

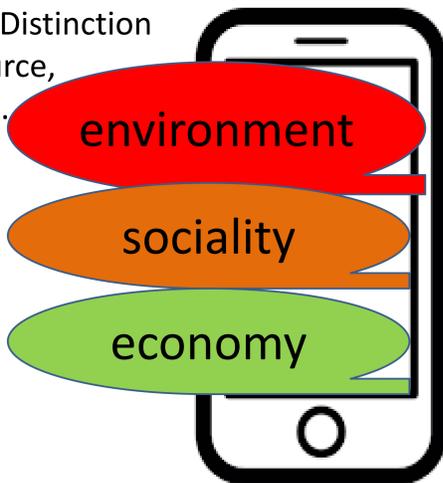
# Current Research Activities

The Center of Sales and Marketing comprises application-oriented and basic research activities in a variety of subjects that are relevant to understand, promote and critically contest sustainability in the realm of managerial economics. The three assembled (current and future) research projects illustrate this variety at the crossing points of marketing, environment, technology, and society.

## eCInnovateIT

From a sustainability perspective the question arises if and how the consumption of information and communication technologies should be designed differently. An understanding of the social and cultural values, beliefs and practices held by consumers, may support product innovation in order to transform consumption. We found that sustainability-oriented product innovations stand to benefit from the following attributes (Svenson and Raabe 2016): Distinction vis-à-vis mainstream brands, Open Source, Repairability and Battery Management. Our transformative research explores the different social practices that constitute mundane consumption of smartphones.

This work is part of the project "Sustainable Consumption of Information and Communication Technology in the Digital Society – Dialogue and Transformation through Open Innovation". The project is funded by the Ministry for Science and Culture of Lower Saxony and the Volkswagen Foundation (VolkswagenStiftung) through the "Niedersächsisches Vorab" grant programme (grant number VWZN3037).



## PackEnd

The transdisciplinary project devoted to the question of how innovative approaches to avoid disposable plastic packaging (DPP) (i.e. "Unverpackt-Läden") can be successfully implemented by leading food retailers. This may contribute to resource-effective efficiency by reduction of DPP, promoting green economy and the socio-ecological transformation.

Content:

- experimental testing and implementation of DPP-reduction activities in a pilot project;
- model developing for portability and transfer;
- interventions to change consumer behavior;
- development of appropriate legal frameworks.

This project applied for funds at the Federal Ministry of Education and Research in Germany (together with Prof. Dr. Anja Hentschel (Darmstadt), Prof. Dr. Martin Müller (Ulm), Dr. Irene Antoni-Komar and Dr. Christine Lenz (both University of Oldenburg)).

## Resilience of socio-technical systems

Exemplified at the electricity system we aim for a deeper understanding of resilience as a frame to conceptualize the persistency of socio-technical (supply) systems in its social, economic, ecological, and technical dimensions. Our research draws on the Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Discourse (SKAD) (Keller 2011) to explore the interplay between resilience and shared (or contested) knowledge on the level of social actors and institutions.

Type	Accepted truth claims	Research aim	Research questions
notion-focused discourse research	none (about resilience)	trace the usage of the notion and its consequences	structures of meaning and action; purposes and consequences; templates of subjects and speaker positions
phenomenon-focused discourse research	resilience is a phenomenon comprised by known knowledge elements	analyze the social construction of the phenomenon	Resilience of what? Resilience to what? Resilience by what means? Resilience in whose interest?
reifying discourse research	resilience has an equivalent in the world of things	analyze discourses' effects on the resilience of an entity	How do particular discourse properties affect the resilience of the entity in question?
incorporating discourse research	resilience research provide useful concepts for discourse research	enhance the understanding of discourses	To what extent are particular resilience concepts suitable to inspire research on the persistency (or resilience) of discourses?

Table 1: Types of discourse research on resilience

In order to address the resilience of an entity it is inevitable to have an idea of a (desired) nucleus and threats that are assumed to put the nucleus' persistency at risk. How these knowledge elements are struggled for in discourses on energy policy is an empirical question from a SKAD-perspective.

Resilience of what?		Resilience to what?	Resilience by what means?	Resilience in whose interest?
Which entity? (Whose capacities to cope, adapt, and transform?)	Which nucleus? (What are the properties that should persist?)	Which threats? (What is assumed as a serious threat for the persistency of the entity and its nucleus?)	How to (re)act? (What is assumed as the correct/rational way to build or enhance resilience?)	Cui bono? (Which interests/motifs are connected with particular calls for resilience, persistence, or transformation?)
Society	Low electricity rates	Natural disasters	Invention of new technologies	Economic interests (e.g. protection and expansion of market shares)
Electricity supply system	Security of power supplies	Technical and human failure	Rapid vs. slow regime shift	Political interests (e.g. hegemonization of beliefs and world views)
Electricity regime	Healthy environment	Attacks / sabotage	(Few) big vs. (many) small solutions	Private interests (e.g. NIMBY, physical integrity)
Regime transition	Physical health	Fluctuating energy feed-in	Centralized vs. decentral topography	
Power grid	Landscape aesthetics	Scarcity of raw materials	Private vs. public ownership	
Energy actors	Social peace	Abuse of monopolies or oligopolis	Market regulation / incentives	
		Political dependencies	Change demands and habits	
			Be prepared for catastrophic events	

Table 2: Multiple perspectives on resilience in the electricity system

This work is part of the project "Resilience of socio-technical systems exemplified at the electricity transport and actor system". The project is funded by the Ministry for Science and Culture of Lower Saxony and the Volkswagen Foundation (VolkswagenStiftung) through the "Niedersächsisches Vorab" grant programme.



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## Further Research Topics

- Cultural approaches to sustainability research (alimentary cultures)
- Sustainability-oriented brand culture
- Macromarketing
- Recycling

## References

- Keller, R. (2011). The Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Discourse (SKAD). *Human Studies*, 34(1), 43–65.  
Svenson, F. and Raabe, T. (2016). Do practices matter? Smartphone affordances for sustainability-oriented product innovations, unpublished manuscript.