Doing Ethics in IT Contexts

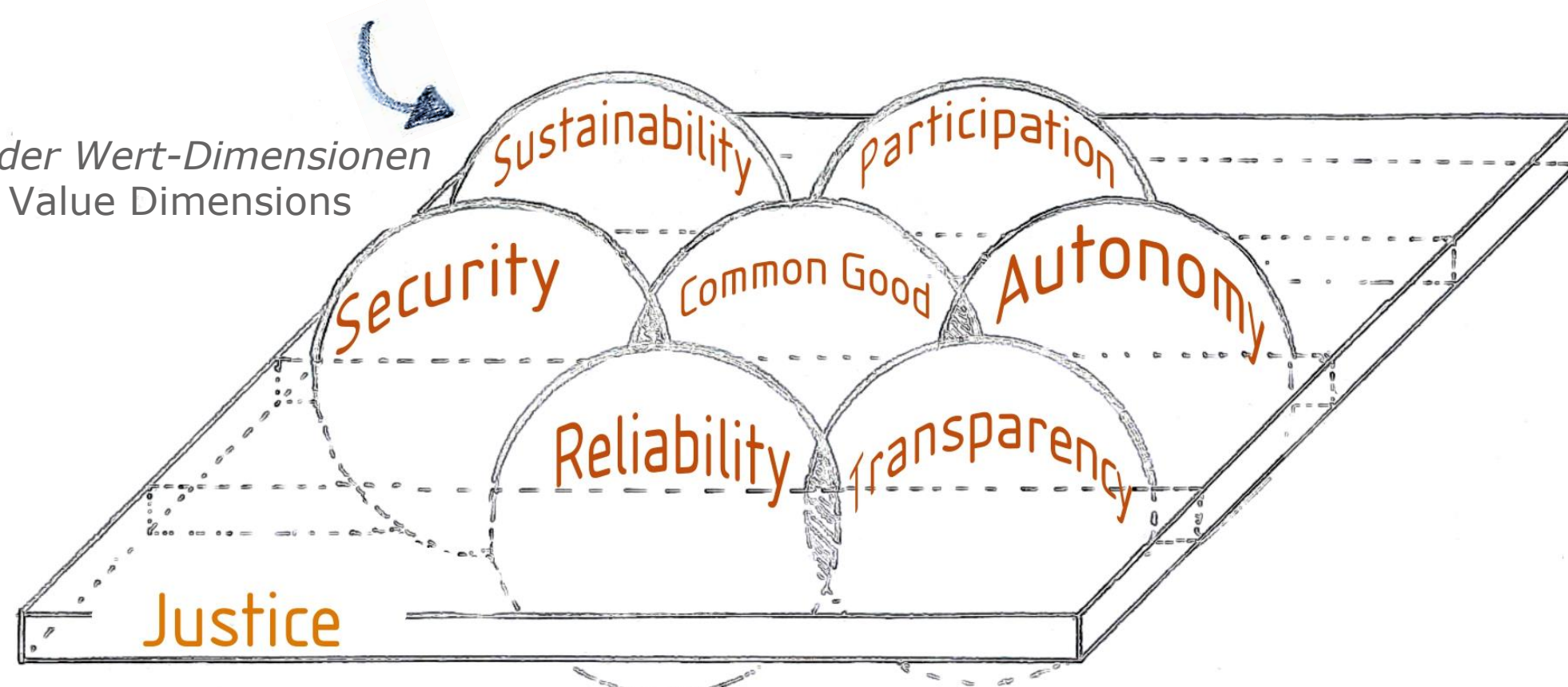**Dr. Isabelle Fries**
✉ isabelle.fries@unibw.de

linkedin.com/in/isabelle-fries

Ethical Guidelines for DLT-based Information Systems

This research contribution not only provides **guidelines** but also embeds the desire for orientation in the digital sphere within fundamental **philosophical and ethical reflections**, while simultaneously acknowledging **legal implications** as well **as practical applications**.

It engages in **an innovative design** by examining existing forays into **Blockchain Ethics** in the scholarly discourse but is taking its own pioneering path. At the core lies the specially developed *Modell der Wert-Dimensionen* (Model of Value Dimensions), encompassing the dimensions of **common good, sustainability, autonomy, security, participation, transparency, and reliability**. The handling of these dimensions is conceptualized as **the action of ethically sovereign subjects** and is addressed to **IT Governance** as well.   https://doi.org/10.30819/5834

Three uncomfortable truths

1. You cannot just buy an ethics module to make any IT context ethical.

2. For IT contexts to become and remain ethically valuable, it requires **you**.

3. The same applies to IT security as to ethics in points 1 and 2.

Modell der Wert-Dimensionen
Model of Value Dimensions

Awareness in Sociotechnical Systems

The focus of this ongoing research project is on **individual awareness in a digitized environment**. Through a **virtue-ethical approach**, it is proposed to consider awareness itself as a virtue. As such, awareness can subsequently be integrated into the **concept of *Innere Führung* of the Bundeswehr**. The overall goal is to highlight ways to **strengthen the autonomy**, emphasizing agency, responsibility, and a critical vision in interactions within sociotechnical systems.

Some further Research

- **Balancing Power and Participation.** Ethical Contributions to Digital Strategy Development Based on a Case Study at a Public University (2025; together with U. Fries & M. Rost)

- **Ein Spielverderber namens Ernst**. Metaethische Reflexionen zu Wargames und Serious Games (2026)

- **On the Way to the Best Information System of the Future** – Reflections on Scenarios in Favor of Good Technology Development (2025; together with M. Greiner et al.)

- **Technology-enabled Fairness?** Reflections on Fairness within Blockchain-based Supply Chain Consortia (2023; together with M. Greiner)

- **Daten, Freiheit, Wirklichkeit**. Deutungshoheit in Zeit und digitalem Raum (2023)

- **»In Code We Trust?«** – Zur Vertrauens-Verheißung der Blockchain-Technologie (2022)

Added value for the Bundeswehr

- **Digital awareness** provides a foundation for securing **critical infrastructure**.
- **Autonomy and responsibility** are critical dimensions of human interaction with technical systems, including the use of autonomous and semi-autonomous weapons.
- **Ethical implications of digital awareness** are transferable to **military contexts**, particularly in the context of digital transformation processes.
- The **virtue-ethical approach** aligns seamlessly with the already established framework of *Innere Führung*.
- **Increasing the effectiveness of strategic action** through a **participatory approach**, which relies on support from broader groups (e.g., the general population), offers valuable insights for military strategies – such as those focused on **civil defense**.