

# **PANTA RHEI THE POWER OF TRANSITIONS**

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**INAUGURAL LECTURE  
ANNA SABIDUSSI**

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**PANTA RHEI**  
THE POWER OF TRANSITIONS

**INAUGURAL LECTURE**  
Anna Sabidussi

Lecturer International Business  
Centre of Expertise Avans University of Applied Sciences  
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## INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS TOUCHES US ALL

Everybody will be familiar with the image below.



*Edited from: Photo by Blake Wisz on Unsplash*

For some of us, a cup of coffee is part of our daily breakfast ritual, it is a time to relax with friends and family, for others it keeps us going during many business meetings and/or long working hours.

Whatever the occasion is, the simple act of drinking a cup of coffee takes us on a journey. To reach us, those grains of coffee, that we are now enjoying have had to come from far away. The tropical plants that provide the seeds of the coffee berry grow in several countries including Vietnam, Colombia, Brazil, Indonesia. After the beans have been sorted and dried, the milling process that produces the “green coffee beans” can take place. Finally the beans are roasted, packed, shipped to the location where they are grinded and the final touches are made before they are distributed to consumers. The key participants are the growers, the traders, the roasters, the packaging and distribution companies, the retailers and finally the consumers all over the world. It can be viewed as a sequence (or a chain) of

geographically dispersed activities. At each step, value is added to the product until it reaches its final destination and it is consumed. Approximately 90% of the world's coffee is produced in developing countries and 90% of it is consumed in developed countries: trade is at the very heart of the coffee industry with sales taking place on a global scale. The environmental consequences of the various phases including cultivation and other agricultural practices, production, transportation, consumption etc.... are evident. Likewise the societal implications, from fair distribution of the value created at the different stages (stability of farmers income), impact on local communities and their living conditions among others. With a valuation of more than 465 billion US dollars in 2020, it is certainly difficult to ignore the economic relevance of the global coffee market (Research & Markets, 2021).

Before we have even finished our cup of coffee ... we already have a snapshot in our minds as to what international business is about.

And of course, there are other similar examples of products that we use in our daily lives, from the shower gels and cotton t-shirts we wear, to the bicycle we ride to the office and the computer or smart phone that we use at work.

International business refers to the commercial activities that expand beyond the borders of a country.

In the last few decades we have witnessed a considerable increase in the relevance of international business, which said increase is also due to globalization.

Our economic system is built around interconnected flows of goods, services, capital, technology, knowledge, investments. According to the 2017 European Commission's indicators of internationalization and globalization processes, the EU-28 was the first exporter of goods and services in the world (17.9% in 2016) and the world leader with respect to the value of its international trade in services (23% of global exports in 2016); in 2015 Europe was also the largest source (600 billion Euro) and recipient (510 billion Euro) of Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) (Eurostat, 2017). The data from OECD statistics show that in The Netherlands in 2017 almost 289,000 companies were involved in import with a trade value of almost 573 billion USD and nearly 116,000 companies engaged in exports with a trade value of 651 billion USD. Interestingly, large companies (> 250 employees) account for approximately 1% of both importers and exporters.

Businesses of no matter which size which operate on an international scale underpin the economy.

The Economics Nobel Laureate Michael Spence describes global value chains as being "the complex network structure of flow of goods, services, capital and technologies

#### Indicators of Globalization/Trade

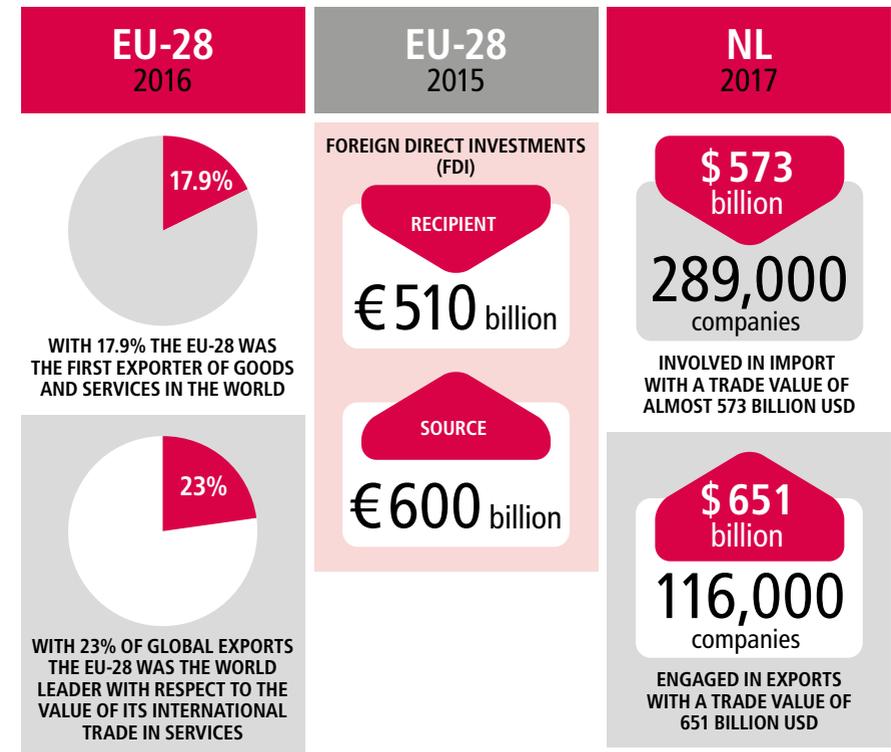


Figure 1

across national borders" (World Bank and World Trade Organization, 2019: V). Internationally operating business are embedded in these complex networks.

*"Goods may no longer be designed, manufactured, assembled nor marketed in a single country, but rather through global value chains"* (Eurostat, 2017: 12).

Global value chain refers to all the activities across various geographical areas that are needed for a product/service to go from conception, design, sourcing through all stages of production, assembly, packaging, distribution to final consumer, marketing and disposal. Global value chains link multiple businesses across multiple countries.

Global value chains are key for international trade across the globe. In the last few months, the entire system has been put under pressure.

Due to the COVID-19 crisis, which has resulted in a human tragedy of millions of deaths around the world, everyone is now aware that we are all connected. At the same time, it has highlighted the importance of value chains and international businesses thanks to which thousands of products of everyday use reach us. Many businesses faced difficulties in continuing production because they did not have a realistic grasp of their own global value chain. Not knowing who their suppliers were, many companies were unable to assess their exposure to the pandemic per geographical region. Discovering how important it is to have a resilient value chain and how fragile parts of the system can be to external shocks, we have now realized just how much we depend on international business activities.

For International Business, the impact of the Pandemic on trade has been widespread. The data provided by Eurostat (Figure 2) shows a marked effect on exports and imports, despite the fact that the trade balance remained positive in 2020.

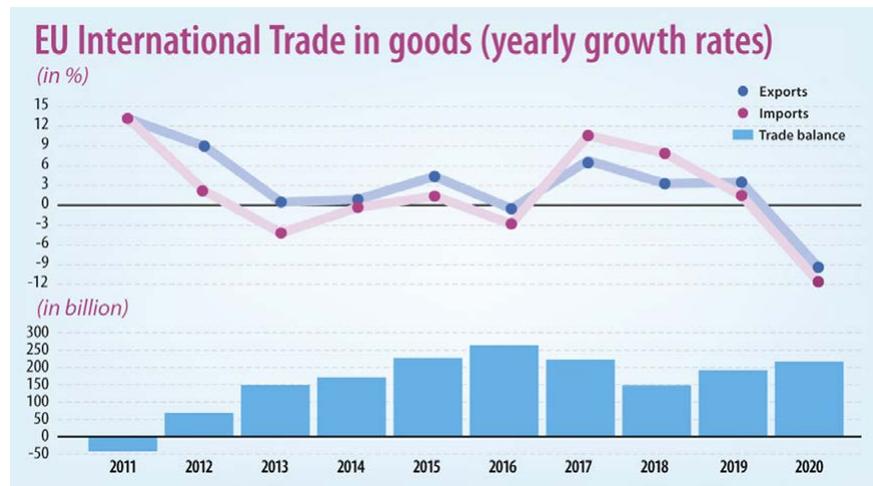


Figure 2 Source: Eurostat, 2020

While the trend towards globalization is questioned more than ever these days, international links across borders, cooperation across countries and collaboration between international companies in key sectors is essential. In the recent crisis, it has been instrumental in terms of responding to the pandemic and saving lives. Overall, the pandemic has impacted dramatically not only on the health of millions of people around the world but also, on how we live, how we interact with each other, how we work, how we do business. Last but not least, it is an opportunity for us to re-think how we view our societies and economic systems and accordingly the role of international business.

## THE TRANSITIONS THAT SHAPED OUR WORLD

In order to fully understand the significance of international business now and in the future, it may be worth considering the context in which it is embedded.

If we look at our world, we are confronted with a rather concerning picture.

The list of poor living conditions affecting human beings around the globe is a long one. Just to mention a few such conditions, the following data is pertinent (UN, 2021): in 2020, 821 million people were undernourished; 2.37 billion people are “without food or unable to eat a healthy balanced diet on a regular basis”; More than 120 million people have returned to conditions of extreme poverty in 2020 (with a global poverty rate expected to be 7% in 2030). More than 700 million people live in poverty due to no access to employment, due to social exclusion etc. The pandemic is estimated to have caused the loss of 255 million full-time jobs and to have increased the inequality within and across nations. According to the UN, 160,000 children die every day from preventable diseases due to inequalities in access to health services. Furthermore the pandemic has annihilated 20 years of

