

Max Schulze

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Profile

Software engineer and startup founder turned sustainability expert, digital economist and policy advocate. Over 15 years of experience building digital products and infrastructure, now focused on ensuring the digital economy delivers on its promises while reducing its negative effects. Founder of the SDIA, the leading European Alliance for Sustainable Digital Infrastructure, and co-founder of Leitmotiv, a think-and-do tank for an alternative digital economy. Combines deep technical credibility and expertise with strategic policy expertise to bridge implementation and advocacy on digital infrastructure accountability.

Professional Experience

Leitmotiv Digital

Co-Founder | January 2024 – Present | Brussels, Belgium

One of the founders of Leitmotiv, a think-and-do tank for an alternative digital economy that operates within planetary boundaries, where excessive concentration of corporate power is contained by democratic forces and where human rights, dignity, and equality are respected and promoted. Leitmotiv is primarily a research organization, but also engages in evidence-based policy and legislative advocacy and supports strategic litigation through its research.

SDIA – Sustainable Digital Infrastructure Alliance

Founder & Director | July 2019 – Present | Amsterdam, Netherlands

Founded and lead Europe's foremost Alliance for Sustainable Digital Infrastructure, bringing together data center operators, cloud providers, policymakers, and researchers. Authored the SDIA Roadmap to Sustainable Digital Infrastructure by 2030 and shaped EU policy on data center energy efficiency. Key achievements include presenting at the UN General Assembly (2021), co-authoring the Commonwealth Taxonomy Guide on digital infrastructure, and establishing industry standards for environmental transparency.

New Bridge Founders

Partner | December 2016 – January 2025 | Amsterdam, Netherlands

Investment vehicle identifying early-stage digital technology companies with positive societal impact. Portfolio investments included Helio (distributed compute marketplace), Informed (curated journalism platform), and Metabuild (AI-powered building energy optimization).

Vattenfall

Senior Strategy Advisor | March 2017 – September 2020 | Stockholm, Sweden

Strategic advisor supporting Vattenfall's transition to fossil-free energy within one generation. Initially advised the Energy Trading Division, later conducted M&A transactions in demand-response and served as direct strategic advisor on digital transformation to the Management Team and CEO.

Helio AG

Chairman of the Board | April 2019 – January 2022 | Zürich, Switzerland

Chaired the board of a platform enabling data centers to monetize idle server resources for compute-intensive workloads. Oversaw development of serverless computation marketplace with transparent pricing.

Woschlab

Managing Partner | September 2015 – December 2016 | Hamburg, Germany

Venture building company for a Spanish family office. Built and launched three digital products within one year: SnipsI (author marketing platform), Wanna Dance (social app for dancers), and EPICK (team building for gamers).

Lobster

CTO | September 2014 – December 2015 | Berlin, Germany

Technical lead building the global marketplace for user-generated content at lobster.media.

GetLikeminds

CTO & Lead Developer | July 2014 – August 2015 | London, United Kingdom

Built talent-matching platform subsequently acquired by L Street (Chicago). Led technical development from inception through acquisition.

Modus Operandi

Founder | January 2010 – December 2013 | Berlin, Germany

Founded digital agency providing technology expertise and outsourced development to agencies and corporates. Clients included Deutsche Telekom, Skril, Axel Springer, EdenSpiekermann, and Schiesser.

Nukotoys

Lead Developer | January 2011 – March 2012 | San Francisco, United States

Lead developer at San Francisco startup creating connected toys linking physical and digital play experiences. Acquired.

Freelance Software Consultant

Senior Ruby on Rails Developer | June 2008 – January 2011 | Berlin, Germany

Consulted for various Berlin-based startups and San Francisco companies including Jovoto, Digitale Seiten, and Gründerszene, and many others.

Publications & Research

Books

Building a European Digital Public Space – Chapter: "A Decentralized Sustainable Cloud" (iRights.Media, 2021)

Data Center Essentials – Contributing author

Key Reports

SDIA Roadmap to Sustainable Digital Infrastructure by 2030 (SDIA, 2020)

Taxonomy Guide: Infrastructure in the Digital Economy (The Commonwealth Secretariat, 2022)

The Utility of the Future: Where Digital and Energy Infrastructure Combine (SDIA, 2021)

Media

Quoted or featured in Computer Weekly, Tagesspiegel Background, Handelsblatt, heise online, Data Centre Magazine, Datacenter-Insider, and CNET on topics including greenwashing in digital infrastructure, data center regulation, and sustainable software development.

Public Speaking (Selected)

UN General Assembly – High-Level Thematic Debate on Digital Cooperation (2021)

Neos Conference – Keynote: A Vision for Digital Sustainability (2023)

Critical Insight Conference – Keynote: Digital Equity for All (2023)

Data Center World London – Conference presentations on carbon neutrality and sustainable infrastructure (2022, 2023)

SDIA Green Coding Summit – Host and moderator (2023)

GreenTech Forum Brussels – Panel on European sustainable IT vision (2024)

German Environmental Agency (UBA) – Fireside chat (2024)

Federal Ministry for Environment (BMUV) – Digital Espresso discussion series (2024)

Standards & Advisory Boards

TNO Sustainable IT Program – Advisory Board Member (2023 – present)

ISO – Working Group Member, Ecodesign for Digital Services (2023 – present)

DIN/VDE – Working Group Member, Green Software Measurement (2024 – present)

SV Bloemendaal Gymnastics – Volunteer chef for youth athletics events

Languages

German (native), English (fluent), French (elementary), Spanish (elementary)