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Special Issue Call for Papers:

"Reimagining spaces for innovation in an era of co-creation"

Submission deadline: Nov 30, 2026

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Background

Spaces for innovation (Ollila and Yström, 2020, Leminen et al., 2024), such as living labs, maker spaces, and the metaverse, are considered central for stimulating innovation and new product and service development as they enable co-creation[1]. IKEA's living lab "Space 10" is a research and design lab where experts and trailblazers are invited to co-create - prototype, test, and try to turn good ideas into meaningful products or services (IKEA, 2025) and Airbus' maker space facilities, ProtoSpaces, provide the environment, means and tools to develop disruptive concepts and accelerate the pace of innovation (Airbus, 2016). While there are many examples of physical spaces used to stimulate innovation, Nokia's Garage also represents a mindset to hack, make, dream and share new ideas without R&D regulation, bureaucracy and boundaries (Nokia, 2025). Some firms use virtual spaces in the metaverse: Nike's Nikeland is a space on the Roblox gaming platform used for interactive experiences with consumers and exploring g digital product concepts (Reuters, 2021). The above examples illustrate the multiple and interrelated modalities of **space - not only the physical and virtual - but also the cognitive and social.**

This special issue positions space as a constitutive element of managing - shaping co-creation processes, enabling or constraining knowledge flows, and stimulating the emergence of innovation. The significance of spatial arrangements in managing innovation processes is well established, with "spatial turns" evident

[1] Co-creation is an active and iterative process through which diverse stakeholders including users, firms, researchers, and institutions jointly contribute to the ideation, development, and refinement of innovations, emphasizing mutual value creation, shared knowledge, and integration of perspectives and interests across organizational and disciplinary boundaries (Carlile, 2004, Browder et al., 2023, Tekic et al., 2023, Dionne and Carlile, 2024, Gemser et al., 2025). Co-creation processes are increasingly shaped not only by human interaction but also the interplay with technologies such as data infrastructures and artificial intelligence (AI) (Verganti et al., 2020, Gama and Magistretti, 2025), and other artifacts (physical or virtual).

in multiple research disciplines, including e.g., organization studies and entrepreneurship research (Sydow, 2004, Brown and Mason, 2017). Moreover, innovation pathways are today often non-linear and serendipitous (Busch, 2024), transcending e.g., traditional industrial barriers or disciplines. Early contributions by Allen (1984) and Giedion (1941/2009) emphasized the role of communication and human-centered design in shaping knowledge flows and interdisciplinary interaction.

However, despite a shift toward open and collaborative paradigms (Pentland, 2015, Baldwin et al., 2024), actionable knowledge for managers and firms on designing productive spaces for innovation remains fragmented (Peschl and Fundneider, 2012, Caccamo, 2020, Pesch et al., 2021, Leminen et al., 2024). Furthermore, the integration of AI into these spaces necessitates a reassessment of orchestration structures and accountability mechanisms to ensure ethically sound and sustainable outcomes. As managers are tasked with crafting environments that actively cultivate creativity and foster meaningful engagement among participants, they need increased understanding of how spatial configurations stimulate innovation, shape co-creation processes and promote inclusion. Thus, this implies a need for inter-disciplinary innovation management research to add new insights and further develop theory and practice related to spaces for innovation in an era of co-creation.

Specific focus of the special issue

In response to recent calls within the innovation and product development community (Weiss et al., 2022, Leminen et al., 2024, Spanjol et al., 2024, Yström et al., 2025), this special issue **aims to advance interdisciplinary innovation management theory and practice by further investigating how spaces for innovation are designed, experienced and orchestrated - and what are the consequences for stimulating innovation**. We thereby seek to extend Allen's trajectory on how spaces play an important role in stimulating innovation, by acknowledging multiple modalities of space – physical, virtual, cognitive and social structures.

Organizational spaces are not neutral backdrops but active elements of organizing, shaping managerial attention, interaction, and power (Stephenson et al., 2020, Ollila and Yström, 2024, Schweitzer et al., 2024). Spaces for innovation encompass various practices for diverse purposes -experimenting, transforming, reflecting, and learning – all noted as essential components in stimulating innovation (Furnari, 2014, Bucher and Langley, 2016, Colombo et al., 2017, Browder et al., 2023). Such spatial practices, shaped by contextual contingencies such as policy, regulation, and societal expectations, can guide behavior and serve as managerial principles (Ollila and Yström, 2017) and organizing mechanisms (Moultrie et al., 2007, Klooker and Hölzle, 2024).

