“No development without peace and no lasting peace without development.”

Jan Eliasson, former UN Deputy General and alumni of the School
A WORD FROM THE DEAN

In a world where knowledge is increasingly questioned and relativised, and where, as an indication of this, the US EPA now is governed by a climate change denier, the role of universities and academic institutions as defenders of fundamental scientific values is of utmost importance.

While the School of Business, Economics and Law at the University of Gothenburg has a long tradition of research and education in sustainable development, and while we in recent years have taken several important measures to better integrate issues of sustainable development into our degree programmes, we are now taking the next steps. This involves several concrete plans, with maybe the most important one being our commitment to transform the formulations in our strategies and action plans into relevant and high-quality sustainability elements in each lecture given. This, of course, is also fully in line with our commitment to The Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) and with our mission, i.e. “to develop knowledge, educate and foster independent thinking for the advancement of organisations, policy and a sustainable world.”

To carefully implement plans and strategies and gradually improve their execution are perhaps less glorious and exciting than the formulating of new and bold plans. Yet, it is certainly not less important. We look forward to working together with other schools within PRME for a better and more sustainable world.

Per Cramér
Dean, School of Business, Economics and Law
INTRODUCTION:
THE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, ECONOMICS AND LAW
AT A GLANCE

The School of Business, Economics and Law at the University of Gothenburg has about 4,000 full-time students and 500 faculty members and staff, of whom about 100 are full professors or associate professors, and has an extensive network of about 160 partner universities and well developed connections with the surrounding society.

The School consists of four departments: Business Administration, Economics, Law, and Economy and Society (including Economic History, Human Geography, and Innovation and Entrepreneurship), and in addition hosts a number of multidisciplinary research centers and units. As such, the School is broader in terms of disciplines and scope than most traditional business schools, which we consider a comparative advantage when tackling sustainability challenges that are often multi-disciplinary by nature.

Since the last PRME SIP report the School has gained its third international accreditation (all of them for five years) and is now one of about 70 business schools in the world, and the only one in Sweden, referred to as ‘Triple Crown’ accredited. The School is also ISO 14001 certified and has been a signatory to the Global Compact and the PRME since 2011; this report constitutes the Schools third SIP-report and cover activites from 2016 to 2017.

We believe that high quality sustainability education rely heavily on highly motivated and curious faculty, staff and students, as well as on a solid foundation in research. Sustainability-related research at the School covers topics such as climate policy, globalization, development and poverty, socioeconomic issues, business ethics, marine resource management, sustainable urban planning, supply-chain management and sustainable consumption to name a few examples. As such, the School conducts extensive research related to most of the 17 sustainable development goals. These goals are now also discussed within all bachelor programs.
PRINCIPLES 1 & 2:
PURPOSE AND VALUES

PRIME PRINCIPLE 1:
We will develop the capabilities of students to be future generators of sustainable value for business and society at large and to work for an inclusive and sustainable global economy.

PRIME PRINCIPLE 2:
We will incorporate into our academic activities, curricula and organisational practices the values of global social responsibility as portrayed in international initiatives such as the United Nations Global Compact.

Our mission explicitly states that we shall contribute to a sustainable world, and to this end, we must take action. We must continue and even accelerate our work to tackle local and global challenges through research, teaching and cooperation with the corporate and public sector, as well as the general public and the international community. The School’s new strategy for the years 2017–2021 provides the overall framework for sustainability and further emphasises its importance for the School as a whole. In addition, the School’s new document titled Our Fundamental Values, adopted by the Faculty Board in 2017, stresses our commitment to the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This section describes our strategic focus and values guiding our operations.

The mission statement guides the academic development at the School

“To develop knowledge, educate and foster independent thinking for the advancement of organisations, policy and a sustainable world.”

The School’s mission was slightly updated with the 2017–2021 strategy. The overall aim, however, remains unchanged. The School’s overall mission is still to contribute to a sustainable world, and this is further emphasised in the strategy. In the new mission, the advancement of policy development was made more explicit, along with the role of independent and critical thinking. Independent and critical thinking is of course a cornerstone of all serious academic institutions but still cannot be stressed enough in a world where science and knowledge are increasingly questioned and relativised.

The great diversity in research activities is one of the School’s main strengths. This strength is evident both within the School itself and in research collaborations with other faculties at the University and Chalmers University of Technology and with other international multidisciplinary research environments. The diversity also translates into great opportunities to provide students with a multitude of different perspectives. We also believe that addressing the 17 SDGs will require us to apply even more of multi-stakeholder and multi-disciplinary approaches going forward.

Strategy in relation to research and education

The strong commitment and achievements to sustainability is made possible through the School’s strong research base in all disciplines, which gives us a favourable position to build on. Sustainability is also one of the School’s three prioritised research areas (the others being globalisation and high societal relevance). The ambition is hence to continue to further strengthen our research in this area. Some achievements since the last report are described under Principle 4 – Research.

As an academic institution, our primary impact on societal development is found in the work done by the School’s alumni. The School therefore emphasises our responsibility to equip students with the knowledge and tools they will need to be able to contribute to a sustainable society. All of the School’s departments offer courses within the broad spectrum of sustainable
development, and since 2015, all undergraduate programmes have explicit learning outcomes related to sustainability. Our educational framework for sustainability is described under Principle 3 – Method.

