

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON MANAGEMENT OF INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Conference Theme

PARALLEL TRANSFORMATIONS:

Responding to the AI Revolution and Global Crises through innovation and Entrepreneurship

Special Track Proposal

Track Title <i>Please provide a concise and engaging title for the proposed track</i>	Strategic leadership in the age of AI: a multi-echelon perspective on top and middle managers' dynamics
Track Description <i>Please provide a detailed description of the proposed track (approximately 800–1,000 words), outlining:</i> • Motivation and relevance of the track; • Key research challenges and emerging issues addressed • Track's contribution to the conference theme • Examples of topics and research questions that would fit within the track	Motivation and relevance of the track Artificial intelligence (AI) represents one of the most disruptive forces currently redefining how organizations formulate strategy, allocate resources, and pursue innovation and entrepreneurial opportunities (Brown et al., 2024; Enholm et al., 2022). Far from being a monolithic technology, AI encompasses a heterogeneous family of applications such as generative AI, machine learning, robotics, and augmented reality, each carrying distinct implications for organizational processes and managerial work (Bauch et al., 2026; Chowdhury et al., 2024; Volkmar et al., 2022). Because these technologies are widely accessible, their value does not reside in the technology itself, but in the ability of leaders to purposefully embed them in strategic and operational routines (Doshi et al., 2025; Firk et al., 2022; Kallmuenzer et al., 2025). Consistent with this view, a growing body of research grounded in upper echelons theory (Hambrick & Mason, 1984) has identified CEOs and top management teams (TMTs) as the key orchestrators of AI-enabled strategic change, examining how their characteristics, competencies, and cognitive frames shape AI adoption and AI-driven business model innovation (Bevilacqua et al., 2025; Bevilacqua et al., 2026; Jorzik et al., 2023). Yet this upper-echelon focus offers only a partial picture of how AI actually reconfigures leadership within organizations. Strategic intentions formulated at the apex must travel through the organizational hierarchy before they materialize in new products, processes, and business models, and they are frequently reinterpreted, enriched, or resisted along the way (Heyden et al., 2017; Wooldridge et al., 2008). A multi-echelon perspective, which looks at the relational interplay between different hierarchical layers, and particularly between top and middle managers, offers a more complete lens for understanding strategic change (Georgakakis et al., 2022; Heyden et al., 2017, 2018). Middle managers, located between the executive suite and frontline units, act as linking pins who translate AI-related strategic priorities into operational practice, sponsor experimentation, champion bottom-up initiatives, and channel organizational learning back to the top (Heyden et al., 2018; Wooldridge et al., 2008). Despite this pivotal position, their role in AI-driven transformation, and the way they interact with top executives in this process, remains largely overlooked. Key research challenges and emerging issues The track addresses several open challenges. First, we know little about how leadership configurations, in terms of demographic attributes, values, prior professional experience, digital and AI-specific knowledge, and leadership styles, combine across hierarchical levels to enable or hinder the adoption, integration, and strategic exploitation of AI technologies.

