EUROCORES Programme
European Collaborative Research

CNCC
Consciousness in a Natural and Cultural Context

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At the beginning of the 21st century, we know more than ever about the function and anatomy of the neural systems underlying human experience. However, nothing close to an explanation has been proposed for the phenomenon of consciousness. In fact, *Science* magazine recently ranked the issue of consciousness second in its top 25 of big questions facing science over the next quarter-century.

The source of this impasse may be a too narrow focus on the neural basis of consciousness. It cannot be denied that consciousness depends on the brain. But perhaps the brain enables consciousness *only given a broader embedding*. Perhaps consciousness arises *only in context*?

Considering a broader context – the body, the environment, social structures, etc. – opens up perspectives made available by humanities and social sciences. One of the important challenges is then to integrate these philosophical clarifications and conceptualizations with cleverly designed experiments and modern technology.

The EUROCORES programme ‘Consciousness in a Natural and Cultural Context (CNCC)’ aims to contribute to this challenge. The programme – with a budget of over 5 Million Euros supported by nine national funding organisations – offers a valuable framework for researchers from the humanities, social and natural sciences to build joint research projects. In these projects, empirical data can serve to challenge and validate theoretical analyses, while conceptual analyses can provide directions and tools for the empirical scientists.

Within these research projects, but also via targeted dissemination activities, training opportunities and strategic networking, the CNCC programme fosters top-quality consciousness research in Europe and beyond.
List of funded Collaborative Research Projects (CRPs)

Brain, Agency, Self, Intersubjectivity and Consciousness (BASIC) (AHRC, CNRS, FIST, NSF)

This project examines the relation between phenomenologically relevant markers of self – e.g. a conceptual identification of the notion of “agency” and “ownership” – and particular patterns of brain activity. The aim is to further develop both empirical research and conceptual refinement, integrating into an interdisciplinary research field whose epistemological validity is supported by a solid anchoring in well-established research traditions.

Project Leader:
Dr. Andreas Roepstorff
University of Aarhus, Denmark

Principal Investigators:
Professor Christopher Frith
University College London, United Kingdom
Professor Shaun Gallagher
University of Central Florida, Orlando, USA
Dr. Anthony Jack
Washington University, St. Louis, USA
Dr. Tatjana Nazir
Hôpital Lyon Université, France

Unconscious Boundaries of Mind; research into the extended mind hypothesis (Boundaries of Mind) (AHRC, FWO, NWO)

Interaction with the environment can alter our way of conceiving things. Think for example how drawing sketches may help to find the solution to a problem. This project studies (re)conceptualisation and the factors that facilitate or impede it. Further, it investigates the influence of preconceptions, the role of our visual system and the limits to the flexibility to switch concepts in normal and clinical populations.

Project Leader:
Dr. Tjeerd Jellema
University of Hull, United Kingdom

Principal Investigators:
Professor Albert Postma
Utrecht University, the Netherlands
Professor Johan Wagemans
University of Leuven, Belgium

Associated Partners:
Professor Vittorio Gallese
Università degli Studi di Parma, Italy
Professor Patrick Haggard
University College London, United Kingdom
Professor Evan Thompson
University of Toronto, Canada
Professor Kai Vogeley
University of Cologne, Germany
The Conscious Experience of What is Reachable: neural, behavioural, cultural and philosophical aspects (CEWR) (CNRS, MEC, NWO)

Being conscious of our environment implies that we are conscious of the actions that can be performed within it. Spatial boundaries exist in the cognitive agents that organise the external world as a function of what is reachable with the body. The overall aim of the CEWR project is to investigate the phenomenological experience of the boundary of peri-personal space, and to evaluate to what extent it depends on interaction between sensory and motor representations.

Project Leader:
Professor Yann Coello
Université de Lille, France

Principal Investigators:
Dr. Joan Lopez-Moliner
Universitat de Barcelona, Spain
Dr. Angela Sirigu
Université Claude Bernard, Lyon, France
Professor Jeroen Smeets
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Associated Partners:
Dr. Bernard Pachoud
Centre de Recherche en Épistémologie Appliquée, Paris, France
Professor Alan Wing
University of Birmingham, United Kingdom

Consciousness in Interaction. The Role of the Natural and Social Environment in Shaping Consciousness (CONTACT) (AHRC, CNR, NWO)

The brains and bodies of cognitive agents (humans and animals) interact dynamically with both their natural and social environments. The CONTACT project opposes the claim that brain activity by itself enables conscious experience and instead investigates the claim that explaining consciousness requires studying the interactions of animals and humans – and their brains – with the environment.

