



Call for papers

Embracing the variety of sustainable business models: social entrepreneurship, corporate intrapreneurship, creativity, innovation, and other approaches to sustainability challenges

Nikolay Dentchev^{a, *}, Rupert Baumgartner^b, Hans Dieleman^c, Lára Jóhannsdóttir^d, Jan Jonker^{e, f}, Timo Nyberg^g, Romana Rauter^b, Michele Rosano^h, Yulia Snihur^f, Xingfu Tangⁱ, Bart van Hoof^j

^a Vrije Universiteit Brussel, KULeuven, Belgium

^b University of Graz, Austria

^c Autonomous University of Mexico City, Mexico

^d University of Iceland, Iceland

^e Radboud University Nijmegen, Netherlands

^f Toulouse Business School, France

^g Aalto University, Finland

^h Curtin University, Australia

ⁱ Fudan University, China

^j Universidad de los Andes, Colombia

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 29 October 2015

Accepted 29 October 2015

Available online 21 December 2015

1. Background

Sustainable business models are in the first place oriented to resolving social and environmental issues. In this vein, profit generation is not their predominant concern. In other words, sustainable business models function in contrast to what Magretta (2002: 87) argued is one of the “fundamental questions every manager must ask: How do we make money in this business?” In order to better understand this contrast, we first would like to refer to the mainstream management knowledge on business modeling. Academics have started to study business models more scrupulously in the last 15 years. Several definitions of business models have been proposed in the literature. Amit and Zott (2012: 42) defined the business model as “a system of interconnected and interdependent activities that determine the way the company does business with its customers, partners, and vendors.”

Casadesus-Masanell and Zhu (2013: 464) defined new business models as the “search for new logics of the firm, new ways to create and capture value for its stakeholders, and focusing, primarily, on finding new ways to generate revenues and to define value propositions for customers, suppliers, and partners”. Markides (2006: 20) wrote about the discovery of fundamentally different business models in existing businesses: “To qualify as an innovation, the new business model must enlarge the existing economic pie, either by attracting new customers into the market or by encouraging existing customers to consume more.” Teece (2010: 172) stated that “the essence of a business model is in defining the manner by which the enterprise delivers value to customers, entices customers to pay for value, and converts those payments to profit.” Overall, most scholars agree that the business model emphasizes a system-level, holistic approach to explaining how firms do business, that is how value is created and captured (Zott et al., 2011).

The missing centrality of profit generation in sustainable business models poses some several intriguing questions for researchers, in an inquiry that requires further exploration. Even the well-known strategic management perspective of Porter and Kramer (2011) on shared value creation, with a simultaneous attention to economic and social progress, acknowledges that “our recognition of the transformative power of shared value is still in its genesis.” It is not yet well researched or understood how alternative, often new, creative or innovative sustainable business models function and how their application in the real world evolve to create value without predominantly generating only profit in their ventures. In addition, certain forms of organizations – e.g. B-Corporations, Worker Owned Corporations, Crowd-Funded

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +32 (0)477.91.71.21 (mobile).

E-mail address: nikolay.dentchev@gmail.com (N. Dentchev).

Corporations, and Cooperative Corporations – deserve attention in this context. While both value creation and value capturing remain important, the priorities for sustainable businesses might be organized in a different order (due to different priorities) compared to classic for-profit entrepreneurs. Moreover, sustainable business models might originate from entrepreneurs, non-profit organizations, business development of multinationals or their intrapreneurial activities, but also from the initiative of a specific economic sector, groups of citizens or government agency. The various approaches of resolving important social or environmental issues might be organized thus by both profit and non-profit oriented organizations. This SV is designed to contribute to a better understanding of the mechanisms behind sustainable business models, which help to ensure sustainable solutions to social and environmental issues. This SV team solicits a wide variety of sustainable business models, originated by (social) entrepreneurs, (non) profit organizations, sector related or governmental initiatives and other types of creative approaches to help to accelerate the transition to “Equitable, Sustainable, Post–Fossil Carbon Societies.”

