Innovation Track

Track Chairs:

- Dr Nick Marshall, University of Brighton, UK
- Dr George Tsekouras, University of Greenwich, UK

The overall conference theme highlights the importance of inclusion, diversity, and working together as key elements to enable our communities, organisations, and societies to thrive, recognising our inescapable interconnectedness and mutual dependency. These are important themes that innovation scholars, practitioners, policy-makers, and activists have engaged with in a variety of ways over the evolution of the discipline. A key landmark was acknowledging the systemic and multi-party nature of innovation, shifting emphasis from the firm as the single unit of analysis. Zooming out, the study of innovation has extensively explored the complex interactions between a wide variety of actors and institutions at different geographical scales, from local clusters, to regional and national innovation systems, and transnational ecosystems. Zooming in, the emphasis has been on managing innovation across different individuals, teams, groups, functions, and collectivities, exploring issues such as how to promote creativity and ideation, integrating knowledge across boundaries of practice, and coordinating diverse contributions to create and capture value.

However, while a considerable body of research suggests that collaboration and leveraging diversity are good for innovation, this does not mean that it is easy, nor that these conditions are achieved all the time, either in the innovation process itself, or crucially, in the distribution of risks and benefits of the outcomes of innovation. For example, while rapidly evolving technologies, such as generative AI, machine learning, and big data offer the potential for the collectivisation and extensive sharing of knowledge, there are concerns about cultural homogenisation, lack of inclusion, systematic biases, job restructuring, and the growing economic and political power of 'big tech'. Similarly, although there are increasing opportunities for customers, users, and other interested parties to make their opinions heard, not all stakeholders in the innovation process have equal opportunities to influence its direction. The evolution of state-of-the art technologies produces very complex systems that, in

some cases, are too difficult to adopt or even use; this slows down the diffusion of new technologies and the relevant innovations. Given differences in power/interest between different stakeholders, this is not surprising, but it is especially problematic where the negative impacts of innovation fall disproportionately on those without a voice, or whose voices are ignored or silenced. It is also important to consider broader geopolitical and societal trends that inhibit the possibilities for inclusion and collaboration, from nationalist movements, religious or political extremism, trade wars and protectionism, limits on the mobility of people, to military conflicts, fractured political systems, and regions prone to natural and environmental disasters.

Although there are many obstacles to inclusive, collaborative, and equitable innovation, and there are no simple or one-off solutions, the study of innovation is fundamentally forward-looking, which introduces a degree of optimism about identifying, promoting, and supporting possible pathways to better social, environmental, political, and economic outcomes. We are keen to establish productive dialogue in the Innovation track about the role of innovation scholars in making major contributions to such pathways, through their research, policy, learning, teaching, and community activities.

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. 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:

- Innovation and environmental, social, and political grand challenges
- Innovation, equality, diversity, and inclusion
- 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, user interface, technological complexity and diffusion
- Innovation under conditions of socio-political fragility
- 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
- 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
- Innovation and transition to a sustainable ecocomy
- Innovation metrics and indicators
- Innovation in newly emerging and developing economies