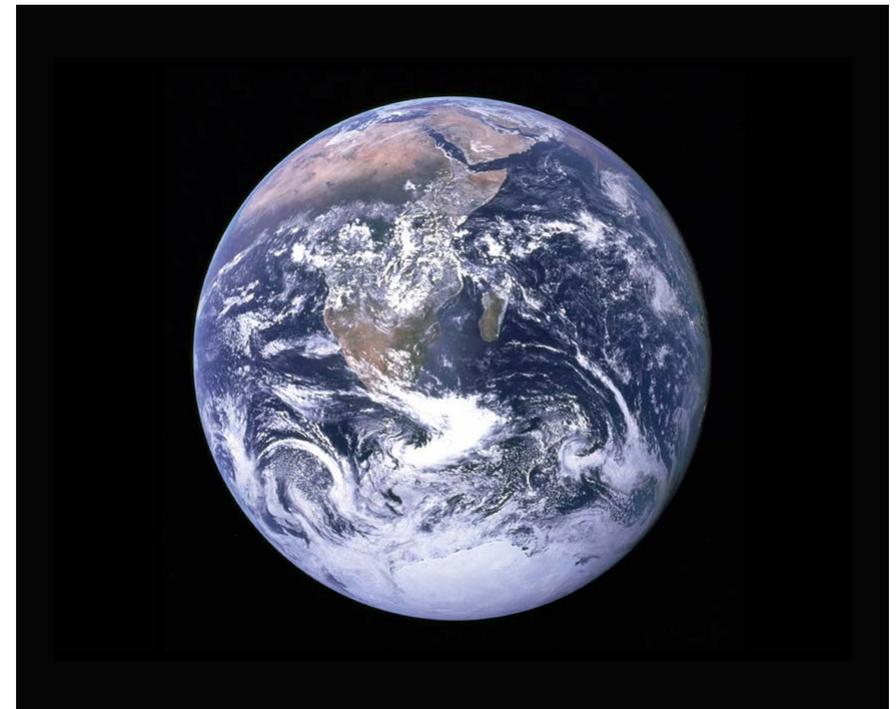


Photo by The New York Public Library on Unsplash

Indicators of Living Conditions

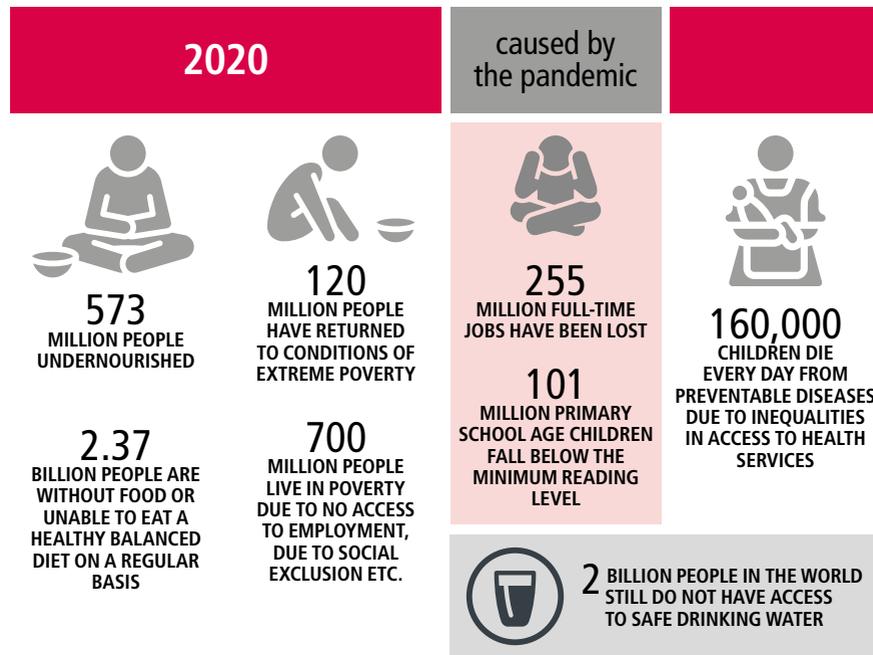


Figure 3

progress in education: an additional 101 million primary school age children fall below the minimum reading level. 2 billion people in the world still do not have access to safe drinking water. (Figure 3)

As regards our ecosystem, we can see a reduction of biodiversity. The UN report (2021) indicates that since 1900, 20% of native species has been lost. In the marine environment, according to the same UN report (United Nations, 2021), we can see that approximately 50% of the live coral cover of reefs has been lost since the 1870s. The global extinction rate is accelerating. "Biodiversity loss" was rated "the second most impactful and third most likely risk for the next decade. The current rate of extinction is tens to hundreds of times higher than the average over the past 10 million years—and it is accelerating. Biodiversity loss has critical implications for humanity, from the collapse of food and health systems to the disruption of entire supply chains". (World Economic Forum, 2020)

On the other hand, since 1970 we can see a significant increase of 70% in the number of invasive alien species. Compared to the estimated pre-industrial level, we can also see a reduction of global forest area of 32%; more than 85% of wetlands has been lost since 1700 (Figure 4).

Indicators of Biodiversity Reduction

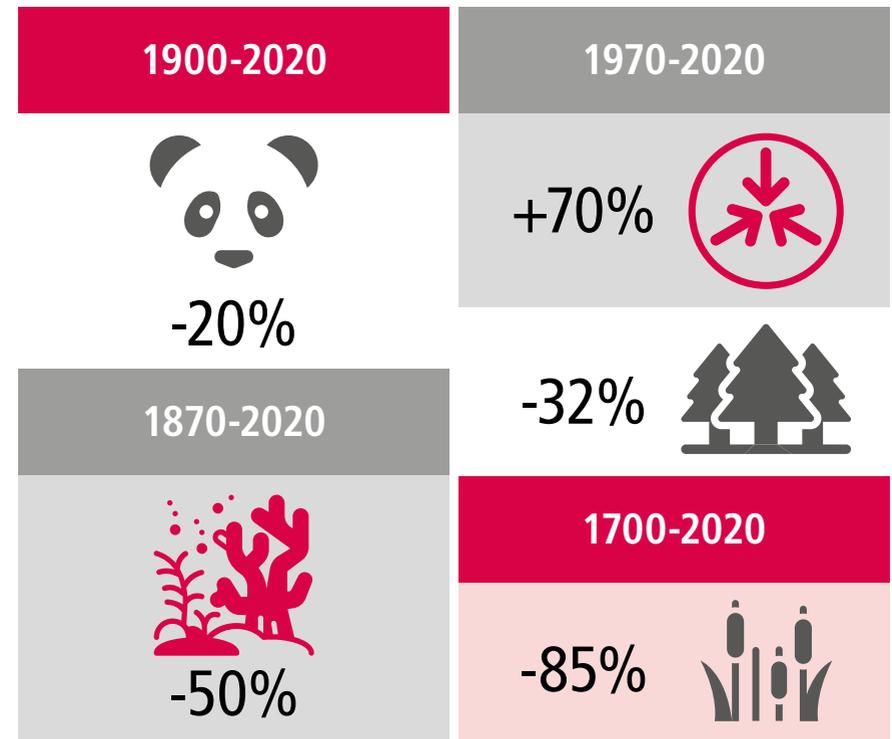


Figure 4

The condition of both the atmosphere and the climate on earth is deteriorating (Figure 5).

Indicators of Atmosphere Quality

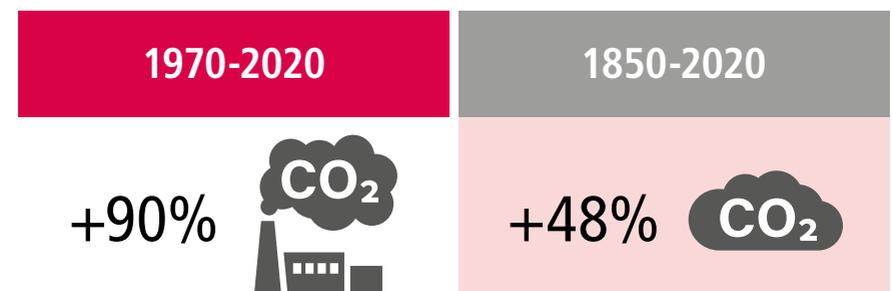


Figure 5

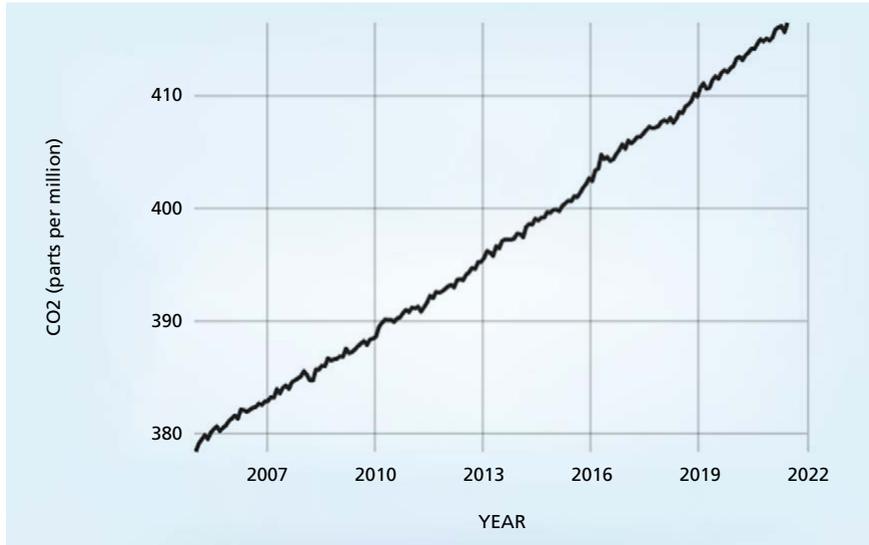


Figure 6

Source: NASA, 2021

According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), since 1970, CO2 emissions have increased by about 90% mainly due to fossil fuel combustion, industrial processes, agriculture. NASA data show that in just 171 years CO2 emissions have increased 48% above the levels found in 1850 (NASA, 2021). Looking at the data from 2005 to 2021, the trend is clear and concerning (Figure 6)

According to NOAA's 2020 Annual Global Climate Report (NOAA, 2020), we can see an increase of 0,08 degrees Celsius per decade since 1880 but the average increase rate has more than doubled since 1981. In 2020 the average temperature has been 1,2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. NASA data elaborations indicate that the increase in land-ocean temperatures is increasing steadily (Figure 7).

Scientists warn us that these changes may result in calamitous consequences as regards our planet's equilibrium. In particular, exceeding the threshold of 2 degrees increase, could instigate a series of domino effects (like melting of glaciers causing sea levels to rise) leading to an irreversible downward spiral of catastrophic events and ultimately of the planet system's collapse.

*"It is unequivocal that human influence has warmed the atmosphere, ocean and land. Widespread and rapid changes in the atmosphere, ocean, cryosphere and biosphere have occurred"* (IPCC, 2021: SPM 5).

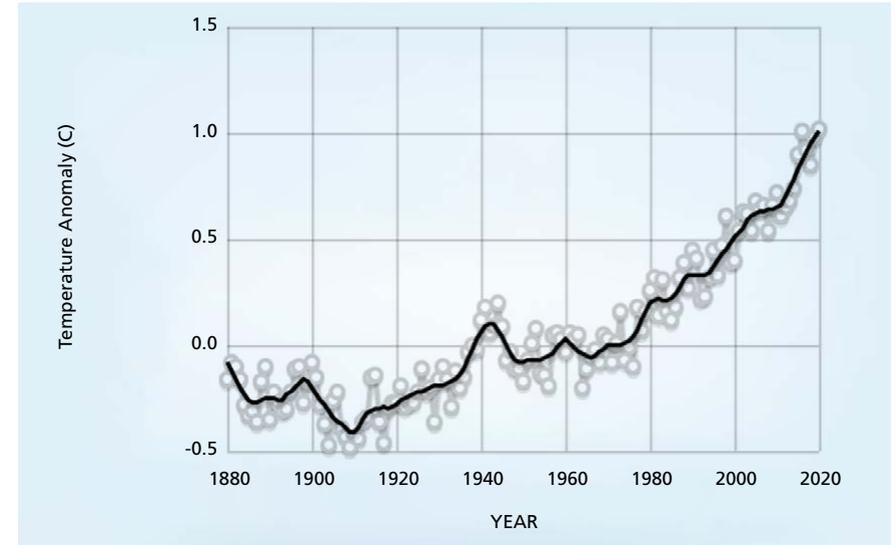


Figure 7

Source: NASA, 2021

The International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)'s Sixth Assessment Report warned that global warming is a reality. An increase of 1.5-2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels could be reached much sooner than previously estimated. Action needs to be taken immediately, the next decade is crucial. UN Secretary General António Guterres stated that *"If we combine forces now we can avert climate catastrophe. But, as today's report makes clear, there is no time for delay and no room for excuses"* (McGrath, 2021). It is estimated that a dramatic scenario of a 3 degree Celsius temperature increase could be reality by the end of the century. Exceeding this threshold would have catastrophic consequences for both humankind and for the planet.