2. Types of contributions solicited

We welcome theoretical, conceptual and empirical papers for this SV. In addition, we welcome scholarly studies from a broad variety of methodologies (e.g. qualitative and quantitative), and from a broad variety of disciplines (e.g. management, entrepreneurship, environmental studies, organization theory, to mention a few). This CFPs is designed to challenge scholars to elaborate on, but not limit themselves to, the following research themes:

2.1. Theme 1: successful sustainable business models

First, we would like authors to elaborate on the meaning of ‘success’ in sustainable business models.

- What are the mechanisms driving successful sustainable business models?
- What are the measures for success with respect to sustainable business models?
- How can sustainable business models be scaled to provide higher impact?
- Are there limitations to scaling sustainable business models?

2.2. Theme 2: value creation challenges of sustainable business models

Second, we solicit papers on the value creation challenges of sustainable business models.

- Assuming a keen stakeholder attention to the value generation process involved, how are activities with sustainability focus coordinated among stakeholders with diverging focus in individual bottom lines (financial and non-financial)?
- Within the category of non-financial value creation, what is the variety of perceived values by different stakeholders and how are all values truly valued in decision-making?
- What are the prioritization mechanisms for value creation, taking into account the variety of values related to a variety of stakeholders?
- How can sustainable business models be used to achieve “shared value creation” for different customers and partners involved in their business models?

2.3. Theme 3: variety of Origins of sustainable business models

Third, we solicit inputs on the variety of organisational settings, which support implementation of sustainable business models.

- Do organisational and legal structures matter for the development of sustainable business models? If so, how and how does that help or hinder utilization of the new models?
- What are the drivers for profit-dominated organizations to engage in implementing sustainable business models?
- How does intrapreneurship, impact the implementation of sustainable business models in multinationals?
- What is the role of the service sector in implementing sustainable business models, in addition to manufacturing or other types of industries?
- Are there conflicts of co-existence among multinational companies, which are using sustainable and conventional business models?
- What are the dynamics of sustainable business models implementation in non-profit organizations and government controlled organizations?

2.4. Theme 4: social entrepreneurship

Fourth, we solicit inputs on the long-term impacts of social transformations as a result of social entrepreneurship (Peredo and McLean, 2006; Alvord et al., 2004; Mair and Marti, 2006; Austin et al., 2006).

- What are the similarities and differences among business models with the main objective profit generation and business models with the main objective revolving around multi-generational social and environmental issues?
- Although profit generation is not the only focus of social entrepreneurs, no initiative can be developed without a financial budget. What is (or should be) the balance between financial and non-financial bottom lines in the business models of social entrepreneurs?
- Are business models of social entrepreneurs different from classic for-profit business models? If so, how? Based on which criteria can we (or should we) describe a business model of social entrepreneurs as successful? What are the indicators of success?
- Do social entrepreneurs generate and implement new business models? How can we define and evaluate these new business models? What is the impact of these new business models on society?

2.5. Theme 5: business models for a circular economy

Fifth, we solicit inputs on the theoretical foundations and on the practical organisational challenges when it comes to business models for the circular economy.

- What are fundamental principles and premises underpinning the idea of a circular economy and how does it shape or influence implementation of other business models?
- What are the theoretical foundations for this type of circular business models?
- What are the inter-connected challenges to make circular business models work in practice?
- What is the possible impact of implementation of circular business models upon societal progress toward truly sustainable societies, within the context of rapid climatic changes?

2.6. Theme 6: creativity in applying sustainable business models

Sixth, we solicit inputs on the role of creativity in developing and applying new sustainable business models.

- In what ways can creativity help to facilitate implementation of sustainable business models? As an individual talent to be developed, as an organizational culture to be stimulated, as a tool to be applied, as an emergent property of a particular way of working or as a combination of all of them and more?
- Do the creative and cultural industries use different business models and if so, what are the characteristic features of their business models? Can they be applied as sustainable business models for other sectors of the economy as well? If so by which sectors and how can they be beneficially utilized within them?
- Many artists work as entrepreneurs, quite frequently in art collectives, which are focussed on issues of sustainability. Can the practice of art-making be a base for a more generally applied arts-based sustainable business model to stimulate innovation?
- Knowing that creativity is based on lateral thinking and incorporated intelligence (intuition, using the senses), what are the methods and ways of educating to stimulate and expand creativity in business schools, and in all other schools?

