

Special Issue in the Journal of Responsible Innovation
“Bringing Responsibility to Firm Practices: Strategies and Challenges”

Editors of special issue:

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Key dates:

Please submit abstracts (2000 words) directly to LUCIANAMAINES@unisinos.br by September 30th 2024. Those accepted will be invited to submit a full paper.

Full papers (6000-10,000 words incl. references) should be submitted by December 31st 2024 on JRI's [Submission Portal](#). Please indicate upon submission that you wish to be considered for this special issue by selecting “Bringing Responsibility to Firm Practices” when prompted at “Step 1 – Manuscript”.

Accepted papers will be immediately published online. Please follow the journal's [Instructions for Authors](#).

Note: While submitting an extended abstract is optional, we strongly encourage authors to do so. This offers a valuable opportunity to receive feedback from the Guest Editors, which can significantly help in aligning your paper more closely with the objectives of the Special Issue. Submitting an abstract provides a chance for your work to be finely tuned and potentially stand out in these significant gatherings

This Special Issue is supported by the [ISPIM Special Interest Group for Responsible Innovation](#) and by [Norwegian National Network on Responsible Innovation \(AFINO\)](#).

Optional Paper Development Workshops will be held at the [2024 ISPIM Innovation Conference in Tallinn, Estonia](#) and on track [Bringing Responsibility into firm practice- how](#) on AFINO Transformative Research and Innovation Conference in Oslo, Norway.

CALL

The notion that Responsible Innovation (RI) can address significant societal challenges such as climate change, resource scarcity, poverty reduction, and the needs of aging societies is gaining traction. However, RI is currently impeded by the lack of a defined governance process with practical guidelines for implementation, remaining largely theoretical and normative (Ribeiro et al., 2018; Thapa and Iakovleva, 2019). The special issue addresses this need.

Realizing the full potential of RI requires its practical adoption and implementation, particularly since most innovation occurs in the private sector and constitutes a completely different context (Blok and Lemmens, 2015; Leminen et al., 2016).

Many firms are either unaware of RI or find it challenging to incorporate RI principles into their corporate research and innovation activities (Blok & Lemmens, 2015; Iakovleva et al., 2021a). For RI to be effectively integrated, firms must perceive its added value. Without this, RI risks following the

path of Corporate Social Responsibility, which has been criticized for its limited application to corporate philanthropy (Laudal, 2011). We invite contributions that delve into a critical examination of the interplay between Responsible Innovation (RI) and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) within the framework of firm practices. We are particularly interested in submissions that address the potential parallels and divergences between RI and CSR, examining how RI can chart a distinctive course, distinct from the trajectory followed by CSR. Contributions should aim to critically assess the implementation, outcomes, and transformative potential of RI practices in the corporate sector, in contrast to traditional CSR approaches.

Recent studies have begun to explore RI's relevance in firm practices (e.g., Callegari and Mikhailova, 2021; Gurzawska, 2021; Iakovleva et al., 2021b; Naughton et al. 2023; Oftedal et al., 2019; Riaz and Ali, 2023; Van De Poel et al., 2020). These studies highlight that the motivation to engage in RI is often not the problem (Garst et al 2017; Scholten & Blok, 2015; Martinuzzi et al., 2018), but that the gap in RI exists regarding specific frameworks for involving users and stakeholders in the innovation process (Blok et al. 2015; Thapa and Iakovleva, 2023; Iakovleva et al., 2021a), including whom to involve, how, and when (Silva et al., 2019). While some research suggests RI benefits businesses, others point to its potential negative impacts on innovation processes (Rivard et al., 2019). Because of the structural tensions between the ideal of RI and the reality of the competitive market (Brand and Blok, 2019), this ambiguity around integrating RI into firm practices and the reasoning behind it requires dedicated research. The recent Special Issue in the Journal of Responsible Innovation (JRI), titled "Institutionalising Responsible Innovation in Industry and Other Competitive Environments," has made significant strides in addressing existing gaps in our understanding of Responsible Innovation (RI) in competitive business contexts. A notable contribution from Ivanova et al. (2023) critically examines the conflicts between business interests and RI principles, highlighting the clash between businesses' focus on profitability and RI's emphasis on ethical, sustainable, and societal impacts. Additionally, Lukovics et al. (2023) explore the challenges of asymmetric information in applying RI in efficiency-driven firms, suggesting certification as a solution. These studies underscore the urgency of reconciling the idealistic goals of RI with the realities of profitable business operations, emphasizing the need for in-depth research into integrating RI principles in a way that supports both societal good and economic viability.

