

The role of creativity and innovation in the quality of our lives, the planet and science

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This editorial is the first in a new set-up, in which we, as the editorial team of *Creativity and Innovation Management*, share with our community and wider readership our experiences, views and perspectives, expectations or questions we may have. The intention is to publish such an editorial every half year. The topic of this one: creativity, innovation and quality.

KEYWORDS

impact, journal impact factor, novelty, relevance, rigor, sustainability

1 | INTRODUCTION

A couple of years ago, we started writing editorials ‘with a message’. Writing about things that kept us busy and made us think. Things we wanted to share with our readers and our reviewers, editorial board members, associate editors and senior advisors. Our CIM Community. Usually short pieces, followed by summaries of the papers included in the respective issues.

The publication landscape has changed (and continues to change). One of the changes is that our publisher has decided to speed up the publication process significantly by publishing accepted papers as soon as they leave the production process, instead of waiting for the editors to decide which 9–12 papers or so should be included in the next issue.

One of the effects is that it is no longer possible to write traditional editorials. We decided to use this change as an opportunity to share with our community and wider readership our experiences, views and perspectives, expectations or questions we may have every half year. This is the first new style editorial. The topic: creativity, innovation and quality.

2 | CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION, AND THE QUALITY OF OUR LIVES AND THE PLANET

During the pandemic, we wrote an editorial called ‘Light at the end of the tunnel’, which was a manifestation of hope. Hope based on human ingenuity and creativity. Hope based on creativity and innovation.

The last couple of years have continued to confront the world with major challenges and also generated new challenges. Sustainability, one of them, is not a new issue. The Limits to Growth by the Club of Rome (Meadows et al., 1972) was among the first publications to systematically dig into the interactions between and the consequences of ‘population increase, agricultural production, natural resources, industrial production, and pollution’ (pp. 11–12). Another landmark publication, ‘Our Common Future’ (Brundtland, 1987), defines sustainable development as ‘... a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their needs’. The last milestone we want to mention here is the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (<https://sdgs.un.org/goals>).

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However, the awareness of sustainability aspects is much older. Just some examples. Adam Smith published his famous *The Wealth of Nations* in 1776 (Smith, 1776). A NASA website (<https://science.nasa.gov/climate-change/evidence/>) refers to an 1863 paper from John Tyndall, which recognizes the Earth's natural greenhouse effect (Tyndall, 1863), and an 1896 publication from Svante Arrhenius, who predicted the climate impact, that is, the greenhouse effect, of changes in CO₂ levels in the atmosphere (Arrhenius, 1896). Benjamin Franklin, Karl Marx and Robert Owen are all examples of 18th- and 19th-century scholars and practitioners concerned with incremental and radical social change.

Is there light at the end of the sustainability tunnel? We do not know. Some reports on the climate crisis are promising: less pollution, lower CO₂ emissions and a steep increase in the sales figures of electrical vehicles. We see much more evidence of the circular economy starting to work, which should have positive effects on our usage of natural resources. Other developments are much less positive, though the temperature on the planet continues to increase, weather patterns are changing dramatically, the Great Barrier Reef is whiter than ever before and the habitat of orangutans is decreasing every day. When it comes to the life of humans on planet Earth, the picture is rather bleak, too. Whole populations are under threat of war or rising seawater levels. The gap between wealth and poverty is only getting bigger. Education and gender equality are still accessible for relatively few.

There are limitations to what a journal can do about the sustainability challenge, but we can contribute and do our bit. Increasing sustainability requires creativity and innovation. Traditional product and process innovation to support the profit aspect of business performance as well as the environmental impact of producing and using products. New product and process technologies and forms of collaboration to radically improve the planet aspect of sustainability. Social innovation to make the world a better people place.

One of the initiatives launched after the 9th CIM Community Meeting we held in March 2023 is that we opened a call for papers on **Bridging innovation and sustainability management research: Theoretical and managerial challenges and opportunities**, guest edited by Cristina Marullo (Politecnico di Torino, Italy), Lillian do N. Gambi (Universidade Federal de Viçosa, Brazil), Eleonora Annunziata (Università di Pisa, Italy) and Desirée van Dun (University of Twente, The Netherlands) (<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/page/journal/14678691/homepage/call-for-papers>).

This is just a first step, though. We will continue stimulating our community to research and publish on ways in which creativity and innovation can contribute to tackling the sustainability challenge. Ways that work and make this world a better place.

3 | CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION MANAGEMENT AND THE QUALITY OF (OUR) SCIENCE

Another big yet entirely different topic that keeps us awake is the quality of science. The quality of the work we publish. The quality of *Creativity and Innovation Management* as a journal.

An important indicator of the latter is the Journal Impact Factor (JIF). We are proud to announce that our JIF has increased from 3.5 in 2022 to 3.7 in 2023. Due to the way the JIF is calculated, we had expected a consolidation or perhaps even a small decrease, so the increase was very good news, also as it goes against the trend in our 'competitive' environment—the JIFs of journals we like to compare ourselves with have all decreased. We expect our JIF to further increase in 2024.

Indicators of the quality of science and, more particularly, academic papers are novelty, relevance, impact and rigour. We believe that the four indicators are not mutually exclusive. That is, novel contributions should still be relevant, be aimed at having an impact on science and practice and be done rigorously. Well-done papers should still be relevant, aim at impact and develop a sufficiently novel contribution. So, all four indicators are important. However, like most scholars, we, as editors of *Creativity and Innovation Management*, only have some implicit notion of what these terms mean and how they could be measured or, at least, assessed.

In 2024, we expect to receive well over 700 submissions, and time and again, we ask ourselves:

- How novel is the paper? Formally assessing that requires a complete overview of the specific field covered in the paper, which no editor, no reviewer can ever have.
- How relevant is the paper? Easier to assess, provided that the paper is well-written: the authors' literature review and problematization should develop a compelling argument for the importance, relevance, need of the paper.
- How impactful is the paper or, rather, will it appear to be? Difficult to predict. Some papers appear to have an immediate and unexpectedly high impact. Others hardly get any reference for years and then start to boom. Yet, others that one would expect to have considerable impact are hardly referred to.
- How rigorous is the paper? Perhaps the easiest indicator to assess. Methodological rigour includes issues such as have the constructs been operationalized properly so that the research is replicable? Have all procedures needed to establish the validity of the data and analytical findings been applied properly? Is the line of reasoning throughout the paper, from its introduction, through the research design and the discussion of the findings, to the theoretical and practical contributions consistent? How close does the paper come to showing causal effects?

In order to help us out, we put novelty, relevance, impact and rigour on the agenda of the 2023 9th CIM Community Meeting and found broad recognition of the importance of, and interest in, these indicators of research and paper quality. In May 2024, a virtual meeting took place, which attracted some 15 scholars, all members of the CIM Community. The meeting led to a small group taking the lead in developing a plan of action. The group, consisting of Paola Bellis and Daniel Trabucchi (Politecnico di Milano), Desirée van Dun (University of Twente) and Mette Præst Knudsen (University of Southern Denmark), will report after the summer with a proposal on how to move this important discussion forward.

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