Corporate Responsibility Research Conference CRRC 2025

'Planetary Boundaries and the Sustainability Transition: The Great Disconnect?'

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

(Version 29/10/2025)

Acting for Biodiversity in a Food Value Chain

(Otto Lappalainen, Satu Teerikangas, Irene Kuhmonen, Matti Salo & Marja Turunen)

Reversing the ongoing biodiversity decline is critical to secure the future of all species. Food production ranks among the primary causes of biodiversity loss. Yet, research lacks appreciations of the biodiversity actions of companies across food value chains. In this paper, adopting a qualitative, grounded theory research design, we explore companies' biodiversity actions across a national food value chain. Empirically, we study 37 companies operating in the Finnish food value chain via interviews and secondary material. As our findings, we (1) identify what companies' biodiversity actions are, (2) assess which actions bear direct vs. indirect impact on biodiversity, and further, how these actions depend on (3) a company's position in the value chain, and (4) the function within an organization. In so doing, we contribute to the discussion on biodiversity and business by offering an analytical categorization of companies' direct vs. indirect biodiversity actions across a national food value chain. Our findings are a call for more research, policy and corporate commitments toward biodiversity conservation.

➔ *full paper available*

Integrating stakeholder theory and action situation framework for collective action for biodiversity

(Annika Blomberg, Ari Jokinen & Johanna Kujala)

Biodiversity loss is a wicked problem that requires wide participation and multi-scale approaches. Previous research has addressed biodiversity governance from a sectoral perspective and implementation. However, to be effective, biodiversity governance needs collective action where different sectors and actors collaborate. This study uses the construct of action situation (Ostrom 2005, 2011) and the stakeholder theory (Freeman 1984) to examine the potential of business-stakeholder networks to contribute to collective action for biodiversity. Action situation (AS) is a social arena in which interdependent actors make decisions to resolve commons problems (Ostrom, 2005, 2011). As stakeholders are increasingly included in studies on biodiversity conservation and commons dynamics, we use stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984) to understand business-stakeholder relationships and networks, and consider not only human stakeholders such as authorities, citizens, activists, and entrepreneurs, but also nonhuman stakeholders such as animals, plants, and the natural environment (Driscoll & Starik, 2004; Kujala et al., 2019). We present a conceptual framework of collective action for biodiversity starting from business-stakeholder interactions in action situations and discuss how stakeholder theory could inform effective action situations. We use the mining sector in Finland as our empirical context and conduct a case study of two mines operating in Finland. The empirical material consists of 23 interviews with 28 people, including representatives of the mining companies and their stakeholders. Other material, such as observation during several site visits, participation in stakeholder meetings and documentary material is used to support the primary material. We identify four types of action situations for more detailed analysis: Environmental impact assessment, water monitoring, acknowledging biotic colonization and mining closure planning. We analyze the action situations concerning the actors, rules, processes and structures and reflect them against the premises of stakeholder theory. We show how stakeholder dynamics in action situations drive collective action for biodiversity through engagements between the focal company and its stakeholders including the nonhuman nature. We conclude by showing how stakeholder theory and commons theory can enrich each other and be jointly used in seeking solutions to tackle biodiversity loss. More specifically, we discuss how stakeholder approach can support collective action for commons. We contribute to previous research by showing that sectoral and transformational progress in biodiversity governance depends on the evolution of well-performing action situations and interdependencies arising from them.

Exploring the connection between managers' biodiversity attitudes and stakeholder responsibility perceptions: Evidence from Finland

(Neha Neha, Hanna Salminen, Johanna Kujala & Riikka Tapaninaho)

Management scholars use the concept of corporate stakeholder responsibility to understand companies' broader societal roles and to reflect how companies and their managers consider the interests, expectations, and needs of their stakeholders, and it is closely linked to top management's perceptions of these interests. Prior research has shown that managers' perceptions of stakeholder responsibility are associated with the integration of sustainable development goals into business practices. However, literature has not given attention to more specific sustainability goals such as biodiversity protection. Building on stakeholder theory, on the concept of stakeholder responsibility, and on environmental management literature, this study investigates how managers' perceptions of stakeholder responsibility are linked to managers' attitudes towards biodiversity. We conducted a quantitative study among top managers of small, medium, and large industrial companies in Finland. Using a phone survey conducted by an external research agency, 2,220 executives representing approximately 1,950 companies were contacted, yielding 200 responses. The final response rate was 9%, which is considered acceptable in studies targeting top management. The survey questionnaire consisted of a stakeholder responsibility scale and a biodiversity attitude scale, and we used descriptive statistics and confirmatory factor analysis to assess factorial validity. Our preliminary findings show that stakeholder responsibility was perceived most strongly in relation to the key stakeholder groups of financiers, competitors, and suppliers. In contrast, responsibility toward watchdog groups of NGOs, and media was perceived generally weaker. While managers expressed a strong willingness to lead in protecting biodiversity, the overall composite score of managers' biodiversity attitudes was moderate, suggesting that biodiversity is not yet fully prioritized over economic concerns. We also found a statistically significant positive correlation between managers' biodiversity attitudes and stakeholder responsibility perceptions. This indicates that strong stakeholder responsibility perceptions are positively linked with managers' attitudes toward biodiversity in general.

➔ *full paper available*

Session 1B – Sustainable Entrepreneurship (1/1)

Thursday 30 October 2025, 09:00-10:30 *Room 6.008*

The road to hell is paved with good intentions: a review and research agenda on rebound effects and win-win strategies

(Jozef Cossey & Aurélien Acquier)

Rebound effects refer to the phenomenon whereby efficiency improvements in resource or energy use translate into increased demand, which partially or even completely offsets their potential savings. This phenomenon presents a major challenge for strategies seeking to reconcile environmental and financial performance improvements, but is at present largely overlooked in management research. This article thus traces the origins of the literature in energy economics, and documents its progressive empirical diversification, especially among industrial ecologists. Yet, the focus has been on the quantification of rebound magnitudes, leaving the literature with a limited understanding of how the phenomenon is perceived and acted upon by decision-makers. Complement existing literature in this regard, we conclude by outlining a conceptual framework that distinguishes unreliable, opportunistic and integrated win-win strategies based on the way in which rebound effects are perceived and acted upon and outline avenues for future research.

The mismatch between sustainability and market expectations: Challenges faced by micro chocolate producers in Trinidad & Tobago

(Berkay Orhaner)

This study investigates how micro tree-to-bar and bean-to-bar chocolate producers in Trinidad and Tobago navigate the challenges and opportunities associated with sustainable production and marketing. Drawing on the Network Theory of Internationalisation and the Uppsala Internationalisation Model, the research examines how these microenterprises access and operate in both domestic and international markets. The case of Trinidad and Tobago's chocolate producers is evaluated through these theoretical lenses to contribute to a deeper understanding of the sustainability-related barriers and enablers faced by micro-enterprises. A qualitative case study approach was employed to gain in-depth insights into real-world practices. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven tree-to-bar and six bean-to-bar chocolate producers across Trinidad. Findings reveal that these producers generally maintain a low environmental footprint, avoid chemical pesticides, require minimal irrigation, and actively engage with sustainability-related developments—demonstrating a high level of environmental responsibility. However, they face significant market-related challenges: domestically, consumer demand for sustainable chocolate remains limited, while internationally, access to sustainability certifications is costly and complex, and the expectation of consistent supply is difficult for small producers to meet. The study offers two key recommendations. First, raising consumer awareness is essential to drive a genuine sustainability transition, particularly in markets for exotic agricultural products. Second, the development of sustainable supply chains should incorporate innovative strategies that extend beyond conventional sustainability-certification schemes.

➔ *full paper available*

Social Entrepreneurship Driving Social Innovation and Institutional Change

(Maria Boura & Stelios Zyglidopoulos)

In this paper, we investigate how social entrepreneurship can become a vehicle for social change and social innovation in traditional industries. Based on an in-depth qualitative case study, we study a social entrepreneurship that operates in the fishing sector through an innovative business model, addressing marine pollution and enhancing local communities. Drawing on social entrepreneurship and institutional legitimacy literature (Suchman, 1995; Mair & Martí, 2006; Battilana et al., 2009; Chiu & Sharfman, 2011)), we first focus on the social change that social ventures can achieve on dominant institutional logics. Second, we highlight how social ventures adapt to local institutional environments (Doh & Guay, 2006), build trust, gain local acceptance and manage to align with the values of local stakeholders (Gifford et al., 2010; Du & Vieira, 2012). Our findings reveal that social innovation is not only a matter of product or process innovation, but also includes the redesign of stakeholder interconnections, concerned with entrepreneurship, social mission and environmental responsibility. Our case study demonstrates the ability to recognize and exploit environmental market failures as meaningful opportunities (Cohen & Winn, 2007; Shepherd & Patzelt, 2011), the treating of sustainability not as a constraint, but as a catalyst for innovation, based on the interplay of value creation, stakeholder engagement and institutional transformation. Furthermore, we find that there is a need for local acceptance and involvement as a basis for institutional consolidation of innovation (Gifford et al., 2010), while visibility, transparency and interpersonal trust proves to be crucial for the acceptance of social enterprises by skeptical and resistant to transformation stakeholder groups (Du & Vieira, 2012; Gehman et al., 2017; Chiu & Sharfman, 2011). In conclusion, our work here advances our understanding of how social entrepreneurship can bring a social change in traditional industries and reveals the procedures through which social ventures can gain legitimacy and transform a particular industry through cooperation, adaptation and value co-creation.

A Catalyst for Positive Change: How Responsible Leadership Improves Supply Chains for Corporate Sustainability

(Silke Bustamante, Martina Martinovic, Andrea Pelzeter & Roxana Zimmermann)

In light of the serious sustainability challenges the world is facing and the recurring scandals related to environmental and social issues in supply chains, companies are called to adopt sustainable supply chain (SSC) practices and contribute to global sustainable development. SSC practices represent a concept that encompasses a variety of internal (e.g. monitoring) as well as external activities (e.g. supplier development, co-operation) (e.g. Broemer et al. 2019) that have been shown to positively influence the sustainability performance of companies (Jum'a et al. 2024; Kuwornu et al. 2023). In terms of factors driving the implementation of SSC practices several aspects including the pressure of interest groups, the existence of strategic alliances as well as the general management orientation towards sustainability have been highlighted in past research (e.g. Warasthe et al. 2020). Interestingly, the concept of SSCs has very rarely been studied in depth in relation to the concept of responsible leadership (RL). Furthermore, no study has investigated the driving role of RL for the comprehensive implementation of SSC practices as well as its effect on the corporate sustainability performance via this implementation. However, as responsible leaders are understood as leaders who are carrying responsibility towards a broad group of stakeholders for economic, social as well as environmental aspects, which they express in their decisions and actions (Patzer et al. 2018), the integration of RL as an enabler for implementing SSC practices and improving the corporate sustainability performance seems very promising. Against this background, the present paper aims to develop a theoretical model on the interplay between RL, the comprehensive adoption of SSC practices and the sustainability performance of companies. It sheds light on the questions, how and when RL influences the adoption of internal and external SSC practices and how it contributes to the corporate economic, social and environmental performance via this implementation. It thereby explores the role of RL as a catalyst for positive change towards sustainability. The model is developed by integrating diverse literature streams focusing on either the RL construct (especially its characterization and effects) or the SSC construct (especially its operationalization, antecedents and outcomes). It applies several theoretical approaches including stakeholder and social learning theory. The results of this study are particularly valuable for future academic works, which can use the developed model to empirically test the assumed relationships and thus gain highly relevant insights for practitioners looking for ways to respond to the demands placed on them for improved supply chain and overall corporate sustainability.

From Corporate Responsibility to Territorial and Locally Grounded Responsibilities: The Case of Mining Corporations in the Antofagasta Region, Northern Chile

(Gaëlle Cotterlaz-Rannard, Manuel Mendez & Paulina Ceballos)

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), predominantly developed within Global North institutional contexts, inadequately addresses the complex socio-natural relations characterizing extractive operations in the Global South. This research challenges mainstream corporate-centric CSR conceptualisations by proposing a territory-centric approach grounded in critical geography. Through longitudinal case studies of three multinational mining corporations in northern Chile, we examine how CSR functions as a mechanism for imposing corporate ontologies onto local territories while obscuring fundamental contradictions regarding long-term dependencies and post-extraction responsibilities. Our findings show that current CSR practices reduce territorial complexity by separating social and natural elements, failing to recognize territories as dynamic socio-environmental assemblages shaped by cultural, historical, economic, and biophysical processes. We have developed the Comprehensive Territorial Approach (CTA), which shifts focus from corporate obligations to territorial

relations, making visible the spatial, temporal, and ontological dimensions typically obscured in mainstream frameworks. This paradigmatic shift addresses deresponsibilisation through substitution that can be observed in extractive contexts. Rather than addressing environmental impacts directly, corporations deploy socio-economic CSR initiatives that redirect stakeholder attention toward community benefits.

➔ *full paper available*

The interplay between Business Diplomacy and CSR in navigating Legitimacy from Home to Host: Case Study of Vietnamese SMEs in Cross-border Engagement

(Anh Tuan Tran)

In a global context emphasising responsible governance and sustainable development, CSR has shifted from an ethical commitment to a strategic tool for legitimacy, especially for enterprises from emerging economies. This study examines how Vietnamese SMEs use CSR to gain legitimacy during international expansion. While much research focuses on large multinationals, little is known about resource-constrained SMEs and their different institutional expectations domestically and abroad. Vietnam's rapidly growing economy and increasing global trade integration make it a significant context. SMEs, over 95% of enterprises, are expanding internationally amid institutional disparities: domestic reliance on informal networks versus international expectations of transparency, CSR, and governance. CSR serves both as an internal ethical practice and an external adaptive strategy. Multinational companies face similar challenges from geopolitical tensions and institutional gaps, making business diplomacy a crucial aspect of their operations. This study views CSR as both a moral and strategic concept. It employs a qualitative case study, comprising fourteen semi-structured interviews with Vietnamese SME leaders who are involved in international collaboration or expansion. Data were thematically coded and analysed through abductive reasoning to develop practice-based theory. Findings reveal three key traits: Vietnamese SMEs utilise CSR to establish legitimacy by gaining trust with domestic stakeholders, which in turn helps secure support abroad during foreign audits. CSR efforts aim to meet societal expectations and achieve long-term benefits, but they rely on the availability of funds. Business diplomacy acts as a soft infrastructure, using CSR to navigate cultural and institutional barriers and enhance international reputation. Despite resource limits, these SMEs show institutional initiative, combining strategies to establish foreign legitimacy. The research question is: How do Vietnamese SMEs use business diplomacy and corporate social responsibility (CSR) to navigate and build legitimacy in the international business context?

➔ *full paper available*

Session 1D – Open Call CSR & Sustainability (1/4)

Thursday 30 October 2025, 09:00-10:30 *Room 6.048*

Stability, Flexibility, and A New Normal: Exploring Organizational Resilience in a Population of Taiwanese Hotels

(Yu-Hsiang Huang, Andrew Bryant & Jennifer Griffin)

International tourist hotels play a critical role in Taiwan's hospitality and tourism industry but faced significant challenges following the onset of COVID-19, testing organizational resilience. Examining resilience between 2020 and 2022, we posit that pre-existing stability and flexibility limits losses and assists in rapid adaptation leading to a stronger recovery. We test our hypotheses across a population of all 51 Taiwanese international tourist hotels, finding that hotels with prior stability and flexibility outperformed rivals, even when controlling for traditional hotel factors of size, location, and price. We make two contributions. First, we examine organizational resilience as a stronger recovery allowing for a new normal over an extended period of

uncertainty. Focusing organizational resilience scholarship on a new normal rather than a bounce back to prior conditions has important theoretical and empirical implications for climate related resilience. Second, we theorize and find that pre-existing organizational efficiencies in converting resources into productive outputs (yields) help navigate extended downturns. Relatedly, we use data envelopment analysis (DEA) to emphasize efficiencies as part of mitigation. Our findings offer an alternative to post-hoc reactive tactics such as cutting slack resources and instead posit *a priori* efficiency is a key to resilience. Our findings of *a priori* efficiencies may pose challenges to the climate mitigation, adaptation, and transformation debates.

