



**CALL FOR PAPERS**

**Promoting Sustainable Development Through**

**Global Infrastructure Initiatives:**

**A Sino-European Perspective**

22-23 September 2022

School of Business, Economics and Law

University of Gothenburg

 Sweden

On behalf of the Alliance of Chinese and European Business Schools (ACE), the School of Business, Economics and Law at University of Gothenburg is hosting a one and a half day conference that explores how sustainable development is understood or should be conceived in context of global infrastructure initiatives. The conference will be held in hybrid format.

Sustainable development as a key organizing concept has assumed an omnipresent status and can now be found in most, if not all, policy instruments, business statements, political speeches, formal and informal discussions. Sustainable development frame is considered critical in resolving global challenges such as poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, and injustice that we face as a society. This frame has assumed greater importance considering COVID-19 led circumstances and is being utilised as a guiding force for governments attempting to revitalize national and regional economies with added resilience.

The concept of sustainable development remains largely undefined and may embrace within its ambit a wide range of issues including ‘green development’, ‘inclusive and sustainable economy’, ‘transparency’, ‘sustainable investment’, and ‘engagement with stakeholders’. The United Nations (UN) General Assembly in 1987 offered a succinct explanation that sustainable development “provides a framework for the integration of environment policies and development strategies”. The UN Agenda 2030 for sustainable development presents the sustainable development goals (SDGs) for action by all countries in global partnership.

Several policy and academic studies have provided ample evidence that infrastructure development is indispensable to the implementation of SDGs. Infrastructure includes within its ambit a wide range of facilities, both physical and digital. One of the main challenges in infrastructure development is finance. The current global infrastructure needs are estimated to worth trillions of dollars and cannot be met solely by one actor, such as national governments, private finance, and international aid. The question remains open whether the recent global infrastructure initiatives, such as Global Gateway, EU Green Deal, Build Back Better, and Belt and Road offer a more reliable, efficient, and resilient model for meeting the infrastructure gap. Another related question is whether such global initiatives are suitable to address the sustainable development challenges that the society faces today.

Finance for infrastructure development has been around for sometime, but the abovementioned recent global infrastructure initiatives promise to be value based, rules and standard based, network oriented, and respectful to local economic, social and cultural considerations. While these initiatives have the potential to deliver, there are many associated challenges. Even though one may visualise these initiatives as building blocks towards a common goal of global infrastructure, the fact remains that they have different centres of gravity. These initiatives are distinctive in their framework, approach, nature, and scope and it cannot be denied that they inevitably compete in the global arena for action. It is also important to situate these initiatives in context of current reality of overall global unstable economic and political climate engendered through growing regionalism, trade wars, armed conflicts, unilateral sanctions, etc. Also, whether these initiatives will act as instruments of transformation by realising the goals set by the UN Agenda 2030 for sustainable development or simply become tools of geopolitics remains a continuing concern.

In the past, development finance has been a subject matter of much criticism in terms of winners and losers. Amongst the concerns that include corruption, environmental degradation and debt sustainability risk, there is a considerable body of literature that has examined how development finance has not met the real long-term requirements of target countries. Be that as it may, the current global infrastructure initiatives may be seen as an opportunity for understanding the difference in Sino-European ideologies and perspectives and perhaps embark on a dialogue to curate a shared understanding of the concept of sustainability.

Against the above backdrop, this conference seeks to explore through six fora panels how sustainable development is understood or should be conceived in the context of the various global infrastructure initiatives. The ambition is to chart and theorise how these initiatives will impact the way of doing business and require companies to adopt new business models and/or processes and on the legal front influence law making, standard setting and adoption of new governance techniques. The question of working-level dialogues between stakeholders and the providers of infrastructure investment is critical to the success or failure of a project. Therefore, it is important to identify how dialogue between stakeholders is materialized and if it is supported through relevant policy framework. Some topics for paper submissions are broadly listed below, but the list is not exhaustive.

**Session 1: Global Gateway, EU Green Deal, Build Back Better and BRI as instruments of transformation**

* Defining sustainability: strategies, approaches
* Global economy and sustainability
* Global infrastructure initiatives and SDG’s
* Regional, international organizations
* Politics, law making and sustainability
* Rethinking multilateralism
* Conflicts and sanctions
* Cooperation, alliances, and strategies
* Collective risk and collective bargaining

**Session 2: Digital Innovation and Entrepreneurship**

* Digital infrastructure investment
* Digital rights
* Digital space and its governance
* Digital Silk Road
* SME digitalization and entrepreneurship
* Digital innovation and finance
* Digital space - connectivity, networks and platforms
* Multistakeholder solutions
* Data protection, security, information sharing and transparency
* Role of regulations, standards, and best practices
* Business environment issues
* Corporate social responsibility
* Transnational corporations, business model and human rights
* Due diligence and entrepreneurship

**Session 3: Trade and Investment**

* Reconfiguration of global value chains, regionalisation of value chains
* Geo-politics, strategies, alliances
* Regional and international institutions
* Role of regulations, standards, and best practices
* FDI flows and screening
* Case-studies of investment projects
* MNCs, local actors and public authority
* Investment environment, rule of law
* Special economic zones, free ports, smart ports
* Trade facilitation
* Trade and digital transformation
* Economic sanctions

**Session 4: Energy and Finance**

* Defining Sustainable Production and Consumption
* Role of legislation, standards and indicators for sustainable production and consumption
* Green finance
* Resource utilization and conservation
* Green technology
* Waste management
* Environmental, social and governance (ESG) criteria
* Sustainable financing for SME
* Finance, risk management and debt sustainability
* Finance and public goods
* Role of development banks and institutions

**Session 5: Infrastructure and Transport**

* Green finance for transport and infrastructure
* Reconfiguration of global value chain, regionalisation of value chains
* Case studies, prototypes related to global infrastructure initiatives
* Enabling environment for the development of sustainable infrastructure
* Capacity building
* Climate neutral future
* Carbon negative infrastructure
* Infrastructure and role of international and regional institutions
* Urban, social and ecological debates
* Smart cities and trade lanes
* Climate change, loss of biodiversity, migration, and infrastructure
* Stakeholders and actors; need for dialogue

**Session 6: Human Capital, Education and Society**

* Labour conditions and the development of transnational production chains
* Access to education and decolonization of curriculum
* Gender equality, cultural and social considerations
* Cooperation, stakeholders, and actors
* Rights of the consumer
* Utilisation of resources and society
* Transformation of society, livelihood, areas, geography, indigenous groups as investment in regeneration or development infrastructure
* Local contestation and conflicts

**Instructions for Submission**

Abstracts (MSWord doc or Adobe pdf, not exceeding 800 words) should be submitted together with a short biography (not exceeding 100 words) via the following email ace2022@handels.gu.se, no later than Monday, 2 May 2022.

Authors of successful abstracts will be notified by Friday, 13 May 2022. Authors should submit the first draft (7,500 -10,000 words, including footnotes) by Friday, 2 September 2022. Draft papers will be shared with other speakers with a view to create interactions during the conference.

**Publication**

The conference proceedings will be subjected to a peer review process and published as an edited book. Details about how to submit finalised papers for publication will be provided to all speakers after the conference.

**Finances**

The conference is free of charge. The event does not cover expenses for travel and accommodation.