**Digital Sustainability – A blind spot in the fintech industry?**

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Digital sustainability, in other words the socio-ecological impact of digital platforms on datafied societies and our planet, has emerged as a critical concern in public discourse. The exponential growth of digital communication and intelligent technologies has not only transformed contemporary societies but has also been linked to being a significant contributor to the global carbon footprint and the rise of associated social inequalities. Media and communication scholars have started to direct attention towards investigating the relationship between digital technologies and their environmental impacts, pointing towards the environment as being treated as a kind of a ‘blind spot’ in theoretical and conceptual developments (Kannengießer & McCurdy, 2021; Vestberg, 2014). Although there is a general awareness about the CO2 emissions of the aviation industry, less people are aware that digital communication technologies could have and even greater carbon impact. The rapid integration of artificial intelligence into digital solutions is said to increase the digital carbon footprint considerably (Saenko, 2023). Against this backdrop, studying digital sustainability has sparked renewed scholarly interest, urging scholars as well as practitioners to take responsibility and actions.

The aim of the abstract is to propose a presentation of first findings from an explorative case study conducted in the Fintech industry. Drawing on qualitative interviews and ethnographic observations at different industry events and conferences, the main research question is: *How do industry experts conceptualize and make sense of digital sustainability?* We are furthermore interested in where industry experts the locate responsibility for socio-ecological ramifications of tech development.

Fintech, characterized by its reliance on digital infrastructure and data-driven processes, presents a compelling case because it creates a new type of complex infrastructure, which often invisible and globally distributed. Theoretically, the research builds on a conceptualization of digital sustainability as a social and environmental process. It thus, does not solely looks at carbon emissions but also at socio-material processes behind them. Thus, the study adopts an empirically-grounded approach, taking starting point in the people involved in the industry. By delving into the perspectives of industry leaders, experts and innovators, this research aims to map digital sustainability awareness within the Fintech ecosystem. Ultimately, this research contributes to advancing our understanding of digital sustainability at the intersection of technology, society, and the environment.

References

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