The Promise Performance Gap: The Role of Boards in Corporate Sustainability Action

(Annabelle Lewis, Fanny Salignac & Alex Baumber)

Despite firms seemingly embracing the urgent need for businesses to contribute to successful sustainability transitions, there is a continued gap between their public commitments and their actual social and environmental impacts. Positing board decision-making as a key mediating mechanism between companies' intentions and performance, our paper explores the influences on board decision-making in a corporate social responsibility (CSR) context. We use a multi-level and multi-theoretical framework as the basis for our study. The framework combines two system-based models from psychology (the capability-opportunity-motivation behaviour change model (COM-B) and the socio-ecological model (SEM) of behavioural influence) to organise behavioural determinants identified from diverse literature. Through semi-structured interviews of non-executive directors and other system participants in Australia, we collect and analyse perceptions of board behaviour in a CSR context. Our results confirm that capability (e.g. cognition, chair leadership), opportunity (e.g. regulation, firm strategy and the chief executive officer) and motivation (e.g. directors' goals and board dynamics) elements interact in complex ways to influence boards' consideration of people and planet when making decisions. By using qualitative methods, we discover nuances not previously emphasised in extant literature. Thus, our findings, in an understudied area at the intersection of corporate governance and CSR, provide rich ground for further exploration. Importantly, by identifying the root cause of behaviour, they also enable the development of interventions that increase boards' meaningful consideration of social and environmental matters, ultimately helping to close the gap between firms' promises and their impact.

➔ *full paper available*

Managerial Sensemaking in SDG Work: A Qualitative Study

(Toke Bjerregaard & Mai Skjøtt Linneberg)

This paper seeks to further understanding of sensemaking practices engaged by sustainability managers in working with UN SDGs, particularly for the complexities of SDG adoption. The paper conveys the findings of a qualitative study of the sensemaking practices engaged by top sustainability managers in handling complexities of their SDG work in MNCs. We pose and respond to the question: *How do top sustainability managers engage and combine sensemaking and -giving practices in working through the complexities of SDG work in MNCs?* To support a sensitising conceptual background for analysis of SDG work by TSMs, we will review and synthesise theoretical inspirations across research on strategic sensemaking and SDG adoption by organisations. The study explains commonalities and variation in SDG sensemaking styles of top sustainability managers and consequential effects. On a fine-grained level of analysis, the findings reveal salient differences in SDG sensemaking styles among TSMs as they work through recursive cycles of strategic SDG sensemaking and -giving. SDG work involves the activities of organizational actors aimed at selecting, adopting, integrating, reconfiguring and abandoning SDGs.

➔ *full paper available*

Beyond the Buzzwords: Is there substance in corporate biodiversity strategies?

(Helle Alsted Søndergaard, Mai Skjøtt Linneberg, Stefan Schaper, Irene Pollach & Jeppe Kristensen)

The EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) mandates comprehensive non-financial reporting across environmental, social, and governance dimensions, including also biodiversity protection. Businesses are major contributors to biodiversity loss and, therefore, key actors in mitigating the biodiversity crisis. This paper investigates how companies engage in actionable biodiversity reporting with the potential to launch initiatives that tackle biodiversity loss effectively. Our theoretical framework synthesizes inspiration from institutional literature, the concept of illusion creation, and reporting substance. Generally, firms adopt standardized disclosures to satisfy external demands and expectations. However, when compliance with expectations challenges organizational effectiveness, symbolic implementation is more likely, and illusion creation a consequence. In such instances, companies would acknowledge biodiversity in their reports, but fail to integrate it substantively into strategy, resource allocation and practice. In our preliminary analysis, we compare two examples of corporate biodiversity engagements. Moving forwards, we plan to conduct a content analysis of corporate sustainability reports to examine and compare the substantive nature of such disclosures to arrive at a more fine-grained understanding of how companies attempt to reduce or compensate their impact on biodiversity.

➔ *full paper available*

What is Regeneration, exactly? Conceptual Cartography and Disciplinary Stretching from Biology to Management

(Boris Guffond, Valentina Carbone & Aurélien Acquier)

This article investigates how the concept of regeneration has evolved across disciplines and assesses whether its current use in sustainability management retains the conditions necessary for it to function as a causally meaningful construct. The central research question asks: what conceptual structure must regeneration retain to support causal theorization in sustainability research? The paper contributes to theory-building efforts in sustainability and organization studies by addressing the challenges posed by emerging constructs that gain discursive prominence while lacking definitional clarity. It engages with the literature on construct clarity and theoretical development (Osigweh, 1989; Cornelissen and Durand, 2014), and draws on the idea that conceptual adaptation must remain accountable to the epistemic goals of the scholarly community using it. Rather than consolidating a fixed definition, the article clarifies the threshold conditions that allow regeneration to support explanation and empirical assessment. Methodologically, the article adopts conceptual cartography (Smithson, 2021) - a non-normative and reflexive approach to examining how concepts change meaning as they move across disciplinary, linguistic, and epistemic contexts. The cartographic method unfolds in two distinct phases. The first consists of a synthesis-oriented literature review, conducted in a selective and discursive style, which traces the interdisciplinary adoption of regeneration across biology, agriculture, the built environment, and management (e.g. Hahn & Tampe, 2021; Konietzko et al., 2023). This phase examines how shifts in meaning, ontology, and epistemology have affected the coherence of the concept. The second phase reconstructs regeneration by identifying the necessary and contingent properties that enable it to function as a causal construct in sustainability management. The findings show that regeneration has been subject to conceptual stretching and is increasingly used as a heuristic analogy. Originating in biology as a materially grounded process of structural and functional restoration triggered by damage, regeneration has progressively expanded to include normative aspirations and metaphorical framings. In management, it is often mobilized as a symbolic orientation - invoked through terms such as “net-positive” or “nature-positive” (Das & Bocken, 2024) - without clear specification of what is regenerated or how. This expansion undermines the conditions

for explanatory coherence. To address this, the article identifies five properties that regeneration must retain to operate as a causal construct: it must involve structural and functional reconstitution; remain grounded in ecological ontology; refer to material and biophysical indicators; demonstrate causal efficacy; and be systemically embedded, aligning with the dynamics of ecological systems. These necessary properties are distinguished from contingent ones - such as scale, initiating agents, evaluation metrics, normative orientation, and domain extensions - that allow contextual adaptation without altering the concept's definitional threshold. By clarifying the conceptual structure of regeneration, the article contributes to sustainability management by enabling its use as a causally coherent and analytically tractable construct. It is best suited for the open call of the conference.

Exploring ambivalence in sustainability in the business context. Part I & II: Paradox theory and institutional theory

(Milla Sarja)

Business and management literature has explored drivers and barriers that affect sustainability or circular economy transition (e.g., Sarja et al., 2021; Hidalgo-Carvajal et al., 2021). This literature is rich in experiences of motivating and hindering sustainability uptake among businesses. In their work, Sarja et al. (2021) discovered that in addition to drivers and barriers, in the circular economy transition, company representatives also experience ambivalences, contradicting experiences when trying to advance their CE transition. This contradictory nature of ambivalence has also been present in other studies (Hidalgo-Carvajal et al., 2021) but has not been called by that name. This study aims to understand the phenomenon of ambivalence from a theoretical perspective. Thus, we explore theories that are familiar with contradictions, namely the paradox theory (Berti et al., 2021; Gaim & Wåhlin, 2016) and the institutional logic (Thornton et al., 2012; Georgiou & Arenas, 2023) and seek whether the phenomenon of ambivalence is explained by one of the theories. The guiding research questions are: 1) Does an existing theory explain the existence of ambivalence and 2) If so, how? The way the ambivalences fit into the chosen theories is tested by applying the theories to an example dataset that demonstrates cases of ambivalences in corporate sustainability advancement. The preliminary findings suggest that neither the paradox theory nor the institutional logics can describe the existence of ambivalences but rather support that the phenomenon does exist. This provides further evidence that there is an overlooked processuality of change in the sustainability domain that the phenomenon of ambivalence could provide a framework for.

Session 2B – CSR Communication (1/1)

Thursday 30 October 2025, 11:00-12:30 *Room 6.008*

The Responsibility Gap: Commercial Milk Formula Marketing Between the WHO Code and Corporate Social Responsibility

(Clare Patton)

Research Question: How do commercial milk formula (CMF) companies use Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) mechanisms to evade their human rights obligations under the WHO International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs)?

Theoretical Framework: This paper employs three interconnected frameworks. First, I apply the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (Ruggie, 2011), particularly Principles 11 and 13 regarding corporate responsibility to respect human rights. Second, I utilise the commercial determinants of health framework (Gilmore et al., 2023; Baker et al., 2023) to analyse how corporate practices shape health outcomes. Third, I draw on critical CSR theory (Banerjee, 2008) to examine how companies instrumentalise CSR for

legitimacy while avoiding substantive change. The WHO Code serves as the normative standard against which we measure corporate compliance with human rights obligations.

Method: I conducted a multi-method qualitative analysis comprising: (1) systematic review of corporate websites of five leading CMF companies (Nestlé, Danone, Reckitt Benckiser, Abbott, FrieslandCampina) using keyword searches for human rights content and CMF marketing policies; (2) critical analysis of two major CSR indices (ATNI BMS/CF Index 2021 and FTSE4Good) examining their assessment criteria and company scores; (3) document analysis of industry responses to the 2020 WHO/UNICEF Call to Action for Code compliance by 2030; and (4) case study analysis of Nestlé's website to trace how CMF marketing is framed relative to human rights commitments.

Findings: My analysis reveals four preliminary key findings. First, no leading CMF company recognises marketing restrictions as a human rights issue despite extensive commitments to other human rights domains. Second, CSR indices enable 'responsibility laundering' by awarding high scores for partial compliance. For example, Nestlé's 68% ATNI score obscures continued violations of WHO Resolution 69.9. Third, all five companies rejected voluntary full Code compliance by 2030, claiming inability to act unilaterally while simultaneously maintaining coordinated marketing strategies that circumvent the Code. Fourth, the industry's practice of applying differential marketing standards in 'higher' versus 'lower' risk countries violates UNGP Principle 11's requirement for respecting universal human rights. We demonstrate that non-adherence to the Code constitutes non-conformity with the UNGPs, revealing how CSR frameworks are weaponised to maintain harmful marketing practices while projecting corporate responsibility.

Exploring the Use of Energy-related Metaphors: A Comparison of UK and Japanese Broadsheet Newspapers

(Elise François & Ralf Barkemeyer)

The aim of this paper is to investigate how energy metaphors shape public discourse about fracking in UK and Japanese broadsheet newspapers. It addresses an important research gap in the metaphor literature by moving beyond the Anglocentric focus of metaphor analysis, exploring crosslinguistic and cross-cultural differences in environmental communication. It investigates metaphor use using Japanese, an underrepresented language. Using a specialized corpus, we examined 6574 UK, and 148 Japanese broadsheet newspaper articles published between 2007 and 2024, applying the Metaphor Identification Procedure proposed by the Pragglejaz Group (2007) and the framework developed by Flusberg and Thibodeau (2023). Findings show areas of convergence alongside clear divergence in the use of fracking-related metaphors. Notably, metaphor usage differs between the Japanese outlets depending on the language (Japanese vs English edition). As our main contribution, we challenge underlying assumptions of metaphor universality.

➔ *full paper available*

A critical framework to analyse corporate sustainability storytelling: An exploratory case study of palm oil producing firms

(Rory Padfield, Alexandra Dales)

Storytelling has long been regarded as a powerful tool for organisational marketing and communication (Gottschall, 2021). Firms across a range of industries and sectors have turned to storytelling to demonstrate their credentials, business legitimacy or to reposition themselves following periods of crisis or scandal. While a body of work largely derived in the management and business literature unpacks how organisations can use storytelling approaches for communication, few scholars have critically analysed the specific features of sustainability storytelling approaches in a business context (Dessart and Standaert, 2023; O'Dochartaigh, 2019). We argue that research is required to investigate the sustainability storytelling corpus curated by firms (e.g. CSR reports, imagery and iconography, technology, social media) to help surface questions related to

authenticity, legitimacy and sustainability values. Drawing on the Critical Sustainability Stories (CriSS) framework (Dales, Padfield and Bridge, 2024), which was developed in collaboration with professional storytellers and artists, we analyse the sustainability storytelling approaches of a small number of firms in the palm oil industry. Palm oil serves as a relevant case study in this study. The crop has been the subject to intense media and researcher scrutiny since the early 2000s; climate change impacts associated with large-scale deforestation, loss of globally significant habitats and community conflict are examples of the negative claims associated with palm oil development (Hansen et al, 2015). In turn, palm oil producers have responded with various counter-narratives to address the negative publicity. This includes communicating their role in global certification bodies, sustainability pledges and the development of digital geospatial visualisation tools (Padfield et at, 2025).

In this study we pose the following questions:

1. How are palm oil producers communicating their activities and values related to sustainability?
2. What categories of communication outputs are present in the corpus of sustainability storytelling materials?
3. What do the storytelling approaches of palm oil firms tells us about their relationship with ecological and societal sustainability?
4. How does the CriSS framework compare with other corporate sustainability storytelling methods?

For the purpose of this paper, we describe the sustainability communication corpus available on their corporate websites of five firms. We have produced a typology of communication outputs as a means to categorise the key findings. Next, we evaluated the corpus for each firm against the six topics of the CriSS framework as follows: i) Critical Activity; ii) Audience; iii) Storytelling; iv) Context; v) Quality of Information; vi) Justice. Discourse and iconographic analyses are employed to investigate the language, rhetoric, and narratives and counter-narratives present. Preliminary results indicate that palm oil firms are employing a combination and variety of communication outputs to build persuasive narratives about their sustainability practices and values. Yet our initial analysis reveals limited critical engagement with some of the key sustainability issues associated with their operations and limited evidence of a holistic engagement with sustainability at a planetary level.

Session 2C – Social Impact & CSR (1/1)

Thursday 30 October 2025, 11:00-12:30 *Room 6.012*

Bridging the Social Abyss? Tensions Between Peripheral Social Entrepreneurs and Philanthropy

(Edgard Barki)

Research Question. This study explores the following question: *How do asymmetric relationships between philanthropic funders and grassroots social entrepreneurs shape the logics, expectations, and practices of funding in peripheral contexts?* Situated within the broader debates on the effectiveness and legitimacy of CSR practices in promoting inclusive development, the study investigates how funders' expectations regarding scalability, legitimacy, and impact interact with the situated knowledge and priorities of grassroots actors. By adopting a decolonial and institutional lens, the research aims to examine how power asymmetries, legitimacy expectations, and funding logics influence the practices, discourses, and trajectories of peripheral social organisations.

Theoretical Framework. The paper draws from institutional theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) to examine how dominant norms and expectations are reproduced in philanthropic ecosystems. It also builds on Nicholls' (2010) concept of reflexive isomorphism to understand how powerful actors

influence legitimacy frameworks in the social entrepreneurship field. A decolonial perspective (Quijano, 2007; Mignolo, 2009) is used to highlight how philanthropic practices may reproduce colonial dynamics, shaping knowledge hierarchies and epistemic exclusion. These combined lenses allow the study to introduce the concept of a *"social abyss"*, referring to the normative and epistemic distance between funders and grassroots entrepreneurs.

Method. The study adopts a qualitative, abductive design. Sixteen in-depth interviews were conducted in 2024, equally divided between leaders of social enterprises from Brazil's urban peripheries and representatives of philanthropic organisations that support them. Data were analysed iteratively through cycles of coding and theoretical engagement. In addition, a participatory validation process was implemented through online focus groups and follow-up conversations with selected participants, in line with decolonial methodological principles.

Findings. The findings reveal a significant disconnect between the lived realities of peripheral social entrepreneurs and the expectations of philanthropic investors. Social entrepreneurs reported feeling compelled to adopt elite narratives and practices in order to access funding, often at the expense of their community-based missions. Philanthropic organisations, in turn, demonstrated limited understanding of local contexts and a reliance on technocratic, metric-driven approaches. This disconnect, conceptualised as a *social abyss*, is material, cultural, and epistemic. It hinders mutual learning, reinforces exclusion, and constrains the transformative potential of social entrepreneurship. Despite these challenges, some actors have developed hybrid strategies to "hack" the system while retaining grassroots commitments, although these remain isolated. These findings highlight the limitations of current CSR and philanthropic practices in addressing deep-rooted inequalities, offering critical insights aligned with SDG targets on reducing inequality and strengthening inclusive institutions.

