

Research projects at GRB – Selected examples

The Commensuration of Responsible Business

Commensuration, i.e. the process of translating qualities into measurable and comparable quantities, is of particular relevance for setting up governance processes related to responsible business. The existence of measurable indicators for selected issue areas (e.g. human rights and anti-corruption) is often seen as an important input into governance processes. This project looked at how various dimensions of commensuration (e.g. cognitive and technical) have shaped the standardisation of responsible business practices (e.g. via non-financial reporting).

Contact: Professor [Andreas Rasche](#)

Nudge-It

The prevalence of overweight and obesity across Europe has increased dramatically in the last thirty years, particularly among children. The full consequences of this epidemic have yet to unfold, with an expected increase in a range of both physical ailments and mental health conditions including anxiety and depression. These are accompanied by huge social, health service and economic costs: they affect individuals in the midst of their working lives, impoverishing families through time lost at work and impaired employment prospects. Stress, compounded by social stigma and prejudice in workplace, educational and health care contexts, adds to the pressures on families and employment, and can enhance the vicious cycle of weight-gain through “comfort eating.

Contact: Professor [Lucia Reisch](#) or Professor MSO [Wencke Gwozdz](#)

Global Value

The Global Value project aimed to develop a comprehensive and innovative framework for assessing the impact that Multinational Corporations (MNCs) have on issues like sustainable development, human rights, transparency and anti-corruption. The project wanted to shed light on institutional arrangements; analyse systems of governance for responsible business practices; explore responsible competitiveness; assess the complementarity of public and private sector activities; and derive recommendations for decision makers in business, policy and NGOs.

Contact: Professor [Lucia Reisch](#)

EU-InnovatE

With the overall goal of uncovering the obstacles and prospects that exist in Europe for a sustainable green economy the EU-InnovatE project strove to uncover the underlying factors, challenges and opportunities linked with the transition towards a sustainable society from an economic, social and environmental point of view. Co-financed by the European Union the project endeavored to tackle this area of concern by focusing on how user-centred and user-driven Integration, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship could positively influence our transition towards a greener economy. Not only because user-driven change remains an area of largely untapped potential, but also because it at the moment remains a mostly unexplored research area.

Contact: [Lucia Reisch](#)

I.Family -You are what you eat and the way that you eat it! Investigate and report

The EC-funded project I.Family was doing just that, helping to identify the reasons why young people in Europe eat the way they do and how this influences lifelong health. Why do young people in Europe eat the way they do? What are the reasons behind their eating habits and choice of foods? Many factors are at play. Family time and influence are challenged by modern independent lifestyles. Processed foods, drinks and snacks are readily available. Marketing and peer pressures, accompanied by screen-based distractions that can replace physical activity, all play their part, under-pinned by learnt taste preferences and genetic predispositions.

Building on data gained from over 10,000 children in the IDEFICS study, the EC funded project **I.Family** provided further insight into the most important influences on Europe's young people, their lifestyle behaviour and their eating habits. **I.Family** did this by re-assessing families as their children move into adolescence, identifying those families that have adopted a healthy approach to food and eating habits and those who have not. The project helped us understand the biological, behavioural, social and environmental factors that drive dietary behaviour as children journey towards adulthood.

With nutrition-related diseases causing a loss of over 56 million years of healthy life of European citizens as reported in 2000, policy-makers and healthcare professionals need to be sure how they can best support families to achieve healthier lifestyles. Families and individuals themselves will also benefit from the clarity provided by I.Family's results, helping them to establish the ground rules that will lead to enjoyment of a longer healthier life.

[Professor Lucia Reisch](#) was chairing the Work Package 7 "Consumer health behaviour and environmental factors". Here, wider factors of nearer and wider environment of children and adolescents and their families were investigated. The regarded age group of pre-teens (tweens) is particularly susceptible to external influences since consumer competence and health literacy in nutrition related behaviour is just being built up, family guidance is gradually losing its predominance and the external consumption environment is gaining importance.

Associate Professor Wencke Gwozdz was co-chairing the Work Package 8 "Consumer awareness, ethical acceptability and policy implications". Here, based on existing research and theory on behavioural change, social marketing and health communication, effective and pragmatic strategies as well as long-term policies to overcome 'resistance to intervention' were designed and tested.

