



*Journal of Product Innovation Management*

Special Issue Call for Papers:

**“The New Normal for Innovation Management?:  
Fostering Adaptability in an Ever Complex and Changing World”**

**Manuscript submission deadline: August 31, 2023**

**Guest Editors**

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**Motivation and Objective of the Special Issue**

Research and practice of innovation management focus on how firms<sup>1</sup> organize innovation by investigating different methods, processes, and overarching capabilities (Markham and Lee 2013; Antons, Kleer, and Salge 2016). This focus provides novel insights into how to structure, manage, and strategically steer the innovation process (Cooper 1996; Spanjol, Qualls, and Rosa 2011; Schultz et al. 2013; Kaufmann, Kock, and Gemünden 2021).

However, given an ever-changing environment, firms are increasingly adopting different notions of adaptability—describing an entity’s ability, inclination, or willingness to change, sense, and react to different conditions—when managing innovations. For instance, technological change, such as digitalization, have forced firms to rely on adaptability and agility at different levels, such as the strategic and organizational (Morton, Stacey, and Mohn 2018; Chan et al. 2019; Tallon et al. 2019), processual (Cooper and Sommer 2016; Thummadi and Lyytinen 2020; Bechtel, Kaufmann,

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<sup>1</sup> We chose the term ‘firms’ to refer to different types of organizations. In this special issue, we are interested in research on incumbents, start-ups, family firms, small and medium sized firms, as well as large corporations.

and Kock 2021), as well as the individual and team levels (Grass, Backmann, and Hoegl 2020; Khanagha et al. 2021). Furthermore, digital technologies offer the means to speed up innovation processes and to allow for more flexible collaboration across places and times (Nambisan et al. 2017; Hanelt et al. 2021; Marion and Fixson 2021). Similarly, crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic and a rapidly changing socio-political environment (e.g., firms withdrawing entire IT operations from Ukraine and Russia in the wake of the Ukraine War) call for resilience and flexibility in innovation activities (Kim 2021). In other words, adaptability has the potential to become the new normal for innovation management in an ever-changing and increasingly complex world. In this regard, this call for papers asks researchers to consider different notions of adaptability, such as agility (Kock and Gemünden 2016; Grass, Backmann, and Hoegl 2020; Thummadi and Lyytinen 2020; Ghosh and Wu 2021), resilience (Moenkemeyer, Hoegl, and Weiss 2012; Todt, Weiss, and Hoegl 2018), speed (Cankurtaran, Langerak, and Griffin 2013; Griffin, Langerak, and Eling 2019), malleability (Solberg, Traavik, and Wong 2020; Hanelt et al. 2021), and flexibility (Klingeziel and Rammer 2014; Brozovic 2018; Schweitzer, Roeth, and Gillier 2020; Peña Häufner et al. 2021).

The innovation management literature tends to neglect the critical role played by adaptability (and related constructs) compared to other disciplines, such as entrepreneurship, organizational behavior, or information systems. For instance, entrepreneurship has widely embraced the lean methodology which, stemming from design science, draws strongly on the principles of agility and adaptability (Shepherd and Gruber 2021). Moreover, the field of positive organizational behavior and the entrepreneurship literature point to resilience, defined as positive adaptation despite facing adversity (Sutcliffe and Vogus 2003), as instrumental in enhancing performance (Luthans et al. 2007) and engaging in entrepreneurial activities (Hartmann et al. 2022). Elsewhere, the information systems community has provided a rich body of scientific insights on agility (Conboy 2009; Goodhue et al. 2009; Tallon et al. 2019).

In contrast, the innovation management literature has only recently started to investigate the implementation, applications, and consequences of different adaptability concepts (Kester et al. 2011; Kock and Gemünden 2016; Annosi, Foss, and Martini 2020; Brock et al. 2020; Grass, Backmann, and Hoegl 2020; Bechtel, Kaufmann, and Kock 2021). Yet, this research area is characterized by a high degree of theoretical fragmentation, as agility can be understood as a dynamic capability (Tece, Peteraf, and Leih 2016), an ability to sense and react to changes (cf. Morton, Stacey, and Mohn 2018; Tallon et al. 2019; Kalaignanam et al. 2021), outcome of innovation processes (Kester et al. 2011; Kock and Gemünden 2016), agile methods and principles to manage innovation projects and teams (Cooper and Sommer 2016; Grass, Backmann, and Hoegl 2020; Bechtel, Kaufmann, and Kock 2021; Khanagha et al. 2021). Similarly, research offers offering heterogeneous insights into the antecedents and consequences of speed. Since the literature applies different conceptualizations of speed (Dayan, Elbanna, and Di Benedetto 2012; Griffin, Langerak, and Eling 2019; Peña Häufner et al. 2021) and flexibility (Kandemir and Acur 2012; Brozovic 2018; Schweitzer, Roeth, and Gillier 2020), scholars understand these concepts as components and also as consequences of adaptability (Brozovic 2018; Tallon et al. 2019).

This fragmentation in the literature is a result of research within theoretical fault lines that rarely seeks to include theories beyond a specific domain. While this fragmentation has resulted in inconsistent and inconclusive insights, such as the functional and dysfunctional consequences of adaptability (Kock and Gemünden 2016; Annosi, Foss, and Martini 2020; Bechtel, Kaufmann, and Kock

2021; Khanagha et al. 2021), it has also opened up new and exciting opportunities for further research. As we know less about the specific enablers, mechanisms and processes, boundary conditions, and functional as well as dysfunctional outcomes of adaptability, further research can contribute to closing this gap and enhancing our understanding of organizational reality.