	Second, AI is not only an object of managerial decisions but also an agent that transforms managerial work itself, by automating or augmenting judgment (Raisch & Krakowski, 2021) and by altering the roles, skills, competencies, and power relationships of executives and middle managers. Third, the tensions that AI may generate across levels, for instance, between centralized AI strategies and decentralized experimentation, between speed and accountability, or between efficiency and ethical responsibility, are still insufficiently theorized. Finally, the conditions under which cross-level leadership dynamics enhance organizational adaptability and resilience in turbulent contexts deserve closer empirical scrutiny. Track's contribution to the conference theme The track speaks directly to the MINE 2027 theme, “Parallel Transformations: Responding to the AI Revolution and Global Crises through Innovation and Entrepreneurship.” AI-driven transformation does not unfold in a vacuum: organizations are simultaneously confronted with geopolitical instability, economic uncertainty, and sustainability pressures. Navigating these parallel transformations requires leadership that is distributed across the hierarchy rather than concentrated at the top. By shifting attention from individual executives to the interplay between top and middle managers, the track sheds light on how organizations can mobilize AI to foster innovation, sustain entrepreneurial initiatives, and build resilience in the face of multiple, overlapping disruptions. Accordingly, the track aims to advance theoretical and empirical knowledge along three lines. First, it invites studies that conceptualize and empirically investigate leadership configurations spanning multiple hierarchical levels in relation to AI adoption, integration, and exploitation. Priority will be given to contributions examining cross-level dynamics between top and middle managers, while papers addressing CEO–TMT interfaces and intra-TMT dynamics in the AI era are equally welcome. Second, it seeks contributions on how AI redefines strategic leadership roles, skills, and competencies at both the top and middle management levels. Third, it is open to a broad range of methodological approaches, including conceptual papers, qualitative case studies, quantitative analyses, mixed-methods designs, experiments, and interdisciplinary work. Examples of topics and research questions • How do the characteristics, values, and experiences of top and middle managers jointly shape the adoption and strategic exploitation of AI technologies? • How do middle managers interpret, translate, adapt, or resist AI strategies defined by the CEO and the TMT? • How does AI reshape the roles, skills, competencies, and power dynamics of executives and middle managers, and the distribution of decision-making authority across levels? • To what extent does AI augment or substitute managerial judgment in strategic decision-making, and with what consequences for accountability? • How do CEO–TMT interfaces influence AI-related strategic choices? • How do multi-level leadership dynamics help organizations remain adaptive and resilient when AI-driven change coincides with global crises? • Which ethical, governance, and risk-management challenges arise when AI is deployed across organizational levels, and how do leaders address them? • How do cross-level leadership dynamics around AI differ across firm types (e.g., SMEs, family firms, start-ups, multinationals) and institutional contexts?
Keywords Please provide 4–6 keywords that best characterize the proposed track. Separate keywords using a semicolon (;)	Strategic leadership; Artificial intelligence; Top managers; Multi-echelon perspective; Middle managers; Digital transformation
References	Bauch, J., Kanbach, D. K., Brenk, K., Schadl, A., & Dabic, M. (2026). Beyond the GenAI hype: a framework for Generative AI in business. <i>Review of Managerial Science</i>, 1-31.



<i>Please include the key references supporting the relevance and positioning of the proposed track</i>	Bevilacqua, S., Ferraris, A., Matzler, K., & Kuděj, M. (2026). Strategic leadership at high altitude: Investigating how AI affects the required skills of top managers. <i>Journal of Business Research</i>, 205, 115878. Bevilacqua, S., Masárová, J., Perotti, F. A., & Ferraris, A. (2025). Enhancing top managers' leadership with artificial intelligence: insights from a systematic literature review. <i>Review of Managerial Science</i>, 19(9), 2899-2935. Brown, O., Davison, R. M., Decker, S., Ellis, D. A., Faulconbridge, J., Gore, J., ... & Hibbert, P. (2024). Theory-driven perspectives on generative artificial intelligence in business and management. <i>British Journal of Management</i>, 35(1), 3-23. Chowdhury, S., Budhwar, P., & Wood, G. (2024). Generative artificial intelligence in business: towards a strategic human resource management framework. <i>British Journal of Management</i>, 35(4), 1680-1691. Doshi, A. R., Bell, J. J., Mirzayev, E., & Vanneste, B. S. (2025). Generative artificial intelligence and evaluating strategic decisions. <i>Strategic Management Journal</i>, 46(3), 583-610. Enholm, I. M., Papagiannidis, E., Mikalef, P., & Krogstie, J. (2022). Artificial intelligence and business value: A literature review. <i>Information systems frontiers</i>, 24(5), 1709-1734. Firk, S., Gehrke, Y., Hanelt, A., & Wolff, M. (2022). Top management team characteristics and digital innovation: Exploring digital knowledge and TMT interfaces. <i>Long range planning</i>, 55(3), 102166. Georgakakis, D., Heyden, M. L., Oehmichen, J. D., & Ekanayake, U. I. (2022). Four decades of CEO–TMT interface research: A review inspired by role theory. <i>The Leadership Quarterly</i>, 33(3), 101354. Hambrick, D. C., & Mason, P. A. (1984). Upper echelons: The organization as a reflection of its top managers. <i>Academy of management review</i>, 9(2), 193-206. Heyden, M. L., Fourné, S. P., Koene, B. A., Werkman, R., & Ansari, S. (2017). Rethinking 'topdown' and 'bottom-up' roles of top and middle managers in organizational change: Implications for employee support. <i>Journal of management studies</i>, 54(7), 961-985. Heyden, M. L., Sidhu, J. S., & Volberda, H. W. (2018). The conjoint influence of top and middle management characteristics on management innovation. <i>Journal of Management</i>, 44(4), 1505-1529. Jorzik, P., Yigit, A., Kanbach, D. K., Kraus, S., & Dabić, M. (2023). Artificial intelligence enabled business model innovation: Competencies and roles of top management. <i>IEEE transactions on engineering management</i>, 71, 7044-7056. Kallmuenzer, A., Mikhaylov, A., Chelaru, M., & Czakon, W. (2025). Adoption and performance outcome of digitalization in small and medium-sized enterprises. <i>Review of Managerial Science</i>, 19(7), 2011-2038. Raisch, S., & Krakowski, S. (2021). Artificial intelligence and management: The automation–augmentation paradox. <i>Academy of management review</i>, 46(1), 192-210. Volkmar, G., Fischer, P. M., & Reinecke, S. (2022). Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning: Exploring drivers, barriers, and future developments in marketing management. <i>Journal of Business Research</i>, 149, 599-614. Wooldridge, B., Schmid, T., & Floyd, S. W. (2008). The middle management perspective on strategy process: Contributions, synthesis, and future research. <i>Journal of management</i>, 34(6), 1190-1221.
Track Chairs <i>Please identify between 2 and 5 Track Chairs. For each Track Chair, provide:</i> • Full Name • Affiliation • Country • Email address • Research interests (optional)	Simone Bevilacqua Affiliation: Department of Management “Valter Cantino”, University of Turin, Turin, Italy. Country: Italy Email address: simone.bevilacqua@unito.it Alberto Ferraris Affiliation: Department of Management “Valter Cantino”, University of Turin, Turin, Italy. Country: Italy Email address: alberto.ferraris@unito.it