2.7. Theme 7: sustainability and the roles of government

Seventh, we solicit inputs on the roles of governments with respect to stimulating the development and experimentation with alternative sustainable business models.

- To what extent are sustainable business models solving but also at the same time creating sustainability issues?
- What are or should be the roles of governments in stimulating and/or controlling sustainable business models?
- Is there a specific stakeholder network that could support sustainable business models development, testing and experimenting with new forms? Are some countries better at developing such a network than others? Why? How can other countries learn from the policies, strategies, procedures, legal frameworks etc of such countries?
- What are effective practices for creating incubators and social systems, which support experimentation with a wide-array of new business models, which may or may not proved, when applied to be fostering sustainable societal transitions for the short and for the long-term future?

This list of themes and research questions is not exhaustive. Additionally, we welcome contributions on:

- Business models in emerging markets that advance sustainability,
- Business models of social manufacturing,
- The idea generation process of sustainable business models,
- The impact of education for the success of generating, testing and improving upon evolving business models, which truly foster and sustain the transition processes that are needed to achieve sustainable societies,
- What are the roles and impacts of sustainable business models on societal transitions?

As such, this SV is open for submissions from various workshops organized during the Global Cleaner Production & Sustainable

Consumption Conference “Accelerating the Transition to Equitable Post Fossil-Carbon Societies” (1–4 November 2015, Sitges, Barcelona, Spain). The team also welcomes contributions from authors of other workshops that may lead to changes in the guest editorial team, while continuity and guidance of the process will be guaranteed by the first guest editor of this CFPs.

We would first like to acknowledge the recent SVs dedicated to the topic of business models¹ and sustainability. With this SV we wish to stimulate further knowledge development on the variety of sustainable business models, i.e. on social entrepreneurship, corporate intrapreneurship, creativity, innovation, and other positivist approaches to sustainability challenges.

3. Special volume timeline and promotion

In addition to the various workshops of the 2015 Global Cleaner Production and Sustainable Consumption Conference, we will host a one-day seminar on the topic of the Special Volume at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium on **13 May 2016**. Keynote speakers from both academia and practice will be invited to submit their papers. We will assign a referee among the guest editors for each paper presented, with the intention of strengthening the papers prior to official submission for peer review for potential inclusion in the SV. The deadline to submit an extended abstract of ca. 1.000 words to the seminar in Brussels is **31 March 2016** to the corresponding guest editor, Nikolay Dentchev (nikolay.dentchev@gmail.com). Participation in the above mentioned seminar is encouraged, but not a precondition for submissions to this SV.

All authors are invited to submit extended abstracts of 1000–1500 words of their proposed papers to Nikolay Dentchev (nikolay.dentchev@gmail.com). The editorial team will review all submissions and will provide prompt feedback to the authors so that they are best guided for preparation of top-quality papers. After the extended abstracts have been reviewed, all authors will be notified whether their abstracts have been accepted as submitted or amendments should be made as the authors develop their full, peer-review ready papers. The authors invited to develop their full papers are kindly requested to access and to follow the “Instructions for authors” presented in the JCLP website (<http://www.journals.elsevier.com/journal-of-cleaner-production>). Then, in order to move onto paper submission, authors are invited to go to <http://ees.elsevier.com/jclepro> and select this SV, and then follow the standard submission procedures of Elsevier’s Editorial System (EES). **Deadlines SV-development phases: June 1, 2016:** Submission of extended abstracts; **July 1, 2016:** Feedback of extended abstracts; **October 1, 2016:** Manuscript submission deadline; **May 1, 2017:** Peer review, paper revision and final decision notification; **August 1, 2017:** SV online publication.