CO2 emissions, global warming, deforestation, and biodiversity loss, create self-reinforcing loops where changes in one part of the ecosystem affect and drive changes in all the others. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) estimated that by 2030 due to climate change 100 million people are expected to fall back into extreme poverty and more than 200 million people will be displaced due to natural disasters (Khoday & Ali, 2018).

Transitions in the condition of our planet are not isolated phenomena. They correspond to (are facilitated by, and are intertwined with) other transitions in human societies.

In particular, the transition from an agricultural to a modern industrial society (often referred to as the "industrial revolution") is reputed to have been the root cause

of profound transformations. The cycle evolved from the first industrial revolution midway through the 18th century, to the second industrial revolution whereby electricity was used for mass production midway through the 19th century, to the third industrial revolution at the end of the 1970s which harnessed technology for the automation of production, to the fourth industrial revolution which has blurred the boundaries between the physical, digital and the biological domains. All these multifaceted transformations have led to a series of modifications which have had a profound impact on our world.

The economy (and what underpins it) has had an important role in terms of the current state of play. In particular, one of the pillars of our current economic vision is rooted in the concept of growth. The relationship between economic growth and the environment is complex. Economic growth is, per se, considered to be desirable. Natural resources fuel economic growth but, on the other hand, unlimited economic growth causes the degeneration of natural resources and a disequilibrium in our planet's ecosystem.

The deterioration of the planet's equilibrium ultimately endangers economic growth. In the February 2021 communication (EU Commission, 2021:1) from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions, states that: *"lower bound estimates show that exposing today's EU economy to global warming of 3°C above pre-industrial levels would result in an annual loss of at least EUR 170 billion (1.36% of EU GDP)."*

The mindset, which is rooted in the unrestrained pursuit of economic growth and profit maximization, and which has brought about the transitions shaping our world is therefore the principle cause of the current status quo. Conceptualizing production/consumption as an unrestrained process conflicts with the natural boundaries of a closed system (the Earth). The current system which is based on unlimited economic growth is, therefore, reputed to have contributed to strain on the boundaries of the overall planet habitat and its inhabitants. The results of the above transitions are before our eyes.

New transitions of business practice are needed. According to the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES, 2019), we need *"transformative changes across economic, social, political and technological factors"* (IPBES, 2019: pp. 5). The evolution and integration of *"economic systems to build a global sustainable economy"* (ibid, page 9) are, not surprisingly, key to these transformations.

## THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS

What does all this have to do with International Business? And what role can International Business play?

Current International Business is the result of the evolutions in society and the economy in the last century. Given the global outreach of their activities, internationally operating businesses have a unique leverage in our economy and society. They are therefore at the centre of the transitions that we witnessed in the last decades.

International Businesses and the ecosystem in which they are embedded are key to global markets. Such a role provides internationally operating businesses with the opportunity to trade across borders and to reap the benefits of global operations and also to sustain profits. However, it also has a greater impact due to the consequences of their actions on a global scale, which can either positively or negatively affect our societies and our planet.

*"The evolution of global-scale industrial organization affects not only the fortunes of firms and the structure of industries, but also how and why countries advance – or fail to advance – in the global economy"* (Gereffi et al., 2005).

In this sense, international businesses have contributed to the creation of the current challenges.

The good news is that they can also contribute to the latter's solution. Taking responsibility for our world and for the societal and environmental imbalances that economic systems have in part created is the mandate of the new millennium. This requires a collective engagement in order to transition towards a renewed economy. First and foremost, we need to re-think the role of the economy and the rules of the game. While we should focus on multiple stakeholders, who are directly or indirectly touched by their international activities, what is needed are transitions towards new business practices which are capable of generating profits which will benefit both people and the planet.

In order to bring about these transitions, academic and applied research are fundamental to generate, share and implement the new knowledge that business requires.

The field of international business as a research area has gone through a considerable refocus in past decades. In this changing world, research has to apply

itself to significant new questions. Research in the field of International Business has had to re-focus in order to have more impact. “IB can play a more constructive and vital role by tackling expansive topics at the business–societal interface” (Buckley et al. 2017: 1045). “We propose a redirection of IB research towards “grand challenges” in global business and the use of interdisciplinary research methods, multilevel approaches, and phenomena-driven perspectives to address those questions” (Buckley et al. 2017: 1045). This new research stream is still in its infancy. Academics who embrace this refocus enhance the repositioning of the entire International Business research field.

Thus International Business can contribute to knowledge generation by linking the study of internationally operating businesses in their global value chains with key transitions to achieve sustainable development.

## **THE INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS CHAIR’S RESEARCH: FOCUS ON KEY TRANSITIONS**

The plea for business to embrace sustainable development is not new. Development is sustainable if it “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” according to the definition in the World Commission on Environment and Development Report (WCED, 1987: 43) Three dimensions are explicitly mentioned as being key pillars of sustainable development, namely social, environmental and economic. In Article 3 of their Resolution of the 27<sup>th</sup> of July 2012, the United Nations “acknowledge the need to further mainstream sustainable development at all levels, integrating economic, social and environmental aspects and recognizing their interlinkages, so as to achieve sustainable development in all its dimensions” UN, (2012).

Companies have responded with various levels of commitment, and with most of them adhering to the basic principles of sustainable development.

Despite this, the 2019 Report of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES, 2019), presented at the UNESCO’s headquarters in Paris, stated that:

- The deterioration of nature and its vital contribution to people, is wide-spread worldwide;
- The above-mentioned deterioration during the past 50 years is known to be an acceleration that is unprecedented in human history.

What is evident is that our world has transitioned in the last decades to a status quo where the equilibrium of the planet’s resources has been dramatically altered.

The Oxford dictionary defines “transitions” as follows: “The process or a period of changing from one state or condition to another”.

Transitions driven by unsustainable business practices have led to the degeneration of our natural environment and to a worsening in the living conditions of the planet’s inhabitants.

So far, the predominant business approach has been geared to the maximization of profit - prioritizing it over natural capital and societal welfare.

As a result, we are consuming more resources than our planet is able to regenerate in the same year. In 2021, exceeding this critical limit occurred on the 29<sup>th</sup> of July. This date is now known as “The Earth Overshoot Day”. We need to prevent these transitions from continuing in the same detrimental direction. As pointed out by William McDonough and Michael Braungart (2010), if a car is driving south and intends to go north, sooner or later it will have to turn around and correct its trajectory. In a similar vein we need to change our course of action.

It is time for a decisive change of direction. Society and/or the planet can no longer be subjugated to merely serve the logic of economic purpose. For too long financial capital has had precedence over everything else. A new business logic calls for changing the order of priorities: focus on human, social and natural capital and financial capital will follow. In a sustainable world, the economy contributes to ecological and societal progress and promotes well-being in addition to pursuing profits. Welfare and wealth are not opposed to each other. “A well-being economy” refers to an economy that is purposefully aiming at increasing the well-being of our society and our planet.

It is clear that good business practices are expected to contribute towards the realisation of the vision of the world we need, by engaging in new transitions. For companies, evolving frameworks create both opportunities and threats. For example, according to a recent survey, internationally operating businesses perceive environmental challenges to be both a risk as well as an opportunity (CDP, 2019). Five hundred firms amongst the world’s largest companies estimated the potential risk exposure due to climate change at just under 1 trillion USD, but the opportunities to expand their business in new “green” areas accounted for 1.2 trillion USD (CDP, 2019).

However, many companies are timid to configure new ways of doing business. Creating win-win opportunities for both stakeholders and shareholders while doing good is possible. Approaches that have opposed businesses being profitable and contributing to both the natural environment and to society are the result of outdated mindsets.

A change in mindset is required in order to overcome inertia and the status-quo. It is also necessary in order to innovate, explore and develop new competences. Previous research confirms that innovation and entrepreneurial ventures are essential for the performance of International Business, especially in dynamic environments (Sabidussi, Lokshin & Duysters, 2021).

Successful organizations are those that are able to cope simultaneously with apparently contradictory goals: reinventing their business by exploring new abilities, while maintaining on-going viability by exploiting existing skills. Engaging in sustainable development implies entering into uncharted territories and it requires developing new competences. It may therefore be considered to be a form of exploration. Alternatively, continuing “business as usual” allows businesses to remain in familiar territories and may be associated with exploiting already existing abilities. Moving along the continuum of these twin activities is no mean feat.

However, the task is, in essence, not a new one: Strategic management research has developed conceptual models and theories which address similar types of challenges. In particular, organizational learning (March, 1991; Levinthal & March, 1993) and dynamic capabilities (Teece, Pisano & Shuen, 1997) have been used as conceptual framework for studying the above mentioned phenomena. The application of the exploration and exploitation framework has been extended in recent years to a broad range of phenomena both within and across organizations (Lavie, Stettner & Tushman, 2010). Previous research has also shown how the company's ecosystem (reference group of partners and main competitors) is critical in terms of influencing the levels of exploration adopted (Duysters, Lavie, Sabidussi & Stettner, 2020). There are therefore interdependencies that need to be considered when studying how organizations develop.

In a world which is changing at fast pace, growing demands for businesses to respond to multiple stakeholders and to shift to sustainable development principles, represent a radical change of context. This causes businesses to re-think the basis of their sustainable competitive advantage. The assumption that competitive advantage, once achieved, can be maintained by preserving the same position creates a bias in favour of the sort of stability created by exploitation and may be “deadly” in a dynamic environment (McGrath, 2013: 7). The principle of “continuous morphing” (Ibid:19) relates to a more dynamic perspective where transitions are key for the survival of business in the long term.

It is now time for a new paradigm shift: Sustainable development is the new way to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage.

Embracing change instead of resisting it is how success is achieved. We can either be carried along by the flow or we can be proactive and engage in transitions creating a

future where we can thrive and prosper. Transitions are inherent to the very essence of life and all its phenomena. Heraclitus (535 BC) is often thought to have expressed this idea with the words “Panta Rhei”, “everything flows”.

What are the transitions in which international companies need to engage? And what are their characteristics?

The chair's research has developed a model based on **Key Transitions**: the focus is on the transitions required to contribute to sustainable development and to achieve sustainable competitive advantage.

In the new scenario, the key transitions illustrated below can be considered to be vital for long-term performance. International businesses are encouraged to transition to serve a new purpose and to re-orient towards a new direction. Businesses are encouraged to embrace a journey of change, shifting mindsets and to actively engage in positive key transitions. Having a clear mission contributes to focus on the initiatives the initiatives. The key transitions (that our world so desperately needs) represent the mission to be achieved and can be classified based on the nature of their contribution to sustainable development and the **Scope** they serve (Brown et al., 2018).

- Transition to **Sustainability** is aimed at limiting harm: e.g. carbon, energy, water footprints reduction. Here the aim is to reduce/minimize (or for example in an ideal world to obtain carbon neutrality) the damage inflicted by economic activities. Although important, this is often misinterpreted and misused in communication campaigns: For example companies claiming that they are reducing 10% of the CO2 emission of their own operations are still contributing to the deterioration of our world. Doing “less bad” while continuing business as usual does not mean that they are doing good.



