

Call for papers – Special Issue

Innovative Business Models in a circular economy to promote business responsibility

Guest Editor(s):

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Traditional business models follow an unsustainable "extract-produce-consume-dispose" approach due to high resource consumption and waste generation. An innovative business model is a strategic framework for creating, delivering, and capturing value in a way that significantly differs from existing models in the industry. It involves novel approaches to generating revenue, structuring operations, engaging customers, leveraging technology, and utilizing resources. Innovative business models often disrupt traditional market practices, offering unique solutions to unmet needs or more efficient ways to meet existing demands. These models can include new ways of pricing, distribution, product development, or customer engagement, ultimately aiming to provide a competitive advantage and drive business growth. Further, the circular economy, as the integration between economic activity and environmental status (Murray et al., 2017), offers an alternative by keeping products and materials in use for longer. As this concept gains traction, businesses need to adapt from linear to circular models (Svensson and Funck, 2019; Prokop et al., 2022); however, researchers continuously debate the circular economy's theoretical framework and connection to sustainability (Geissdoerfer et al., 2017; Schöggl et al., 2020; Kirchherr et al., 2023).

Additionally, various players – together forming an innovation ecosystem – are involved, from international organizations, industries, and consumers to local NGOs (Lopes de Sousa Jabbour et al., 2022). This raises several questions about the scale of implementation and the specific types of innovation needed, at the micro, meso and macro levels (Vence et al., 2022). Hence, firms must prioritize practices encompassing a company's ethical, social, and

environmental obligations towards its stakeholders, including employees, customers, communities, and the planet. It involves conducting business in a manner that is ethical and sustainable, ensuring compliance with laws and regulations, and contributing positively to society. Business responsibility includes corporate social responsibility (CSR), sustainability, ethical practices, and corporate governance. It implies that businesses should go beyond profit-making to consider the broader impact of their operations on society and the environment, and thus develop responsible innovations (Owen and Pansera, 2019; Barlatier et al., 2024). Are these objectives compatible? To what extent can social pressure lead to the development of innovative business models? What social or political incentives are needed? By integrating responsible innovation, companies can address societal challenges, meet regulatory and stakeholder expectations, and build a positive brand reputation. This alignment ensures long-term viability and competitiveness while contributing to the overall well-being of society and the environment (Sharma et al., 2021). Thus, innovative business models can drive both economic success and responsible corporate behavior, demonstrating that profitability and responsibility are not mutually exclusive but can be mutually reinforcing.

In response to these challenges, and to develop financial and/or legal incentives with varying degrees of constraint, governments worldwide are implementing green policies, and they have established indicators and monitored their progress toward circular transition (Kostakis and Tsagarakis, 2022). Notably, the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals include a goal to ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns. This goal heavily relies on the circular economy as the economic model to lessen the strain on our natural resources. Entrepreneurs play a crucial role in this shift by adopting and promoting business practices that reduce waste and maximize resource efficiency, such as creating products that are durable, easy to repair, and upgradable to extend their lifecycle. They play a pivotal role in driving responsible innovation, which balances economic growth with societal and environmental stewardship. By integrating ethical considerations into their business models, entrepreneurs can develop products and services that meet market demands and address pressing global challenges. Also, shifting from selling products to offering them as a service, such as leasing or sharing models, can reduce the total number of products needed. Additionally, ensuring that stakeholders, including employees, customers, and the community, support sustainability initiatives. Furthermore, ethical and responsible entrepreneurship that maximizes its positive effects on society while minimizing its adverse impact on people and the environment is another solution to the ever-evolving dynamic needs of society (Azmat & Samaratunge, 2009).

Innovative business models involve creating, modifying, or redefining a business model's fundamental structure and components to create new value propositions and capture new market opportunities. This strategy could reflect a fundamental shift in how a company delivers value to its customers by developing new revenue streams or distribution channels. On the other hand, business responsibility, also known as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), is a self-regulating business model that helps a company be socially accountable to itself, its stakeholders, and the public. It implies that businesses should follow principles and policies that positively impact society and the environment.

The link between an innovative business model and business responsibility is significant. Businesses that employ innovative business models are more likely to address corporate sustainability, an essential aspect of business responsibility. Changes in business models are

widely recognized as a critical strategy for achieving long-term innovation. As a result, responsible business model innovation is increasingly becoming a relevant challenge in academic research and business practice and deserves a thorough analysis on barriers and opportunities for its development.

Summarizing the above policy steps and research challenges so far, we encourage submissions that advance the theoretical and practical understanding of the circular economy, business model innovation, and responsible entrepreneurship.

Aims and scope of the Special Issue

This special issue focuses on transitioning to the circular economy through responsible and sustainable entrepreneurship. It promotes green transmission, aiming to bring together the latest research and innovations in management economics, policy-making, and sustainable development. It will cover various topics, including but not limited to sustainable entrepreneurship, business models innovation, environmental sustainability, circular economy practices, and economic policies. Governments, practitioners, and academics can benefit from this topic; thus, looking closely at how companies might successfully use the circular economy concepts to support a shift towards sustainability is crucial.

Empirical works (Khan et al., 2022; Ahmadov et al., 2023; Tsironis et al., 2024) covering good practices, tools, management models, dynamics of transition to the circular economy, public policies, and stakeholders' collective efforts, among others, are welcome, as well as reflections, criticisms, and analyses related to the theme. Potential authors are also encouraged to submit high-quality original empirical, quantitative, and conceptual research papers on energy and sustainable development issues.

Our goal is to provide a platform for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to exchange ideas, share best practices, and contribute to developing sustainable solutions. As a part of our current and upcoming content, we are excited to feature empirical articles on innovative policy strategies, cutting-edge research on natural resource management, and case studies of successful initiatives. For this Special Issue, we accept original research from interested scholars seeking to explore any of the following research strands:

Design and Implementation of Business Models Innovation

- Cleaner Energy Production/Consumption
- Eco-friendly Packaging Solutions
- Energy issues
- Food Systems Embracing Circularity
- Green Building Practices
- Sustainable Design and Material Innovation in Construction
- Sustainable Supply Chain Management
- Technologies Enable Resource Optimization, etc.
- Waste-to-Energy Solutions
- Water Management and Conservation

Business responsibility and the circular economy:

- Consumer Behavior and the Circular Economy
- Entrepreneurship and the Circular Economy

- Large Companies and the Circular Economy
- Innovation and Business Responsibility
- Rethinking the role of entrepreneurs
- Policy and Regulation: constraints, decisions and incentives
- SMEs in the Circular Economy

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Timetable for submission and acceptance of papers:

- December 30th, 2024: Deadline for complete manuscripts through online paper submission: <https://jiem.manuscriptmanager.net>

Guideline for authors: <http://innovations.cairn.info/en/instructions-for-authors/>

- November 30th, 2025: Final notification for acceptance:

Submit abstracts or questions to: ktsagarakis@tuc.gr