Contact: Professor [Lucia Reisch](#)

The "Hidden Architecture" of Organizations: A Study of Organizational Secrecy

Secrecy is a fundamental part of organizations. However, in the light of the increasing push towards transparency, public accountability and knowledge sharing it has increasingly become subject to contested debates. Indeed corruption, ethical wrongdoing and irresponsibility are often equated with dark secrecy. But does secrecy necessarily lead to irresponsible behavior? Can there be organizational life without secrecy? Why do organizations engage in secrecy?

This project, which was funded by the European Union (Marie Curie Fellowship), sought to conduct a systematic investigation of the significant, yet still widely neglected topic of organizational secrecy. The aim of the project was to bring organizational secrecy into research focus, add it as a novel construct to the analytical repertoire of organization theory and related fields, and discuss its wide-ranging social, economic and political implications.

Contact: Professor [Dan Kärreman](#) or Research Fellow Jana Costas

Is Organizational Hypocrisy Merely a Transitory Phenomenon

In this project, we aimed at theory building regarding the dynamics of decoupling in global corporate responsibility (CR) standardization, the semi-voluntary self-regulation of global industries. We integrated recent advancements in theories of path dependence and self-reinforcing processes with the institutional theory conception of decoupling to better describe decoupling as a transitory phenomenon. Drawing upon a computer-based simulation we ran virtual experiments to specify the boundary conditions and mechanisms under which a decision to formally adopt a CR standard triggers a self-reinforcing mechanism that is constitutive of field-level change.

Contact: Professor [Dennis Schoeneborn](#)

The Communicative Constitution of Global Partial Organizations

In this project, we contributed to Ahrne and Brunsson's notion of "partial organization" (2011). By definition, partial organizations lack one or more of the typical features of "complete organizations", i.e., hierarchies, membership, rules, or monitoring and sanction mechanisms. We reconstructed phenomena of partial organizations in the global realm from a theoretical perspective called "communication constitutes organizations" (CCO). The CCO view allows for examining partial organizations as dynamic phenomena that typically undergo a discursive trajectory over time.

Contact: Professor [Dennis Schoeneborn](#)

Corruption Control and Transparency Regimes

This project analyzed how and why international anti-corruption activities organized by states, international organizations and NGOs have come to address the responsibility of business in the fight against corruption, and how corporate anti-corruption activity are connected to wider sustainability, corporate responsibility and business ethics agendas. The project strove to bring us more knowledge about how corporate engagement and particularly its softer dimensions beyond legal compliance (if any at all) is practiced by analyzing the relations between business, government organizations and civil society actors on various levels and in different issue areas in the shaping, making and implementation of the anti-corruption agenda. Theoretically, the project explored the concepts of governance, governmentality and private authority. It theorized the emergence of new modes of governance that replace, overlap or complement more traditional modes, and it looked into the implications for organizational practices. Forming part of this project was also a study of the emergence of regimes of transparency and surveillance, including of the 'power of numbers', such as rankings and other numerical systems, in governance.

Contact: Professor [Hans Krause Hansen](#)

Sustainability in a Scandinavian Context

Scandinavia is routinely cited as a global leader in corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainability. In this research project, we explored the foundations for claims that Scandinavian countries and Scandinavian companies are leaders in CSR and sustainability. We did so while also exploring the potential contributing factors for these performances and looming challenges to these performances. This project was comprised of a number of supporting initiatives that included the building of the Nordic Network for Sustainability comprised of universities across the Nordic region and beyond, in particular North America, to collaboratively engage in sustainability and CSR research and educational opportunities. The successful "Sustainability in a Scandinavian Context Conference" hosted at CBS in June 2013 represented one outcome of this project and a pending journal special issue dedicated to these topics.

Contact: Associate Professor [Robert Strand](#)

MISTRA Future Fashion

The overall objective of the [MISTRA Future Fashion](#) project was to promote systemic change of the Swedish fashion industry that leads to sustainable development of the industry and wider society, while at the same time strengthening the competitiveness of this industry. Expected outcomes of the four-year research initiative (2011-2015) included e.g. novel textile fibers, educational materials for designers, innovative recycling solutions, new business models, toolboxes for communication, and recommendations for policy makers. The project was financed by Stiftelsen för Miljöstrategisk Forskning (MISTRA).

MISTRA Future Fashion was based on cross-sectoral and cross-disciplinary collaboration between academia and industry. Participants included SP Technical Research Institute of Sweden, Chalmers University of Technology, Copenhagen Business School, College of Crafts, Arts and Design (Konstfack), Innventia, Malmö University, Stockholm School of Economics, Swerea IVF, and the University of the Arts London. In addition, the project also had participation of industry partners.