- Transitions to **Restorative** practices aim at restoring a healthy balance in our societal and ecological systems. The basic principle of restorative approaches is to compensate for what is consumed. Practices geared towards restorative approaches include implementing circular business models: although beneficial, circular business models are mostly focused on environmental contribution while social aspects are given less attention. These models require a systemic change involving various stakeholders at the industry level. The EU Commission clearly encourages efforts in this direction: “We need science-based, robust ecosystem restoration” (European Commission, 2021: 6).



- Transitions to **Regenerative** approaches aim at supporting the progress of societal and ecological systems. Regenerative practices aim at “doing good” by providing an active, positive contribution to our societies and to our planet. In this sense, contribution to the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals (Figure 8) become an essential aspect of doing business with respect. Faced with unprecedented challenges, the United Nation’s call is for action to promote prosperity and well-being while protecting the planet. The Sustainable Development Goals summarize the 17 key areas requiring urgent initiatives. 2020 (under UN auspices) is the first year of a decade dedicated to engaging in action.



**Sustainable Development Goals**

**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**



Figure 8

It is worth noticing that multiple scopes can typically coexist in business activities. How much a company is engaged in (each of) the above scopes, gives an indication about how much sustainable development goals are translated into concrete actions and results. Companies can engage at various levels in all three scopes.

**Scale** refers to the magnitude of the transitions and captures the extension of the engagement towards sustainable development. A systemic, thorough, structural approach is needed which encompasses all of the company’s operations, divisions and activities along the length of the entire company value chain.



Scale refers not only to internal involvement but also to any influence exerted externally, for example by influencing the practices of others such as suppliers, partners, customers. Scaling-up the transitions towards sustainable, restorative and regenerative practices requires a departure from conservative, traditional, shareholder capitalism mindsets by way of embracing a new business logic and enterprise model. It also requires in practical terms an aggregation and coordination of initiatives based on shared goals. The societal and environmental challenges we face require extensive and substantial interventions, proportional to the severity of the situation. It is no longer the time for superficial or incremental changes.

The second characteristic is the **Speed** of transitions, the rapidity at which they are implemented. To visualize the advancements of business embracing these transitions, we need to conceptualize an “initial” state, a “final” state in order to evaluate the process “in between”. We can take a snapshot at any point in time and compare it to its previous state.



The trends (such as in global warming) are accelerating at a pace that are unprecedented (e.g. IPCC, 2021). Scientists claim that the window to halt the current trends is closing rapidly. The next decade is crucial to prevent us reaching a point of non-return. Similarly the transitions of International Business need to be rapid and decisive. Having clear goals for the medium and long term can assist the smooth deployment of corporate initiatives.

Despite remarkable examples of seriously engaged businesses, too many companies are still doing too little, too slowly, too late. Despite apparent adherence to sustainable development goals, proactive speedy implementation of systematic changes on a large scale remains mostly unattained.

The UN Global Compact 20th-Anniversary Progress Report of 2020 assessed the contribution of business to sustainable development and concluded that more ambitious goals and more incisive measures are needed. Principles-based approaches to business are still not sufficiently integrated in business strategy from decision making to implementation.

Implementing the changes we want to see in our world requires that transitions take place at multiple levels. International Business unfolds in a complex world with activities that are widely dispersed but still interdependent. Understanding these interdependences is a multifaceted task and it is critical for business success (Sabidussi et al., 2018). These interdependences occur across multiple levels. Individual companies aim at creating more value with their activities. Their value chain is, however, connected to communities, ecosystems and other business around the world. In other words, businesses are not stand-alone entities, but are interlinked

to their global value chains across industries and countries. Adopting a global value chains perspective provides a multi-level understanding of competitive, societal, environmental, economic dynamics: at the first level, the value chain of the individual internationally operating business; at the second level, the industries in which they are active; at the third level, the countries in which operations take place. Transitions must occur at the 1) company value chain level, at the 2) industry value chain level, 3) at the national and international level.

When moving towards sustainable, restorative and regenerative approaches, specific ripple effects occurring at the three levels need to be considered. Internationally operating businesses may implement practices that increase the sustainability of their own operations (direct effect) but they may result in less/more sustainable practices (negative/positive indirect effects) along their global value chain. In a recent report by Arthur D. Little (Teixeira et al., 2021), the risk exposure that companies face when they are not aware of the (un)sustainability of practices in their supply chain are illustrated with case studies. Pre-assessment, due diligence checks and risk evaluations to prioritize suppliers need to be thoughtfully applied (Teixeira et al., 2021). Being aware and assessment of others' practices that are progressively more and more distant along the value chain is challenging. Organizations are required to operate in complex supply chains that extend beyond the first and often the second tier and that are spread across geographies. Taking responsibility, however, does not stop at the front door of the company. Indirect effects are as important as direct effects: Embracing effective sustainable, restorative, regenerative business practices requires an understanding of both. Furthermore, the role of international agencies (e.g. UN), national policies, governmental initiatives and laws and public agencies can't be neglected as they all contribute to create the ecosystem in which international businesses operate.

Therefore, a comprehensive approach should consider the **Span** of the key transitions, meaning the extent to which the (positive/negative) ripple effect propagates. Are these transitions spreading across sectors, industries, geographical boundaries?



It is worth noting that key transitions create, and require, fundamental changes in a co-evolutionary approach that involves societies, markets and businesses (Loorbach & Wijsman, 2013). They do not occur in isolation and in fact, they are applicable not only to companies but also to industries and countries as well. Engaging in these transitions requires a collaborative attitude. Organizations which cooperate are more innovative and also more likely to be able to achieve successful results (Salazar et al., 2016). The synergies generated by aligning entities at the business, sector and national/international level are the true impetus for meaningful change.

## THE TOOL: THE 6S COMPASS

If we bring together the elements of the above proposed model, we can design a compass tool to serve various purposes. Figure 9 provides an illustration. The 6S Compass developed by the International Business chair is essentially a navigation **Tool**.

### Illustrative Example of the 6S Compass

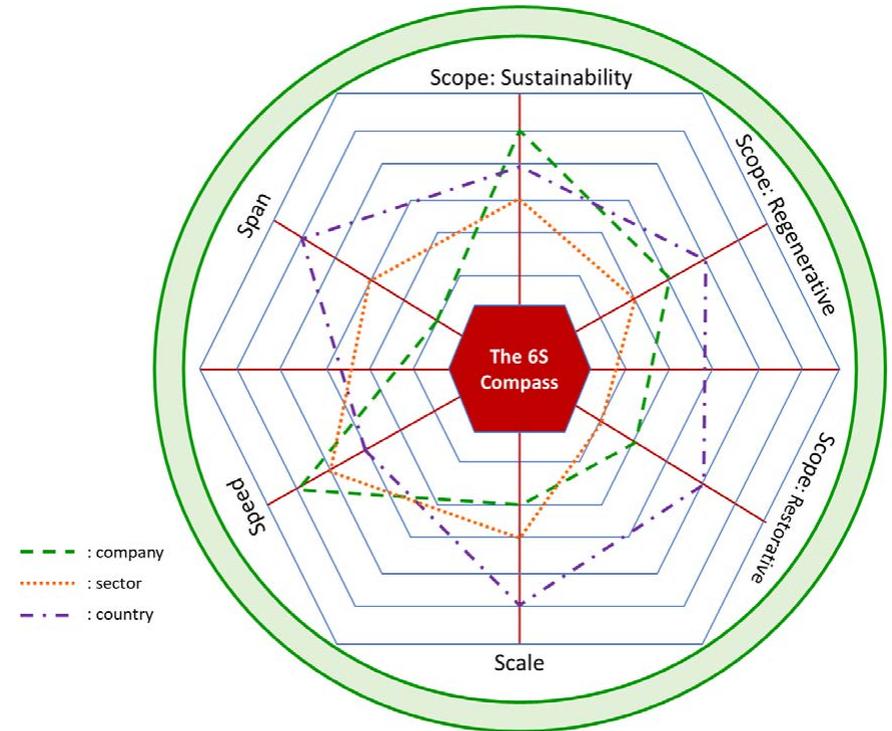


Figure 9

Each of the scores represents an index, aggregating multiple factors.

For organizations, the tool depicts the status of key transitions towards sustainable development; it enables them to align their strategic orientation, prioritize their initiatives and manage their processes. This is specific to the company profile. For example, SMEs and large organizations differ in their decision making processes and therefore it is important to consider the approaches adopted by different size companies (Sabidussi, 2014).

When taking two snapshots at different points in time, the tool also enables us to capture evolution and advancements.

Where the 6S Compass assessment is used, it enables organizations to raise **awareness** about their own operations and processes in their network. This also enables them to align with internal and external stakeholders as regards actions and contributions.

This model offers a way to **map** and visualise the advancements of the key transitions. In this sense, it can be used for landscaping the evolutions and for obtaining an overview of the on-going developments.

It can also be used for **diagnosis** in order to identify potential interventions in areas that may need to be improved. Having a clear picture of the gaps as they emerge can help with the development of ad-hoc measures.

Additionally, the tool can be used for assessing **performance** both for internal use as well as for external communication.

The resulting profile from the application of the 6S model can also be used for **benchmarking** purposes. In fact, it offers the possibility of comparing companies within or across their sectors and also of comparing industries' or countries' evolutions. Depending on the value chain in which they are located, companies may prioritize scale over speed, or a regenerative approach over a restorative one. This model can be applied at all of the three relevant levels which enables it to gather useful insights about co-evolution and the presence/lack of synchronicity between the company, its industry network and the macroeconomic context.

The 6S Compass offers an additional advantage: rethinking the concept of **value**. Approaching international business' activities from a global value chains perspective places the concept of "value" in a central position. In traditional analysis, value refers to benefit measured as the difference between value of the output and value of the input. It is therefore economic in essence, reiterating the logic that the economy is the reference criteria for value and takes precedence over planet and society.

Addressing the challenges of our world requires a reconsideration of the concept of value and also a re-interpretation as a positive contribution to planet and society. In a new conceptualization of value, monetization ceases to be the only tool for measuring business success. In the present context, high scores may be interpreted as a high level of contribution to societal well-being: they represent therefore an alternative conceptualization of value.

Value creation and value appropriation generated by business could be re-interpreted accordingly. If we do so, the expectations from investors, customers, service providers, partners, suppliers, government etc.. will evolve, will become more demanding, further reinforcing the positive loops in business practices. It is worth noticing that these positive reinforcing loops benefit from the contribution of other stakeholders as well: customers driving demand for more sustainable products/services, governments implementing regulations that favour sustainable development, supra-national organizations setting guidelines and common policies. Businesses are not isolated entities and the framework in which they operate is critical.

The chair is fine-tuning the model developed and refining its application for business practice and research.