How do Icelandic SMEs incorporate CSR in their business?

(Fjola Björk Karlsdottir & Kjartan Sigurdsson)

This paper explores how Iceland's small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) engage with corporate social responsibility (CSR), emphasising the role of personal values, local embeddedness, and the balance between formal and informal practices. Based on qualitative interviews with 9 SME owners and managers across diverse sectors, the study examines how responsible practices emerge and operate in everyday business contexts. Findings reveal that CSR in Icelandic SMEs is mainly informal and strongly influenced by the convictions and ethics of owner–managers. Standard practices include environmental responsibility, workplace fairness, community engagement, and responsiveness to social challenges. These initiatives are often undocumented and not part of formal strategies, yet they are meaningful responses to stakeholder and societal needs. Such grassroots engagement demonstrates a capacity for social innovation by creating context-specific solutions that address local challenges while supporting business viability. The analysis highlights how Icelandic SMEs integrate responsibility into daily operations through close stakeholder relationships, enabling them to adapt quickly to social and environmental demands. However, these practices' informal and implicit nature often limits their visibility in policy and academic debates. At the same time, growing pressures for formalisation, such as sustainability reporting requirements, present challenges for SMEs whose approaches are grounded in values and local trust rather than compliance systems. This study contributes to debates on responsible business by showing how CSR and social innovation are intertwined in the practices of Icelandic SMEs. It argues that these firms represent a distinctive model of embedded, place-based responsibility that is socially responsive, economically relevant, and rooted in ethical motivations.

➔ *full paper available*

Integrating marginalised stakeholders in the just transition of supply chains: ensuring decent work conditions of vulnerable workers while achieving environmental goals

(Anne Ratsimandresy & Chi Zhang)

Addressing the planetary limits requires companies to redraw their supply chains in ways that account for the deep and complex links between economic, environmental and social systems. While the transition is essential, it is currently far from being carried out in an equitable manner. At the societal level, the restructuring it entails leads to job losses, displacement of workers, adverse effects of commodity and energy conversion prices ensuing inequality on the weight repartition of the necessary effort on the global population. For companies, redesigning truly sustainable supply chains means the responsibility of protecting workers by adopting people-centered supply chain management practices. This aspect of the transition has so far mainly been explored in the context of economics and regional studies and this research builds on the very recent introduction of the concept and definition of just transition in the discipline of supply chain management, and on the theoretical lens of marginal stakeholders. The research question of this study is *How can companies include marginalized stakeholders in the sustainable transition process to ensure decent working conditions for their supply chain workforce while successfully achieving environmental goals?* This research is at its early stages, the prospective method is qualitative and exploratory, based on semi-directed interviews with workers employed on manufacturing lines in lower-tier suppliers located in Bangladesh and in India, labour unions representatives, managers and non-governmental organisation representatives. Researchers aim to engage in methods of investigation compatible with the gathering of visions and perspectives of stakeholders who are usually neglected in research and understand how their experience can have an influence at the organisational and supply chain levels. The goal is to expand the body of knowledge on the reconciliation of decent work and environmental transition.

➔ *full paper available*

Session 2D – Open Call CSR & Sustainability (2/4)

Thursday 30 October 2025, 11:00-12:30 *Room 6.048*

AI-enabled Digital Stakeholder Engagement: Towards a New Digital Responsible Stakeholder Communication Strategy

(Raga Teja Sudhams Kanaparthi & Oliver Laasch)

The proliferation of generative and predictive artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping the communicative fabric of social media and, by extension, corporate responsibility (CR) discourse. A conceptual cornerstone of this field are Morsing and Schultz's (2006) CR communication strategies. However, this concept with its three strategies of information, response and involvement, was crafted before the age of social media, and little research has critically examined its application in this new context. Against this backdrop, our study guided the three main research questions:

1. How and to what degree do the established CR communication strategies apply in an age of social media? (RQ1)
2. Does the CR communication model need to be adapted to capture a constitutive stakeholder communication strategy in the realm of social media? (RQ2)
3. How does the accelerating use of AI-enabled communication tools recalibrate the established strategies, and does this recalibration give rise to a distinct fourth strategy of constitutive stakeholder co-creation? (RQ3)

To address these questions, we revisited corporate responsibility communication strategies in the empirical context of European and Chinese CR communication on social media. Through a sequential case study involving 30 European and 20 Chinese companies, we find distinctive characteristics of CR communication on social media. We also find a novel, fourth type of CR communication strategies of constitutive cocreation, where communication is central to a stakeholder-led cocreation process, constituting new CR activities that would not have materialised otherwise. We further investigate how the growing adoption of AI-enabled communication tools recalibrates all four strategies: AI systems support real-time sentiment sensing, dynamic message personalisation and predictive issue-spotting, adding new dimensions to both the design and impact of CR communication on social media. This article offers three major contributions to existing research. Firstly, we created a systematic extension of CR communication strategies to the social media context, and secondly, a refinement of the conceptual framework by theorising the new constitutive cocreation strategy. Third, we incorporated the accelerating use of AI-enabled communication tools for stakeholder communication and showed how the new communication with AI recalibrates the four strategies and adds a data-driven dimension to the constitutive communication of the organisation.

The role of AI in shaping Sustainable Value Creation, Capture and Delivery: A Multiple-Case Study of Italian Start-Ups

(Giulia Piantoni, Marika Arena & Giovanni Azzone)

This study explores how start-ups leverage on artificial intelligence (AI) to drive sustainable business model innovation, focusing on the interplay between value creation, delivery, and capture. Through a multiple case study of Italian AI start-ups, we investigate how AI applications enable or challenge sustainable innovation (considering environmental, social, and economic dimensions). Findings highlight both benefits and tensions inherent in AI adoption, including risks, barriers, and trade-offs among Triple Bottom Line (TBL) goals. This research expands the emerging literature on AI and sustainable business model innovation, by keeping a specific focus on start-ups, and providing a more nuanced, neutral, TBL perspective beyond the predominant benefit-focused view.

➔ *full paper available*

Paradigm without Transformation: Revisiting Sustaincentrism in the Age of AI

(Fabien Martinez)

'Nothing in this world is so powerful as an idea whose time has come,' wrote Victor Hugo – a phrase once used to herald the rise of sustainability in management thought. Yet decades after the call for a paradigmatic shift, the idea remains more visible than realized. Sustaincentrism is invoked, celebrated, even institutionalized – yet often without displacing the technocentric logics it was meant to transform. This paper revisits the dream of paradigmatic change and reframes it not as a rational shift, but as an ethical struggle. It introduces syncretic ethics to theorize how organizational actors live with clashing paradigms, composing moral coherence from fragments – sometimes sincerely, often ambivalently. Rather than coherence, what emerges is drift: a fragile threading together of worlds that do not neatly align. In the age of artificial intelligence, these tensions intensify. AI promises sustainable futures while reanimating the logics of abstraction, control, and detachment. Against this backdrop, paradigmatic change appears not as arrival, but as ongoing labor – emotional, moral, and unresolved.

➔ *full paper available*

The tools used to support companies' biodiversity strategies and action plans: from a comprehensive typology to an assessment of their impact on businesses

(Astrid Le Chippey, Rémi Beulque, Emmanuel Garbolino & Franck Aggeri)

Research Question: What is the research question that the submission aims to answer?

RQ1: How do the various biodiversity tools and instruments used by economic actors interact and respond to each other? And what are the breaking points and gaps between them?

RQ2: What does the use of these biodiversity tools and instruments change within companies from an organisational and business point of view (supply chain, management control, R&D, etc.)?

Theoretical Framework: What are the main concepts, models or theories used in the paper? Include 3-4 central references.

1. The notion of dispositive.

The notion of dispositive refers to the arrangement of heterogeneous elements - discursive, cognitive, and material - by managers to guide subordinate behaviour (Foucault, 1977/1994; Aggeri, 2017). This paper contributes to the dispositional analysis of biodiversity as a management dispositive that shapes collective action on nature (Raffnsøe, 2008; Charrier et al., 2024). In Foucauldian terms, biodiversity becomes a means of governing nature through interwoven knowledge, standards, technologies, and powers, generating social, political, and ecological effects within organisations (Aggeri & Labatut, 2010). It includes heterogeneous elements such as diverse tools, instruments, and economic actors mobilizing them.

2. The sociology of translation approach

The sociology of translation, central to Actor-Network Theory (ANT), focuses not on linguistic translation but on how interests are transferred among human and non-human actors within socio-technical networks. It explains how scientific and technological innovations emerge, stabilise, and become embedded in society through dynamic interactions and negotiations. Developed by scholars like Bruno Latour and John Law (CSI, Mines Paris, 1980), this approach views social, scientific, or technological phenomena as products of heterogeneous networks. In this framework, biodiversity management tools are analysed as outcomes of biodiversity public policy instruments shaped by societal contexts, aligning with the insights of Akrich et al. (2006) on technology and policy interactions.

3. The notion of performativity

This paper explores how organisations internally manage biodiversity through micro-practices structured within strategic dispositives. These dispositives give meaning to actions and link them into coherent, performative sets. Drawing on John L. Austin's concept of performativity (1962), the study argues that speech acts - such as speech, reports, or calculations - do not merely describe reality but actively shape it. The analysis investigates how some biodiversity practices, when framed appropriately, can transform organisational realities, while others do not achieve such effects. By focusing on biodiversity speech acts (e.g. quantitative results from biodiversity impact assessment tools, sustainability reports, etc.), the paper aims to evaluate which practices succeed in enacting change and thus assesses the performative power of biodiversity-related actions within organisations.

Method: Which method is used for the research work?

We follow a two-stage methodology: gathering information from theoretical / empirical sources (1) and analysing the information gathered (2).

Findings: What are the main outcomes and results of the paper?

Our paper contributes to the literature by proposing an analysis of biodiversity through the prism of the notion of management dispositive. This dispositional analysis enables us to map the instrumental objects that form part of biodiversity as a management dispositive. And to establish the links, shifts and breaks between biodiversity tools and instruments. It also makes it possible to study the expected and unexpected effects of instrumentalised biodiversity practices and to assess their operational impacts on organisations.

Biodiversity impact and ecosystem service dependency assessment in financial industry – a literature review

(Aija Hokkanen & Juho Saarinen)

There is a growing need for quantifiable information on organizations' impact and dependency on nature to develop business models and operations that steer us towards a nature-positive future. The financial sector has great potential in steering such development by its financing instruments and services. Simultaneously, the sector is exposed to indirect risks from nature loss and biodiversity degradation through the businesses they finance. Due to these risks financial institutions, together with experts and regulators, have been forerunners in developing and piloting novel tools and methods to assess impacts on biodiversity loss and dependency on nature. Yet, the methods developed differ widely in accuracy, comparability, and focus, and there is a knowledge gap of how, why, and which methods organizations apply. To endeavor to close this knowledge gap and identify which impact and dependency assessment methods are used in the financial sector and why, we conduct a scoping literature review. The scoping method (e.g., Arksey & O'Malley, 2005) is chosen due to the novelty of the topic. The aim of our analysis is twofold: to scan the published biodiversity impact or ecosystem dependency case studies and to examine the applicability, accessibility, and acceptability of these novel assessment tools for steering nature-positivity. The review is grounded in the theory of innovation diffusion in impact assessment tools (e.g., Costanzo & Sánches, 2019) and conceptually covers the different impact and dependency assessment tools (e.g., De Ryck et al., 2024). The preliminary findings of the review results indicate that academic research and industry reports on the topic are sparse, which is contradictory to the vast number of developed methods. Furthermore, the published case assessments have been based on the utilization of only a few tools, and the selection of methods has not been explained or argued profoundly but rather driven by their use in earlier case studies. Finally, regarding the scope of the case studies, they mostly focus on larger entities such as stock indexes, while specific company cases, for example, banks' holdings and operations, are infrequent. In all, this review sheds light on the current coverage of academic research on the topic of biodiversity impact and ecosystem services dependency assessment in the finance sector and uncovers multiple research gaps.

➔ *full paper available*

Institutional change to mainstream Nature-based Solutions within economic sectors: The case of barrier removal as a potential NbS measure for the EU Hydropower Sector

(Esther Carmen, Kirsty Blackstock & Kerry Waylen)

Concept of Nature-based Solutions (NbS) can be somewhat nebulous and so far has not been associated with widespread change by any economic sector. The intention embedded within this concept is to reframe the relationship between the natural environment and human activities by signposting how by working with the natural environment can help tackle societal challenges such as those associated with a rapidly changing climate (Sowińska-Świerkosz and García, 2022, IUCN, 2016). For example, if adopted by economic actors NbS could help strengthen the resilience of core and strategically important business activities. Therefore there is a need to better understand how NbS can be mainstreamed across economic sectors, defined as a process of change that leads to previously marginal practices becoming the norm (Scott et al., 2022, Adams et al., 2023). Economic sectors with tangible dependencies and impacts on nature – such as EU Hydropower Sector

represents a relevant context to advance such understanding. This study examines the institutional changes required to support the Hydropower Sector to apply the Nature-based Solutions concept widely in practice. Using the increasing policy focus on barrier removal as a tangible entry point and by drawing multiple methods, including a series of industry orientated roundtables and policy interviews this study identifies and explores five key strategic action areas for mainstreaming of NbS across Europe. These action areas relate to the need to improve; 1. Understanding by economic actors of the NBS concept; 2. Policy narratives about the role of NbS for strategically important economic activities; 3. Funding and financial incentives for measures applied from an NbS perspective; 4. Tools for use by the Sector to design NbS programmes; and 5. Coordination and collaboration between public and private sector actors, from initiation to delivery of NbS programmes with both public and private goods. Delivering such change is however complex, hinging on the ability to harness the different skills and resources of disparate actors. To achieve mainstreaming in practice, this study brings to the fore the need to attend to issues of inclusivity within the sector, and for strong relationships built on trust between actors to positively guide thinking and acting within the Sector for more positive business-nature connections and outcomes.

Session 3B – CSR & Planetary Boundaries (1/2)

Thursday 30 October 2025, 14:00-15:30 *Room 6.008*

Planetary Boundaries and Sustainability: The Challenge of the Energy Transition

(Adolfo Chiri)

The tension between *planetary boundaries* and *sustainability* from the energy transition perspective is addressed in this paper. One of the critical aspects of sustainability is the gradual replacement of highly polluting fossil fuels with clean, renewable sources for energy production. This process, known as the energy transition, has generated enormous expectations in the international community, encouraging the movement toward sustainability. However, after more than three decades of development in this direction, the planet's capacity to absorb environmental impacts has not diminished; on the contrary, it is reaching critical limits. In this context, this paper attempts to answer the question: How can this imbalance be explained from the perspective of the energy transition, and what actions could be taken to ensure sustainability?

The sustainability movement has its closest global reference in 1988, with the formation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) within the United Nations, tasked with assessing the scientific basis of climate change, its future impacts and risks, and adaptation and mitigation options. This group concluded that human activities, primarily through greenhouse gas emissions, have unequivocally caused global warming. Thus, the 1989 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development marked the beginning of a global effort to systematically address the issues of development and the environment. Since then, the international community, including the business community, has evolved in the conception and implementation of mechanisms for sustainability.

Efforts to reduce emissions to zero require the massive deployment of a wide range of clean energy technologies, such as solar panels, wind turbines, batteries, and electric vehicles, most of which require critical minerals such as copper, lithium, nickel, cobalt, and rare earth minerals for their manufacture. However, the increased exploitation of these critical materials to meet the growing demand for renewable energy potentially increases environmental pollution, increases biodegradation, and increases the consumption of water resources. This can put pressure on the *planetary limits*, within which humanity can safely operate. At the corporate level, the effort to contribute to sustainability has coincided with the development of concepts such as corporate social responsibility (CSR) and creating shared value (CSV). Concepts such as those mentioned above have been used to guide corporate behavior in their sustainability efforts.