All papers will be subject to an intensive peer review process. Authors are requested to follow the *Journal of Cleaner Production* guidelines for authors (cf. <http://www.journals.elsevier.com/journal-of-cleaner-production>) and to submit a full paper via the online system.

¹ Arevalo et al., 2011 ‘Integrating sustainability in business models’ in *Journal of Management Development*; Svensson and Wagner, 2011 ‘Sustainable Business Models’ in *European Business Review*; Boons et al., 2013, ‘Sustainable Innovation and Business Models’ in *Journal of Cleaner Production*, Robins, 2013, ‘Managing Business Models for Innovation, Strategic Change and Value Creation’ in *Long Range Planning*, Demil et al., 2015, ‘Business Models within the Domain of Strategic Entrepreneurship’ in *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*, Haigh et al., 2015, ‘Hybrid Organizations: Origins, Strategies, Impacts and Implications’ in *California Management Review*, and in Schaltegger et al., 2015 ‘Business Models for Sustainability: Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Transformation’ in *Organization & Environment*.

References

- Alvord, S.H., Brown, L.D., Letts, C.W., 2004. Social entrepreneurship and societal transformation an exploratory study. *J. Appl. Behav. Sci.* 40 (3), 260–282.
- Amit, R., Zott, C., 2012. Creating value through business model innovation. *MIT Sloan Manag. Rev.* 53 (3), 41–49.
- Arevalo, J.A., Castelló, I., de Colle, S., Lenssen, G., Neumann, K., Zollo, M., 2011. Introduction to the special issue: integrating sustainability in business models. *J. Manag. Dev.* 30 (10), 941–954.
- Austin, J., Stevenson, H., Wei-Skillern, J., 2006. Social and commercial entrepreneurship: same, different or both? *Entrepreneursh. Theory Pract.* 30 (1), 1–22.
- Boons, F., Montalvo, C., Quist, J., Wagner, M., 2013. Sustainable innovations, business models and economic performance: an overview. *J. Clean. Prod.* 45, 1–8.
- Casadesus-Masanell, R., Zhu, F., 2013. Business model innovation and competitive imitation. *Strat. Manag. J.* 34 (4), 464–482.
- Demil, B., Lecoq, X., Ricart, J., Zott, C., 2015. Introduction to the SEJ special issue on business models: business models within the domain of strategic entrepreneurship. *Strat. Entrepreneursh. J.* 9 (1), 1–11.
- Haigh, N., Walker, J., Bacq, S., Kickul, J., 2015. Hybrid organizations: origins, strategies, impacts, and implications. *Calif. Manag. Rev.* 57 (3), 5–13 (Spring 2015).
- Magretta, J., 2002. Why business models matter. *Harv. Bus. Rev.* 80 (5), 3–8.
- Mair, J., Marti, I., 2006. Social entrepreneurship research: a source of explanation, prediction, and delight. *J. World Bus.* 41 (1), 36–44.
- Markides, C., 2006. Disruptive innovation: in need of better theory. *J. Prod. Innov. Manag.* 23 (1), 19–25.
- Peredo, A.M., McLean, M., 2006. Social entrepreneurship: a critical review of the concept. *J. World Bus.* 41 (1), 56–65.
- Porter, M.E., Kramer, M.R., 2011. CREATING shared value. *Harv. Bus. Rev.* 89 (1–2), 62–77.
- Robins, J., 2013. Editorial managing business models for innovation, strategic change and value creation. *Long Range Plan.* 46 (6), 417–418.
- Schaltegger, S., Hansen, E.G., Lüdeke-Freund, F., 2015. Business models for sustainability: origins, present research, and future avenues. *Organ. Environ.* 1–8. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1086026615599806>.
- Svensson, G., Wagner, B., 2011. Transformative business sustainability: multi-layer model and network of e-footprint sources. *Eur. Bus. Rev.* 23 (4), 334–352.
- Teece, D.J., 2010. Business models, business strategy and innovation. *Long Range Plan.* 43 (2), 172–194.
- Zott, C., Amit, R., Massa, L., 2011. The business model: recent developments and future research. *J. Manag.* 37 (4), 1019–1042.