



Call for papers

Sustainable Innovation: Firms, Markets and Competitiveness in a Global Perspective

Current patterns of production and consumption continue to rupture the social fabric of societies as well as the vital ecological cycles upon which these societies are totally dependent. The financial crisis that started in 2008 has made it abundantly clear how short term-profitability mindsets and related strategies, policies and actions of individuals and individual firms may cause global economic, ecological and ethical crises. These events serve as a warning signal that many firms continue to base themselves on business models that are more or less totally unsustainable.

In this special issue of the Journal of Cleaner Production (JCLP) we seek contributions that increase our understanding of sustainable business models. Such models should move beyond the aim of gaining a 'license to operate'; in fact they should be designed to help envision and implement the criteria that can be used to more effectively assess and regulate the legitimacy of business activities.

Sustainable business models build upon innovations that are fundamental rather than incremental, as they define new technological trajectories through which ecological, social, and economic sustainability can be achieved. Possible concepts that provide a basis to make progress toward more sustainable enterprises and hopefully, also to more sustainable societies, include, but are not limited to: 'Cradle2Cradle', 'sufficiency', and 'degrowth'.

In this special issue we will develop a deeper understanding of the ways in which improved, sustainable business models, can be shaped at the firm level, and how they can be/are being implemented in the markets and production and consumption systems in which firms operate.

Therefore, we invite contributions that combine new, innovative theoretical insights with thorough empirical analysis, explicitly including research questions that are directed specifically at the level of the firm. At the same time, contributions should place an analysis of firms within the context of markets and (international) systems of production and consumption. Of course, to be sustainable, such systems must also address their ecological and societal impacts in the short and long term.

We therefore invite contributions that focus on one or more of the following issues:

- **What are the concepts, values, components and results of implementation of sustainable business models?** How can concepts such as 'Cradle2Cradle', sufficiency, degrowth and other concepts, be translated into business systems that really deliver long term Triple Bottom Line/Corporate Social Responsibility results? In what ways can a business model combine technological innovation, positioning on markets and organizational routines in a way that synergizes ecological, ethical and economic values at the same time?
- **How is sustainability defined and implemented by firms as they seek to develop new, more sustainable business models?** Although there is agreement that sustainable development requires fundamental innovations in concepts, values, visions, policies and technologies, for specific products and services, the precise meaning of sustainability is often contested among involved actors. What role do firms play in the process of defining sustainability at the level of society and ecosystems, and how do they link this definition to a viable, sustainable, new business model?
- **How is competitiveness redefined in the process of developing/marketing sustainable innovations?** Can firms market sustainable innovations using their existing business models, or does this require new definitions of value, competitive advantage, and new markets (including concepts and approaches such as the Bottom- of-the-Pyramid (BoP)?
- **To what extent do firms actively innovate in terms of creative destruction?** Sustainable innovations are supposed to replace unsustainable practices. Are there cases where firms actively 'destroy' their businesses in order to replace them with new products/services that are more sustainable? If so how, what, when and what have been the results? What can be learned from the failures and successes?
- **How do firms organize their supply and post-consumer chains in ways that foster and build upon ecologically and ethically sound sustainable innovation?** Fundamental innovation requires alignment of other firms in the system of production and consumption. What governance mechanisms do firms employ to coordinate activities with these actors? What new, improved, governmental governance tools should be developed and utilized to help to make national and global improvements?
- **How do firms connect with external stakeholders in the process of developing a new, sustainable business model?** Firms have developed new ways of involving suppliers, customers and other actors in the research, development, and design of new products and services. Their approaches range from stakeholder dialogue to user-based design. In what way(s) do such new practices enable firms to move swiftly in bringing sustainable products and services to market?
- **How do multinational companies (MNCs) align their activities to make them more sustainable and equitable?** MNCs combine activities in several markets and production and consumption systems. They show different profiles, sometimes globally addressing sustainability

concerns, while in others they may develop specific activities for distinct markets and products/services. What drives their decisions?

- **How does the process of sustainable innovation bridge developed and developing countries?** With the increasing global scope of production and consumption systems, firms are linked to firms, customers, NGOs, governmental agencies and eco-systems in developed as well as developing countries. What are specific characteristics of the process of sustainable innovation in such global systems, and how do firms deal with these within the context of sustainable business models that focus upon the long-term?

Authors are invited to submit an extended abstract of approximately 300 - 500 words for the special issue by November 15, 2009. The authors of the most promising abstracts will be invited to submit a full paper of not more than 7000 words for the joint conferences of ERCP/EMSU entitled **Knowledge collaboration and learning for sustainable innovation** that will be held in Delft, The Netherlands, October 25-29th, 2010, The Netherlands. By discussing full papers during the conference the objective is to develop an *'integrated set'* of articles rather than a *'collection'* of papers on the same topic. All invited papers, will, of course, be subjected to independent, peer review. After the review and revision process is completed, all accepted papers, will be published in a special issue of the JOURNAL OF CLEANER PRODUCTION in 2011.

You are invited to submit your extended abstract to the EES system <http://ees.elsevier.com/JCLEPRO> and select "Special Issue: **Sustainable Innovation**" when asked to indicate the "Article Type" in the submission process.

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