Our fundamental values

The adoption of the document Our Fundamental Values in 2017 was an important action taken in the areas of Principle 1 (purpose) and Principle 2 (values). Before the adoption of the values specified in the document, all departments and individuals at the School had a chance to participate in and contribute to the development of the text. The document was approved by the Faculty Board in late 2017 and then immediately made public. It for example states that the School's overall objective is to contribute to the development of a better society. As part of this objective, the School works actively to promote:

- equal value and treatment of all people,
- democracy, freedom of speech and other fundamental human rights,
- achievement of the 17 UN sustainability goals.

The document also lays down that all activities at the School shall be characterised by an urge to achieve the highest quality and relevance and that research and education are to be scientifically based and centred around critical thinking and a constant search for knowledge. It also clearly expresses that:

- Collaborations with external partners, while generally encouraged, must never lead to individual businesses or organisations being favoured or treated uncritically.
- The results of research and their publication, as well as the teaching content, must never be influenced by the funders of the activities.
- All employees are encouraged to express their opinions and criticism, this is especially important that well-justified criticism of external partners or donors is not avoided or downplayed.
- In collaborations with academic institutions in undemocratic countries, criticism of these countries or their institutions must under no circumstances be silenced or downplayed.
- The School shall be an inclusive organisation where everybody regardless of gender, age, ethnic background, religious beliefs and view of life, sexual orientation, political opinion or physical disability feels welcome and included.
- There is a zero tolerance policy for all forms of discrimination, bullying and harassment.
- All employees and students have a personal responsibility to ensure that the activities of the School are carried out in accordance with the School's fundamental values to the greatest possible extent.

Future plans and challenges

At present, the School's main focus is on implementing already existing plans and strategies in the area of sustainability and not on developing new strategies. However, there is of course always development of new more concrete plans at different levels at the School (for example a current overhaul of the undergraduate program in Business and Economics). We are pleased with the positive international evaluations we have received in this area (for example from EQUIS and AACSB) but are far from content. Feedback from the EQUIS peer review team in 2017:

“Ethics, Responsibility and Sustainability (ERS) is a flagship characteristic of the School of Business, Economics and Law. The School has a clear focus on ERS as displayed in its strategy, mission and action.”

“The peer review team note the commitment to ethics, responsibility and sustainability (ERS). It is part of the DNA – from the solar panels, to the law clinics, from the environmental economics research to the class room teaching.”

Written report by EQUIS peer review team 2017
Learning outcomes for all undergraduate programmes

The presence of sustainability-related learning outcomes in all of our four undergraduate programmes is an essential part of our sustainability framework for education. Learning outcomes at programme level guide course development and require programme coordinators and teaching staff to take action and make sure that the stated goals are met. Since 2015, the programmes in law, logistics and business and economics, as well as the multidisciplinary programme in environmental social science, all have at least one learning outcome explicitly addressing sustainability.

Progression between courses

In a setting were an undergraduate programme consists of courses provided by multiple staff from multiple departments, ensuring a good progression between courses can be challenging. At many universities with an ambition to strengthen a curriculum with regard to sustainability, students complain that there is too much repetition and overlap in this area. For example, relevant sustainability concepts should not be explained several times in different courses. One way to avoid this is to work closely with programme coordinators, which we have continued to do since our last PRME report. For the programme in business and economics, the following initiatives have been taken:

- A workshop where the programme’s course coordinators discuss different ways of tackling the issue of progression and ensuring that each course complements or continues building on, and does not repeat, sustainability themes covered in other courses.
- Courses have been strengthened by incorporating new relevant sustainability aspects after consultation with the programme manager and the teachers in the different courses.
- Integration of themes from the Sustainability Days into programme courses has been encouraged.

PRINCIPLE 3: METHOD

PRME PRINCIPLE 3:
We will create educational frameworks, materials, processes and environments that enable effective learning experiences for responsible leadership.

OVERVIEW AND FRAMEWORK

Our impact on societal development as an academic institution depends on the knowledge, skills and abilities we provide to our students. It is therefore of great importance that our students are prepared and trained to address sustainability related problems and to make ethical judgements relevant for their future careers. This is to an increasing degree reflected in our programme portfolio, even though there is certainly still room for improvement. In this section, we describe the framework, achievements and future challenges related to the integration of sustainability into courses and programmes at the School as well as examples of stand-alone initiatives and extracurricular activities.

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Two short examples of specific sustainability courses that integrate practitioners

**Sustainable management**
Sustainable Management is an elective at the MSc Programs, enabling students to sharpen their analytical skills in the area of sustainable business. Students study social and environmental issues in relation to corporate strategy, how sustainable business strategies are developed in different industries and how ethical considerations influence this process.

An important part of the course is the Sustainability Screening Case, giving students the opportunity to perform an in-depth study of the sustainability practices and performance of a local company. The analysis is conducted in groups, based on desktop studies and an interview with the CEO or CSO of the company. The aim is to foster a holistic understanding in the field of sustainable business and improve students’ analytical skills by connecting theoretical knowledge with corporate sustainability practices. At the end of the course, the student groups present their results and suggestions for improving the sustainability strategy of their case company to their peers and to the different companies.