This Special Issue invites contributions that critically evaluate firm practices within the context of Responsible Innovation (RI), specifically focusing on the practical aspects of implementing RI. It aims to advance the discourse beyond existing literature by exploring how organizational activities, influenced by materiality, spatiality, practices, and leadership structures (Buse et al., 2018), can effectively incorporate and reinforce RI principles. The emphasis is on how these dimensions contribute to a holistic approach to RI, encompassing inclusiveness, anticipation, and reflexivity in corporate environments. The interplay between materiality and actions in organizations is a critical area for deeper investigation (Buse et al., 2018). Materiality, encompassing both tangible elements like computers and software and the immaterial, such as organizational groups, significantly shapes inclusiveness and reflexivity through its influence on daily interactions (Czarniawska & Hernes, 2005; Buse et al., 2018). Spatiality, defining the physical organization of workspaces, from buildings to informal areas, affects the formation of social networks and relationships within and across organizations, with implications for operational dynamics (Husted et al., 2016; Voeten et al., 2015).

Practices in firms, reflecting the relationship between actors' competencies, dynamics, processes, and both material and immaterial aspects, play a crucial role in responsible innovation (Buse et al., 2018; Teece et al., 1997; Chen et al., 2022). These practices, embodying tacit knowledge and routine activities, are influenced by hierarchies and power relations, which regulate organizational work and

signal priorities (Thompson, 2008; Buse et al., 2018). Informal activities and norms, valued by leaders, contribute significantly to fostering responsible innovation practices and warrant further exploration.

Acknowledging the importance of bringing responsibility to firm practices, it's crucial to consider the limitations of what a single economic actor can achieve. Future research should on the one hand focus on capabilities that enable firms to integrate responsible Innovation practices, like Value Absorptive Capacity (Garst et al. 2021, 2022), and on broader networks and economic ecosystems like open innovation that can support real-world application of RIs (Jakobsen et al., 2019; Long and Blok, 2017). Also regional initiatives like organizational networks, clusters, and conglomerates to make user inclusiveness less burdensome for individual actors may stimulate the integration of RI in firm R&D practices (Coffay et. Al, 2022). Open Innovation lab-type environments (Iakovleva et al, forthcoming 2024) that enable co-creation and facilitate entry into mainstream systems also hold promise. This Special Issue responds to the growing need to delve into effective approaches, whether they involve physical contexts, toolkits, or framework methodologies, that actively engage stakeholders in the innovation process.

We encourage submissions that offer innovative insights, theoretical advancements, and empirical investigations that critically reflect on the unique aspects of RI in shaping firms' strategies, operations, and broader societal impacts. This is a call for papers that not only recognize the complexities inherent in integrating RI into business practices but also boldly question and redefine the boundaries between RI and CSR, ensuring RI's distinct and impactful evolution in the corporate world.

In summary, this issue invites contributions addressing, but not limited to, the following queries:

- Strategies for ensuring responsible outcomes in firms' entrepreneurial and innovation processes.
- The role of stakeholder participation in various innovation forms and the orchestration of such participation.
- Effective user engagement methods or tools in firm practices.
- Comparisons between traditional and digital user involvement methods.
- Developing responsible business models that incorporate stakeholder feedback and reflection throughout the innovation process.
- Critical reflections on CSR and RI discourses
- Tools for self-assessment of RI within firms.
- The impact of an ecosystem approach on creating shared value and robust frameworks for RI.
- The influence of regional embeddedness on enhancing RI in firms.
- Methodologies that bridge system change with practical implementation of RI within firms.
- Exploring the co-creation of responsible innovation in living labs, sharing experiences and lessons learned.

- The firm capabilities that enable firms to integrate responsible Innovation practices, such as value absorptive capacity
- Drivers and barriers to engagement in RI in startups

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