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Embracing the variety of sustainable business models: A prolific field of research and a future research agenda

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Special Volume of the Journal of Cleaner Production

Introductory Article

Embracing the variety of sustainable business models: A prolific field of research and a future research agenda**Nikolay Dentchev***, Vrije Universiteit Brussel and KULeuven**Romana Rauter**, University of Graz**Lára Jóhannsdóttir**, University of Iceland**Yulia Snihur**, Toulouse Business School**Michele Rosano**, Curtin University**Rupert Baumgartner**, University of Graz**Timo Nyberg**, Aalto University**Xingfu Tang**, Fudan University**Bart van Hoof**, Universidad de los Andes**Jan Jonker**, Radboud University Nijmegen

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Abstract

Investigating the benefits of sustainable business models for our societies is an important and timely topic. This Special Volume contributes to current research by exploring a variety of sustainable models in use around the world. The accepted articles provide an overview of the various organizational forms, management mechanisms, sustainability solutions, challenges, theoretical lenses and empirical evidence, i.e. fundamental elements in the study of sustainable business models. In this introductory paper, the thirty-seven articles included in this Special Volume are presented, organized in four approaches to sustainable business models: 1/ the generalist approach, 2/ the technology-based approach, 3/ the entrepreneurship and innovation approach and 4/ the behavioral approach. In conclusion, avenues for future research are formulated, with a call for solid theory building, more sophisticated research methods, focus on the interplay of sustainable with existing conventional business models, and systemic consideration of the role of governments in advancing sustainable business models.

Keywords: sustainable business models, corporate sustainability, sustainability management, social entrepreneurship, circular economy

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