One of the teachers expressed that, “meeting professionals and discussing their challenges to develop corporate sustainability, is by far the most meaningful experience for the students.” It was obvious that the learning setting fostered personal engagement and problem-solving skills. Students improved their understanding how companies work with sustainability and deal with dilemmas. They also observed that there often is a gap between academic knowledge and reality.

**Environmental economics**
Economics can sometimes appear a bit theoretical, and the practical application of the studied theories can be difficult for students to see. In Åsa Löfgren’s environmental economics course, regulatory theory is combined with discussions of real world policy instruments. During the course the students meet with representatives from the Swedish EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) to discuss regulation in practice. What are the challenges of designing, implementing and evaluating the effect of policies according to the EPA? During the last course special attention was given to the Swedish NOx-fee.

In Anders Sandoff’s course Sustainable Management students are faced with real world ethical dilemmas. Students are also tasked with performing a sustainability screening of a local company, including interviewing CEOs or CSOs.
Examples of themes: Sustainability Day – Challenges

- Agenda 2030 as guiding strategy for business and society
- The challenge of antibiotic resistance
- Global inequality – the super-rich, the poor and everyone else. What does the science say about the trends in equality within and across countries?
- The war in Syria – what is it really about?
- Human rights in supply-chain management
- Energy supply as a global challenge – supply, safety and climate impact
- The climate impact of meat production
- Will there be more plastic than fish in the ocean in 2050?

Parts 1–2 are carried out in the form of literature studies and writing of short summaries based on the literature and lectures given by researchers representing different theoretical perspectives and disciplines, as well as a literature seminar. In Part 3, the participants write a report and then present and discuss it at a seminar.

Sustainability Days

The Sustainability Day concept was introduced in 2013, and in 2016 it was fully implemented in all undergraduate programmes. The Sustainability Days consists of three full days focusing on sustainability from various perspectives. The overall aim is to complement the sustainability content of courses by raising awareness and providing knowledge around three themes: challenges, responsibility and solutions.

Day 1: Challenges

The Sustainability Days build (somewhat loosely) on each other, where the first day focuses on sustainability challenges from a variety of perspectives. This day, arranged in the first year of the programmes, is organised as a conference where topics such as climate change, economic inequality, antibiotic resistance, migration, human rights and challenges related to the implementation of the SDGs are discussed. A total of 20–25 sessions divided into four time slots are organised. Students freely choose three of these sessions and attend one mandatory session on the challenges involved in implementing the SDGs. Faculty from both other parts of the University and other universities in Sweden and elsewhere give presentations during the day. Presentations are also given by practitioners.

Day 2: Responsibility

In the second year of the programmes, the School arranges a Sustainability Day titled Responsibility, focusing on responsibility and accountability through discussions on the roles of various actors in a globalised world. This day has so far addressed ethical, social, economic and environmental aspects related to the fashion industry. An important and unique feature of all sustainability days is that students from different programmes meet and discuss complicated and challenging issues. This is particularly evident during the Responsibility day when we gather 350 students in a large venue and let them work in groups of four on issues related to the clothing industry. Presentations on philosophical perspectives of taking responsibility and research presentations on supply chain management and consumption patterns are mixed with presentations and discussions with contributions by small and large global actors in the clothing industry. The structure of this day is currently being revised.
Day 3: Solutions
The third and final day, held during the sixth semester of the programmes, focuses on solutions to global sustainability challenges. This day was first organised in 2016 and then again in 2017 and 2018. In 2018, it focused on concrete solutions. After a plenum presentation by Johan Kuylenstierna from the Stockholm Environmental Institute, students could choose one of five tracks. All tracks focused on one or more of the global sustainability goals, and business, legal, and policy perspectives were discussed in most sessions. Future mobility was for example discussed with both representatives from Volvo Cars and UNITI (a new small Swedish electric car company) and staff from the School and Chalmers University of Technology. Impact entrepreneurship was discussed with representatives from, among others, TRINE, which is a large crowdsourcing platform for investment in solar cells in developing countries, and Ignitia, which has developed a weather app to provide African farmers with improved weather forecast services and hence enhanced agricultural production. Students’ ideas about urban development were presented to and discussed with representatives from the urban planning office, real estate companies and representatives from various NGOs. In these sessions, students also had to present their ideas to the business representatives.

All Sustainability Days are under continuous development to keep up with relevant topics. The days are greatly appreciated by students, who value the topics discussed, the teaching approaches and the interaction with peers from other programmes. On a 1–5 scale with 5 being the best, 70–80% of students respond 4 or 5 to a question about their satisfaction with the days.

Organisation
The School’s Council for Sustainable Development (CSD) has four main areas of responsibility, as outlined in Figure 1, namely educational support, strategic sustainability support, a sustainable campus and sustainability days. The Council’s work is described in an annual activity plan. The CSD is chaired by the Vice-Dean and consists of one researcher from each of the School’s four departments. Much of the work is carried out by the sustainability coordinator and the project coordinator of the Sustainability Days. The School’s communications officer also has an important role in the CSD. In addition, CSD meetings involve representation from Handels Students for Sustainability, which is the School’s highly active student organisation.

