CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY MANAGEMENT

Advertised Topics for Bachelor- and Master Theses
for the winter term 2021/22

This **list includes** but is not limited to **topics we are currently interested in**. Please note that some topics are rather broad while others are more specific. You can **also** propose **your own topic/research question.** Furthermore, you can **indicate** in the application form whether you are **willing to work on**/interested in working on **alternative topics** of this list if a supervision for your proposed research question/the topic of your first choice is not possible. In this case, refer to the topic numbers in this list (#).

Important information: For some topics, the supervision process and writing of the thesis is only possible in **English**. For other topics (and depending on the supervisor assignment), the thesis can be written **in German or in English**. To help us find a match for your application, please **indicate** in the application form **whether** you are **flexible to write your thesis in English** and/or German.

Topic overview (for more detailed descriptions, see below):

(*supervision/thesis in English, only; + supervision by Dr. Dimitar Zvezdov)

- #01* **Regenerative enterprises or regenerative business models** (BA/MA)

- #02 **Foresight Study on Technologies & Sustainability 2035** (BA/MA)

- #03 **Business and Human Rights** (BA/MA)

- #04* **Social Entrepreneurship** (BA/MA)

- #05+ **Areas/Functions of Sustainability Management+** (BA)

- #06* **Platform-based business models in social enterprises** (BA/MA)

- #07 **Sustainability as a Design Approach** (BA/MA)

- #08 **Blockchain and Sustainability** (BA)

- #09+ **Practical Implications/Impact of Sust. Mgmt Research** (BA)

- #10 **The Management Relevance of Life Cycle Analysis** (BA/MA)

- #11 **Further topics include** (without an addition description)

  #11-1 CSR/Sustainability Reporting
  #11-2 Circular Economy: Innovation, Smartification & Product-Service Systems
  #11-3 Public service innovation and sustainability
  #11-4 Sustainability-related topics in China in business and public management
  #11-5 Sustainability and co-operatives (Genossenschaften)

Topic descriptions

Topic #01
Regenerative enterprises and regenerative business models
A major cause for pressing sustainability challenges is our linear economy in which we deplete natural resources, damage ecosystems and create harm to the ecological environment. In contrast, regenerative forms of business seek to heal ecological damages and regenerate the ecosystems in which they operate. Examples can include climate positive business models or forms of agriculture that increase soil quality, carbon sequestration, and biodiversity.

Thesis candidates are invited to look at these exciting new business models and develop interesting research questions in this field. Candidates will be guided in their formulation of the final research question.
Language: English   Study level: Bachelor or Master Thesis

Topic #02
Forsight Study on Technologies & Sustainability 2035
The topic covers the research field of sustainability management at the interface with innovation management, in particular the integration of smart technologies. The aim of the thesis is to qualitatively investigate potentials and drivers, but also barriers and concrete application scenarios of smart technologies for sustainability, e.g. in the transition towards a circular economy. Major trends and applications can be deduced from the literature. In addition, experts will be researched and interviewed on possible future topics of the interface. One possibility to approach these expert survey is the Delphi method (within a master thesis).

A possible, preliminary question is: What potentials and application scenarios of smart technologies for sustainability can be expected by 2035?
Language: English or German   Study level: Bachelor or Master thesis

Topic #03
Business and Human Rights
This general topic includes but is not limited to various sub-topics. Students can also propose their own topic within this field:
- management and reporting of corporate human rights performance
- the business case for human Rights
- internal organization, processes and tools for managing corporate human rights performance
- industry and international/cultural differences in corporate human rights strategy
- The role of partnerships for managing corporate human rights performance

Language: English or German   Study level: Bachelor or Master thesis

Topic #04
Social Entrepreneurship
Social entrepreneurship is a novel entrepreneurial form that aims at solving societal problems with commercial approaches and it is increasingly playing prominent roles in many fields, such as education diffusion, environment protection, poverty elimination, etc. Under this topic, possible questions include but are not limited to
- Fostering social entrepreneurship in university students
- Investigating differences among social enterprises and other conventional non-profit organizations
- how social entrepreneurship upgrades itself under the impact of digitalization
- how social entrepreneurship develops in different ecosystems.