Project Leader:
Professor Cristiano Castelfranchi
Istituto Scienze e Tecnologie della Cognizione, Rome, Italy

Principal Investigators:
Professor Andy Clark
University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom
Professor Enrico Rambaldi
Instituto per la Storia del Pensiero Filosofico e Scientifico Moderno, Milan, Italy
Dr. Finn Spicer
University of Bristol, United Kingdom
Professor Ed S. Tan
University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Associated Partner:
Professor Thomas Metzinger
Johannes Gutenberg – Universität Mainz, Germany
Metacognition as a Precursor to Self-consciousness: evolution, development and epistemology (METACOGNITION) (AHRC, CNRS, FWF, NSF)

Metacognition, i.e., thinking about thinking, may not be uniquely human, according to new experimental paradigms. This project critically examines the existence and nature of metacognitive abilities in non-human primates and develops comparative knowledge of metacognitive processes by exploring how similar these capacities are in non-human animals, human children and human adults. It will also examine how metacognitive processes contribute to self-consciousness.

Project Leader:
Professor Joëlle Proust
CNRS, ENS-EHESS, Paris, France

Principal Investigators:
Professor Johannes Brandl
Universität Salzburg, Austria
Dr. Hannes Leitgeb
University of Bristol, United Kingdom
Professor Josef Perner
Universität Salzburg, Austria
Dr. Bernard Renault
CNRS, Hopital de la Salpêtrière, Paris, France
Professor John Smith
University of Buffalo – State University of New York, USA

Associated Partner:
Professor Josep Call
MPI for Evolutionary Anthropology, Leipzig, Germany
CNCC Activities in 2008

• Workshop ‘Subjective Pre-Reflective Experience and Action’
  29 January – 1 February 2008, Copenhagen, Denmark

• Workshop ‘Boundaries of what the mind can reach’
  28-29 February 2008, Amsterdam, the Netherlands

• CNCC session at the conference ‘Toward a Science of Consciousness’
  8-12 April 2008, Tucson, Arizona, USA

• CNCC session ‘Metacognition of Ignorance’
  8-10 May 2008, Ioanninia, Greece

• Workshop ‘Religion and Cognition in Context’
  31 May – 1 June 2008, Aarhus, Denmark

• Summer school ‘Sense of Body’
  16-21 June 2008, Bologna, Italy

• Final ‘CNCC Essay Award’
  27 June 2008, Edinburgh, UK

• Workshop ‘Sense of Agency: from sensorimotor processing to meta-representation’
  30 June 2008, Edinburgh, UK

• Summer school ‘Social Cognition and Social Narrative’
  7-13 July 2008, San Marino

• CNCC session ‘Consciousness in Context’ at ESOF 2008
  20 July 2008, Barcelona, Spain

• Workshop ‘Representations: Perspectives from Philosophy, Psychology and Neuroscience’
  August 2008, Kirchberg am Wechsel, Austria

• Expert meeting ‘Self and Other in Social Neuroscience and Philosophy of Mind 2’
  October 2008, Alghero, Italy

• Workshop ‘Motor Representation and Language of Space’
  January 2009, Lille, France

Final ‘CNCC Essay Award for Junior Scholars’
27 June 2008, Edinburgh, UK

The CNCC Essay Award invited young researchers to submit a scholarly essay on a relevant topic in the field of consciousness studies, framed within the scope and aims of the CNCC original call for proposals. After an international reviewing stage, six finalist papers have been short-listed and sent to the jurors, who will select the winners of the two awards. The awards will be presented in Edinburgh at the end of a special event devoted to the discussion of the six finalist papers.

Summer school ‘Social Cognition and Social Narrative’
7-13 July 2008, San Marino

Social Cognition and Social Narrative is a one-week interdisciplinary collegiums/summer school on contemporary research in the area of social cognition, theory of mind and narrative theory. It will bring CNCC researchers and other major figures in the area of social cognition together with younger scholars, graduate students and post-docs to discuss the role of narrative and embodied inter-subjectivity.
The aim of the European Collaborative Research (EUROCORES) Scheme is to enable researchers in different European countries to develop collaboration and scientific synergy in areas where European scale and scope are required to reach the critical mass necessary for top class science in a global context.

The scheme provides a flexible framework which allows national basic research funding and performing organisations to join forces to support excellent European research in and across all scientific areas.

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www.esf.org/eurocores

THE FOLLOWING NATIONAL FUNDING ORGANISATIONS SUPPORT THE CNCC PROGRAMME:

**Fonds voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek – Vlaanderen (FWO)**  
*Research Foundation Flanders, Belgium*

**Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung (FWF)**  
*Austrian Science Research Fund, Austria*

**Forsknings- og Innovationsstyrelsen (FIST)**  
*Danish Agency for Science, Technology and Innovation, Denmark*

**Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS)**  
*National Centre for Scientific Research, France*

**Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche (CNR)**  
*National Research Council, Italy*

**Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek (NWO)**  
*Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research, the Netherlands*

**Ministerio de Educacion y Ciencia (MEC)**  
*Ministry of Education and Science, Spain*

**Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)**  
*United Kingdom*

**National Science Foundation (NSF)**  
*United States of America*
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