The programme in environmental social science
Since 2000, the School offers a programme in environmental social science – a result of strong research in the field of environmental sustainability at the School. The programme’s transdisciplinary approach that is characterised by integration of social and environmental sciences makes it unique in Sweden. In the programme, students can take advantage of the social science profile of the programme while also developing environmental competence. The various programme tracks (of which those specialising in environmental economics, environmental planning and sustainable business are given by the School) generate a wide range of career opportunities. Since the introduction of the School’s Young Alumni Award in 2012, two students from the programme have received the prestigious award for their work at Norad (the Norwegian Development Agency) and Swedish multinational medical technology company Getinge and then later IKEA.

Figure 1. The four main areas of responsibility.
Handels Students for Sustainability

Handels Students for Sustainability (HaSS) is a student association at the School dedicated to channeling students’ ambitions and creativity into making sustainability happen. They describe their central aim as spreading knowledge, creating incentives and developing their members’ capacity as change agents. The vision of HaSS is for all students at the School of Business, Economics and Law to understand the opportunities of a sustainable society. The association’s ambition is to serve as a platform for the hosting and support of student-driven initiatives and discussions within the field of sustainability, especially in the areas of economics, business and law.

HaSS is centred around student-run projects, which may consist of for example seminars, lectures, workshops, case solving and contests. All activities are based on member initiatives, with the association’s board providing support in the background. The association was founded in 2012, has grown steadily and is currently the largest student association at the School.

The Enviro Travel project

EnviroTravel is a project within HaSS with the aim of studying sustainability related matters abroad. Participants can either study challenges or good examples. The event was first organised in 2014, when students studied scenarios for scaling up sustainable tourism in Albania. Since then, study trips to Germany and Bangladesh have been arranged, and in 2017 students organised a trip to Iceland (by boat to minimise the carbon footprint of the travel). HaSS organises Enviro Travel yearly and around 15 students usually participate. Participating students later share their experience and knowledge gained in different forums, for example during the Sustainability Days.

Last year, the trip to Iceland focused on studying the opportunities and difficulties related learning from Iceland’s experience in transition to a near zero carbon energy system. Island today generate more renewable energy per capita than any other country. In the summer of 2018 students participating in Enviro Travel will study sustainable food production in Europe both locally, for example in the form of urban gardening projects, and at national policy level. As the project promotes sustainable travel, students will travel to the European parliament, universities, NGOs and local farmers by train.

Addressing the SDGs in the master’s programmes

So far, much of the focus on strengthening the curricula with regard to sustainability has focused on the Bachelor’s level. In 2018, however, the Council for Sustainable Development together with the programme management for the Master’s programmes began a process of addressing the the sustainable development goals within all these programmes. The current programme content related to the SDGs was discussed and steps towards strengthening this content were taken at a workshop arranged in April for all programme coordinators.

Combining theory, practice and outreach – the School’s law clinic and street law courses

The School’s Law Clinic was opened in late 2014 in connection with the launching of a new course, Welfare Law in Theory and Practice, included as
an elective in the Masters of Law programme. In the course, students work at non-profit organisations giving legal advice to disadvantaged people while also attending lectures and seminars at the Department of Law. Upon completion of the course, the students are awarded academic credits (30 ECTS). The students work closely with their supervisors at the organisations (for example the Red Cross, Save the Children and Gothenburg Human Rights Centre) three days a week. Two days a week, they have lectures, exercise sessions and seminars at the Department of Law, which provides the academic part of the course. The idea is to help the students improve their legal skills by providing a good theoretical basis within the different areas of welfare law, along with opportunities to apply the knowledge in practice at the non-profit organisations.

In 2018, the work at the Law Clinics is being further developed and expanded by means of a new course in migration law (15 ECTS credits) organised in close collaboration with the Swedish Migration Agency, the Swedish National Course Administration, the City of Gothenburg and non-profit organisations. In the final month of this course, students will engage in providing legal education/training to local communities at organisations and public agencies, schools etc. Gothenburg is a segregated city with many newly arrived migrants and a high demand for skilled lawyers in the field of immigration law. With this course, we hope to contribute a little bit to a more socially sustainable city.

Future plans and challenges

Since our last PRME report, we have continued the work to increase the integration of sustainability perspectives in courses and degree programmes, especially at the Bachelor’s level. Since 2015 and the adoption of the SDGs, we not only have a new internationally recognised language to discuss sustainability, the global goals also constitute a unique international call for action to many stakeholders, including academia, business and public organisations. How to best integrate the 17 SDGs and not create ‘silos’ is one of our challenges for the future since one of the aims of Agenda 2030 is to recognise the interlinkages between different sectors, actors and goals.

To date, there has been no mandatory course for all undergraduate programme students dedicated to addressing the SDGs or global challenges more generally. However, there are ongoing discussions among faculty and the program management team about introducing a compulsory sustainability course in the business and economics programme. There are also discussions between the School and Chalmers University of Technology about developing a new sustainability-focused Master’s course. Future plans also include an increased focus on embedding sustainability more thoroughly in the School’s Master’s programmes by continue to build on the work started in 2018.