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Short biography of each organizer <i>Please provide a short biography for each Track Chair (maximum 200 words per biography)</i>	Simone Bevilacqua: PhD Candidate in Business and Management at the University of Turin (Italy), under a cotutelle agreement with the University of Innsbruck (Austria). His research focuses on strategic leadership, artificial intelligence, and top management teams, with particular attention to how emerging technologies reshape managerial roles, skills, and decision-making processes. His research has been published in international journals including the Journal of Business Research, Review of Managerial Science, and Business Process Management Journal. He also contributes to the academic community through reviewing activities for international journals and conferences. He regularly presents his research at international conferences and seminars. Alberto Ferraris: Ph.D. in Business and Management, currently working as Full Professor at the University of Turin. He is Fellow (F-EMAB) and an active member of the EuroMed Research Business Institute as well as of Gnosis Research Center at the University of Nicosia. He is author of more than 100 academic and scientific articles with more than 20,000 citations (Google Scholar) and serves as Guest Editor or he is in the Editorial Board in several prestigious international journals, such as Journal of International Management, Journal of Business Research, Journal of Intellectual Capital. He is also the Co-Editor in Chief of British Food Journal. Marina Dabić: Full Professor of Entrepreneurship and International Business at the University of Dubrovnik (Croatia) and the University of Ljubljana (Slovenia). She is Editor-in-Chief of Technology in Society, Associate Editor of Technological Forecasting and Social Change and Strategic Change, and Senior Editor of IEEE Transactions on Engineering Management. She has authored more than 280 articles indexed in Scopus and Web of Science and edited ten books with leading publishers. She is the most cited scholar in economics and business in Croatia and Central and Eastern Europe, and she has been listed among the world's top 2% scientists in business and management (Stanford list). She is an Academy of Management Ambassador and serves on international evaluation panels, including the European Research Council. Her research covers entrepreneurship, innovation management, international business and the human side of AI and digital transformation. Andreas Kallmuenzer: Full Professor of Entrepreneurship and Strategic Management at Excelia Business School, La Rochelle (France), where he has worked since 2019. He holds a PhD in Management and a Habilitation in Business Administration from the University of Innsbruck (Austria). Before his academic career he was an entrepreneur in the tourism industry for several years. His research focuses on the digital transformation of SMEs and family businesses, entrepreneurial orientation, business model innovation, sustainability



	and tourism. He has published in journals such as Journal of Business Research, Tourism Management and Long Range Planning. He serves on the editorial boards of numerous international journals and has guest-edited several special issues. Wojciech Czakon: Full Professor and Chair of Strategic Management at Jagiellonian University, Kraków (Poland). He received his PhD (2002) and habilitation (2007) in management, and the national professorial title in economics in 2013. He is a member of Academia Europaea, a former Vice-President of the European Academy of Management (EURAM), and one of the most cited Polish management scholars. His research addresses coopetition, behavioral strategy, managerial cognition and strategic myopia, organizational resilience and digital identity. His work has appeared in leading international journals such as Long Range Planning, Journal of Business Research, Industrial Marketing Management and Journal of Travel Research. He has developed widely used measurement scales and has advanced qualitative research methods. He has guest-edited special issues in journals such as Long Range Planning and co-edited The Routledge Companion to Coopetition Strategies.
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