This paper's methodology consists of the application of a conceptual approach based on relevant contributions from empirical research stemming from critical analyses of the energy transition and corporate practice regarding its social responsibility and sustainability. The paper concludes that there is a need to reexamine international governance regarding the exploitation of natural resources and the environment; it also requires a rethinking of the prevailing concept of corporate social responsibility. Both elements, it is suggested, should be adapted to the challenges of the *new energy transition*. A set of courses of action is suggested to mitigate the tension between sustainability and the energy transition.

➔ *full paper available*

Combining Planetary Boundaries and Essentiality to Assess Sustainable Transition

(Patricia Fernanda Dionizio-Leite, Flavio Hourneaux Jr, Breno Nunes & Roberto Alamino)

This conceptual paper examines how companies can align their production strategies to meet the growing demand for sustainability while respecting planetary boundaries and responding to human needs. The study employs the planetary boundaries concept to evaluate the environmental impact of companies and the essentiality concept to assess how much production meets societal needs. Based on the Ecological Modernisation Theory, the paper presents a theoretical framework that combines ecological and social sustainability with economic viability. Finally, the article identifies five production archetypes, each expressing a distinct strategy, serving as a guide for supply chain management and facilitating the transition of companies toward a more sustainable model.

➔ *full paper available*

Libidinal CSR: On the production of desires to care, or: a psychoanalytic basis for considering others

(Pasi Heikkurinen, Kiira Parikka, Hoang Quoc Khanh Phan, Maija Lumme & Risto Musta)

Acts contributing to transgressing planetary boundaries in the business context are successfully described, as well as prescribed, from economic, critical, politicoethical perspectives. The economic view suggest that companies take the environment and people into account because there is a business case for it. The critical view aims to debunk this notion by claiming that corporate responsibilities are mainly discourses used to hide a neoliberal agenda. The politicoethical view again challenges this thesis-antithesis setting. It posits that in the new global business environment, the boundaries between private and public sectors have become blurred. And because of this, firms are taking ethical responsibility for social and environmental matters by engaging in political deliberation facilitated by the civil society. While an integrative perspective manages to demonstrate the potential and pitfalls of each point of view, it does not explain the foundation of consideration for others, or the lack of it. In this presentation, I will argue that corporate responsibility and stakeholder engagement, like all human action, has a libidinal base. Whether planetary boundaries, for example, are cared for, depends on the connection to not only rational processes but also to unconscious forces; do we know what we are doing and why. Which archetypes and what instincts drive us? Such psychoanalytically inspired questions still largely remain outside business ethics debate. This paper will review the literature and define a new concept, namely "business libido" to identify and analyze how the libidinal economy influences (ir)responsible decision-making. I will propose that by acknowledging and analyzing libidinal energetic flows, practitioners and policymakers, as well as academics, are in a better position to understand the prevailing unsustainability and find solutions to it. This new line of investigation is coined libidinal CSR.

➔ *full paper available*

The role and responsibility of businesses in addressing overconsumption. A literature review on the corporate aspects contributing to overconsumption

(Milla Sarja)

The current business environment is based on the ideology of continuous growth (Jackson, 2009). Meaning that companies seek opportunities for increasing sales and revenue. The present model has a long history based on natural resource extraction, without implications of causing harm to nature. However, as resource extraction has been continuously increasing during the past centuries, it has caused nature's inability to regenerate its processes (Meadows et al., 2005) and we start to feel the effects of climate change, and biodiversity loss. The way our societies are structured rely heavily on fossil-fuel consumption and continuously glorifying lifestyles based on consumption as the basis for wellbeing. Consumers are often held responsible in the overconsumption narratives. However, businesses are a significant link in upholding this complex system, as they encourage such behaviour (Ardley & May, 2020). Overconsumption has been recognised as one of the profound reasons behind the environmental crisis (Brown & Cameron, 2000), therefore understanding how companies contribute to overconsumption is necessary so that finding ways to minimise it is possible. This study aims to build an understanding of the business aspects contributing to overconsumption. The guiding research questions are:

1. What business activities contribute to overconsumption?
2. How have companies changed or could change these activities?

A systematic literature review is conducted on academic literature that focuses on factors contributing to overconsumption in connection to business activities. The reviewed literature covers research streams that are known to challenge the current business paradigm: degrowth, sufficiency, circular economy and doughnut economics. The covered timeline is from 2015 to 2024 as the concepts have gained academic interest during this time. The findings suggest areas for companies to improve and adjust their practices, however it is evident that some literature streams highlight this more than others. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of the relevance of business conduct to the current overconsumption. It also brings closer consideration for the business organisations' role and responsibilities in the development of a more sustainable future, one that acknowledges the harm of overconsumption and actively seeks ways to reduce it.

Can Firms Transform Waste into Strategic Value? Waste Costs and Corporate Investment Efficiency in the US Automotive Industry

(Teck-Yong Eng & Chelsea Lin-Chih Wu)

This study examines the role of waste costs in shaping corporate investment efficiency within the U.S. automotive industry. Grounded in stakeholder theory, the resource-based view, and contingency theory, the research investigates two main questions: how waste costs affect investment efficiency and whether they moderate the relationship between firm risk and investment efficiency. Using data from 107 automotive firms between 2019 and 2024, investment efficiency is measured as the ratio of capital expenditure to total assets. The findings show that higher waste increases firm risk, which negatively impacts investment efficiency. However, strategic waste-related expenditures mitigate this effect by lowering risk and supporting more efficient resource allocation. These findings extend prior research by demonstrating how environmental costs function as strategic investments that integrate sustainability with financial decision-making, offering new insights into the role of waste management in enhancing firm performance and environmental responsibility.

➔ *full paper available*

Circular Economy Approach in Indonesian Fashion and Textile SMEs: A 10R-based Framework Analysis

(Dede Iskandar Siregar, Sally Russell, Rory Padfield & James van Alstine)

While the circular economy (CE) has gained significant attention, its practical implementation by small and medium enterprises (SMEs) remains sparse, particularly in Indonesia, where the business processes of this industry are tied to the grassroots. This study investigates how SMEs in Indonesian fashion and textile perform CE. Using the 10R framework, we found three CE scenarios: (1) resource efficiency, where firms select smarter product use and manufacture, ensuring that the majority of raw materials used in the production process are aligned with CE; (2) narrowing resource flows while slowing resource loops where firms select materials from verified natural/organic fibres suppliers in the production, while avoid premature obsolesence; and (3) resource efficiency, lifetime extension and value retention, where firms use materials with CE features, ensuring subsequent product lives, and recapturing values post-use. Each scenario contains strategies to support CE processes. These findings emphasise the importance of setting clear CE goals to guide its implementation. We offer new insights into CE discourse from diverse cultural perspectives of the region.

➔ *full paper available*

Session 3D – Open Call CSR & Sustainability (3/4)

Thursday 30 October 2025, 14:00-15:30 *Room 6.048*

Re-conceptualising Corporate Scandals

(Ana Flamind & Thomas Long)

This conceptual paper critically examines dominant perspectives on corporate scandals, exploring and challenging the positions that scandals either provoke substantial organizational change or merely reinforce existing structures through symbolic gestures. Drawing from cultural sociology and institutional theory, this research proposes a novel framework conceptualizing scandals as societal junctures that prompt sustained public debate and gradual normative transformation at the industry level, rather than immediate, isolated organizational responses (Gilles et al., 2020; Farndale et al., 2025). Through a narrative review, the paper juxtaposes traditional conceptualizations—scandal-as-catalyst, prompting ethical reforms, versus scandal-as-containment, reinforcing the status quo through symbolic compliance (Hail et al., 2018; Grolleau, et al., 2019). The illustrative case of the fast fashion industry exemplifies how repeated scandals, such as labour abuses and environmental degradation, cumulatively shift public discourse and consumer expectations, leading to incremental but meaningful normative shifts within the industry. While individual corporate responses may initially appear superficial or performative, over time, these cumulative scandals significantly impact broader societal values, practices, and regulatory frameworks. The paper thus argues for broadening and nuancing existing understandings of corporate scandals, emphasizing their cultural and discursive dimensions. It highlights the importance of analysing scandals through a long-term lens, considering their collective role in reshaping societal meanings and industry standards. Practically, this perspective suggests that organizations and policymakers should strategically engage with scandals not merely as crises requiring immediate mitigation but as opportunities to proactively influence long-term societal norms and ethical business practices.

Cross-Sector Partnerships and Environmentally Sustainable Innovation: A Literature Review

(Gauri Navgire, Lutz Preuss, Tobias Goessling & Anne Norheim-Hansen)

Environmental sustainability has emerged as a major business priority worldwide. One approach that can help achieve this goal is environmentally sustainable innovation (ESI). In recent studies, cross-sector partnerships (XSPs) have been identified as an important success factor in facilitating ESI. However, the existing literature on XSPs and ESI is fragmented and under-theorized, which has resulted in a poor understanding of how such partnerships facilitate ESI. Despite rising XSP adoption, systematic research on how they enable ESI is scarce. This paper addresses this gap by adopting a multi-theoretical lens to define and detect underlying mechanisms that enable XSP to facilitate ESI. Further, allowing us to uncover their mediating/moderating interactions in future empirical research. Based on the research gap and rationale presented, this study poses the following research question: "How do XSPs enable ESI?" The answer to this question is provided by qualitatively meta-analyzing how XSPs enable ESI to identify mechanisms. Theoretical and emergent perspectives were combined using deductive and inductive coding. Through a systematic literature review that identifies multiple theoretical perspectives, this study synthesizes seven themes that encompass different mechanisms. Joint resource utilization, collaborative knowledge exchange and regulatory and policy support are the most identified mechanisms in this study. In doing so, this study advances theory synthesis by applying Jaakkola's (2020) framework to integrate disparate theoretical perspectives on XSPs and ESI, resolving fragmentation in the literature. It unifies causal mechanisms by identifying and synthesizing how XSPs enable ESI, exposing mediating/moderating pathways previously studied in isolation. The paper creates conceptual coherence by systematically mapping and integrating causal mechanisms into a unified framework, setting a foundation for future empirical testing.

➔ *full paper available*

The Grand Disconnect in Corporate Sustainability Research: A System Justification Theory Explanation

(Ralf Barkemeyer, Lutz Preuss & Jennifer Griffin)

Global production and consumption systems are blatantly unsustainable, external shocks induced by e.g. weather events or armed conflict are becoming more frequent and potential consequences of system-level change remain poorly understood. In response, scholarship on corporate sustainability has gradually emerged, arguably mainstreamed within organization studies, and sharpened our awareness of wicked problems associated with our current policies and practices. Yet, humanity continues to exceed planetary boundaries. Global trends point towards accelerated deterioration rather than any notable improvement of planetary health. Building on system justification theory, we argue that the disconnect between micro-level corporate sustainability practices and macro-level planetary unsustainability is not exclusive to corporate practice and government policymaking, but very much extends to scholarly work on the topic. Initially proposed by John T. Jost and Mahzarin R. Banaji (1994), system justification theory seeks to explain why individuals defend existing social arrangements even when doing so is against their personal and group interests (Jost, 2020). Going beyond prior explanations rooted in the passive acceptance of a 'dominant ideology' (see e.g. Abercrombie & Turner, 1978), system justification theory hones in on the psychological processes that contribute to the preservation of existing social arrangements. System justification theory has been applied to explain why a majority of working class people adopted conservative attitudes when doing so would seem to be against their self-interest (Jost, 2017) or the perceived status of women in the household versus at work (Williams & Chen, 2014). According to Jost (2020), the psychological processes that undergird system justification can be grouped into epistemic, existential and relational needs. We extend this work to examine how system justification may have contributed to the Grand Disconnect in corporate sustainability research, namely in terms of: (a) epistemic needs: what do we study and why; (b) existential needs: the publish or perish ethos (De Rond & Miller, 2005); and (c) relational needs: who do we mainly interact with, with other scholars vs with business practitioners. Using the sizeable literature on stage models of corporate sustainability as an illustration of our main argument, we show how corporate sustainability research is distorted by outdated

paradigms. The overarching narrative of the transition to sustainability as an ongoing and somewhat inevitable, if not convenient, market-based process persists, even though macro-level data continues to suggest otherwise. From the perspective of system justification theory, this situation provides epistemic safety: we are making progress, if slowly. It also offers existential safety: tried-and-tested concepts and ideas are easier to get accepted by editors and reviewers than novel ones (Stanford, 2019). Not least, it is provides relational safety: after all, our colleagues in industry keep reassuring us that the business case will eventually solve things.

Session 4A – Corruption & CSR (1/1)

Thursday 30 October 2025, 16:00-17:30 *Auditorium*

The Impact of Digital Transformation on Corruption Networks

(Stelios Zyglidopoulos, Maria Boura & Shaobo Ji)

In this paper, we investigate the impact that the digital transformation of public sector organizations has on corruption networks (Fazekas & Tóth, 2016; Yu, Kang, & Rhodes, 2018). Corruption has been broadly defined as the "misuse of an *organizational position* or authority for personal or organizational (or subunit) gain, where misuse in turn refers to departures from accepted societal norms" (Anand, Ashforth, & Joshi, 2004, pg. 10). Most of the corruption literature is dealing either with individual agents engaging in corrupt activities within organizations (Lambert-Mogiliansky, Majumdar, & Radner, 2008; Rose-Ackerman, 2007) or as something that gets normalized within organizations (Ashforth & Anand, 2003; Fleming, Zyglidopoulos, Boura, & Lioukas, 2022). However, recently the study of corruption has shifted to the study of corruption networks, which can be seen as webs or dependency relations across organizations and spheres of influence with the purpose of improperly extracting rent for themselves (Della Porta, 2017; Stark & Vedres, 2012; Yu et al., 2018). Drawing on the literatures dealing with the digital transformation of the public sector (Al Nuaimi, Kumar Singh, Ren, Budhwar, & Vorobyev, 2022; Haug, Dan, & Mergel, 2024), and particularly the impact that digital transformation has on corruption (Addo & Senyo, 2020; Addo & Avgerou, 2021; Kim, Kim, & Lee, 2009; Majchrzak, Markus, & Wareham, 2016; Martins, Fernandes, Rohman, & Veiga, 2018; Srivastava, Teo, & Devaraj, 2016) and corruption networks (Fazekas & Tóth, 2016; Yu et al., 2018), we develop a theoretical framework on how the digital transformation of organizations impacts corruption networks. And, even though the overall study of digital transformation on corruption has come up with contradictory findings (Addo & Senyo, 2020), we argue that digital transformation has a negative impact on corruption networks and propose a theoretical framework that describes how digital transformation impedes the functioning of such networks. In short, our theoretical framework is made up of three mechanisms that can be captured under the titles: (1) increased transparency, (2) reduction of regulatory grey areas, and (3) reducing the opportunity for personal contact between individuals.

Internal Control Requirements in Sanctions Compliance: Comparative Study of Latvia, China and the United Kingdom Financial Sector Companies

(Jēkabs Kārlis Rasnacs)

Amid escalating global conflicts, companies face growing reputational and financial risks from inadvertent non-compliance with international sanctions. This study investigates how leading financial institutions in Latvia, China, and the United Kingdom implement self-regulatory frameworks to address these risks. Using a 19-criteria methodology based on international standards (e.g., ISO 37001, ISO 26001), the research identifies significant cross-country variation in compliance practices. UK firms demonstrate a mature, ethics-driven approach, integrating compliance into broader corporate governance and stakeholder trust-building. Whistleblowing systems, training programs, and third-party due diligence are key elements. Chinese companies, while adopting similar mechanisms, do so largely in response to state-led anti-corruption initiatives

and reputational concerns in international markets. Compliance efforts tend to be formalistic and externally driven. Latvian firms show increasing awareness, especially due to geopolitical pressures and sanctions circumvention risks, but implementation remains uneven. Higher compliance standards are more evident in firms with Scandinavian ties or past reputational challenges. The analysis draws on business ethics and CSR theories to explain how reputational risk, political incentives, and legal frameworks shape corporate behavior. The study highlights the need for more consistent and transparent self-regulatory mechanisms to support sanctions compliance and strengthen ethical business practices globally.