However, key theoretical and empirical gaps remain related to how spaces stimulate innovation in an era of co-creation, characterized by openness and distributed collaboration. First, we lack integrative accounts of how different spatial modalities physical, virtual, cognitive, and social -separately and jointly shape innovation dynamics across levels of analysis, and how these configurations impact firms and managers. Second, the growing presence of technological actants (e.g., AI-augmentation) as problem framers, sense-makers, and decision-makers in innovation spaces calls for deeper exploration of their implications

for creativity, governance, and ethics. Third, the boundary-spanning nature of spaces for innovation raises critical questions about knowledge integration across organizational, disciplinary, and cultural divides, and how spatial arrangements influence these processes. Fourth, managers need actionable insights on how to orchestrate spaces for innovation to foster inclusion, fairness, and transparency while balancing diverse objectives and mitigating potential "dark sides". Fifth and finally, researchers must advance methodological approaches capable of capturing the dynamic, multi-modal and evolving nature of spaces for innovation - ensuring both theoretical rigor and practical relevance in understanding how spatial configurations stimulate innovation.

We seek submissions that explicitly addresses various aspects of spaces intending to stimulate innovation, by e.g. exploring modalities, dynamics and practices related to how spaces are designed, experienced and orchestrated - and with what consequences for stimulating innovation. A spatial lens invites inquiry into e.g., how resources, boundaries, and exchanges are structured and experienced in spaces for innovation, and how different spatial modalities affect innovation trajectories and outcomes. To foreground submissions, we invite papers employing both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. In particular, we welcome contributions that offer theoretical insights grounded in the "natural habitat" of practice (Van Heerde et al., 2021). Key themes include, but are not limited to:

1. Dynamics of Stimulating Innovation Across Spatial Modalities

This theme explores how different modalities of space - physical, digital, cognitive, and social -stimulate innovation, both intentionally and serendipitously, and how these modalities interact over time. Innovation processes often unfold across multiple spaces: for example, experimentation in a physical living lab may be complemented by ideation in a virtual environment, or innovation may occur entirely within immersive digital spaces such as the metaverse. Understanding these dynamics requires examining how spatial configurations shape interaction patterns, knowledge flows, and creative practices. Potential research questions include:

- *How do various spatial modalities interact to stimulate innovation over time?*
- *What is the role of serendipity in shaping innovation dynamics within and across spaces?*
- *How do spatial configurations influence identity, inclusion/exclusion, and participation—and what are the implications for innovation?*
- *What is the relationship between enacted spatial practices and innovation outcomes?*

2. AI-Augmented Spaces and Their Role in Stimulating Innovation

This theme explores how AI-augmentation reshapes spaces for innovation and their management as managers strategically integrate AI tools to enhance creativity, decision-making and collaboration. AI-enabled capabilities - such as generative design tools for rapid prototyping or predictive analytics for resource allocation - can accelerate iteration cycles and expand creative possibilities. At the same time, these technologies introduce new challenges related to transparency, bias, and trust when decision-making becomes

increasingly technology-driven. The introduction of AI into spaces for innovation raises critical questions about how it impacts and interacts with the different modalities of space and reshape innovation dynamics. Beyond technical efficiency, AI involvement influences power relations, accountability structures, and ethical considerations such as fairness, privacy, and human oversight. Understanding these dynamics is essential for designing spaces that stimulate innovation while safeguarding inclusivity and integrity. Potential research questions:

- *How does AI-augmentation reshape the interaction between different spatial modalities in stimulating innovation?*

- *In what ways do generative AI tools affect the quantity, quality, and novelty of ideas produced in spaces for innovation?*

- *How does AI involvement influence power dynamics and governance structures within spaces for innovation?*

- *What ethical and managerial implications arise when AI systems become active participants in spaces for innovation?*