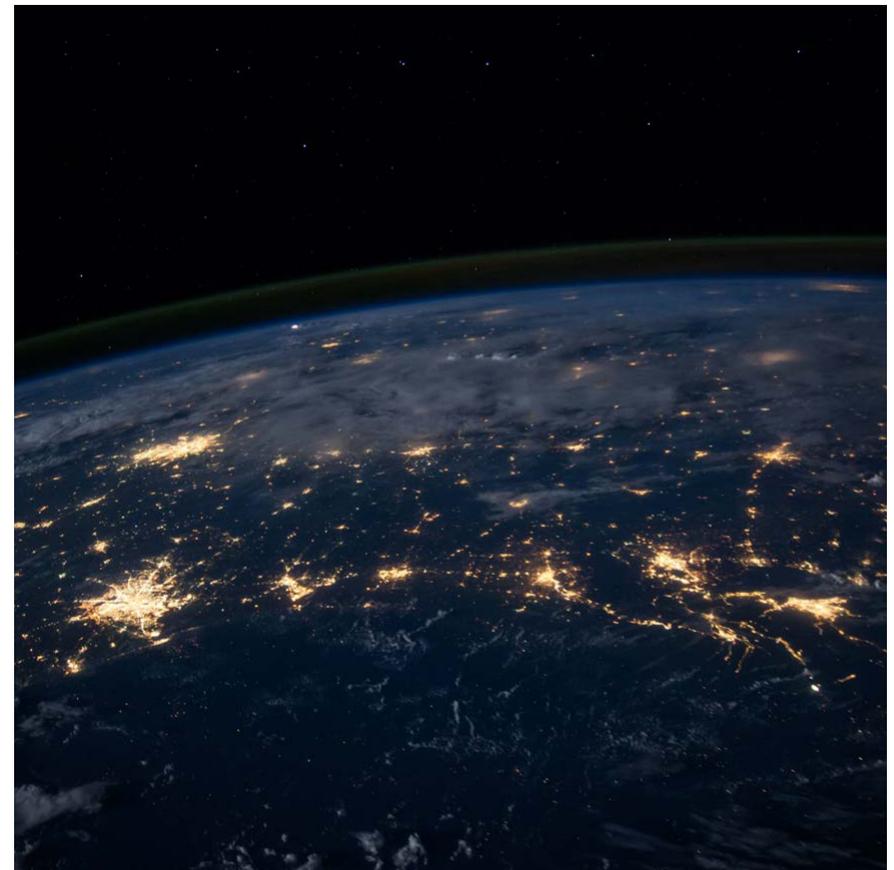


Photo by NASA on Unsplash

## RESEARCH ARENA: KEY COMPETENCES

In order to make progress with the above mentioned transitions, the chair is conducting research on the specific competences that can facilitate the business process. Focusing on the key areas where these transitions occur, the chair supports international businesses in fine-tuning the business configurations, in the upgrading processes and in the orchestration of global-scale activities. Identifying best practices and developing guidelines for business applications smooths the path towards sustainable/restorative/regenerative approaches.

### Configuration

One of the key challenges that the path towards sustainable development poses is how to define the most suitable business configuration. Configurations refer to the profile of internationally operating business, namely structures, organizational forms, business models, processes, sourcing modalities, operations, inter-company relations and links across countries and industries.

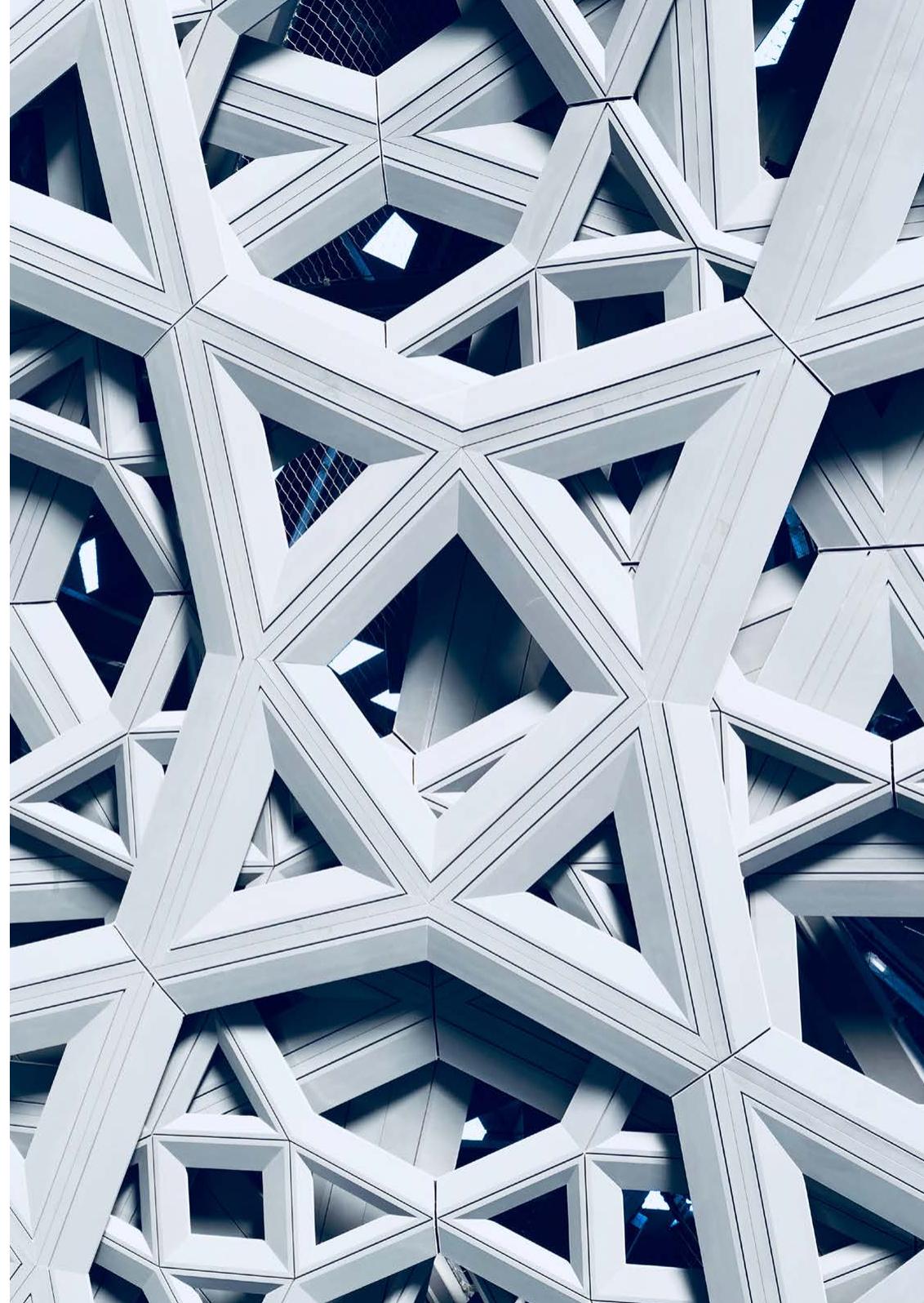
A configuration that serves a company in a non-sustainable business setting is not suitable for supporting transitions towards sustainable/restorative and regenerative practices.

It is important to approach these configurations not only from the point of view of the individual international operating business but from the perspective of the entire value chain. This is, for example, the case when considering circular business models where the activities along the entire value chain move, by design, from linear to circular.

Specifically, the configuration of global value chains (also called governance) indicates how the various functions are organized along the chain, how the resources are divided and how the gains are shared. Governance is critical for sustainable, restorative, regenerative practices because it defines which code of conduct and according to which principles the global value chain (and its members) operates. The pattern in which the transitions can spread in an industry varies depending on the governance's typology.

The chair investigates the configurations that, based on the specific profile of the companies, are the most suitable ones for the transitions.

*Photo by Alvaro Pinot on Unsplash*



## Upgrading

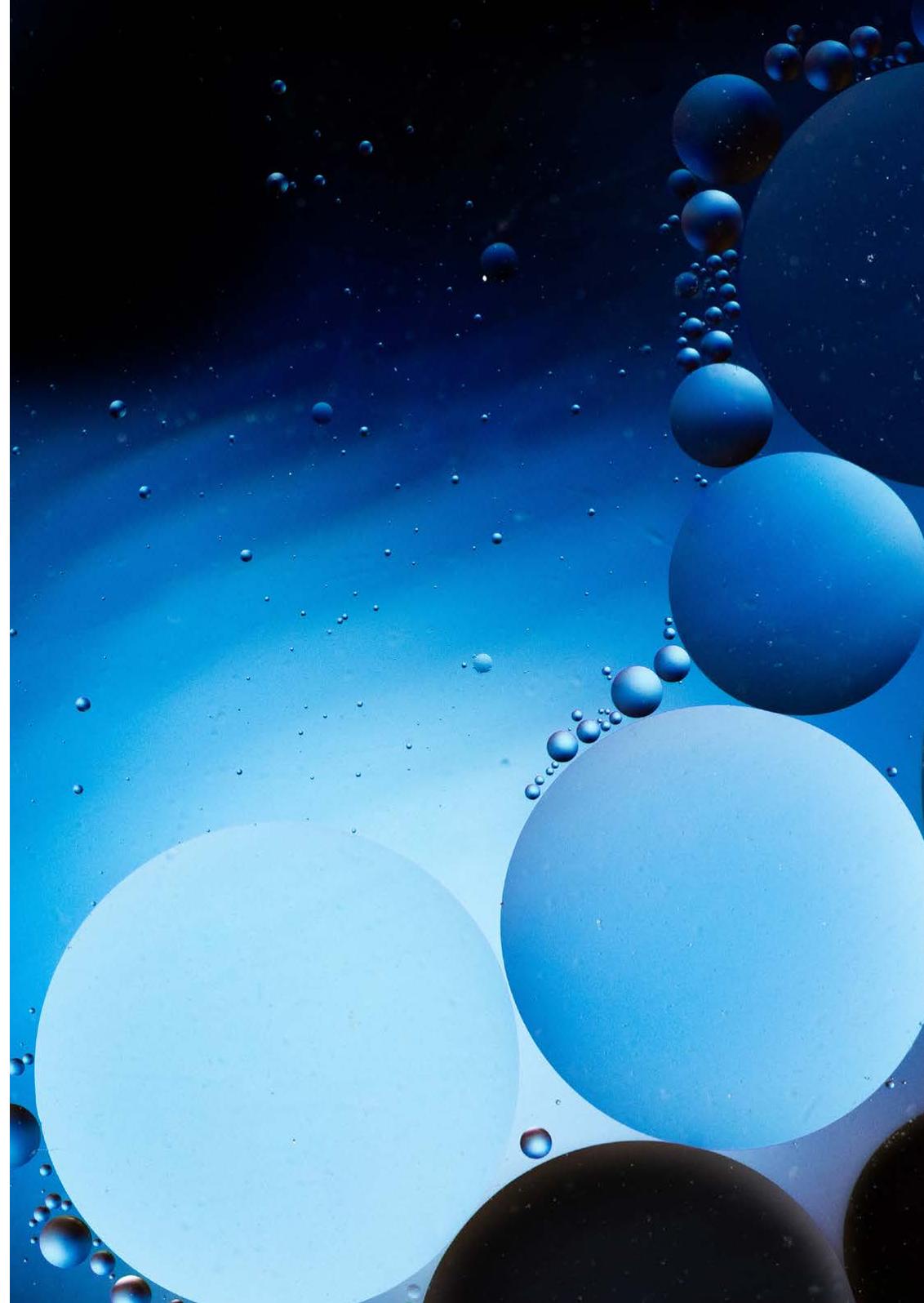
International operating businesses aim at entering and/or upgrading their position in global value chains to expand the advantages derived from their participation to the network. Upgrading is often interpreted from an economic perspective as referring to the increase of the value generated and appropriated in the network. From a sustainability perspective, upgrading may be interpreted as moving to a position in the value chain where there is a higher contribution to societal and environmental purposes.