➔ full paper available

Mind Maps of Corruption: An Analysis of Management Students from 8 European Countries

(Ralf Barkemeyer, Lutz Preuss, Dejan Zec, Anna Hannula, Sarah Jastram, Stefan Prigge, Max Johns, Emre Bilgic, Raminta Pucetaite, Rodica Zaharia, Julien Hanoteau, Pablo Aguilar, Riika Tapaninaho, Heta Leinonen, Sara Vélez Zapata & Robert Kudlak)

Corruption is a prototypical Grand Challenge (George et al., 2016) and wicked problem in that it is a multi-facetted, wider societal problem for which no obvious solutions are presently available (Grewatsch et al., 2023). Even though it is commonly discussed under the umbrella of corporate social responsibility (Rodriguez et al., 2006), it stands out as an issue that is even more difficult to capture: it is largely illegal, corrupt practices tend to be stigmatized, and frequently is linked to concealed work and one-off projects. Empirical research continues to be scarce given that he extent of the problem can commonly only be measured indirectly, as in the case of the Corruption Perceptions Index and Bribe Payers Index. From the limited information that is available, it is clear that there are country-level differences in both the severity and the nature of corruption. This is where our study is positioned. In order to understand and address corruption, it is important to understand how individuals perceive and conceptualize corruption. Our theoretical lens is centred on cognitive frames, which can be understood as knowledge structures that individuals impose on the myriads of external stimuli in order to reduce complexity (Suedfeld & Tetlock, 1977) and to make sense of a phenomenon (Daft & Weick, 1984). Cognitive frames held by individuals differ in terms of both content and structure (Walsh, 1995). An established way of measuring cognitive frames is in terms of (a) differentiation, i.e. the number of cognitive elements or units of information on a topic; and (b) integration: the connections between these units (Suedfeld & Tetlock, 1977). Following the protocol of Baker-Brown et al. (1990; see also Preuss et al., 2023, 2024), we apply this approach and conduct an international comparative analysis of mind maps produced by MSc-level students from eight different countries. Particular emphasis is placed on the complexity of cognitive frames, measured in terms of differentiation and integration, and the topics individuals associate with corruption. We relate emerging patterns to a set of independent variables including country of origin, degree programme and individual-level characteristics such as age, gender, cosmopolitanism and academic performance, in order to move towards a more refined understanding of the micro-foundations of corruption in different country contexts.

Session 4B – CSR & Planetary Boundaries (2/2)

Thursday 30 October 2025, 16:00-17:30 *Room 6.008*

Realigning Entrepreneurial Logics with Planetary Boundaries: conceptualising a post-growth entrepreneurial logic

(Thomas Long & Giacomo Buzzao)

Entrepreneurship has classically played a central role in economic and societal development – driving innovation, employment, and the creation of wealth (Brouwer, 2002; Vedula et al., 2022). However, it is

increasingly critiqued for driving socio-environmental harms due to extractive logics, seen to accelerate resource depletion, social inequality, and ecological degradation. Alternative approaches, such as eco-, social or sustainable entrepreneurship, seek to reduce negative impacts, and generate various types of sustainability value through entrepreneurial processes and outcomes (Muñoz & Cohen, 2018; Anand et al., 2021). While promising, these approaches remain insufficient. In response, this conceptual paper seeks to redefine entrepreneurship in line with planetary boundaries. We argue that the entrepreneurial process is not ideologically neutral but is shaped by the institutional logic under which it unfolds. We draw on institutional logics theory, conceptualizing institutional logics as overarching belief systems guiding organizational behaviours and legitimacy (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Thornton et al., 2012). We propose a concept of post-growth entrepreneurship that operates from a fundamentally distinct institutional logic. We theorize post-growth entrepreneurship as grounded in sufficiency, ecological embeddedness, and collective well-being, rejecting hybridity in favour of disassociative institutional work. We contrast classical, sustainable, and post-growth logics across entrepreneurial dimensions including identity orientation, opportunity framing, value creation, and scaling. We identify core dimensions of post-growth entrepreneurial logic – values, identity orientation, opportunity framing, value creation, and scaling – demonstrating significant deviations from both classical and hybrid sustainable entrepreneurial approaches. Through seven theoretical propositions and illustrative examples we show how post-growth ventures enact a logic that redefines value beyond narrow profitability and in terms of success within planetary limits. In doing so, we contribute to institutional theory by theorizing how new logics emerge not through blending, but through normative boundary-drawing, and to entrepreneurship research by reframing entrepreneurial agency as ethically driven logic-building within biospheric constraints. We conclude by outlining a research agenda for entrepreneurship in the Anthropocene.

The silent stakeholder: how can planetary boundaries be integrated into corporate sustainability reporting and measurement?

(Oualid Mokhantar & Laura Dell'Agostino)

The Planetary Boundaries (PBs) framework defines the global biophysical boundaries for nine processes that, if respected, preserve the stability and resilience of the Earth system and a "safe operating space" for humanity. Currently, six PBs have been crossed, calling for immediate action. Companies are critical to overcoming this challenge and top scholars urge the systematic integration of the PBs framework into business studies to advance corporate sustainability, pointing out that comprehensive, accurate, and actionable metrics are crucial to operationalize the PBs framework at firm-level. Moving from these considerations, this paper proposes a methodological framework for translating PBs into firm-level metrics. Specifically, it identifies for each PB potential metrics and data sources. The framework bridges Earth systems science, on which the PBs are drawn, with corporate governance and accounting theory. Such a framework is then applied to a hypothetical multinational company. A literature review of the various ways in which PBs have been translated at the firm level -including the ESRS and the related EFRAG data points - guides the development of the framework and the subsequent application. While translating PBs at the firm-level presents substantial difficulties, mainly due PBs interactions, the process offers meaningful insights that can inform strategic prioritization. Besides contributing to the call for integrating BPs into business studies, this work also offers reflections on the ongoing EU regulatory simplification and its implications for corporate sustainability.

➔ *full paper available*

Integrative literature review on the notion of regenerative business: narrative and organisational perspectives

(Eloïse Vailland)

In the hope of reconciling corporate social responsibility with the planetary boundaries, out of which six have already been exceeded, the regenerative narrative has emerged calling for a new approach to business in

harmony with the living world. This new notion is gaining traction in academia and among practitioners but without full clarity and consensus on what it means for a company to be or become regenerative, and to what extent it challenges current management practices. Thus, our article addresses the following research question: what are the different meanings behind the notion of regenerative business? We conduct an integrative literature review which consists in a synthesis of current knowledge of an emerging topic offering a better understanding of the topic while also spawning new perspectives and areas of research. From the literature corpus, we outline the emergence of a paradigmatic narrative of regenerative businesses, where it comes from and takes inspiration from, and we highlight the spectrum of meanings it has in regard to circular economy and sustainable businesses. Eight managerial characteristics are identified to support the shift of paradigm. They are fully interrelated and should be seen more as windows through which to approach the managerial culture and processes necessary to embark on the regenerative journey.

➔ *full paper available*

Session 4C – Circular Economy (2/2)

Thursday 30 October 2025, 16:00-17:30 *Room 6.012*

Perceived Financial Gains of Implementing Circular Economy Principles in the Fashion and Textile Industry

(Julius Hovikoski, Marileena Mäkelä, Suvi Heikkinen & Tiina Onkila)

As climate change intensifies due to the ever-growing consumption of resources, sectors such as the fashion and textile industry have become increasingly unsustainable. The resource-intensive industry also contributes significantly to water pollution and land use while struggling with transparency issues throughout its supply chain. In response to the urgent need to replace the current linear economic model, the Circular Economy (CE) emerged. While sustainability-oriented companies in the textile industry have begun to embrace these CE principles in their operations with positive results, widespread adoption of the model seems utopistic. The previous literature on CE rarely highlights the financial advantages of CE adoption. Therefore, this chapter asks what kind of financial gains textile industry companies recognize. We study Finnish textile companies that identify themselves as sustainability-oriented. We interviewed 21 employees from five companies. All the interviewees were familiar with sustainability and CE work in their own company. The job titles of the interviewees varied from CEOs to designers and production managers. The interview themes cover aspects of sustainability and CE practices at work and in the organization. All interviewees reported that investing in CE has been beneficial. Many emphasized financial gains through smarter resource management, enhanced brand image, marketing opportunities, rental services, and reselling excess materials and used products. Despite these financial gains, companies also reported challenges in scaling CE practices, including supply chain management and shifting consumer behaviour. This chapter contributes to the aim of the book by highlighting the success of prior sustainability-oriented companies who have embraced CE principles in their operations and how they came to achieve this. The chapter also offers inspiration and practical insights for other textile companies aiming to adopt similar practices.

➔ *full paper available*

Walking the tight rope of circular business model transitions: A multilevel perspective

(Andrew Mzembe)

The hospitality industry has significant social and environmental impacts (De Martino et al., 2025). To mitigate the negative impacts, some hospitality firms are exploring the possibilities of adopting circular business models (CBM) as an avenue by which they can contribute to sustainability transition. While their focus on CBM has

been on closing the resource loop as a mitigation to negative environmental externalities, cost and resource-use efficiency is reported to be one of the main drivers (De Martino et al., 2025). For some firms, the adoption of CBMs is driven by the normative desire to limit resource consumption. To date, interest in CBMs within the hospitality industry is emerging, but evidence suggests that it is still lagging behind in transitioning toward radical and system-oriented CBM despite the availability of some isolated technological developments. As such, CBMs in the hospitality industry are often viewed as niche business activities that are often undertaken by niche actors – which are mostly start-ups. The scant literature in hospitality has examined the nature and shape of CBMs transitions in the hospitality sociotechnical system, but an in-depth understanding of factors that are involved as hospitality firms transition their business models towards CBMs remain under theorised. Given that transitioning to CBMs can be complex, it is therefore fundamental that investigation of the transition towards CBMs go beyond the focus on technological innovation driven sustainability transitions. Our study considers the influences of norms, cognitive routines, regulations, resources, and institutional frameworks on the sustainability transition of the hospitality sociotechnical system. Our study therefore sought to answer the following question: *How do different socio-technical system elements influence the ability of hospitality firms such as hotels to transition to CBMs?* To answer this question, we draw insights from the Multi-Level Perspective (MLP) – a comprehensive theoretical perspective that addresses the multi-dimensional and complex nature of sustainability transitions (Geels et al., 2023). With its three key levels: sociotechnical landscape, sociotechnical regime and niche innovation, the MLP allows us to understand the hospitality industry as a socio-technical system whose transition to CBMs may be shaped by the interaction of these three key levels (cf. Niewiadomski and Brouder, 2024). The MLP is, thus, essential to the understanding of the dynamics involved in the transition to CBMs as it explains how the elements within the socio-technical regime interact with niche innovations and socio-technical landscape to facilitate or resist the transitions to CBMs. We conducted 24 semi-structured interviews involving employees of the selected hotels and stakeholders. We undertook a three staged data coding process: open, axial and selective coding was done to analyse data. We found hospitality sociotechnical regime stabilisers such as unfavourable institutional factors (unfavourable policies), tension in circularity goal framing, and lack of alternative and niche circular innovations that derailed CBMs transitions despite the existence of sociotechnical landscape pressures such as COVID-19 pandemic and the growing shift towards circularity. We equally identified antecedents of sociotechnical regime disruptions such as technology, the emerging space for experimentation with innovation within hotels, and the untapped potential for establishing and strengthening the circular business ecosystem.

➔ *full paper available*

Us before me - rethinking how we use resources

(Frank Figge, Andrea Thorpe & Jason Good)

Session 4D – Open Call CSR & Sustainability (4/4)

Thursday 30 October 2025, 16:00-17:30 *Room 6.048*

How do Key Customers Affect the Supplier Firms' Environmental-Financial Performance Relationship?

(Dixon Ho & Chien-Ming Chen)

Research Questions. This paper theorizes and empirically tests how the relationship between a supplier's environmental performance (EP) and financial performance (FP) may be contingent on its key business customers' environmental performance.

Theoretical Framework. Drawing on the notion of inter-organizational status transfer, we develop a cost-benefit framework to explain how customers' EP would affect the supplier's EP–FP relationship. Our framework is built on the concept of *status* in social sciences, which refers to "an agreed-upon and accepted

ordering or ranking of individuals, groups, organizations, or activities in a social system" (Washington & Zajac, 2005, p.284). We argue that environmentally oriented firms favor suppliers with a strong EP primarily because of the reputational advantages gained from the supplier-customer affiliation (Chen & Ho, 2019; Palmer et al., 1995). Thus, customers who anticipate a significant gain in reputation are more likely to maintain and deepen their affiliations with a green supplier. In other words, customers' perceived reputational impact from affiliating with the same supplier can vary substantially, depending on the customer's own environmental status. Accordingly, the EP–FP relationship of suppliers can be explained by *how c*ustomers perceive their environmental *status* as impacted by the affiliated supplier's environmental *status*. Specifically, we suggest that a supplier with a high environmental status is likely to obtain more sales from customers who would benefit from such affiliation, which in turn determines the characteristics of the supplier's EP–FP relationship. Building on the above premises, we hypothesize that suppliers' EP and FP exhibit a curvilinear relationship, where the curvature is contingent on customers' EP. Specifically, a supplier's EP–FP relationship is concave *increasing* when its customers' EP is high and convex *decreasing* when its customers' EP is low.

Method. We tested our hypotheses using panel data from U.S. public firms between 1996 and 2018. The sample was assembled from multiple sources of environmental performance and financial accounting data, including EP data from KLD, customer-supplier data from the Compustat Customer Segment files, and company financial data from the Compustat annual files. Suppliers' and customers' EP were measured by the environmental strength variables from KLD, while suppliers' EP was measured by return-on-assets from their financial records. We analyzed the panel data using higher-order regression with fixed time and firm effects to test the curvilinear relationship between suppliers' EP and FP. To ensure robustness, we controlled for potential extraneous variables and conducted several specification tests. The empirical results are aligned with our research hypotheses.

Findings. Our empirical results show a curvilinear relationship between suppliers' EP and FP. Specifically, the curvature and direction (i.e., increasing or decreasing) of the relationship depend on key customers' EP. When the EP of key customers is high, the supplier EP has a positive but diminishing impact on its FP. In contrast, when the EP of key customers is low, the supplier EP has a negative and diminishing impact on its FP.

How double materiality influences corporate sustainability practices

(Kabelo Rathobei, Helena Ranângen & Åsa Lindman)

There is growing societal concern about sustainability and the extent to which companies are held accountable for the environmental and social impacts of their operations(GRI, 2025). In response to the concerns, the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) was adopted by the European Union, mandating a significant shift in the way companies report on environmental, social, and governance (ESG) issues (European Parliament, 2022). A cornerstone of this directive is the double materiality principle (Baumüller & Sopp, 2022; Dunfjäll, 2025; EFRAG, 2024; European Parliament, 2022). GRI (2022) defines materiality as the threshold of relevance used to determine which information should be included in sustainability or financial reporting, based on its potential to influence stakeholder decisions regarding the reporting organisation. Double materiality looks at both financial materiality and impact materiality (EFRAG, 2024). Financial materiality requires firms to disclose both how sustainability matters affect the company financially (financial materiality), taking an outside-in approach, and how the company's operations impact external stakeholders and the environment (impact materiality), an inside-out approach (Baumüller & Sopp, 2022; Dunfjäll, 2025). This approach challenges traditional reporting practices and raises important questions about how organisations understand and implement these expectations within their strategic and operational frameworks. This paper addresses the overarching research question: How does the double materiality assessment requirement under the CSRD influence corporate sustainability practices at the organisational level? The study explores this through the following guiding research questions:

RQ1: How is double materiality conceptualised in the existing literature on corporate sustainability reporting?

RQ2: What are the anticipated organisational responses to the CSRD's double materiality mandate, especially in sectors with high environmental and social exposure?

RQ3: What challenges are highlighted in the literature regarding the operationalisation of double materiality in corporate settings?