Figure 1. Students’ perceptions of integration of sustainability.

To what extent do you think sustainability has been integrated into the program? (Undergraduate programme in Business and Economics.)

Every year 2016–2018 at the Sustainability Day: Solutions, students completing the final semester of the Bachelor’s programme in business and economics have been asked to respond to this question. The figure shows a clear positive trend. The share of students who perceive sustainability as something that is partly or fully stand-alone focused decreased from 60% in 2016 to 36% in 2018 (response rate 85–90%). It should be pointed out, however, that there is still room for much improvement in this regard.

Figure 2. Students’ perceptions of the importance of sustainability knowledge when applying for a job (data from 2018).

“I think that sustainability related knowledge will be important when I apply for a job.”

Obviously, what future employers value in terms of knowledge and skills is of great interest to our students. As shown in Figure 2, many students perceive sustainability-related knowledge to be important when applying for a job. This is especially evident for students in the Bachelor’s programme in logistics, as 85% of them agree fully or to a large extent that sustainability-related knowledge will be important when applying for a job. Students in the social science environmental programme are not included in the figure, yet almost all of them believe that sustainability-related knowledge will be important when they apply for a job in the future.

Figure 3. Students’ views of the amount of attention given to sustainability perspectives in their programmes (data from 2018).

To what extent do you think sustainability perspectives has been discussed during your program so far?

As shown in Figure 3, law and business/economics students are far more likely to think that there has been too little discussion related to sustainability than to think the opposite. However, the most common answer to the question asked is “to an appropriate degree.”
OVERVIEW

The School has a long tradition of sustainable development research and has long offered more elective courses in this area than most other business schools. While the School’s overall research strategy emphasises the bottom-up perspective, to the extent that the School does prioritise the focus is on research that relates to:

- Sustainability
- Globalisation, regarding both focus and outreach
- Close interaction with other parts of society

The School features a broader disciplinary scope than most other business schools, and includes the Department of Business Administration, Department of Economics, Department of Law and the multidisciplinary Department of Economy and Society. This is of course also reflected in the broad research on sustainable development at the School.

The School also hosts and/or is active in numerous research centres, often supported by industry or community actors. Many of these centres have a clear sustainability focus in response to the demands of their stakeholders, including the Centre for Business in Society, the Centre for Tourism, the Centre for Retailing, the Centre for Consumer Science, and the centre for Global Human Resource Management; there is also a multi-disciplinary research unit at the School, Gothenburg research Institute.

Below, we present a few examples of recent and ongoing research projects with a sustainability perspective.
There has been a rise in the interest in and use of nudges as a tool to deal with environmental problems. A ‘nudge’ is a change in any aspect of the choice architecture that alters people’s behaviour in a predictable way without forbidding any options or significantly changing the economic incentives. Traditionally, nudging has been used in areas such as healthy consumption and savings. In this research project, we investigate the conditions for when nudging can be used as a policy instrument to address environmental problems. We do this in two ways. First, we explore under what general conditions nudges are preferred to standard policy instruments such as taxes. Second, we investigate the effects of nudges under very specific conditions by means of experimental studies to understand the effects of nudges on sustainable consumption. We have found that nudges can be used as complements to standard policy instruments under certain circumstances. This is particularly the case when nudges can target people that have a large impact on the environment, and when there are large monitoring and enforcement costs associated with standard policy instruments. We have also found that a number of nudges can have a rather substantial effect on people’s food choices. Our focus has been on vegetarian food choices. According to our results, it is much more difficult to influence people’s choices of transport mode with nudges.

Fredrik Carlsson, Professor

A regulatory dilemma – handling environmental impacts caused by multiple factors over extended periods of time

Agenda 2030 challenges existing legal systems, traditionally based on other objectives and principles. Laws are in general designed to combat harmful effects of human activities, by assessing substances, products and activities one by one. However, they are typically not well designed to the reality of multiple stressors having impact on the same recipients over long periods of time. While for example individual chemicals are subject to detailed regulation at international and EU level, combinations of multiple chemicals and other stressors often fall outside the scope of any rules. Similarly, small-scale development of docks and marinas along the Swedish west coast are also assessed one by one by the environmental authorities. A single dock can be perceived as having only a minor impact on the surrounding ecosystem, and therefore regarded as allowed; yet over time the development of numerous docks can constitute a significant threat to the fish stock and biodiversity more generally. Examples from ongoing projects raise many questions about fairness and burden sharing, particularly when considering whether the exposure occurs simultaneously or in sequence. In my research, I describe and analyse these situations but also legal approaches to handling them by applying the legal instrument of environmental quality norms.

Lena Gipperth, Professor
The reverse logistics of clothing in Sweden – a sustainability issue

The return rates of clothing bought online in Sweden vary from 15% to 60%. The logistics of dealing with these returns is an area of huge concern to many clothing retailers who want to get the returned merchandise back into the marketplace as quickly and cheaply as possible. There are also environmental concerns involved as the returns generate a great number of additional logistics kilometres. Our project, which is sponsored by the Swedish Energy Agency, aims to identify the current state of clothing reverse logistics in order to be able to suggest a ‘best practice’ framework for the future.