MISTRA Future Fashion was divided into 8 research projects. CBS was responsible for the planning and implementation of two of these:

Professor Esben Rahbek Gjerdrum Pedersen was project leader of **Project 1: Changing markets & business models: Towards sustainable innovation in the fashion industry**. The objective of this research project was to identify, develop, and disseminate knowledge about new market and business models for sustainable fashion. Concerted action is needed to foster a tipping point for sustainable fashion since no single actor has the capital and power to restructure the entire fashion industry. Therefore, the study of new market and business models have to look beyond the individual company and take into account the factors within the institutional environment that play a role in transforming the fashion industry.

Professor MSO Wencke Gwozdz led **Project 7: Sustainable consumption and consumer behaviour**. The project strove to identify, develop, and disseminate in-depth knowledge about the sustainable fashion system in general and the behavior of specified consumers in particular. The focus was on potential promising entry points to successfully induce behavioral change towards more sustainable fashion consumption. We looked for such entry points in the realm of fashion producers, retailers and consumers as well as in policy making.

Contact: Professor [Esben Rahbek Gjerdrum Pedersen](#) and Professor MSO [Wencke Gwozdz](#)

Image, branding and identity: organizational, occupational and individual interfaces

The research program aimed to investigate in considerable depth the dynamic relation among image (external perceptions), branding (efforts to distil an 'essence' and implant that in others) and identity (view of one's self or collective). This investigation proceeded through several intricate studies of various groups involved in the interface among image, branding, and identity.

In particular, the research focused on groups who are active in the attempts to construct brands, images and identities: marketing managers, salespersons in retailing and advertising, communication specialists, management consultants, and senior HRM people. We were also interested in groups who are less formally active in (or paid to do) branding and image management work, but who are nevertheless vital to the process. This group includes low-level and other employees, consumers, students and other parts of the public. Some of these intermediaries may be actively involved in branding work by, for instance, reproducing certain messages, whereas others are more like 'end-targets' expected to mostly consume messages. Many of these groups and their particular members may inhabit conflicted positions and exhibit ambivalent stances toward specific images, brands and identities. The empirical research thus involved

organizations, occupational/professional groups and individuals in a variety of capacities – full-time and formal branders, part-time and informal branders, as well as branding reproducers, consumers and ‘jammers’.

The project sought to develop empirical in-depth research and theory on the following three areas:

1. Branding as influenced by image and identity: In what ways do branding processes and outcomes depend on image and identity? How is branding affected, tempered, and/or unravelled by image and identity factors?
2. Considering image in relation to branding and identity, what image concerns do various actors encounter, and how do they grapple with these concerns?
3. How do personal and collective identity constructions interact with image and branding?

Contact: Professor [Dan Kärreman](#)

Light and Darkness - The Prospects and Limitations of Organizational Transparency

The overall aim of this project was to analyze the prospects and limitations of *organizational transparency* understood as the idea(l), the objective, and the policy of increased openness and accountability in organizational practices. Focusing on the intersection between processes that *promote and advance* transparency, and conditions and procedures that *impede* it, the project explored how organizational responses to transparency demands in their surroundings shape and, eventually, affect public insight into contemporary organizations. We analyzed the efforts of key organizational actors, including major private corporations, select regulatory agencies, concerned international organizations and nongovernmental organizations to define, specify and make explicit what transparency means or should mean in practice. Being sensitive to the ambiguities and hidden premises associated with transparency, the project contributed to an understanding of the promises, premises and perils of increased organizational transparency. The focus on this issue was timely and important, not only because it addressed the possibilities for organizational accountability, but also because it tapped into issues of sustainability and democratic practice at all levels of society.

Contact: Professor [Lars Thøger Christensen](#)

Transparency and opacity: balancing legitimacy

Transparency as an aspirational norm has achieved a pivotal role in the governance of responsible organizational practice. Organizations often have an interest in positioning themselves as accessible and transparent to the outside world, as promoting dialogue, multi-stakeholder inclusion, and accountability. Beyond making the opaque visible, transparency serves as a central signpost for the organization, both internally and externally, endowing its activities with a degree of legitimacy. On the other hand, organizations often have reason to cultivate a degree of opacity around their activities, with selective invitations of experts, committee members, and journalists, and a degree of secrecy around organizational resource allocations. The alignment of transparency ideals with opacity practices is a major organizational balancing act, and a central cultural tenet in many organizations.