The paper draws on a narrative literature review as its primary method, synthesising insights from recent academic literature (Belidan & Baghad, 2024; Dunfjäll, 2025; Torelli et al., 2020), EU policy documents (EFRAG, 2024; European Parliament, 2022), and regulatory analyses. It builds on theoretical frameworks such as stakeholder theory (Freeman & Mcvea, 2001) to examine how regulatory demands are internalised at the organisational level. As a next step, to gain empirical insight and strengthen the paper's contribution, the plan is to include interview data from a Swedish mining company. Preliminary findings from the review suggest that while the CSRD presents an opportunity for strategic sustainability integration, many companies struggle with practical ambiguities, data complexity, and competing materiality interpretations (Dunfjäll, 2025). Most existing studies focus on governance and compliance, with limited attention to internal practices and decision-making dynamics, particularly in high-impact sectors like mining (Dehbi & Martin-Ortega, 2023; Espínola et al., 2025; Micheler, 2023; Sinnig & Zetzsche, 2025). This review serves as the preliminary phase of a broader research project, which will include a case study of a Swedish mining company. The findings aim to inform how firms interpret and operationalise double materiality and how this shapes their sustainability priorities.

➔ *full paper available*

Sustainability, strategy, and management controls: Exploring the case of Belgian and French companies

(Annah Friob & Nathalie Crutzen)

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to explore how large companies design management control systems to implement a sustainability strategy into their organizational practices. This research is relevant as management controls are considered crucial for the strategic integration of sustainability within corporations.

Methodology – A multiple case study method was employed in three large Belgian and French organizations. Qualitative data were collected during seventeen semi-structured interviews and various complementary data sources were utilized for triangulation. Analysis was then performed in two stages: within-case and cross-case.

Preliminary findings – The findings highlight the importance of implementing a comprehensive set of controls, combining both formal and informal mechanisms, to achieve environmental, social, and economic objectives. Additionally, the results demonstrate two tensions in management controls for sustainability that result from increased employee empowerment. These tensions can be distinguished in terms of the subject being controlled, whether it is the organization or the individuals, defining the level of control, and the way in which the control is applied, either formally or informally, representing the degree of formality.

Value – From a scientific perspective, by identifying the tensions between different control types, our study aims to contribute to the knowledge on the design of sustainability management control systems. Thus, it responds to calls in the literature for research on sustainability strategic management and on management control systems that facilitate the integration of sustainability within the organizational strategy.

Practical implications – The implications of this paper are also relevant for managers as it emphasizes the role of control design in strategically integrating sustainability, thus contributing to sustainable development.

➔ *full paper available*

The ubiquity of suffering in organisations

(Max Ganzin, Jaco Lok, Grant Michelson & Ed Wray-Bliss)

Despite its universality and persistence suffering remains conceptually and empirically underexplored in organization studies. Although manifestations of suffering have been indirectly examined through phenomena like burnout, depression, and abusive supervision, its understanding has been obscured by an uncritical reliance on assumptions rooted in central aspects of Western thought, including the Protestant ethic. These have produced a dominant, though usually implicit, perspective on suffering in organizations that we refer to as "suffering as sacrifice": understanding, treating, and accepting suffering as a necessary exchange for future material, moral, or spiritual reward. In this essay, we argue that the normalization of this perspective in organization research and practice has limited consideration of possibilities for reducing suffering by attributing a central role to the organization in both its causes *and* solutions. Direct and renewed exploration of suffering is necessary to generate theoretical and practical alternatives. Drawing on existentialist philosophy and related perspectives, we present an alternative, which views suffering as intrinsic to both the human condition *and* organizing itself. An existential perspective suggests that organizational efforts to manage or eliminate suffering may paradoxically exacerbate it. This enables us to critically question the role of organization in human suffering.

➔ *full paper available*

A Systematic Review of Sustainability Agency across Management Disciplines

(Satu Teerikangas & Tiina Onkila)

NEED FOR RESEARCH. To secure a future-proof future for all species, there is need to undertake systemic change toward sustainable ways of living and doing business (Loorbach et al., 2017; Dyllick & Muff, 2015). In this endeavor, the agency of actors is critical (Geels, 2020; Onkila & Sarna, 2022). Yet, who are these actors and how are they supposed to act? METHOD. In this paper, we focus on sustainability actors relevant to business, asking 'which actors engage in furthering sustainable business, and, how?' To this end, by analysing articles published across the disciplines in management sciences over a 25-year period (1994-2019), we present a systematic review of the literature on actors engaged in making business more sustainable. To include a diversity of management disciplines and a focus on top-tier journals, the sample consisted in journals in general management (AMJ, AMR, AMA, ASQ, JOM, JMS, BJM), organization studies (OSc, OStud, HuRel), international business (JIBS, IJMR), strategy (SMJ, LRP, SO); policy (RP), and responsible business (OE, JBE, BSE, B&S, JCP), across a quarter of a century (1994–2019). From an initial sample of 767 articles, our final sample consists in 269 articles.

FINDINGS. In order to bring clarity to the currently scattered literature, the paper's contribution is in developing a typology of actors working toward sustainable futures. While conducting our review, we noted that the concept of agency (Ritzer, 2005) captures the intentional action that these sustainability actors engage in. Consequently, we built on agencyrelated concepts in developing the dimensions of our typology, including an individual's agency (Bandura, 2006; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998), collective agency (Crozier & Friedberg, 1980), non-human agency (Knappett & Malafouris, 2008), material agency (Cooren, 2020) and relational agency (Burkitt, 2015). In furthering our categorization and making sense of the diversity of actors and forms of agency represented in the reviewed papers, the developed typology of sustainability agency thus builds on four dimensions, each portraying a specific form of agency. The first dimension considers whether papers focus on human or non-human forms of agency. The second dimension considers the studied level of analysis, be it individual, organizational or institutional. The third dimension assesses whether the papers study the

agency of influential, incumbent, or proactive, niche, actors. The fourth dimension takes its interest in whether papers focus on forms of relational agency, be it via collective or collaborative action.

In closing, our findings are a call to recognize the cruciality of human agency in building sustainable futures. By highlighting the actors' agency, we join calls to take agency seriously in the sustainability context. It can be argued that a scattered literature on sustainability actors might, in part, impede actors' agency on the ground, as there is a lacking appreciation of the variety of means of acting toward sustainable futures. This highlights the significance of integrative views, as developed here.

Session 5B – Stakeholder Engagement for Sustainability (1/3)

Friday 31 October 2025, 09:30-10:30 *Room 6.012*

Stakeholder engagement for sustainability – Accommodating different understandings

(Lotta Sihvo Matikainen & Annika Blomberg)

In this empirical paper, we explore how stakeholder engagement for sustainability takes place despite varying sustainability understandings. We explore this topic in two different empirical contexts and in relation to two different sustainability topics, that is, in circular economy (CE) or in relation to biodiversity. First, we analyze how leading CE stakeholders and stakeholders involved in biodiversity protection understand CE or biodiversity and how they perceive sustainability in these topics. Second, we analyze how the interviewees see the role of stakeholder engagement in CE or biodiversity protection and identify different ways of engagement. Third, we discuss how stakeholder engagement is possible despite the different understandings of the topic. Stakeholder engagement in this study builds on stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984), considering all groups and individuals who can affect or be affected by the organization's actions as stakeholders (Freeman, 1984). Ideally, stakeholder engagement itself is a constructive and positive practice between an organization and its stakeholders although, Kujala et al. (2022) argue that literature tends to overemphasize positivity in stakeholder engagement and limited attention has been paid on the challenges in stakeholder relationships. We understand stakeholder engagement as a relational process, focusing on collaboration and co-creation (Kujala et al., 2022) and focus on how stakeholder relationships are shaped and successful engagement achieved despite stakeholders' different assumptions. We study the stakeholder relations in two contexts that both require stakeholder engagement. To transition towards CE, stakeholder engagement among the integration of their interests is needed (Marjamaa et al., 2021). Marjamaa et al. (2021) suggest that understanding sustainability in CE, stakeholders' sustainability interests need to be analyzed. The importance of stakeholder collaboration in biodiversity protection is well established (e.g. Boiral & Heras-Saizarbitoria, 2017), although there is still little research on deeper understanding stakeholder relations in the context of biodiversity protection. Addressing complex issues, such as biodiversity loss, requires collaboration among many stakeholders with different values, perceptions of the issue and conflicting interests (Sharman & Mlambo, 2012). The data in this qualitative case study consists of 40 semi structured interviews that are conducted as part of two different research projects. The first data set consists of 20 interviews with leading CE actors in Finland with the focus on advancing CE in collaboration. The second data set consists of 20 interviews with stakeholders in two Finnish mining regions with the focus on biodiversity protection. We use qualitative content analysis to identify the main differences in the respondents' sustainability understandings and analyze the mechanisms that enable stakeholder engagement despite the differences. Our preliminary findings show that stakeholders understand CE and biodiversity differently and put differing weight on how sustainability is inherent in these contexts. We identify different ways of stakeholder engagement for sustainability, which take place despite differing sustainability understandings. In addition, stakeholder engagement is often described as successful and shared goals identified. The results need to be further analyzed to better understand what mechanisms enable stakeholder engagement despite different sustainability understandings.

Companies and rural communities in managing common-pool resources: from silos to interdisciplinary collaboration

(Sara Vélez-Zapata, Lutz Preuss, Neva Bojovic & Lorenzo Pellegrini)

Understanding the role of companies and their impact on nature requires addressing who sets the rules for the use of what has been called common-pool resources (Ostrom, 1990) or the global commons (Peredo et al., 2020), such as fisheries and forests. Environmental management, as a research field, has been approached from many different angles, but in silos. As a result, we still lack an integrated understanding of how companies and rural communities interact, under what institutional arrangements, and with what outcomes for the commons. To address this gap, our study engages in mapping how different approaches have dealt with these topics, asking: How have different streams of literature conceptualised and addressed the interactions between companies and rural communities for managing the commons? Through a multi-method approach (bibliometric analysis and in-depth qualitative analysis), we aim to reveal where ideas converge, where silos persist, and which conceptual tools can be combined to explain effective co-management of the commons that includes the roles of companies and rural inhabitants directly. Our findings from the bibliometric analysis suggest that scholars use two theoretical frameworks to conceptualise the interactions between companies and communities in managing the commons: (1) Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984) and Corporate Social Responsibility (Carrol, 1979; 1991) from Management studies and (2) Environmental Governance (Ostrom, 1990) from Development Studies. However, these frameworks remain independent conceptual tools, as we have found limited examples of papers attempting to use them in a complementary way. Our qualitative analysis also surfaced an important difference between Management and Development studies in how they conceptualise the agency of rural communities. Most of the papers published in Management journals have addressed communities in a passive role, as recipients of external help or as a dimension of CSR reports. Environmental and Development Studies journals show empirical evidence of communities playing an entrepreneurial and agentic role. These differences provided us with an opportunity to contribute with an integrative framework that dissolves disciplinary silos and presents a new approach to analysing the governance of common-pool resources through corporate-community co-management arrangements. This paper offers three contributions. First, we map out fragmented literature across Management, Environmental and Development studies to provide a comprehensive view of how companies and rural communities interact in managing common-pool resources. Our approach analyses understudied dimensions of previous literature reviews that have conceptualised rural communities in their social and environmental entrepreneurial roles or have focused only on the co-management arrangements between governments and communities. Second, we establish the foundations for developing a conceptual framework that bridges Corporate Social Responsibility, Stakeholder Theory and Environmental Governance, offering a polycentric perspective highlighting the explanatory power of an interdisciplinary framework for the "commons" dilemma. Third, we offer managerial recommendations to foreground the often-overlooked capabilities of local communities as partners and agents, rather than passive beneficiaries, within corporate sustainability strategies.

➔ *full paper available*

Session 5C – Climate Change & CSR (1/2)

Friday 31 October 2025, 09:30-10:30 *Room 6.048*

Exploring the Diversity of Carbon Accounting Practices Among Climate Consultants: Navigating Agency and Professional Discretion in Quantification Work

(Camille Habé & Aurélien Acquier)

While prior research in the sociology of quantification has extensively examined the social processes behind the decision to quantify, the standardization of metrics, and the performative use of numbers, less attention has

been paid to the discretionary work of professionals who implement quantification in context. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork and 53 interviews within the French carbon consulting field, this paper analyzes how professionals make context-specific specification choices within the boundaries of established quantification standards. We show how professionals negotiate institutional and operational constraints, and client expectations with their own beliefs and knowledge of quantification properties. In doing so, they exercise agency and embed meaning into quantification practices. In this context, we identify a repertoire four distinct carbon accounting practice—Trojan Horse, Convincing, Knowledge Creation, and Monitoring—each reflecting different intentions for the numbers they produce. These findings underscore the deeply contextual nature of quantification and the critical role that practitioners' understanding of quantification properties plays in shaping the outcomes of standardized frameworks.

➔ *full paper available*

Apocalypse or small potatoes? Climate change and ecologically rigorous theorizing within management studies

(Jozef Cossey, Aurélien Acquier)

Despite decades of research in business and the natural environment, management research is still struggling to theorize complex natural phenomena such as climate change. We illustrate this by showing how influential economic -*'optimal warming'*- and sociological -*'climate imaginaries'*- perspectives misalign with what we know and don't know about climate change. Connecting this difficulty with their respective ontological and epistemological assumptions, we argue that critical realism offers an important alternative to move towards ecologically embedded management research. We conclude by suggesting a series of practical and theoretical recommendations for academics to enact this perspective and make our knowledge boundaries with natural sciences more robust and rigorous.

Session 6A – Sustainable Workplace (2/2)

Friday 31 October 2025, 11:00-12:30 *Room 6.008*

Corporate Social Responsibility, Affect and Change in Public Organizations

(Marc Ohana, Elodie Arneguy, David Carassus & Aurore Darmandieu)

Local governments face major challenges in terms of innovation and performance. New Public Management reforms have introduced more strategic and performance-oriented management practices. However, these reforms have often overlooked the impact of organizational change on employees themselves, resulting in implementation difficulties and high failure rates for managerial innovations in the public sector (Haffar et al., 2023; Rafferty and Minbashian, 2019). In this context, employees' resistance to change becomes a crucial condition for the success of reforms. Indeed, if employees are resisting to change, it is likely to be rejected or misapplied, compromising the expected results. Although several studies have identified factors influencing resistance to change, most focus on the private sector or other public administrations. In addition, this research focuses mainly on the treatment received by internal stakeholders such as employees themselves (Reimer et al., 2024). The aim of the current study is to consider perceptions of corporate social responsibility as an antecedent of resistance to change. Drawing on Affective Event Theory (Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996; Weiss and Beal, 2005), it shows how perceptions of low CSR increase agents' shame, which in turn increases resistance to change. We also investigate the role of public service motivation in this relationship (Ritz et al., 2020), hypothesizing that agents with high public service motivation will be more ashamed in cases of low CSR. A 3-waves data collection of 113 local authority employees was conducted to test our hypotheses. The data were analyzed using partial least square structural equation modeling. The results confirmed all our

hypotheses, with shame mediating the relationship between CSR and resistance to change, and public service motivation having a positive moderating effect. Understanding these dynamics can reveal levers for action to strengthen employee support for reforms, and ultimately improve the effectiveness of changes in local government.

Psychologically Safe AND Sustainable – is that too much to ask?

(Keith Burnett)

To anyone interested in making their business more sustainable, and addressing the impact of climate anxiety upon colleagues, the widespread interest in Psychological Safety might seem a reasonable place to start – but there is little research available which answers this challenge directly. Starting with a brief history of how the concept of Psychological Safety evolved, it is possible to draw out how team creativity and confidence to challenge the status quo constructively – both aspects of Psychological Safety – are also promising enablers for achieving a more sustainable workplace. Recent research also takes this further, connecting Psychological Safety and Sustainability goals – or does it? Climate change is observably already happening all round us, the costs to businesses and governments are stacking up and sustainability policies are becoming increasingly fashionable in all manner of organisations, but the toughest (and perhaps most essential) part of enacting a strategy still comes when it connects to operations. Operationalising strategy is often seen to be dependent upon the quality of leadership, and it is the team culture that leaders foster which often proves critical. Interest is starting to develop in Psychological Safety as a means to reach a Psychology of Sustainability, so it's worth taking a fresh look to see if there are methods which can be developed and scaled-up. Psychological safety has been popularised by Amy Edmondson as the creation of an environment in which team members feel safe to take creative or interpersonal risks. The term originates with Carl Rogers, who was primarily concerned with psychological safety as a means to improve creativity, also later a focus for Ekvall and his disciples. Observably, both interpersonal confidence and creativity are vital to improving the sustainability of workplaces, as old established ways of doing business will have to be challenged, and innovative solutions found. Clark's model of psychological safety, although open to challenge regarding verisimilitude given its mirroring of old hierarchies, nevertheless identifies some of the key factors which leaders may need to attend to; enabling everyone to feel welcome and wanted in the team, making space for learning, creating confidence to propose new ideas and even challenge further up the hierarchy. In practical terms, moving towards more sustainable work practices is observably often a tangible change, with all the issues attendant upon a change programme; communication difficulties, resistance, and complexity. But if we are to overcome the addiction to fossil fuels then borrowing from some neighbouring disciplines may be wise – including, conceivably, the realm of addiction recovery itself. During this session we will explore what we can take from the fields of psychological safety and behavioural change to bring about sustainable workplaces, up to and including whether there is such a thing as a 'sustainability mindset' – and, if so, how business school researchers and alumni can help to make the most of it.