Based on detailed face-to-face discussions with a variety of stakeholders representing all links in the logistics chain, dealing with the reverse logistics of clothing is one of the most important items on clothing (re-)tailers’ agendas. Resources include labour time (it takes approximately three times as much labour to deal with a return than to deal with an outward delivery), warehouse space, equipment usage, product waste and, perhaps most importantly from an energy use perspective, transportation. Several companies are in the process of out-sourcing their reverse logistics to countries in Eastern Europe. Like for example container loads of items being shipped to Poland or Estonia by road for processing and then being returned to Sweden for onward sale. In order to improve stock availability, these containers are not always full, implying obvious energy use/sustainability issues.

Sharon Cullinane, Professor

Organisational capability for delayed retirement

This study on organisational capability aims to explore how organisations, in a sustainable way, address problems and opportunities associated with an ageing workforce by applying various age-management measures. In order to characterise the ability of organisations to promote delayed retirement of older employees, we turn to the concept of organisational capability.

Given the increasing proportion of elderly people in Sweden, demographic changes have created a need for an extended working life and delayed retirement. Three reasons for the need for delayed retirement are often cited: (a) to ensure an economically sustainable pension system, (b) to ensure availability of labour and the effective use of the human capital that older workers possess, and (c) to contribute to the welfare of older people. A change in practices is required in order for organisations to meet and participate in the changes at policy and individual level. Unfortunately, there is a lack of systematic knowledge about how such changes can be successfully implemented within organisations. In this study, we discuss this lacuna and specifically focus on organisational capability. We highlight workplace conditions and practices that may inhibit and promote the retention of employees beyond what has been the standard retirement age.

Ewa Wikström, Professor
Agricultural productivity and the transatlantic slave trade

Agriculture has been of central importance to Africa’s long-term economic development. Previous research has argued that low productivity of African agriculture has posed significant challenges to African efforts to produce an agricultural surplus or develop commercial agriculture. Low agricultural productivity has also served as a key explanation for the transatlantic slave trade, i.e. it was more profitable for individual agents to export humans overseas than to use their labour to grow and export produce locally in Africa. We contribute to the field by presenting quantitative data – gathered from historical archives – on historical land and labour productivity from a case study of Senegambia in the early nineteenth century. Focusing on five key agricultural crops, our results suggest that both land and labour productivity were lower in Senegambia than in all other parts of the world for which we have found comparable data. Thus, we find support for the claim that Africa’s long-term historical development has been partly shaped by ecological factors. (Our article is forthcoming in Economic History Review).

Klas Rönnbäck, Associate Professor and Dimitrios Theodoridis, PhD

What determines successful economic assimilation of immigrants?

Much research in economic history deals with the development of more or less socially sustainable institutions and systems. A recent example at the School is an ongoing research project on immigration to the US and Sweden from Germany after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. In this project, Yitchak Haberfeld and Christer Lundh have found important interaction effects between the context of reception on the one hand and immigrant selectivity on the other, on immigrant economic assimilation. Both Sweden and the US attracted German immigrants who were more highly educated than the native populations. However, immigrants to the US, as opposed to Sweden, reached and surpassed the average earnings of the native population due to selectivity within the immigrant group and better returns to education. Moreover, the economic assimilation of immigrants influenced the interaction between the context of reception in the potential host country and the patterns of selection among potential migrants. More specifically, differences in migration policy, welfare arrangements, returns to human capital and income dispersion influence the selectivity among migrants, which is one factor behind the economic assimilation of immigrants. Our results are in line with previous studies of immigration from developing countries to developed countries, which show that the most successful economic integration has been noted for highly educated immigrants from countries with smaller income differences moving to a country with higher levels of income dispersion. In addition, we find that people with higher education moving between two countries with smaller income differences (like Germany and Sweden) also achieve more successful earnings assimilation in the country of destination.

Christer Lund, Professor and Yitchak Haberfeldt, Professor

Christer Lund and Yitchak Haberfeldt have studied determinants of successful economic assimilation, using data from German immigrants to Sweden and the US after the fall of the Berlin Wall.
What determines whether we will pay our fair share of taxes or try to evade?

Tax compliance and tax morale are issues that have currently received a great deal of attention, both academically and in the public debate. Consider e.g. the so-called Paradise Papers, which revealed many wealthy individuals from many countries who had perhaps not evaded but at least avoided large amounts of taxes. A large part of my research deals with trying to understand the mechanisms that make people decide whether or not to pay taxes. Standard economic incentives alone are not sufficient in this regard. In one article, my co-authors and I show that taxpayers who owe on their taxes are much more likely to claim dubious deductions than those who expect a refund. In a new project, we build on these results to study behaviour over time. So far, we have found that standard economic incentives are unable to explain the deduction behaviour that indeed seems to be driven by loss aversion. In another study, I analyse how tax morale and social norms concerning tax compliance evolve over time. I apply mechanisms from social psychology and study how people are influenced both by their own past behaviour and by what others think is right and wrong. I find that these mechanisms explain how economic policy can affect not only behaviour but also norm formation in the longer run.