### Aim and Scope

Against this backdrop, research on adaptability and related constructs such as agility, resilience, speed, and flexibility can contribute to existing conversations about innovation management and inform novel ones. We highly encourage research on the aforementioned and related concepts at the individual, group, and organizational levels to elucidate the antecedents, consequences, and contingency factors affecting adaptability in innovation management. This research can encompass different stages of the innovation processes (e.g., ideation, front-end of innovation, new product development, portfolio management, and commercialization) and various forms of innovations (e.g., radical innovations, digital innovations, business model innovation, and process innovation). Potential contributions might, for instance, explore drivers, such as leadership practices, organizational control mechanisms, and contingency factors (Grass, Backmann, and Hoegl 2020; Khanagha et al. 2021; Meier and Kock 2021) to understand when adaptability has functional or dysfunctional consequences (Morton, Stacey, and Mohn 2018; Tallon et al. 2019; Annosi, Foss, and Martini 2020; Ghosh and Wu 2021). In this vein, we are seeking contributions that refine established theoretical lenses and develop novel ones at different or multiple levels of analysis to advance our knowledge of innovation management.

This special issue welcomes conceptual, methodological, quantitative, and qualitative contributions that can improve our theoretical understanding of innovation management in a changing and increasingly complex environment and to offer theoretically grounded guidelines and tools for management practice. Relevant topics and related questions that demonstrate this special issue’s intended scope include, but are not limited to, the following:

Topic	Questions
Foundations and Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can we advance the methodological tools used to measure the antecedents, mechanisms, and consequences of adaptability? For example, how can adaptability be operationalized using different data sources, such as archival, interview, and survey/experimental data? How can suitable data sources be combined to assess the adaptability of innovation management foundations and processes?</li> <li>• How can experimental designs enhance our understanding of the antecedents, consequences, and contextual factors affecting adaptability across multiple levels? For instance, how can we understand the spill-over effects of organizational agility on innovation teams and leaders and vice-versa?</li> <li>• How can integrative conceptual work, reviews, and meta-analyses overcome the fragmentation of the field? For, instance how can we differentiate and synthesize different forms of adaptability, such as agility, resilience, speed, flexibility, and slack?</li> <li>• How can we conceptualize and investigate the temporal interdependencies between adaptability’s antecedents, processes, and consequences?</li> <li>• Do the effects of adaptability vary for different stages of the innovation process (e.g., front end, development, and market introduction) and types of innovations (e.g., incremental vs. non-incremental innovations, digital vs. non-digital)? For instance, how</li> </ul>

	<p>far can agile principles be applied beyond software development, such as in developing complex, durable investment goods? Is iterative and user-centric agile development better suited for incremental or radical innovation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does applicability differ between different types of organizations (e.g., large incumbents, start-ups, manufacturing-based incumbents, digitalized firms, and family firms)? What can explain potential differences and commonalities?</li> </ul>
<u>Antecedents</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which antecedents (e.g., organizational design, strategies, leadership practices, values, and behaviors) drive or impede adaptation in innovation management? For instance, how do cognitive flexibility, resilience, and agile focus as well as practices of strategic leaders affect the adaptability of innovations? Which internal and external contextual factors explain potential differences?</li> <li>• How can a firm manage the implementation of adaptability? For instance, which socio-material processes can explain the successful implementation of adaptability in innovation management? How can digital technologies and tools support this process?</li> <li>• Which role does the context (e.g., adverse conditions, complex environments) play in activating different forms of adaptability? For instance, is resilience particularly helpful for innovation management when facing adversity or can the beneficial effects be leveraged without the presence of adverse conditions?</li> <li>• How can firms manage the tensions and paradoxes between different levels of adaptability within the same organization? For instance, how can firms manage a portfolio of differently adaptive innovation projects? How can firms resolve tensions between adaptive and non-adaptive partners, organizational units, and teams? What is the relationship between adaptiveness at different organizational levels (e.g., individual, team, and organizational resilience; project or portfolio agility)?</li> <li>• How can external collaborations (e.g., co-creation with external actors, corporate entrepreneurship, strategic alliances, and industry-university collaborations) support the adaptability of innovation management? Under which conditions do these external collaboration efforts support or restrict the adaptability of innovation management?</li> </ul>

<u>Consequences</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How is adaptability related to functional and dysfunctional outcomes at different levels of the innovation process? Which strategies, organizational control mechanisms, leadership practices, and social factors promote functional effects while controlling potential dysfunctions? What tools and methods support management practices in achieving functional consequences?</li> <li>• How can adaptability assist in managing different types of innovations simultaneously, and what are the consequences? Are some types of innovations more likely to benefit from adaptability than others? For what reasons?</li> <li>• What are the consequences of adaptability at different organizational levels? For example, how is organizational agility related to NPD success? How do team agility or team resilience affect individual employees (e.g., innovation behavior, ambidextrous behavior, entrepreneurial orientation, motivation, satisfaction, and well-being)?</li> <li>• Can different forms and intensities of environmental changes or adversities (e.g., crises, market turbulence, or shortages in the supplies of components) explain the conditions under which the effects of adaptability become functional or dysfunctional?</li> <li>• How is learning transferred from one episode of adaptability to another, over a long term basis? How does this differ between different innovation types, innovation stages, and types of firms within an organization and across organizations?</li> </ul>
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### Submission Deadline and Anticipated Publication Timeline

Milestone	Date
Virtual ideation workshop	Spring 2023
Submission deadline	August 31, 2023
First round decisions	November 30, 2023
Hybrid paper development workshop at “The University of Münster”	Spring 2024
Revision due	May 31, 2024
Second round decisions	August 31, 2024
Second revision due	November 30, 2024
Final editorial decisions	February 28, 2025
Anticipated publication date	Summer 2025

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