The relationship between the members of the industry is critical to define how entire sectors succeed or fail in advancing towards the achievement of sustainable development. Practices that simply transfer environmental or social damage from one point in the chain to another, do not make any real contribution.

Understanding how upgrading works contributes to disentangling the interdependences between individual organizations, their network of inter-company relations and the industry context in which internationally operating businesses operate. In order to promote sustainable development, a helicopter overview to improve the context in which value chain actors operate is critical. The ability to clearly differentiate and promote practices that are significantly contributing to embracing a sustainable/restorative/regenerative approach is a key competence.

The chair focuses on researching the upgrading dynamics that provide the most effective results for organizations which are currently considering the business ecosystem in which they operate.

*Photo by Solen Feyissa on Unsplash*



## Orchestration

Internationally operating businesses and their global value chains have the potential to positively or negatively affect the communities (e.g. suppliers, customers etc.) in which they operate around the globe. Given their unique position to alleviate or aggravate societal and environmental conditions, to proactively respond to the plea for sustainability or, alternatively to endanger the survival of the earth's ecosystems. Together with global opportunities come global responsibilities. Ethical decisions are at the forefront of international activities. In this sense, internationally operating businesses and global value chains may be considered to be citizens of the world, responsible for their global and local activities.

Orchestration competences refer to coordination practices. These practices may be internally or externally driven. Internally-driven initiatives include self-regulatory practices at industry level and Corporate Global Citizenship. A self-regulatory initiative is for example the "Fashion Pact", a coalition initiated by the French group Kering<sup>1</sup> which at the time of writing includes more than 60 signatories representing 200 brands. Corporate global citizenship recognizes local communities (even if in distant parts of the world) as part of the internationally operating business' stakeholders. The ability to coordinate such initiatives leads to ethical and responsible corporate behaviours that safeguard the safety and well-being of these communities.

Externally-driven interventions are mechanisms adopted by governments and international organizations to orient sectors towards a common good (commonly referred to as "policies"). An example of a government initiative involved in facilitating voluntary agreements is International Responsible Business Conduct (IRBC): the agreement has been facilitated by the Dutch government among partners at the sector level. Several initiatives have been developed within its framework and are referred to here, for example the Dutch Agreement on Sustainable Garments and Textiles (2016) or the Insurance Sector Agreements (2018). These initiatives, by promoting exposure and potential reputation gain, are creating alignment to public good through incentives. Other policies can be more regulatory in nature, creating obligations which have to be respected.

All of the above has a diverse impact depending on the sector of reference and is, therefore, industry-specific. Policies represent the framework in which global value chains operate and can shape the configurations in the global value chains' network and can promote/impose industry standards, influence upgrading modalities, and prioritize public good in the global network.

<sup>1</sup> see: <https://www.kering.com/en/news/the-fashion-pact-first-steps-towards-industry-transformation>

*Photo by Spencer Imbrock on Unsplash*

Coordinating activities along the global value chains may require an understanding of the public interest that encompasses the scope of business alone. It is therefore critical to have (or to develop) the ability to coordinate joint activities in a network structure. Companies need to understand the context of their operations and be proactive rather than simply complying, in order to advance their transitions.

The chair's research is actively contributing to activities aimed at aligning the joint efforts of public and private institutions committed to enhancing key transitions. Reaching the tipping point and reversing the trends that led to the current challenges cannot be a solo effort. It is essential to leverage the synergies for multiplying the positive effects from all contributions. Synergies have a critical role in stimulating innovation (Sabidussi et al., 2014). Solutions to the complex challenges we are facing, need multilateral engagement. The chair's research focuses on how to best support these joint endeavours.

International operations take place in a context characterized by high levels of digitalization and in countries with their own specific cultural identity.

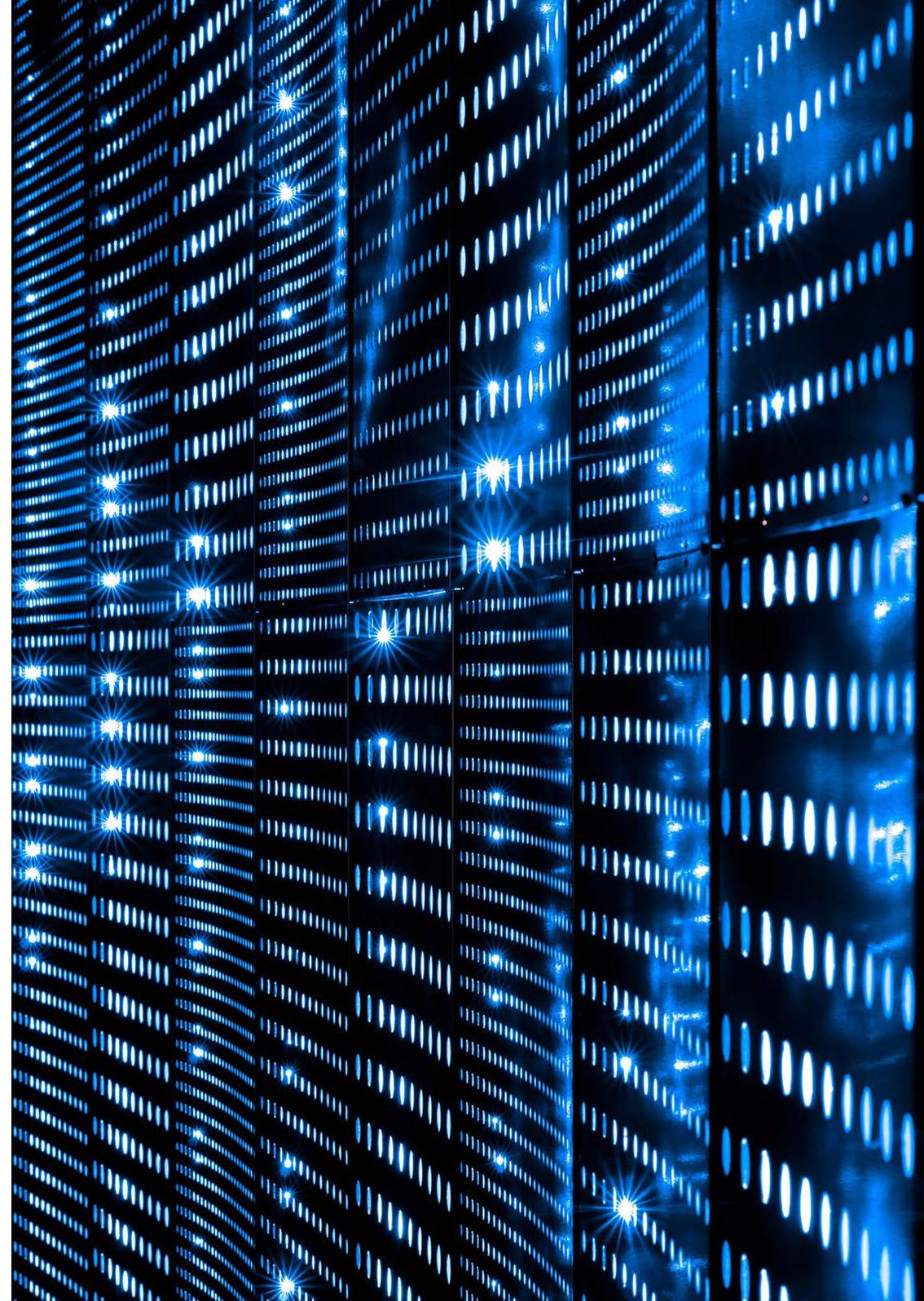


## Digitalization

Technological evolution under the umbrella term of “Digitalization” is changing entire economies. Digitalization has the potential to shift the way products/services are conceived, manufactured/operationalized, assembled, delivered/distributed, transferred, used/reused within internationally operating businesses and along the entire global value chain. It is worth noting that the professorship does not focus on the technologies per se but on their application and relevance for business practice. As illustrative examples, blockchain technology refers to encrypted lists of data that can record transactions between parties and cannot be altered. Blockchain technology can, therefore, support traceability and transparency along the value chain to ensure the application of sustainable practices. 3D printing technology can transform the production activities of internationally operating businesses into a (design) transfer and move the production activities at local level (thus reducing transportation of goods so as to enhance sustainable practices). Data Analytics and AI can reshape integration among actors in the value chain, enable upgrading of internationally operating businesses and their global value chains and support policies aimed at increasing sustainable practices. Digitalization also has the potential to enable sustainable development by changing industry processes, accelerating circular economy and facilitating Small and Medium Enterprise (SMEs) to engage more actively in global value chains. Moreover, Industry 4.0 encourages a massive diversification of services but also real time manufacturing adaptation to demand therefore reducing waste.

Technology is, therefore, critical to shape how internationally operating businesses and global value chains’ configurations are set, how dynamics in the global value chains unfold and how effective orchestration are organized. Therefore, they have the potential to support and accelerate the transitions towards new sustainable/restorative/regenerative models.

*Photo by Krzysztof Kowalik on Unsplash*



## Cultural intelligence

Internationally operating businesses are involved in complex activities that span various national borders and economies. By operating on a global scale, internationally operating businesses are involved in various networks around them (of subsidiaries, suppliers, customers, partners, governments, agencies etc.) spread over several countries/societies/cultures.

Understanding different cultures can facilitate processes where inter-company relations are involved. This occurs in the configuration of internationally operating businesses (interaction between global headquarters and local subsidiaries) and in the governance of global value chains (interactions among its network members). It takes place in the dynamics leading to the upgrade of companies (and countries) in the global value chain. It also occurs when interacting with governmental representatives and intergovernmental agencies. Transitions towards sustainable, restorative and regenerative practices cannot be taken out of the cultural setting in which companies operate.

Digitalization and cultural intelligence have the potential, if fully and properly exploited, to support the scaling-up of corporate transitions and to accelerate their pace. Digitalization and cultural intelligence are complementary to the role of (re-) configurations, dynamics and orchestrations in driving internationally operating businesses and global value chains towards sustainable, restorative and regenerative practices.

The chair is researching technology solutions that promote efficient transitions and support their successful implementation. Similarly, attention is paid to identify how favourable conditions can be created for the transitions to occur by supporting mutual cultural alignment.

*Photo by Tim Mossholder on Unsplash*



## FROM INSIGHTS TO ACTION

The International Business chair's research aims at translating relevant insights into guidelines for impactful interventions. Several research projects have been developed in this respect and the range of activities continues to expand. The projects' characteristics also reflect the type of contribution the chair offers to organizations engaging in key transitions.