Katarina Nordblom, Professor

Sustainable cities

In Agenda 2030, Goal 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities has emerged as one of the most challenging societal challenges, with complicated causes and effects. In the future cities are expected to be economically, socially and green at the same time – a difficult equation to solve. Gothenburg is facing complex problems with residential segregation and growing inequalities in terms of e.g. health, education and trust in institutions. At the same time, Gothenburg is an expanding city with major infrastructure projects underway. The Law Clinic at the Department of Law is a platform for clinical legal education, research and collaboration with the civil society and the City of Gothenburg. Using basically the same methodology, the platform is now expanding to also cover Swedish housing policy and particularly the role of its legal considerations in relation to residential segregation. As the immaterial infrastructure of society, law and legal tools set the foundation of housing policy. By analysing the behaviour of civil servants, landlords and other actors, we can understand law in practice and identify key factors leading up to remedies to steer towards a more sustainable direction in housing policy and related matters. In this process, we also lean on our previous interdisciplinary research on innovation platforms for sustainable cities.

Filip Bladini, Associate Professor

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2 Nordblom (2017) "Tax morale and policy intervention" Working Paper No. 711, Department of Economics, University of Gothenburg
Gothenburg is Sweden's second largest city. It is home to Scandinavia’s largest port and is also Sweden’s industrial center and primary logistics and trading hub. The successful logistics research at the School is conducted in close collaboration with the industry as well as with Chalmers university of Technology. As a result of this research environment the School hosts a Bachelor program in Logistics and Transport Management.
PRINCIPLES 5 & 6:
PARTNERSHIP AND DIALOGUE

PRME PRINCIPLE 5:
We will interact with managers of business corporations to extend our knowledge of their challenges in meeting social and environmental responsibilities and to explore jointly effective approaches to meeting these challenges.

PRME PRINCIPLE 6:
We will facilitate and support dialog and debate among educators, students, business, government, consumers, media, civil society organisations and other interested groups and stakeholders on critical issues related to global social responsibility and sustainability.

OVERVIEW

Close relations and cooperation with business, public authorities and other organisations are embedded in all dimensions of the School. Gothenburg is to a large extent a place where the local meets the global, and the School has well-developed relationships with companies such as Volvo Cars, Stena, SKF and the Volvo group, all with headquarters in Gothenburg. These relationships are increasingly focusing on sustainability-related issues. Examples include seminars on sustainable mobility and the future of the car and on the diversity and integration of migrants, as well as executive events. The school is also increasingly involved in sustainability-related collaborations with various governmental bodies at different levels, including tax authorities and the city of Gothenburg, for example regarding sustainable urban development and planning.

Internationally, the School participates in a number of networks within the field of sustainability. GRLI, EFMD and PRME Nordic Chapter are valuable for sharing experiences and discussing joint challenges. Examples include the discussion and shared experiences regarding the use of the Sulitest within the PRME Nordic Chapter group and the work on developing a business school sustainability rating system together with Business School Lausanne, St Gallen and others.

The School and the University as a whole are certified according to ISO14001 and registered under the EU environmental regulation EMAS. The environmental management system requires a process of determining so-called significant environmental aspects of one’s operations. For a university, this naturally implies inclusion of research and education and the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals.
Global capacity building through Environment for Development (EfD)

The Environment for Development (EfD) initiative is an example of the School’s contribution to the global community. EfD is a capacity-building programme in environmental economics with an ambition to promote research-based environmental policy-making and facilitate capacity building in developing countries. The overall objective of the programme is to support poverty reduction and sustainable development by increasing the use of environmental economics in the public policy processes.

EfD was founded in 2007 at the Unit for Environmental Economics and is based on the successful research and education in environmental economics at the School’s Department of Economics, which has now been examining 35 PhDs in environmental economics since 1998. EfD recently received an additional 13 million EUR in financial support from the Swedish Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), enabling its network to expand to more countries. EfD plans to expand the network from the existing nine centres in Chile, China, Costa Rica, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania, Sweden and the United States to also include new centres in India, Vietnam, Colombia and another centre in Africa. So far, EfD researchers have produced over 300 international peer-reviewed journal articles, 230 discussion papers, around 75 book chapters and six books in EfD’s own book series. “I am very proud of the network and what we have achieved so far. I look forward to another five exciting years when we will do our best to meet the need for analysis and evaluation to achieve the global sustainability goals...” says EfD’s founder and director Gunnar Köhlin.

An ambitious green growth strategy for Ethiopia

Developing countries are often thought to follow what is known as the environmental Kuznets curve. When an economy improves, emissions increase up to a certain level at which point it turns. Ethiopia intends to make this journey in a sustainable way – something that no country has ever done.

“Historically, all rich countries, including Sweden, have developed out of poverty in environmentally harmful ways. Ethiopia has adopted powerful strategies and policies in order to go straight through that curve. This is a unique ambition that will require lots of new ideas and new technology, but there are many countries involved in making these types of contributions,” Haileselassie Medhin explains.

Medhin heads the Environmental and Climate Research Centre at the Development Research Institute of Addis Ababa. Before accepting this position, he studied and eventually earned a PhD in environmental economics at the School of Business, Economics and Law. As the head of the research centre in Addis Ababa, Medhin’s job includes studying and evaluating Ethiopia’s green growth strategy:

“We’ve set up the Centre in order to fill the knowledge gaps. Academic research typically takes place at universities and policy analysis in policy arenas. We’re combining both of these perspectives while at the same time generating lots of data.