3. Knowledge Integration and Boundary-Spanning in and across Spaces for Innovation

This theme examines how spaces for innovation enable or constrain knowledge integration and boundary-spanning, recognizing the challenges of sharing and utilizing knowledge across organizational, disciplinary, and cultural divides. Innovation often requires collaboration among diverse actors - such as universities, municipalities, and private firms - whose differences in language, priorities, and time horizons can hinder mutual understanding and slow progress. Micro-level practices that foster boundary-spanning and navigate epistemic differences are critical for inclusive and effective innovation. These practices may unfold differently across spatial modalities: physical spaces (e.g., labs or hubs) can facilitate informal exchanges, virtual spaces can enable distributed collaboration, cognitive spaces shape interpretive frames, and social spaces influence trust and legitimacy. Understanding how these modalities interact is essential for designing spaces that stimulate innovation. This theme also investigates factors that support or hinder knowledge integration, such as communication flows, trust, and cross-disciplinary alignment, and underscores the need for orchestration strategies that bridge epistemic divides and foster productive dialogue. Potential research questions:

- *How is knowledge shared, translated, and transformed across organizational, disciplinary, and cultural boundaries in spaces for innovation?*

- *How does the frequency and nature of cross-boundary interactions in various modalities of spaces for innovation correlate with innovation outcomes?*

- *What factors support or hinder knowledge sharing and integration in spaces for innovation, and how do they relate to different spatial modalities or phases?*

- *How are tensions related to knowledge integration managed within and across spaces for innovation?*

4. Orchestrating Spaces for Innovation: Inclusion, Power, and Governance

This theme examines how orchestration forms and practices shape the functioning of spaces for innovation, with particular attention to fairness, transparency, and inclusion. Spaces for innovation are rarely neutral; they can be dominated by powerful actors or hindered by conflicting priorities and lack of initiative. For example, in regional hubs, start-ups may struggle for influence when decision-making is centralized, while public-sector innovation initiatives may stall due to divergent stakeholder interests. Managers are therefore challenged to design inclusive processes and align stakeholder interests to enable equitable participation – e.g., balancing individual and collective goals. This theme invites critical reflection on both strategic and operational dimensions of orchestration, including how value is distributed and how orchestration practices influence participation. It also addresses the "dark sides" of spaces for innovation, such as overemphasis on physical environments at the expense of virtual or cognitive modalities, exclusion of less obvious partners, and opaque technology-enabled surveillance. For instance, partner selection often favors well-resourced actors, marginalizing others and raising concerns about legitimacy and representation in spaces for innovation. Understanding these dynamics is essential for creating spaces that stimulate innovation while safeguarding inclusivity and trust. Potential research questions:

- *How can orchestration support fairness and inclusion in spaces for innovation?*
- *What is the relationship between decision-making strategies and perceived inclusion in the orchestration of spaces for innovation?*
- *How do various orchestration forms enable or hinder co-creation processes, and how do they impact value distribution in spaces for innovation?*
- *What are the dark sides of spaces for innovation and how can orchestration mitigate them?*

5. Methodological Advancements for Studying Spaces Across Modalities and Over Time

This theme calls for methodological advancements to capture the dynamic, multi-modal nature of spaces for innovation as they evolve over time. Understanding how spaces stimulate innovation requires approaches that go beyond static observation, integrating mixed methods such as ethnography, spatial and network analysis, AI-driven tools, and longitudinal designs. For example, a study of a living lab might combine ethnographic fieldwork with social network mapping (in both physical and virtual spaces) to track shifting stakeholder relationships, while AI-based sentiment analysis of workshop transcripts could reveal patterns of engagement and conflict. However, robust methodological frameworks are still needed to address the complexity of spatial interactions and their implications for innovation. Potential research questions:

- *What research methods can effectively capture the evolution of spaces for innovation over time?*
- *How do the interrelations among spatial modalities (physical, digital, cognitive, and social) influence methodological choices for studying innovation dynamics?*
- *How can AI tools be integrated with qualitative and quantitative approaches to advance research on spaces for innovation?*

Timeline

Announcement of Call for Papers	December 2025
Proposal deadline (optional) via https://forms.gle/GziteHq37d8CabMv7	April 30, 2026* (optional)
Decisions on proposal	May 11, 2026
Online information session with Q&A (open for all), followed by proposal workshop (only for colleagues with accepted proposals)	June 8, 2026* (optional)
(Full) paper submission window	30 Sept-30 Nov 2026
First round decisions	February 28, 2027
First round revision due	June 30, 2027
Second round decisions	Nov 30, 2027
Second revisions due	Feb 28, 2028
Final editorial decisions	June 30, 2028
Expected publication	Fall 2028

*Optional event, to support potential contributors to further develop their work for the SI submission.