### Methods

The chair ensures the rigorous application of scientific research methods. The said research relies on both quantitative and qualitative methods to ensure that complex issues are approached in a comprehensive fashion. Quantitative methods are preferred for assessing/measuring causal relationships and for extracting relevant information from large databases; these include econometric analysis/modelling and network analysis. Qualitative research such as case studies are used to gather insights into the internal processes and practices. Exploratory approaches, design thinking, users' experience methodologies, scenario analysis are all used and also creative techniques are proposed when the identification of the business challenge at hand requires innovative perspectives.

### Toolkit

The chair classifies existing models and conceptual frameworks based on their purpose and translates their insights into tools supporting business practice (such as mapping of the key stakeholders and the value chain etc.). In order to assist organizations to engage in key transitions, the chair also develops ad-hoc tools (e.g. the 6S Compass). By providing guidelines and assisting in the application process, the chair creates value for those international business partners pursuing joint collaboration projects.

### Multilevel & Interdisciplinary Approach

The chair adopts a multilevel and interdisciplinary approach to see the big picture while connecting the dots.

The multilevel approach is reflected in the research's content links, its design, the individual company, the industry, sector, the country or countries in which the company operates. All these levels are intertwined and are critical to promote key transitions towards sustainable/restorative/regenerative business practices. The interdisciplinary approach is driven by the fact that International Business, as a research area, relies on other key business disciplines such as strategy and innovation, organization, marketing, finance etc. Therefore, it builds systematically on insights from various content areas. This is critical as the processes associated with key transitions are not monodisciplinary and as such require a comprehensive scientific approach.

Additionally, the International Business chair bridges economic with non-economic disciplines. The focus on technology's and cultural intelligence's enablers links the research to fields of expertise outside the economic field. Cultural intelligence is approached from a sociology, psychology and/ or communication perspective. The chair also explores the role of personal values in driving behaviours. The personal drive of business leaders has a role in setting the goals and the objectives of their organizations. Technological advancements, in particular in the area of digitization, are also central for the chair. Technologies may be depicted as having a technical component and a business application. While the first is outside of the direct scope of the International Business professorship, the latter is at its core. Although distinct, the technical and the business aspects are complementary. Organizations need to address both in a comprehensive fashion in order to deliver practical solutions to their complex challenges.

### Co-creation

The team fine-tunes projects based on the needs of the key stakeholders involved. The specific business challenges of international companies and associations with whom we collaborate are addressed involving all of the relevant contributors. We conceive, design and execute the research in a co-creation process with the key actors in order to deliver high-potential solutions. Bringing various different perspectives together in all phases of our projects enriches both the process as well as the outcome of the research.

### International Network

The chair's priority is to establish collaborative projects with international partners. Cooperation involves international knowledge centres and renowned experts, whose area of specialization is relevant for the active research endeavours. Stimulating progress with key transitions requires joining forces with leading international expertise and developing a supportive knowledge ecosystem. The chair also contributes to international think tanks and actively collaborates with non-profit organizations promoting an inclusive, just, resilient, sustainable and peaceful society.

### Living Lab

For all our projects, the chair offers a space to industry partners to explore novel solutions, experiment and develop and implement new business practices on a pilot basis. Field lab methods are adopted where organizations can experiment, guided by scientific approaches, with the changes and transitions that are the core of the International Business research. Supported by experts, our industry partners are offered a setting where scientifically-based solutions can be tested and validated before large scale applications. In the living lab, international companies can work on individual business cases or in collaboration with other entities. This is particularly the case for fine-tuning collaborative/circular business models in global value chains.

## System Approach

Understanding challenges in their interconnections and complexity is central for advancing key transitions. Adopting a system approach is particularly suitable for dealing with wicked problems: it is at the heart of engaging the transformations that our world needs. Embracing complexity instead of rejecting it is a valuable and fruitful exercise. Moreover, exploring interdependencies instead of ignoring them can stimulate innovative solutions (Sabidussi, Lokshin & Duysters, 2018). Understanding the questions, investigating the nature of the issues at stake, reflecting on them, is as important as finding the answers. Ad-hoc approaches such as Design and System Thinking stimulate creativity as regards proposals for a new society and a new economy.

## Knowledge Valorisation

Knowledge valorisation refers to using scientific knowledge in practice and to knowledge dissemination. The chair publishes reports and articles, as well as organizes events, workshops and webinars in order to contribute to all of those organizations which are engaging in a sustainable development journey. The chair also makes available tools that have been developed that can be beneficial for supporting the key transitions. In sharing ideas, insights, new concepts, our commitment is to encourage a joint re-thinking of the principles driving business practice. We are convinced that collective engagement can assist progress towards a new way of doing business.

## THE WAY FORWARD

Humanity is on the verge of a critical decade. The SDGs targets are still set for 2030 but more has to be done in order to achieve them. Emissions need to be halved by 2030 in order to prevent global warming becoming irreversible.

The fate of this generation and many to come will be marked by every decision and every action that we take in the next few years. Today's choices will not only affect human beings but also all other species with whom we share our planet. Our choices will have consequences for the entire earth.

The series of transitions that we have put in motion in the past are now endangering our future and the future of the planet. Like never before, we share a collective responsibility; we need to change direction, engage in new transitions, create positive transformations that are beneficial for business, society and for the environment. Key transitions are central to achieving sustainable development. Now more than ever before we realize that we are all connected and part of a dynamic, continuous process of development.



Photo by Bill Oxford on Unsplash

International Business has an important role in creating the transitions towards a new society and a new economy. The scope, scale and speed of the said transitions which International Business is engaging in during the coming 10 years are more relevant than ever. Assuming this responsibility is the only way forward.

The task of the International Business Professorship is to contribute to our world (have impact) by supporting the transitions of internationally operating businesses and their ecosystems – particularly global value chains – towards sustainable, restorative and regenerative practices. The International Business chair is committed to assisting businesses to succeed in these transitions.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank you the Board of Avans University of Applied Sciences for your trust in appointing me to the position of Professor of International Business. It is a privilege to contribute to the University's vision and objectives by developing and leading the International Business research programme. I am truly humbled and honoured by this responsibility.

I would also like to thank you the Academies' Deans and the ESB Steering Committee for the constructive and fruitful collaboration. Linking education, research, business practice and fostering the constructive synergies among them is at the core of the chair's focus. I look forward to further expanding our cooperation in the coming years.

The Professorship International Business is one of the six chairs of the Expertise Centre Sustainable Business. It is a pleasure to work with colleagues who are so dedicated and so enthusiastic about improving our world. Sharing with all of you a common endeavour, discussing our research vision and projects is not only an enjoyable but also an stimulating experience. A great thank you also to ESB management for facilitating the chairs' initiatives and for creating the conditions for successful interactive endeavours. A special thank you goes to the ESB management assistants, for their valuable support with all the activities as well as with all the events organized by the chair.

In addition I would like to express my appreciation to the Avans "Lectoren"; we are actively engaged in regular discussions of our research themes and the impact that we want our research to have. It has been a wonderful opportunity to get to know more about each other's' areas of investigation, discovering common interests and launching joint multidisciplinary projects.

The greatest strength of the International Business chair is its team. A special thank you goes to "IB Kenniskring" for all your passion for research and hard work, commitment to make a difference, the courage to be curious, your willingness to collaborate and to join forces, enthusiasm to re-think assumptions, openness to embrace new challenges, your energy to always go the extra mile. The dedication of the team to advance our research agenda and make it impactful and relevant is a powerful driver.

Our team is enlarged by means of the International Business Consortium, a collaboration network that is continuously growing and developing. A chat over a cup of coffee, a shared vision about the future of International Business and the initial seed of the consortium grew from there: I still recall that conversation at the Avans research offices in Den Bosch with Professor Ronald Tuninga at a time when

meetings were always face-to-face. Since then, many colleagues have joined the initiative, research ideas have been shared, multiparty projects have been developed, new collaborations have taken place. There is still a lot to develop and I look forward to the future.

The work of the chair would be not meaningful without the companies we collaborate with. We are thrilled to work with so many committed organizations which agreed to participate in our research endeavours and to share with us their journey towards sustainable development.

I would like to express my gratitude to those who are at the very heart of my professional development.

I own all my gratitude to Professor Geert Duysters for his comprehensive academic expertise, indispensable research advice, continuous mentorship and encouragement since I started my PhD, and throughout my entire career.

I am deeply obliged to Professor Dovev Lavie for all the inspiration, scientific rigor, extensive knowledge and outstanding commitment to excellence that he has so generously shared during the many years of our collaboration.

I am very grateful to have worked with Uriel Stettner, his research competences and professionalism are truly impressive: It is a pleasure and a privilege to collaborate with such a dedicated scholar.

The joint project that resulted in a publication in the Academy of Management Journal has been an enriching and stimulating journey: I hope that circumstances will allow all of us to meet in person soon to celebrate this achievement together.

Thank you to my PhD supervisors: Harry Bremmers, for being always available, for offering advice and guidance, for being genuinely interested in supporting my research progress; Professor Onno Omta, for the opportunity to conduct my research at the Management Studies Group; to Professor Hans Schenk, for welcoming me into his econometrics team and for the fruitful conversations about the meaningfulness of research in economics.

To all my co-authors, thank you for the expertise exchanged during our projects, I have enjoyed every single one of our discussions.

Over the years, I am privileged to have met extraordinary scholars. In particular, I immensely value the opportunity to regularly participate in the Israel Strategy Conference since its first editions; these academic discussions have always been an intellectual delight and a very special opportunity for nurturing research ideas,

engaging in thought-provoking, stimulating exchanges and learning from the wisdom of the other participants.

A heartfelt thank you goes to Soren Kaplan; his dedication in helping organizations innovate, his in depth understanding of business challenges and the ability to design solution paths are remarkable. Collaborating has been an inspirational experience for me.

Thank you to all those who are present here today at this inaugural speech. I hope that this will be an opportunity to start new conversations and initiatives.

Finally, to my friends from around the world; thank you for always being there. Even far away, I know you are always close.

My endless gratitude goes to my family for all the constant love, care, infinite support and for being part of all the small and big moments that life offers us. You know you mean more to me than I can ever say.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Anna is passionate about linking education, business and research to respond and anticipate the fast-paced changes of a globalized, interconnected world.

Her approach is grounded in the creation of international knowledge-sharing platforms where students, researchers, companies and institutions collaborate and generate synergies from their complementary skills and experiences. This activity has been specifically applied in her roles at Wageningen University and Research Centrum, where she won a best lecturer award, at Eindhoven University of Technology and at TiasNimbas Business School, Tilburg University.

She views leadership as a team endeavour that is a success enabler across business/industries. She and her teams have been active in a variety of sectors from services to high-tech, finance, agri-food, manufacturing, perfumery and beauty, luxury goods, biopharma, art and the creativity industry. She brings with her expertise from the multiple roles she has worked in over the years'; entrepreneur and founder of two international companies, strategy management consultant, competence-centre director, academic director among others.

Anna has a Masters in International Business from MIB and a Ph.D. in Management Science obtained on a joint NWO-sponsored project between Wageningen University and Research Centrum and Utrecht School of Economics.

Her research has been published in the Academy of Management Journal, Innovation & Industry, Computers in Human Behaviour, International Journal of Technology Transfer and Commercialization, Journal of Engineering and Technology Management, European Management Review, International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business among others.