The purpose of the Centre is to drive new ideas. For example, at the moment we’re investigating the potential of introducing a carbon tax in Ethiopia and observe how the green growth strategy affects various parts of the economy, making sure that the investments made are relevant in the long term and communicating our results to decision makers,” says Medhin.

Claudine Uwera, who holds a PhD in economics from the School, was in April 2018 sworn in as Minister of State in Rwanda. This appointment is one of many examples of students from low-income countries who, after having received a degree from the School, makes a big difference in their home countries.
Kenya

How can sustainable management of the Maasai Mara National Park be ensured? The Kenyan conservation authorities contacted the local EfD centre in Kenya to find an answer to this question. The annual wildebeest migration from the Serengeti in Tanzania into the Maasai Mara in southwestern Kenya has made this park a ‘bucket list’ tourist destination, placing it among world travellers’ top four places to visit. Yet, the park struggles with deteriorating infrastructure and natural assets. The crumbling entrance road to the park and the degraded Mara River are two examples. After studying the economics of the park, EfD-affiliated researchers Dr Richard Mulwa and colleagues recommended increasing the entrance fee by about $7 per person, as this would substantially increase revenues without discouraging domestic tourists from visiting the park.

Costa Rica

The health costs of high air pollution from vehicles in and around the Costa Rican capital of San José reach millions of dollars each year, according to new research from the Ministry of Environment and Energy (Minae). By reducing the air pollution concentrations to below the limits recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO), the country could save US$17 million annually on money spent on bronchitis treatment alone. These are the findings of a study produced for Minae’s Climate Change Director at the EfD Central America Centre, which is part of the international network, Environment for Development (EfD) initiative, based at the School of Business, Economics and Law in Gothenburg. “We had the idea of quantifying the damage that air pollution causes to health in the wider San José area,” explains environmental economist and EfD senior researcher Dr Francisco Alpízar. “The effects of pollution are mostly seen in the respiratory tract, for example in the form of asthma and bronchitis. We wanted to see the damage caused by death and diseases related to air pollution, and to quantify it in economic terms.”
Is the Swedish government policy consistent with national climate policy targets?

Studying this issue is a job for the newly founded Swedish climate policy council, to which Åsa Löfgren and a group of other prominent researchers have been appointed. The reason for forming the council is the Swedish parliament’s very ambitious climate target for Sweden to reach zero net emissions of greenhouse gases in 2045. The target will require major changes in Swedish society over the next 25 years. Every year, the council presents an assessment to the government of how the national climate policy is progressing and whether and how Sweden is reducing its emissions levels.

“The members of the council specialise in a wide range of fields and my role as an economist will be to look at if the current and suggested climate policy supports individuals, companies and agencies to efficiently respond to incentives and market signals,” says Åsa Löfgren.

Åsa Löfgren is associate professor at the Department of Economics, University of Gothenburg. She is an international expert on climate economics and specialises in particular in climate change and behavioral economics. Åsa is also a member of the School’s council for sustainable development and chief officer for the World Congress of Environmental and Resource Economists held in Gothenburg 25–29 June 2018.

Nature’s contribution to people

Marie Stenseke is a member of the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel, a leading body of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). Operating under the auspices of UN, IPBES provides policymakers with scientific assessments of the state of knowledge regarding the planet’s biodiversity and ecosystems and their contributions to people, as well as the tools and methods to protect and sustainably use these vital natural assets. To some extent, IPBES does for biodiversity what the IPCC does for climate change.

The Multidisciplinary Expert Panel has 25 members, five from each UN region, and is tasked to oversee all IPBES scientific and technical functions. Key responsibilities of the expert panel include selecting the authors of the IPBES assessments, providing scientific guidance on overarching conceptual issues and approaches in order to secure cross-assessment consistency, and overseeing the review of the assessments. Stenseke has served as co-chair of the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel 2015–2018 and was recently elected by IPBES plenary to serve on the panel for a second 3-year period.

Former UN Deputy General and School alumni Jan Eliasson

“No development without peace and no lasting peace without development.”

In April 2018, Jan Eliasson, former Deputy Secretary-General at the UN and a School alumni, held a much appreciated lecture for students and staff in the School’s main auditorium. Mr Eliasson was one of the leading figures behind Agenda 2030 and its 17 sustainable development goals. Eliasson stressed the long-run existential nature of the goals; we may have a personal plan B in our lives, but there is no planet B. He also highlighted the fact that the goals are complementary in nature and a shared responsibility for all, and not merely an agenda for the poorer countries. He especially stressed goal 16 (peace justice and strong institution) by saying, “There is no development without peace and there is no lasting peace or sustainable development without respect for human rights and the rule of law.”

The subsequent discussion and separate round table discussion with the School’s corporate partners focused on the responsibility business and academia to work together towards achieving the goals.
Examples of PRME and sustainability-relevant PhD theses

2016–2017


Peers-reviewed articles relevant to sustainability

2016