Submission process

Manuscripts must be submitted via the Research Exchange platform, choosing this SI as the target. Manuscripts should follow JPIM author guidelines. A guest editor will be assigned to each submission to oversee the review process and select reviewers. Inquiries regarding proposed topics and alignment with the SI aims are welcome. Please direct questions to the guest editors.

About the Guest Editors

Anna Ystrom is Professor of Industrial Organization at Linköping University, Sweden. Anna received her PhD from Chalmers University of Technology, with a specialization in Technology Management and Economics. Her primary research explores the human side of organizing and managing inter-organizational collaboration for innovation. To that end, she has conducted mainly qualitative research on e.g., managerial practices and roles, organizing principles of spaces for innovation, boundary-spanning, knowledge ecosystems, processes and practices of knowledge creation and capture, knowledge dissemination and integration, organizational creativity, and design methods supporting co-creation. In addition, she has extensive experience in conducting research projects in close partnership with practitioners. Her work has been published in journals such as Technovation, R&D Management, Creativity and Innovation Management, Journal of Applied Behavioral Science. She currently serves on the editorial board of Creativity and Innovation Management and has co-edited special issues in R&D management, Technovation and Creativity and Innovation Management.

Susanne Ollila is Professor of Organizational Behaviour at Chalmers University of Technology and currently a visiting researcher at Linköping University. Her scholarship, grounded in qualitative methodologies, explores the spaces, practices, process, and identities that enable collaborative innovation across organizational boundaries. In particular, she examines inter-organizational collaboration, managerial practices, and identity work within collaborative innovation, alongside the spatial aspects of innovation processes and the emergence and design of knowledge ecosystems. Ollila directs the "Managing-in-Between" research group, which investigates the dynamics of collaboration across institutional interfaces and the management of in-between spaces through which heterogeneous actors co-create innovation. She is an active participant in the international open innovation research community, and her work has appeared in Technovation, R&D Management, Creativity and Innovation Management, and the Journal of Knowledge Management. Her contributions to bridging academic research and industrial practice have been recognized through sustained engagement with practitioners and industry partners.

Paul Carlile is a Professor of Information Systems and Management at Boston University's Questrom School of Business. He is currently serving at the Sr. Associate Dean for Research and Innovation. As a researcher, Paul continues to be ranked among the top 2% of researchers across all disciplines worldwide according to Stanford University. His article "An Integrative Framework for Managing Knowledge across Boundaries" has been used to drive innovative outcomes across numerous organizations and industries. In his roles as a Senior Associate Dean he has helped create several award winning and pioneering programs at Questrom. These projects followed the pathbreaking book that Paul and other Questrom colleagues published in 2016 that outlined a roadmap for "Reimagining Business Education." Paul has now turned his attention to creating more collaborative and sustainable approaches to research at Questrom via the various institutes at the school and by targeting on shared research problems that are of consequence to key academic and business partners. Paul was also named to the Thinkers50 Radar 2022 list of management thinkers whose ideas, hard work and passions are making a real difference in the world.

Deborah Roberts is Professor of Marketing and Innovation at York University. Her research examines the intersection of marketing and innovation management, with interests in open and user-driven innovation, co-creation, market learning, social media, artificial intelligence, and the relationship between theory and practice. Her work has appeared in leading journals, including the Journal of Product Innovation Management, MIT Sloan Management Review, European Journal of Marketing, R&D Management, British Journal of Management, and Technovation. She serves on the Scientific Committee of the International Product Development Conference (EIASM, Brussels) and as an expert advisor to RADMA, supporting governance, doctoral training, and research funding. Deborah also brings senior industry experience from blue-chip organizations and consulting roles, bridging theory and practice. She has held visiting professorships at McGill University, Northeastern University, and is an affiliated research professor at RWTH Aachen University.

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