➔ *full paper available*

From Readiness to Action: How Complex Thinking and Organizational Support Drive Sustainable Behavior in Companies

(Fiammetta Cascioli Karavalis & Eleonora Veglianti)

Research question: This research studies the importance of individual capabilities in achieving sustainability, emphasizing the need to leverage metacognitive skills for this endeavor. First, as organizations engage in a quest for performant sustainability practices, it investigates complex thinking as a precursor to individual organizational behavior. The research question addressed is: "How do Complex Thinking and Organizational Support Drive Sustainable Behavior in Companies?"

Theoretical framework: The study utilizes a Self-Determination Theory framework to understand the drivers behind both complex thinking and the adoption of virtuous behaviors and it explores under which circumstances` complex thinking capabilities, rooted in an attitude for problem solving, critical analysis, metacognition, systemic analysis and creative thinking, promote the adoption of environmentally sustainable behaviors within organizations. While doing so, it also questions the importance of support within organizations as an enhancing factor for the development of individual's complex thinking capabilities for sustainable change.

Method: Data collected from 372 organizational members were analyzed in AMOS 29, through structural equation modeling (SEM) (Hair et.al, 2014). The two-step procedure of data analysis (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988) was followed. Firstly, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with AMOS 29 was conducted. Once satisfactory values were obtained, the structural model was analyzed using path analysis and second order factors with the maximum likelihood estimator to study eventual causal links among the variables.

Findings: Path analysis allows us to draw conclusions regarding the direct and the indirect effects. As for the direct effects:

Hypothesized paths				**β**	**S.E.**	**C.R.**	**P**	**Outcomes**
H1	Complex thinking	—>	Individual behavioral outcome	0.092	0.048	1.903	0.057	Not supported
H2	Complex thinking	—>	Readiness for change	0.198	0.028	7.038	***	supported
H3	Readiness for change	—>	Individual behavioral outcome	0.899	0.081	11.135	***	supported
H5	Organizational support	—>	Readiness for change	0.209	0.028	7.470	***	supported

As for the indirect effects, the relationship between complex thinking and individual behavior is proven to be fully mediated by readiness for change. To examine such mediating effect of complex thinking, a bootstrapping method with 1000 sub-samples and bias-corrected at a 95% confidence interval was employed. The results indicate that the indirect effect of complex thinking on the relationship between readiness for change and individual behavioral outcome is positive and significant (indirect effect = 0.178; p 0.001; 95%BCCI (0.009; 0.082), which further supports H4. On the other hand, the relationship between complex thinking and readiness for change is not moderated by organizational support, despite the positive impact of organizational support on readiness for change, which invalidates H6. Theoretical and managerial insights are drawn from such treatment.

Session 6B – Stakeholder Engagement for Sustainability (2/3)

Friday 31 October 2025, 11:00-12:30 *Room 6.012*

Framing Management for Desirable Futures with Disruptive Climate Activists

(Neeltje Rohlfes & Oliver Laasch)

Extreme weather events and billions of public funds locked in climate mitigation notwithstanding, government and corporate responses to ameliorate global warming has been slow if not deferring (Dunlap & McCright, 2011). Climate justice movements increasingly resort to disruptive protests due to their dissatisfaction with this failure. Our research interest is to understand how the distinctively disruptive climate movements such as

Fridays for Future, Extinction Rebellion and the Last Generation imagine alternative practices of managerial organizing towards a sustainable future. Disruptive climate activists make the future of unchecked capitalism and neo-liberalism (Wright, Nyberg, & Bowden, 2023) alarmingly visible by disruptive, high stakes protests-often at significant personal costs. The criminalization and marginalization of these activists by corporate actors (Gulliver et al., 2023) highlights their epistemic significance for imagining alternatives for managerial organizing towards desirable futures. As representatives of social fringes, their future making efforts are one empirical basis for discerning desirable futures for prescriptive theorizing in management research (Gümüsay & Reinecke, 2024). Due to the potential of disruptive activism to highlight destructive normalities, it has been theorized as one of the key-competences of responsible managers to promote disruptive activism as one form of "future-proofing" (Laasch & Wernink, 2024). Our qualitative study draws on 78 interviews with disruptive activists from a variety of climate justice movements, such as Extinction Rebellion, the Last Generation, Fridays for Future, Greenpeace and others. We inquired what these activists want managers to do and how managers can become better at this. Our analysis derives recommendations for disruptive managerial practices, as well as invitations to collaboratively organize internal and external to the own corporation (King & Carberry, 2020). Not the least, disruptive activists substantiate their framing of desirable futures with a moralizing appeal to the values of honesty and humanity. As real utopias we analyse these petitions further through prospective thought experiments (Gümüsay & Reinecke, 2024) and investigate to what extent the literature supports their visions.

Zoocentric Organizing Needed: Problematizing the Inclusion of Animals in Stakeholder Theory and Corporate Sustainability

(Markus Vinnari & Eija Vinnari)

This conceptual paper introduces Zoocentric Organizing as a novel framework for integrating animal interests into organizational decision-making. Existing approaches that treat animals as stakeholders or a sustainability dimension are problematized for remaining anthropocentric. Drawing on the moral orientation of zoocentrism, the paper proposes a matrix to guide organizations in considering diverse animal groups from multiple ethical perspectives. The framework is illustrated by applying it to the strategy process of two different companies. The study contributes to management and organization studies by advancing post-anthropocentric thinking and promoting ethical inclusion of animals in corporate contexts.

➔ *full paper available*

Politics and Partnership: Exploring Roles of Internal Bridging Agents in Cross-Sector Partnership Brokerage within an Authoritarian Setting

(Thi Minh Chau Bui)

Cross-sector partnerships (CSPs) operating under authoritarianism face political risks that are overlooked by conventional accounts of boundary work. This paper explores how internal bridging agents enable CSPs to initiate and persist in such settings as well as how internal and external brokers jointly construct and negotiate boundaries with state authorities. Drawing on five CSP cases in Vietnam, the study shows that internal bridging agents perform dual-faced boundary work: alongside inter-partner mediation, they actively engage with state actors, converting tacit contextual knowledge and dense personalised ties into protective mechanisms that mitigate political risks and sustain CSP operations. Where political literacy or network ties are weak, sustaining CSPs becomes a more arduous and resource-intensive task, prompting external intermediaries to supply procedural rigour, reputational leverage and alternative legitimacy. This study conceptualises this complementarity as a hybrid brokerage dyad that distributes the costs and benefits of state-facing boundary work. Theoretically, the study reframes boundary work scholarship to integrate political brokerage; practically, it urges capacity development in political navigation alongside calibrated hybrid brokerage arrangements.

➔ *full paper available*

How do Minority Employees Build Resilience across Work and Life Segments? Evidence from the Peru Mining Sector

(Sébastien Fosse, Kety Jaureguy & Grant Michelson)

The boundaries between work and non-work identities are often viewed as fuzzy or blurred. The well-being of employees, both at work and at home, is largely influenced by how they are treated at work by their supervisors (Quade et al., 2022). This dependence on supervisors' attitudes, behavior, and decisions is expected to be especially strong for employees who live in precarious economic, health, and social conditions; in short, those who belong to minority groups in the workplace. It is a reasonable assumption that, despite this heightened dependence, some minority members may access social support, either at work or outside of it (e.g., local neighborhoods), to provide resources for resilience. At work, conversations with colleagues, including gossip (e.g., Michelson et al., 2010), as well as mobilizing, outside of the workplace, regular or sporadic support from friends, family members, neighbours, and other social communities, represent examples of potential sources of employee resilience (Britt et al., 2016). Resilience has been shown to result from a process linking the various facets of individual and team identities at work and outside of work (Li et al., 2025). However, these two environments to the best of our knowledge, have been mostly studied separately, thus reducing the potential to understand how this dynamic process unfolds across domains and one's multiple identities. In this project, we propose to build on the critical incident technique (Flanagan, 1954) and on social exchange theory to describe and analyze how supervisors, intentionally or not, affect the private and work experiences of their employees. We plan to collect our data in a Peruvian community that lives in close interaction with the neighboring mine (Arenas et al., 2020). The locality or surroundings of this mine include groups of visible minority members, such as single mothers working in the mine who typically experience precarious conditions. Using the case study method, we will interview female employees of the mine (and their relatives) about their interactions with their supervisor and how these interactions affect their emotions, attitudes, and behavior both at work and outside of work. Our paper aims to contribute to the burgeoning theory and research on work-family relations and broader Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policies and practices (see Kossek et al., 2025). By shedding light on the complex dynamics that contribute to the resilience of minority members living in a less-than-benevolent social and organizational environment, we highlight how resilience emerges and contributes to DEI. The practical implications will include offering some key recommendations for middle and top managers of organizations eager to include and involve members of minority groups who navigate adverse environments.

Participatory storytelling as a research method – More accessible knowledge production with vulnerable stakeholder groups

(Susi Mikael Nousiainen)

In my presentation I wish to share experiences on participatory storytelling as a research method, especially from the viewpoint of understanding diversity. My research question is: How can participatory storytelling work help researchers to understand the plurality of human experiences, instead of forcing the diverse viewpoints into one? Based on my research using comics ethnography and participatory comics-making, I believe that participatory arts-based methods can help us to gain more agency in our own stories: both through being able to define our experiences, but also in relation to others. This notion can be especially important in cases concerning knowledge production with and about vulnerable or marginalized stakeholder groups. In my doctoral research in Organization studies the material for participatory storytelling is comics. During my work on the research project "Drifting Teens: Inequalities in the Discourses Concerning Vocational School Students and Finnish Society", funded by the Kone Foundation, I have had the opportunity to draw a more diverse

picture of youth in vocational schools through participatory comics-making, including ethnographic material and comics workshops. As this group of youth in Finland is often represented through a narrow working class framing, possibly set in a hierarchical position in relation to their age-mates in high school, the aim was to bring a more nuanced and intersectional understanding of their life. The participatory storytelling focused around the question "What kind of stories should be told more about youth in vocational schools?". The publications of the project include both academic articles and a comic book. The goal in using participatory comics-making as the research method is to commit to more accessible research, both in terms of different forms of participation and publishing within and outside academia. Comics are a material that moves through borders and boundaries, both through its contents and communities (Kauranen et.al. 2019). In Finland there is for example an ongoing discussion on making official legal documents more accessible by translating them to comics (Ketola et.al. 2024; Ketola et.al. 2023). A shared space for storytelling through comics can also give people in marginalized groups more possibilities for attending research – and publishing as comics can make reaching knowledge more accessible. In my presentation I wish to share some insights (and comics pages) from the project, and discuss how to further develop participatory arts-based research methods in the field of Management and Organization Studies.

➔ *full paper available*

When Good Intentions Clash: Paradoxes and Unintended Consequences in Diversity Management. A Systematic Literature Review

(Sarah Plate & Stefan Gold)

Diversity Management is often presented as a strategic response to changing workplace demographics arising from "wicked problems" such as discrimination, social inequality and mental health risks, while simultaneously aiming to enhance organisational effectiveness and workforce productivity (Jackson & Alvarez, 1992). DM evolved from affirmative action programmes, initially designed to promote the employment and advancement of workers of colour and later women, before developing into a broader managerial philosophy within HRM (Kelly & Dobbin, 1998). As organisational complexity and environmental dynamism increase, contradictory demands become more salient and persistent (Lewis, 2000), leading to tensions that challenge the effectiveness of diversity strategies (Schad et al., 2016). Progress in representation and inclusion remains slow, as compliance-driven approaches frequently fail to address deeper paradoxical tensions (Brennan, 2023). Addressing this gap is crucial to understanding why diversity efforts often fall short of achieving systemic impact and may even exacerbate organisational contradictions. This underscores the need to critically examine how DM practices are conceptualised and how they may inadvertently perpetuate rather than resolve underlying tensions (Smith & Lewis, 2011; Leslie, 2019). Accordingly, this paper investigates *how the existing literature on diversity management reflects paradoxes and unintended consequences within organisations.* A systematic literature review of English speaking peer-reviewed journal articles on DM was conducted. The analysis followed a qualitative coding approach that was deductively informed by Smith and Lewis's (2011) paradox theory, which conceptualises paradoxes as "contradictory yet interrelated elements that persist over time," and Leslie's (2019) framework on diversity practices and unintended consequences. By combining these frameworks, the analysis captures how organisational paradoxes are not only reflected in diversity practices but also expressed through unintended consequences. Core DM practices, including nondiscrimination practices (e.g., bias training), resource practices (e.g., mentoring), and accountability practices (e.g., quotas), were examined to understand how paradoxes and unintended effects manifest. Expected findings suggest that nondiscrimination practices often result in false progress, reflecting belonging paradoxes by promoting surface-level fairness without enabling authentic inclusion. Resource practices may backfire, highlighting tensions between supporting subgroup identities and maintaining cohesion. Accountability practices can provoke resistance and meritocracy concerns, exemplifying performing paradoxes. Overall, DM practices, while intended to support inclusion, may inadvertently sustain or amplify tensions rather than resolve them. This paper provides a systematic, paradox-informed perspective linking diversity practices to unintended consequences and underlying tensions. By integrating paradox theory with a typology of unintended effects, it advances theoretical understanding and

contributes practical insights for more reflective and effective DEI strategies. The paper is submitted under Sub-theme 12: CSR and Diversity.

➔ *full paper available*

Session 6D – Climate Change & CSR (2/2)

Friday 31 October 2025, 11:00-12:30 *Room 6.048*

A Sustainable Swedish Gaming Wonder? Reviewing the Sustainability Reporting Maturity of the Swedish Video Game Industry

(Per Fors, Ossian Nordgren & Ben Abraham)

Swedish industrial companies are often regarded as being at the forefront of sustainability, due to factors such as strong and proactive environmental policies and widespread access to renewable energy. The Swedish video game industry enjoys an equally impressive reputation, having produced world-leading titles and IPs despite its modest size, a phenomenon referred to as the "Swedish gaming wonder". Recently, the trade association for the Swedish Video Game Industry, Swedish Games Industry, has started to promote the environmental sustainability of the industry. However, while the industry's climate impact is described as "low," the actual impact remains unclear. Previous research on GHG reporting within the Swedish video game industry has generally focused on individual case companies. These studies offer limited insight into the industry's overall performance. The focal study seeks to show how actors within the industry report on environmental sustainability, and what areas require improvement in light of the upcoming European Union (EU) Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD). Furthermore, it seeks to contribute methodologically and theoretically to qualitative assessment of environmental sustainability reporting practices through the development of an assessment matrix. The final assessment matrix, which is one of the contributions of the study, comprises 1) Impact Identification and (Double-) Materiality, 2) Environmental Sustainability Targets and Goals, 3) Governance, Strategy, and Policy Compliance, 4) Stakeholder Identification and Engagement, and 5) Report Quality and Clarity. Preliminary findings indicate that most of the companies in the sample are aware of various negative impacts of their operations; however, very few show where along their value chain these negative effects occur and how extensive they are. More specifically, the companies struggle with Scope 3 emissions, both in terms of reporting and strategic responses. While many companies provide explicit and quantifiable goals and targets related to GHG emissions, few show how these goals and targets align with overall business-related targets and strategies.

➔ *full paper available*

Can companies in the power generation sector accelerate the low-carbon transition?