Language: English   Study level: Bachelor or Master thesis

<u>Topic #05</u> (supervised by Dr. Dimitar Zvezdov)
Bereiche des Nachhaltigkeitsmanagements
Ziel: Typologisierung der aktuellen Forschung zum Thema Nachhaltigkeitsmanagement
Methode: Überwiegend literaturbasiert + Auswertung der Literatur in diesem Bereich

Kurze Beschreibung: Die Forschung im Bereich des unternehmerischen Nachhaltigkeitsmanagements hat in den letzten Jahren stark zugenommen. Diese Bachelorarbeit soll eine Übersicht der Teilbereiche (z.B. Lieferkettenmanagement, Strategie) erstellen, mit deren Hilfe Schwerpunkte, aber auch weiße Flecken auf der Forschungskarte identifiziert werden können.

Besondere Voraussetzungen: Spaß an der Auseinandersetzung mit der Theorie und Forschungsrecherche; Kreativität; idealerweise Basiskenntnisse in Netzwerkanalyse; Englischkenntnisse
Language: German or English   Study level: Bachelor thesis

<u>Topic #06</u>
Platform based business models in social enterprises
Social enterprises use their business to address social problems and help their beneficiaries. For example, social enterprises provide better access to health services, education, sanitation, or nutrition to marginalized groups. This topic looks at the role of platform (web-based) solutions and business models that allows social enterprises to increase their impact.

Thesis candidates are invited to look at this area of overlap between digitalization and social enterprises to develop interesting research questions in this field. Candidates will be guided in their formulation of the final research question.
Language: English   Study level: Bachelor or Master Thesis

<u>Topic #07</u>
Sustainability as a Design Approach
Sustainability is a question of design. In the sense of the concept of "constraint-based innovation", sustainability can even lead to more creative, innovative solutions. The thesis analyzes sustainability as a design principle in different disciplines, e.g. chemistry, architecture, etc. and derives general design principles. The goal is to create an interdisciplinary, universal design approach for sustainability.
This is a literature-based thesis, which requires solid English and analysis skills.

Language: English or German   Study level: Bachelor or Master thesis

<u>Topic #08</u>
Blockchain and Sustainability (BA)
Blockchain technologies are discussed as a a potentially powerful tool to achieve positive sustainability impacts (e.g. https://positiveblockchain.io). Theses in this field can investigate topics that include but are not limited to:

- Cryptocurrencies, blockchains and social enterprises
- Analysis of existing 'positive blockchain' projects and their positive social and/ or environmental impact
- How can blockchain technology enable businesses to address current sustainability challenges?

Language: English or German   Study level: Bachelor or Master thesis

Topic #09 (supervised by Dr. Dimitar Zvezdov)

Praktische Erkenntnisse der Forschung zu Nachhaltigkeitsmanagement

Ziel: Auswertung des Beitrages der Forschung zur unternehmerischen Praxis

Methode: Auswertung der meistzitierten Publikationen in Bereich Nachhaltigkeitsmanagement

Kurze Beschreibung: Die Forschung im Bereich des unternehmerischen Nachhaltigkeitsmanagements hat in den letzten Jahren stark zugenommen. Diese Bachelorarbeit soll die darin enthaltenen praxisorientierten Handlungsempfehlungen auswerten.

Besondere Voraussetzungen: Spaß an der Auseinandersetzung mit Forschungsliteratur; Kreativität; gute Englischkenntnisse

Language: English or German   Study level: Bachelor thesis

Topic #10

The Management Relevance of Life Cycle Analysis

The thesis analyzes the existing literature on Life Cycle Analysis in Sustainability Management and present it in a descriptive way. The focus is on different tools, the application in companies and the benefits of the method.

This is a literature-based thesis, which requires solid English and analysis skills.

Language: English or German   Study level: Bachelor or Master thesis

#11

Further Topics

- #11-1   Sustainability-related topics in China in business and public management
- #11-2   CSR/Sustainability Reporting
- #11-3   Public service innovation and sustainability
- #11-4   Circular Economy: Innovation, Smartification & Product-Service Systems
- #11-5   Sustainability and co-operatives (Genossenschaften)