

# Bits & Bäume

## Die Konferenz für Digitalisierung und Nachhaltigkeit

### Digital and Sustainable – Transformative Business Models

The track „Digital and Sustainable - Transformative Business Models“ deals with the role of economic actors in social-ecological transformation. A special focus is on the potential and limitations of entrepreneurial action for an economic upheaval and their embedding in political framework conditions. Another focus is on

concrete business models and solutions with which economic actors strive to contribute to the socio-ecological transformation. In a series of workshops and lectures, actors from science and practice will present their approaches, solutions, and concepts. The diverse contributions deal, for example, with digital corporate

responsibility, digitization for sustainable agriculture, sustainability and digitization in medium-sized companies, or the reparability of electronics. Look forward to exciting debates and innovative ideas, question, discuss, and be inspired - with the track „Digital and Sustainable - Transformative Business Models“.

### Tech Design, Power Relations and Ownership

Currently, technology design too often conforms to the principles of growing consumption, maximising profit and exploiting attention. In addition, tracking technologies, such as cookies, cause unnecessary data flows and energy consumption. To enable a social just and climate-friendly transformation, technology design and deployment need to be reconsidered. These include questions of democratic and individual control, equitable access, protection of fundamental rights and freedoms, as well as ensuring inclusion and participation and sufficiency in energy and resource consumption. Everyone should be able to participate in the design of technology as far as hardware and soft-

ware are concerned. In this way, they can individually and collectively participate in deciding on the purpose, data protection, data use, data security or energy and resource consumption of digital technologies. Thus, the actual needs of the users can be placed at the centre and technologies can become common goods. This requires political efforts. One main focus of this track is the question of how we can build a democratically legitimised and collectively organised technological infrastructure and how citizens can gain control over technical devices.

The second main focus of this track deals with power relations and ownership. Not only since the Corona

pandemic - but encouraged by it - we can witness the monopolization of more and more digital business fields. Ownership of data and platforms presents exorbitant value for large tech companies. Monopolization not only stifles true innovation and prevents choice. Big Tech companies also form new undemocratic power centers with problematic political influence and turn citizens into mere consumers. This is not how the socio-ecological transformation in the digital space can succeed. The non-commercial scene, which builds on DIY, FabCities/Maker Spaces and Free & Open Source communities such as Wikipedia, Linux or OpenStreet-Map, remains trapped in the niche. With the Digital

### New Social Deal and Global Justice

This thematic section aims at providing a platform to perspectives from the Global South on the combined field of digitalisation and sustainability. On the one hand, we will raise questions of distributive justice and path dependency in our globalised world, e.g. who benefits/profits from present-day digitalisation, and who suffers from it and in what way? On the other hand, we will discuss self-determination and agenda-setting within existing socio-political and economic structures. Questions of power play a central role here: Who shapes digitalisation? Who owns infrastructure and who controls the Internet? What role do transnational corporations play? What is digital colonialism and which inequalities are reproduced by digitalisation? In addition to this critical viewpoint on digitalisation, we will also address questions such as to what extent communication and information technologies can be used to break down power asymmetries. Here, we find it particularly interesting

to discuss possible trade-offs and how to deal with them. In short, we want to discuss approaches for a just digitalisation with a focus on possible solutions from people in the Global South. In this context, we also want to discuss what we need to demand from decision-makers in the Global North. Emerging technologies often promise more equality, freedom, and sustainability. However, they can also lead to more harm: machine learning algorithms might make better climate predictions, but their training produces a lot of CO2 emissions. AI promises to make recruiting processes more efficient, but it also bears biases and flaws. What is needed are critical, scientific, and intersectional perspectives on assessing the harms and potentials of these technologies. What are the opportunities and pitfalls of emerging technologies? This track shows pathways towards building the just and sustainable futures we want to see.

### Forum & Culture

The Bits & Bäume Forum will offer plenty of networking opportunities. It aims to be a creative space for projects, organisations, networks and start-ups where they can present themselves and connect. There will be hackspaces, couch-corners, an open stage and so much more for you to explore. Of course we will also provide an exciting and varied cultural programme, which includes music, readings, theatre performances and much more. We will kick things off with an epic performance by “vollehalle” on Friday night and finish on Sunday with an unforgettable party to celebrate the conference's completion.

### Digitalisation, Environmental and Climate Protection

The aim of this track is to assess the interlinkages between digitalisation and the climate crisis. We want to stress the compelling necessity to think and treat climate neutrality as a precondition for digitalisation and climate protection as the most important application goal of digital technologies. This involves both the climate-neutral digitalisation of applications and devices and the use of digital technologies for the purpose of climate protection (e.g. energy/mobility/industry/agriculture/consumption transition). In addition to climate-friendly digitalisation effects, the form and risks of possible misdesigns will be examined. These include points of friction between increases in efficiency and the resulting increase in total greenhouse gas

emissions (rebound effects), critique of digital greenwashing, demystification of hype technologies as well as questions regarding digital sufficiency and power consumption of digital technologies. We will systematically discuss relevant areas of conflict and try to resolve (seemingly) apparent contradictions. Furthermore, we want to politically mobilise the participants in this track. We want to develop concrete political approaches as to how digitalisation can serve climate protection or (at least) be compatible with it. We will engage critically with political decision-makers. A goal is to go beyond the binary risk-opportunity logic and work out what a meaningful climate protection-oriented digitalisation may look like.

### Economy and Resources

Does social prosperity always have to be linked to resource consumption? Digitalisation holds the promise of being able to break such a link and lead to a genuine circular economy. The sharing economy offers interesting approaches in the areas of reusing, repairing and recycling. At the same time, digitalisation itself eats up vast amounts of resources. Market concentrations fuelled by digitalisation damage regional economic cycles and socio-ecological innovations. With the Circular Economy Action Plan (CEAP), the EU Commission has presented a package of measures that is to be concretised and implemented in the coming years. How can it strengthen a digital circular economy and lead digitalisation itself into the circular economy? This track also asks the big economic questions: Which economic models will lead us into the circular economy? Which economic sectors will have to shrink, which ones might have to grow? Representatives from theory and practice will discuss these questions.

### Smart new public, society and democracy

The infamous Cambridge Analytica case illustrates: powerful corporations like Meta pose a major threat to democracy. The digital public space is organized by corporations to which the state grants a lot of control. These corporations are fiercely focused on profit maximization and lack public transparency. Fake news, hate speech and manipulation flourish in so-called „social media.“ Their algorithms promote „echo chambers“ in which like-minded people spiral into ever more extreme views. Meta and Google endanger independent media that work with journalistic standards and whose business model is collapsing. Digital technologies accelerate political and social processes and leave little room for deliberative discourse. At the same time, state actors who should exert informational and regulatory influence often outsource their capacities and services to these companies, withholding public sector data and information from citizens. In order to counter this, the following questions, among others, will be discussed in this track: How can a better discourse be shaped and which instruments do we need for this at which levels? What alternatives are already available today and how can we develop them further? How can aspects such as data protection, transparency and open source be better valued and implemented? Last but not least, the role of the state as an enabler or impediment to democratic opinion-forming will also be discussed in this context.