(Marco Menoni)

The main research question of this work regards the impact of net zero-carbon energy on firms sustainability transition (Di Vaio et al, 2025). Related to this topic is the question of how much such decarbonization practices could create a cascade effect (spillover) with a virtuous mechanism to foster the sustainability transition of all the system. It is interesting to investigate when tipping points could arise in corporate behavior that can be able to reach thresholds capable of triggering acceleration for sustainability transition (Sovacool et al, 2025).

Given the importance of technology substitution topics, a relevant aspect concerns the threshold level at which it can promote political and system support to accelerate sustainability (Sovacool et al, 2025). To investigate the research questions, a system perspective is used. A system logic permit to understand better the factors and dynamics that can develop the sustainability transition. Complex cause-effect relationships and system changes that entail different societal actors can be taken into account with the support of SDGs (Berrone et al, 2023) at different scales of analysis, that is, firm, sector, and country level. The topics of sustainability transition are analyzed considering a socio-ecological view beside a socio-technical approach (Biely & Chakori, 2025). The main theories used are the institutional theory, legitimacy theory, and system theory. The methodology is both qualitative and quantitative. A panel of worldwide companies is used with data on sector, system, and country level. The data are of second order. A longitudinal perspective can help to evaluate the depth and speed of transition change. The variables considered for low-carbon energy transition involve economic and market factors, technological factors, social (behavioral) factors, and environmental policy. Among the main outcomes and results expected by the paper is that not only the intensity but also the timing of events can contribute to shaping the speed of transition change. The diffusion and use of environmentally sustainable energy can involve spillover effects on other sectors that can accelerate the transition process. The relationship between SDGs and their prioritization can advance the transition to regeneration and preservation of ecosystem resources. Sustainable and relevant technology diffusion has a positive impact on the acceleration of low-carbon transition.

Turbulences from climate change in the food system: towards long-term resilience

(William Young, Steffen Hirth & Anne Tallontire)

Research Question: How can organisations adapt to turbulences in the food system from climate change?

Theoretical Framework: Many people in the UK have faced disruptions to food supplies due to COVID-19, the cost-of-living crisis, and extreme weather events globally. The food we eat in the UK is sourced and processed from around the world, with a few large companies controlling much of the processing and retailing. We may have food security in the UK at an aggregate level at present, but (over)reliance on imports through just-in-time supply means food is not secure over a medium-term time horizon. Climate change and biodiversity decline remain largely unmitigated while the lack of distributive social policy compromises access to healthy foods for an increasing share of households. These interconnected social and environmental challenges highlight vulnerabilities in the relation between our food and political-economic system. We explore these vulnerabilities and discuss ways to transform our food systems to make them more sustainable and resilient.

- Hirth, S., Morgan, E., Kaptan, G., Crastes dit Sourd, R., Tallontire, A., Young, W. and Winter, M. (2025), Restoring Food System Resilience in a Turbulent World: Supply Chain Actors' Shared Responsibility. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 34: 6007-6023. https://doi.org/10.1002/bse.4287
- Hirth, S., Morgan, E., Crastes dit Sourd, R., Kaptan, G., Tallontire, A., and Young, W. (2025), Leverage points to improve resilience in supply chains: civil food resilience and food sovereignty, *Journal of Rural Studies*,119: 103720. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2025.103720.

Method: Which method is used for the research work? The methods applied comprise a systematic literature review, qualitative semi-structured interviews and a Q-method survey with supply chain stakeholders.

Findings: What are the main outcomes and results of the paper? Findings suggest that responses to COVID-19, which dominate the sample, are biased towards short-term recovery, and neither did justice to calls for "building back better" nor to the long-term impacts of relatively neglected causes of disturbance such as climate change, biodiversity decline, and economic crises. We outline contradictions in resilience discourse between the drive towards short-term system recovery and the need to address long-term stressors caused by an unsustainable food and economic system. Given the need for deep, systemic change, we advocate for civil food resilience and food sovereignty as frameworks for resilience research and food systems transformation.

From Policy to Pavement: Rethinking Well-being at the Neighbourhood Level

(Cindy Ras)

What if well-being wasn't just something we measure — but something we design, together with the people it affects most? In recent years, the debate around Beyond GDP has gained traction in academic and policy circles alike. In 2009, the European Commission published the report *GPD and Beyond: Measuring progress in a changing world*. But while global frameworks like the Sustainable Development Goals set the stage, the real transformation happens much closer to home — in cities, in neighbourhoods, in the everyday experience of citizens. That's exactly where our research takes place. In our research we therefore use the '*Positive Health Model'* (Hubert, 2015). At the 21st Corporate Responsibility Research Conference, I would like to present findings from a research project based in Keent, a neighbourhood in the municipality of Weert (a city of approximately 50.000 inhabitants in the South of the Netherlands). Our central question: *How can a municipality contribute to a systemic approach to well-being at strategic, tactical, and practical levels — and how is this experienced by citizens in their daily lives?* This presentation will explore a multi-layered research approach combining literature review, stakeholder interviews, citizen engagement, and design thinking methodologies. Together with a social design agency (We Are Social Rebels), and in collaboration with a local housing foundation, a welfare organization, other local partners and municipal planners, we developed a co-creative toolbox aimed at fostering neighbourhood well-being from the ground up. Why this matters to researchers: While much academic attention has been given to well-being indicators and cross-national comparisons, this research zooms in on the lived experience of well-being. It highlights the implementation gap between policy intentions and actual needs — and explores how municipalities, often overlooked in macro-level debates, are crucial actors in turning theory into practice. Our findings show both the promise and the complexity of local governance in shaping well-being. We observed meaningful partnerships, but also friction points: mismatches between institutional interventions and what residents actually need or value. In one case, for instance, policymakers proudly discussed public 'meeting spaces', while residents simply longed for a bench to sit on and connect. This research doesn't offer quick fixes — it offers a grounded, system-oriented, and participatory perspective on well-being that can enrich both academic inquiry and public discourse. Let's move beyond indicators. Let's explore what happens when we center people, place, and purpose in our understanding of well-being.

From Causal Evidence to Actionable Signals: A Dual-Track Framework for Policy-Aware Factor Investing in the Sustainable Fuel Sector

(Jingyi Yang, Zhuoran Du, Yi He, Xinqia Liu & Yiyang Xia)

Research Question. How do financial markets reflect and differentiate between government-led green industrial policies, and how can these heterogeneous responses across sectors be modeled to inform ESG-integrated investment strategies that align with global sustainability goals?

Theoretical Framework. This study Our study integrates event study methods from empirical asset pricing with the Bartik-style exposure modeling framework developed by Goldsmith-Pinkham et al. (2020), applied in environmental finance (Liu et al., 2022). Prior work has established that markets react to policy signals (Ramiah et al., 2013; Pham et al., 2019), but little is known about the structural sources of variation across firms. We build on regenerative finance theory to treat public policy as a directional market force—co-constructing capital behavior and ESG signaling at the global governance level.

Method. We construct a dual-layer empirical framework using firm-level data from 2018 to 2024 across North American listed firms in sustainable aviation fuel (SAF), biodiesel, and green hydrogen. Three policy events—

IRA (2022), LCFS revision (2023), and RFS2 update (2021)—are treated as exogenous climate shocks. First, we compute cumulative abnormal returns (CARs) using market-adjusted and 4-factor models across multiple event windows. Second, we construct firm-specific exposure indices based on regulatory incentive intensity (e.g., tax credit size, LCFS credit price) and firms' revenue share from affected sectors. A panel regression with firm and time fixed effects then models the causal impact of exposure on abnormal returns, controlling for size, R&D, and ESG transparency.

Findings. We find that firms with stronger alignment to policy incentives—such as SAF producers benefiting from §45Z credits—experience statistically significant CARs post-announcement. Hydrogen sector firms show delayed or weak responses, often due to regulatory vagueness or infrastructure inertia. These asymmetric outcomes suggest that policy is not a uniform market driver but a stratified force, creating sector-specific valuation shifts. Our findings support the construction of a replicable, policy-aware factor model that turns institutional design into portfolio strategy.

➔ *full paper available*

Session 7B – Stakeholder Engagement for Sustainability (3/3)

Friday 31 October 2025, 14:00-15:00 *Room 6.012*

Competing logics and their reconciliation in addressing biodiversity in business-stakeholder relationships

(Inka Lappalainen)

Despite increasing biodiversity awareness among business and management scholars, public actors as well as business practitioners, current levels of action have limited impacts on biodiversity protection and recovery. Therefore, transformative changes are necessary to synchronize economic growth with planetary boundaries. (e.g., IPBES, 2019; Bansal et al., 2025.) Even though the difficulties of companies to integrate biodiversity issues in their business strategies and practice have been widely acknowledged, current research on businesses and industries particularly in addressing biodiversity is yet scarce. Sustainability and particularly biodiversity issues have challenged the institutionalized dominant logic(s) and related system paradigms and forced scholars across disciplines and business practitioners to re-think beyond societal value systems towards more integrated socio-ecological systems. This paper and related research aim at building bridges between stakeholder theory, institutional theory and biodiversity management research (e.g., Thornton et al., 2012; Kujala et al., 2022; Testa et al., 2025). By building on these theoretical grounds, extant research and empirical study, the paper aims to clarify conceptual and deepen empirical understanding of change dynamics including misalignments generated by competing logics in business-stakeholder relationships in biodiversity management in transition. The two-fold research question has been formulated as follows: a) What kind of competing logics and related misalignments have generated, and b) How have they co-evolved and could be reconciled in addressing biodiversity in business-stakeholder relationships? Empirical research is targeted at the topical and controversial mining sector, which plays such a critical role in sustainability transitions. As known, mining operations as the nature-resource based industry may have significant and direct negative biodiversity impacts, while the industry enacts as an enabler of the sustainability transitions. The qualitative multi-case study approach is applied. The primary empirical data covers altogether 49 in-depth thematic interviews of the mining companies, and their stakeholders collected in Action4Commons research project (2023-2025) in Finland. Archival data is used as secondary data source to supplement the qualitative content analysis and clarify interpretations made from the interview data analysis. The findings demonstrate empirically how theoretical underpinnings of stakeholder theory and institutional theory can complement each other when seeking in-depth understanding of change dynamics including misalignments generated by competing logics in business-stakeholder relationships in biodiversity management in transition. Thus, the findings bring valuable new insights to both the topical societal and corporate responsibility research debate

by helping to understand more comprehensively complex dynamics of business-stakeholder relationships in biodiversity management in the mining context, and how related misalignments and possible conflicts could be reconciled at different local settings in terms of system vitality and sustainability transitions. As a practical contribution the findings inform companies and their multiple stakeholders, such as authorities and policymakers in their crucial roles in the highly topical and regulated mining sector.

How to categorize nonhuman nature stakeholders?

(Anna Hannula, Johanna Kujala & Sybille Sachs)

Research Question: How can nonhuman nature stakeholders be conceptualized in stakeholder theory, and what kind of categorization can be established for them?

Theoretical Framework: Stakeholder theory has considerably discussed the acknowledgment of nonhuman nature entities and beings as stakeholders (Driscoll & Starik, 2004, Kortetmäki et al., 2023; Starik, 1995; Tallberg et al., 2022). Conceptual discussions regarding the identification and categorization of nonhuman stakeholders are still limited, yet increasingly called for. Research on nonhuman stakeholders is fragmented, with varying—and at times conflicting—assumptions about their role and significance in firms. To move beyond instrumental approaches, recent literature has introduced non-anthropocentric perspectives, such as recognizing and particularizing nonhumans as individuals and collectives with distinct characteristics (Kortetmäki et al., 2023) and using feminist embodied readings to explore animal stakeholder interests (Tallberg et al., 2022). Yet, ongoing fragmentation and unresolved debates limit stakeholder theory's capacity to incorporate nonhumans into stakeholder networks and to examine their connections to business activities.

Method: In this conceptual article, we build on prior research on nonhuman nature in stakeholder theory. Our work relies on theorizing based on typologies as suggested by Cornelissen (2017).

Findings: We propose a conceptualization of nonhuman stakeholders along two dimensions: (1) a humanistic vs. posthumanistic normative core and (2) a distant vs. intertwined connection to a firm's main activities. Based on this conceptualization, we identify four categories of nonhuman stakeholders: unacknowledged, resource, protected, and partner. Beyond proposing these categories, we contribute to stakeholder theory by explicating posthumanism as an alternative normative foundation to the prevailing humanistic paradigm and by elucidating the role of intermediaries in mediating firm–nonhuman stakeholder relationships.

Session 7C – CSR & Diversity (2/2)

Friday 31 October 2025, 14:00-15:00 *Room 6.048*

Does Female Representation in Boards Matter for Firm Biodiversity Performance?

(Neha Neha, Lotta Sihvo Matikainen & Francesco Fasano)

As biodiversity loss rises to the forefront of corporate sustainability concerns, understanding the role of corporate leadership in addressing these challenges becomes critical. Amid escalating biodiversity depletion and intensified regulatory and stakeholder pressures, companies increasingly face demands to disclose and actively manage their impacts on natural ecosystems. However, given its largely voluntary nature, firm-level biodiversity engagement remains relatively underexplored in corporate governance literature. This study investigates the role of board characteristics—particularly female board representation—in influencing corporate biodiversity disclosure and engagement practices among European firms. Drawing on upper echelons' theory and social theory, we propose that women directors may introduce distinctive leadership attributes, such as higher risk awareness and enhanced social values, that promote stronger biodiversity initiatives. Prior research underscores the influence of managerial attributes, such as gender, education,

political affiliations, and environmental training, on general environmental performance (Ma et al., 2019; Nadeem et al., 2020; Haque & Jones, 2020). Nevertheless, their specific impact on biodiversity-related strategies remains largely unaddressed. With the EU's Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) expanding environmental accountability, identifying factors that drive corporate biodiversity strategies is increasingly crucial. Using a comprehensive panel dataset of 3,446 firm-year observations from 19 European countries (2020–2023), we employ pooled OLS regressions with industry, country, and year fixed effects to assess the relationship between board gender diversity and firm-level biodiversity outcomes. To capture biodiversity engagement, we develop and introduce a Composite Biodiversity Engagement Index (CBEI), a multidimensional measure encompassing various biodiversity protection actions and strategic initiatives. Our findings indicate that female representation on corporate boards is positively associated with both biodiversity disclosure and engagement. However, further robustness checks employing instrumental variable (IV) two-stage least squares regression methods, designed to control for potential endogeneity and omitted variable biases, yield mixed results. These nuanced findings highlight the inherent complexity of accurately measuring biodiversity outcomes and suggest that genuine biodiversity performance requires deeper organizational efforts beyond mere disclosures. This study makes several important contributions. First, it introduces and validates the CBEI as an innovative governance-linked measure of corporate biodiversity engagement. Second, it provides empirical evidence regarding the influence of female board representation on biodiversity performance. Lastly, by applying upper echelons theory and social theory specifically to biodiversity issues, it extends the theoretical frameworks traditionally employed in corporate sustainability research. Our results offer important normative and practical guidance for corporate boards, investors, and policymakers, suggesting that enhancing gender diversity at the leadership level may foster more substantive biodiversity protection strategies.

Board Gender Diversity, Board Independence, and CSR: The Moderating Effect of Ownership Structure

(Defeng Sun)

This study analyzes how the board gender diversity and board independence affect firms' corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities, and how ownership structure (e.g., government, institutional, foreign ownership) moderates the relationships between the board gender diversity, board independence, and CSR activities. Using a sample of 1,561 listed Japanese firms from 2012 to 2021, our results provide evidence that board gender diversity and board independence are positively associated with CSR activities. The moderating role of government ownership on the effect of board gender diversity and board independence on the firm's CSR activities are not statistically significant and the direct effect of government ownership on CSR activities is also not significant. In regard with institutional ownership, the moderator impact of institutional ownership on the effect of board gender diversity and board independence on CSR activities are not significant, but the institutional ownership is positively associated with CSR activities directly. However, foreign ownership has a negative and statistically significant impact on the relationship between board gender diversity, board independence and CSR activities. Specifically, as the percentage of foreign shareholders increases, the positive impact of board gender diversity and board independence on a firm's CSR activities decreases.

➔ *full paper available*