## THE TEAM

### ERIC COORENS



Eric Coorens combines his role as project manager and researcher at the lectorates International Business programme in Den Bosch.

Eric has business experience in global trade, retail and a theoretical foundation in business administration, marketing and engineering. He has worked in various management and board positions in retail, management consulting, sustainability, marketing and sourcing. This work experience has been gained with listed multinationals, NGOs,

government agencies and industry associations. His primary focus is on sustainability of global value chains, supply chain management and interdisciplinary collaboration. Eric's background and expertise are reflected in his research, mainly as project manager of the joint research programme 'Doing business as if The World is Our Village' of the Lectorates International Business and New Marketing. The aim of the programme is to increase sustainable business behaviour by making companies and individuals aware of their direct and indirect impact on the communities, ecosystems and value chains they are part of.

*"I joined the knowledge circle International Business specifically based on .... the drive and passion and the need to create a more sustainable international (business) world ...I wanted to be part of and contribute to .... applied research. Joining the team has been everything I hoped for and more. ... We are great team of dedicated researchers, professionals and students, who actively work together in a very warm and personal way to help solve the issues we face in our global business environment".*

### KAREN JANSSEN



Karen Janssen is a project leader and researcher in the field of cooperation and multiple value creation in sustainable innovation networks at the Expertise Centre Sustainable Business.

Karen studied Commercial Technical Business Administration at Saxion University in Enschede and Strategy & Marketing at Radboud University in Nijmegen. She then worked as a researcher at a market research agency. In 2011, she was awarded her PhD by Radboud University in Nijmegen which

was based on her research on consumer involvement in radical product innovation in

the food sector. As a post doc, she investigated mechanisms for orchestrating value networks created by integrating sustainability into innovation. Since 2016, she has been associated with Avans University of Applied Sciences.

Karen is active in several projects aimed at creating value from waste, by recycling, reusing or reducing materials and products. She researches the obstacles and challenges that companies experience in the transition to a circular economy and how companies need to work together in networks and negotiate a balance in their economic, ecological and social impact.

*“My research focuses on the development of sustainable ecosystems for a regenerative circular economy. These innovations cannot be realized in isolation, collaboration is essential. This is exactly what occurs in the lectorate IB .... a nice and productive atmosphere for collaboration between multiple people with different perspectives, creating synergies to bring this system change a step closer. I love being part of this group, working on my own research interests while sharing, discussing and creating collective knowledge which will have an impact at the intersection of science and business”.*

## INGRID DEVJAK



Ingrid Devjak is a researcher at the lectorate International Business.

Adventurousness, an open mindset and curiosity are qualities that describe Ingrid and that have determined her life path. This led to living and studying in several countries, several months of world travel and literary studies. But also, an international MBA to a postgraduate course.

In addition to her research work at International Business in the area of Intercultural Competences, she works as a lecturer

in Business English for the Accountancy, Finance and Control study programmes at Avans. With great enthusiasm, she coaches students of the international minor Business, Leadership, Sustainability.

In these roles, she uses the experience she gained at various multinationals. For instance, Ingrid worked at InterContinental Hotels Group in the sales, customer service and guest relations departments, she gave shape to Learning and Development at Epson Europe and was a senior trainer at KLM.

Ingrid is involved in projects on ‘intercultural competences’ and ‘cross-cultural awareness’.

*“Drawn by its mission I joined the research centre with the wish to contribute to its goals and ultimately to a better world. Working with my new colleagues is more than just stimulating and challenging.*

## MARCO VERKOOIJEN



Marco Verkooijen is a lecturer-researcher and part of the Knowledge Circle International Business.

Marco has a Master of Information Management from TIAS Business School. There he researched the integration of ICT in Supply Chains. He also did the course Artificial Intelligence: Implications for Business Strategy at MIT Boston. Marco is also a certified Lean Black Belt. He is specialized in ICT & Supply Chain Management, Business Process Management and Digital Transformation.

Marco has over 20 years of experience in working as a consultant, project manager and coach on complex business issues in the above-mentioned specialization areas. In addition, he has been working for about 10 years as a lecturer at various colleges in the Netherlands. At Avans, he gives courses in the field of Artificial Intelligence, Supply Chain Management, Business Process Modelling, Lean Management, ERP, Innovation & Transformation and Information Systems.

Marco’s ambition is to develop organizations, business processes and people to achieve their goals. Within the knowledge network, he carries out applied research projects in his specialist areas. He does this in co-creation with international companies.

*“During my introduction to the kenniskring International Business I was delighted to meet so many enthusiastic and inspired colleagues. I look forward to working with them in projects where digital transformation and sustainability are central. With my knowledge and experience in Supply Chain Management and IT, I hope to make a valuable contribution to these projects”.*

## BENNO BUUNK



Benno Buunk is a lecturer-researcher at the lectorate International Business.

Benno’s expertise lies in the field of (international) marketing, new business models and blockchain technology.

Benno has experience in various marketing positions in the banking sector, consultancy and higher education, and holds a Master of Science in Marketing. Benno teaches economics, organizational studies, marketing communication, public administration and business administration in the

Communication programme.

Within the International Business research group, Benno researches possibilities for new business models and earning models for various clients.

*"I have been involved in the International Business research group since May 2020. This knowledge network fits in perfectly with my work as a lecturer at the Academy for Communication and User Experience (ACUE). To be able to link up with education and to do practical research were the main reasons why I wanted to participate in the group. In addition, it was possible to undertake research together with the business community on areas that are of personal interest to me, such as the development of new business models using Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Blockchain technology. My participation in Knowledge Circle International Business has broadened my horizons and has also helped me to develop in my teaching role at ACUE."*

### ELENA LOMELI AGUIRRE



Elena is an accomplished marketer, an innovative business development manager and a curious researcher whose remit in an ideal world is to transform the world!

She studied International Business in Mexico and France and added a Master's degree in International Development Cooperation at the ISS at Erasmus University Rotterdam. She worked in several marketing and sales roles in Mexico in internal telecommunications and international logistics for the World Trade Center. She led the marketing and innovations

department for Shell Motor Oil in the U.S.A. and managed the integration of their product portfolio in Latin America. She coached women entrepreneurs in Uganda and Fair-Trade producers in Nigeria. She developed and implemented business plans for Child rights NGOs in Uganda and strategies for teachers working in Indian slums.

*"I believe that Businesses and Business leaders are driving the rapid changes in our dynamic and pluralistic world. Business skills and thinking are required to generate the new areas of value that will develop the sustainable solutions needed to create the world we want to live in. As part of the IB KK I am enabled to work together with a group of talented of people sharing the same aim, and together via our research and our lectures, we can make a stronger contribution to inspire and impact the Business leaders of today and tomorrow to drive the positive change that our world needs."*

### REINIER SMEETS



Reinier Smeets is a junior researcher for the Expertise Centre For Sustainable Business, where he enthusiastically participates in numerous projects such as The World Is Our Village and Intercultural Competences.

Reinier has a Bachelor's degree in Psychology & Society and a Master's in Economic Psychology in Tilburg. Due to his research he has accumulated a great deal of experience with projects related to marketing and consumer behaviour.

Reinier is a driven, ambitious researcher. He uses his skills in data analysis and his psychological background to discover in detail how consumers and employees are influenced in their decision making. He has a purposeful, innovative style of work and believes that science should have an added value. Reinier has researched how mindfulness leads to responsible purchase behaviour, how greed influences purchase behaviour, how globalized marketing changes local cultures, how proximity leads to sustainability and how emotions affect financial decision making.

*"I have a great interest to discover how Social Psychology and Cultural Psychology relate to International Business. There is an overlap between these topics, where still many innovations could be found. I also like to be part of the Knowledge Circle, to present the new findings of his projects and gather inspiration from the conversations with his colleagues."*

### ROBIN PEREBOOM



Robin Pereboom is a member of the research group International Business. She is also a lecturer on the new IB World Development programme, formerly known as International Business. She is also project manager for this course.

Robin studied Economics and Management & Organisation. Before joining Avans, she had various roles in marketing, sales and HRM. She worked in France for 10 years and then later on in the Netherlands she became acquainted with the ins and outs of value chain management in her role as Business Development Manager (Europe). Robin started to develop IB Futures within the Academy for Management and International Business. This is a learning community where students, teachers, the field?, researchers and other stakeholders explore the future of sustainable International Business.

In addition, Robin has set up the research project with the provisional working title Redesigning Global Value Chains in Fashion, International Business in Disruptive Times. This research is part of the Orchestration research project within the Chair's research agenda. It seeks interdisciplinary cooperation from economic, social and humanities perspectives, with both national and international partners.

*"The development of global value chains has brought a lot to global economic growth. However, challenges such as COVID-19 has made the need to also take into account ecological and social effects even more urgent. It is a joy and pleasure to be part of this group of enthusiastic and eager lecturers-researchers to contribute to rethinking the global value chain and move forward towards a more sustainable future for the next generations."*

### ROB DE WITH



Rob is a lecturer-researcher at the Lectorate International Business. Working at the cutting edge of entrepreneurship, sustainability and innovation, Rob likes to work proactively to implement sustainable development goals in education and business. He will share his international network of businesses and educational institutes with the Avans Centre of expertise / International Business in order to develop new global goals related research.

*"Doing applied research, sharing experiences and deliver new insight to students and business. It sounds easy, isn't it? Not always is the importance seen of the work a team like KK International Business. For students, as well as for businesses. We need international business: business is on forehand "international" nowadays. The results of the work done by the KK International Business (and others within the Expertise Centre for Sustainable Business) is extremely important. It's great to be part of this team, adding experience and networks, and learning every day. ..."*

### IREM BEZCIOGLU



Irem Bezcioglu is a researcher at the Lectorate International Business.

Irem has a background in teaching. After doing her Master's in education at the Middle East Technical University in Turkey, she moved to the Netherlands to do her PhD in Culture Studies at Tilburg University. She specialized in sociolinguistics and in investigating the connection between immigrant languages, state policies and integration. She has published several academic articles on the topic of family language in

multicultural societies. She also had the opportunity to collaborate internationally with institutions and scholars during her PhD, including via fellowships at Oranim College of Education in Israel and University of Jyväskylä in Finland.

She is currently coaching International Business students at Avans in intercultural business communication and personal leadership. She is passionate about assisting students to develop their unique potential as well as helping them understand and embrace diversity in society.

Irem is involved in projects on multiculturalism, diversity, intercultural awareness. She is currently investigating cultural barriers and how to overcome them in business in cross-cultural settings.

*"Understanding intercultural encounters and contributing to creating a multicultural society where people from different backgrounds live in harmony has always been my passion. I am lucky to be able to work on my passion in the Knowledge Circle .... Knowing that I am surrounded by dedicated colleagues who care and share is the best part of being in this research group".*

## COLOFON

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### **Coordination**

Marketing, Communication and Student Affairs Department,  
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### **Editorial staff**

Anna Sabidussi  
Eric Coorens  
Ellen Herbrink  
Robin Pereboom

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### **Contact**

Centre of Expertise Sustainable Business  
Location Breda: Hogeschoollaan 1  
Location 's-Hertogenbosch: Onderwijsboulevard 215  
P.O. Box 90116, 4800 RA Breda, The Netherlands  
088 – 5258083  
Info.esb@avans.nl

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