progress towards achievement of the SDGs, already off track before the pandemic, has been further complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which threatens to undo years of development gains. The SDGs are part of a universal program that applies to all governments and societal actors at all levels. However, without diminishing the importance of the work toward sustainable development at the international level, the global nature of the SDGs leaves local communities and businesses in a bit of a quandary of how they can align their activities to make a meaningful positive impact on social development and environmental sustainability.

The adage of 'think globally, act locally' may sound trite, but carries significant truth. Success of the UN's 2030 agenda for sustainable development depends on mobilization of all actors, particularly at a local level (Tremblay et al., 2021). Localization is required to instantiate the process of "defining, implementing, and monitoring strategies at the local level for achieving global, national and subnational sustainable development goals and targets" (United Nations Development Programme, 2014). There remains a knowledge gap regarding how to best implement SDGs at the local level (Tremblay et al., 2021). Localization efforts can relate to government efforts to contextualize their approach to their own specific environmental, economic, social, political and cultural conditions (Corbett & Mellouli, 2017; Pan et al., 2022; Tremblay et al., 2021), but can also apply to other individuals, organizations and businesses that seek to translate the SDGs to their own realities.

Much of the management literature has focused on corporate sustainability, with the underlying assumption that an organization's incremental improvements in environmental performance will contribute to global planetary improvements. However, this assumption does not always hold true (Haffar & Searcy, 2018). From afar, organizational changes may look like sustainability gains, but they can actually mask unsustainable performance. At the extreme are cases of greenwashing (Szabo & Webster, 2021). The IS discipline is perhaps not much different. There is a need to link organizational IS initiatives more closely to science-based, explicit objectives that can be measured and monitored over time. There is an inconsistent match between community, organizational or individual-level priorities and global priorities because of the practical challenge of translating complex, interconnected and systems-wide objectives to the company level (Haffar & Searcy, 2018). Besides reorienting organizational priorities, there is also the opportunity for digital innovation and entrepreneurship for sustainable development, which involves the "discovery, creation, and exploitation of opportunities for (future) goods and services that simultaneously sustain the natural and social environment and provide economic and non-economic gain for others" (Johnson & Schaltegger, 2020).

Recognizing that the IS community must move from discussion to action, the goal of this special issue is the construction and dissemination of applicable knowledge within the IS community in relation to the SDGs related to social development and the natural environment. We encourage solution-oriented submissions that can make immediate contributions to the sustainable practices adopted by organizations, societies, and individuals: preference will be given to papers that include measurable sustainability outcomes that link to one or more of the SDGs. The special issue is also open to 'dependent variables' and more general outcomes that pertain to the issues at hand such as reduction of pollution in the air or water, access to nutritious food or stable housing (Dwivedi et al., 2022) as well as the traditional IS measures of use, user satisfaction, and success. We are primarily interested in how the research has or can affect these global problems, but we also want to see the role and influence of information systems

and digital technology as a component of the study to provide connection to and grounding with our AIS community.

There is also an interest in the design of IS related projects that facilitate 'citizen science' (Levy & Germonprez, 2017) and empower communities to address these global issues (Dennehy et al., 2021). Such projects often involve processes of mutual learning regarding requirements and tuning of information systems to solve real problems. We encourage research that goes beyond the proof-of-concept stage to proof of value and proof of use (Nunamaker et al., 2015). No methods or approaches are unwelcome, though we anticipate case studies, design-oriented research, and action research to be prominently included (Nishant et al., 2020). No particular philosophical position is privileged over others, though we lean toward pluralist pragmatist perspectives. While respecting the existing journal guidelines for papers, we particularly welcome short papers (around 8000 words) that concisely present a focused research problem. The papers should be open to a wide range of audiences. Findings do not have to be universal or generalizable, though showing how others can apply or extend them is encouraged. Issues and solutions from anywhere in the world are welcome in keeping with CAIS as a publication with global readership.

## Submission Requirements

All manuscripts submitted to CAIS should be submitted in Microsoft Word format. Authors are encouraged to follow CAIS style guide (available on the CAIS website <https://aisel.aisnet.org/cais/format.html>) and use the CAIS author template for submissions of their manuscripts. Submissions must be made to the CAIS ScholarOne site (<https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/cais>). If you do not have an account already, you will need to create one. Once you have logged in, and you begin the submission process, you will have the opportunity to submit the manuscript to the special issue ("SS" designation).

## Important Dates

- Submission deadline: October 31, 2022
- First round notification: December 31, 2022
- Invited revisions deadline: March 31, 2023
- Second/final editorial decision: May 15, 2023
- Projected Publication: September/October 2023

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