This project worked from the assumption that the interplay of transparency and opacity is constitutive of organizational practice, contributes to the allocation of agency, and influences the configuration of legitimacy. The project looked at how transparency ideals are articulated in the organizational world of policy-making and how opacity figures in the practices of organizations. How do organizations make use of transparency to construct legitimacy and to gain leverage for their interests? How do organizations work to maintain a degree of opacity around core dimensions of organizational resources? Empirically, the project

built on ethnographic fieldwork in and among think tanks and similar kinds of organizations in the U.S and in Sweden. The project was led by Christina Garsten and was funded by The Swedish Foundation for Humanities and Social Sciences.

Contact: Professor Christina Garsten

Think tanks and the organizing of global markets

The globalization of markets and corporate activities opens up new possibilities as well as new risks for citizens and nation-states. The established organizational structures and forms of governance are facing significant challenges pertaining to the social effects of the global economy. In this process, think tanks, or policy institutes, have assumed a greater role as arenas for policy analysis and diffusion of ideas and knowledge. Think tanks often play a prominent role in analyzing the current financial and social situation in the world and creating scenarios for possible future development trajectories. Such representations often play a crucial role in political debates and in decision-making processes in corporations and in global, multilateral institutions, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. They also often influence the allocation of financial resources, agenda setting, and the definition of priorities.

This project focused on the role of think tanks in producing knowledge about, and representations of, future markets. Some research questions were: How is knowledge produced in think tanks? How are ideas and knowledge diffused to other, relevant actors? How can think tanks influence political processes and decision making through their activities? Ethnographic fieldwork has been undertaken in Washington DC, in Paris, and in Stockholm. The project was led by Christina Garsten and received funding by The Swedish Foundation for Humanities and Social Sciences.

Contact: Professor Christina Garsten

CORPUS - Enhancing connectivity between research and policy-making in sustainable consumption FP7 Project, chaired by Professor Lucia A. Reisch, cbsCSR (started 2010). The EU Research Framework Programme (FP7) provided the unique opportunity to further improve knowledge transfer at the interface of policy-making and research on sustainable development. CORPUS was a research project within the work programme "Environment". It aimed to develop new and practical approaches in order to enhance the connectivity between research and policy-making. The aim of this activity in FP7 was to experiment and develop new integrative modalities of linking research results to policy-making through 'secondary exploitation' of existing research. The project focused on the policy issue of 'sustainable consumption' which is of great importance in the current and future strategic development of the EU. It is included, for instance, in the re-launched Lisbon Strategy and is one of the key challenges of renewed EU SDS.

The objectives of the project were:

- Development and testing of a knowledge web-platform with in-built incentives attracting and matching researchers' and policy-makers' interests in knowledge exchange alike.
- Development and testing of interactive tools of knowledge brokerage within different dialogue-oriented formats, such as scenario workshops and mapping exercises.
- Initiation of learning processes among researchers and policy-makers involved in the specific trials in order to trigger self-sustaining processes of knowledge brokerage and community building.
- Assessment of the capabilities and shortcomings of the knowledge brokerage tools under consideration in order to arrive at general recommendations for future methodologies aimed to enhance the connectivity

between research and policy-making in sustainable development.

Contact: Professor [Lucia Reisch](#)

IDEFICS - IDEFICS study, Identification and prevention of Dietary- and lifestyle-induced health Effects In Children and infants.

The IDEFICS study, financed by the EU 6th Framework Programme, was a major multidisciplinary, intercultural project with partners in 11 EU countries and focusing on children aged 2 to 10 years. The project was conducted from September 2006 until February 2012.

Its strategic objectives were:

1. to enhance knowledge of health effects of an altered social environment & lifestyle of children in Europe
2. and to develop, implement & validate specific intervention approaches in order to reduce the prevalence of diet- & lifestyle-related diseases & disorders in the EU

Prof. Lucia Reisch was chairing the Work Activity 07 "Consumer science". Here, consumer behaviour was put into the broader perspective of society, e.g., internal and external factors of health behaviour were identified. Children's health behaviour is not only influenced by individual characteristics and the family environment, but also by communities and school and on a societal level by all actors involved, e.g., political actors, mass media, food industry etc. A special interest within this consumer working area is laid on the role of commercials where a qualitative toolbox provides an insight into the effects commercials exert on children's food related behaviour.

Contact: Professor [Lucia A. Reisch](#) and Professor MSO [Wencke Gwozdz](#)