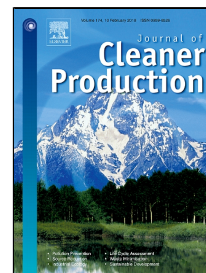


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The three roles of business models in societal transitions: New linkages between business model and transition research

Christina M. Bidmon, Sebastian F. Knab



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# The three roles of business models in societal transitions: New linkages between business model and transition research

**Christina M. Bidmon\***

Aarhus University, Bartholins Allé 10, 8000 Aarhus C, Denmark  
[chb@mgmt.au.dk](mailto:chb@mgmt.au.dk), +45 8716 6046

**Sebastian F. Knab**

Universität Hamburg, Von-Melle-Park 9, 20146 Hamburg, Germany  
[Sebastian.Knab@wiso.uni-hamburg.de](mailto:Sebastian.Knab@wiso.uni-hamburg.de), +49 40 42838 9474

\* Corresponding author

## Abstract

Following recent calls from sustainable business model and transition research, we establish the link between both fields. We systematically integrate existing knowledge on business models into the well-established multi-level perspective on socio-technical transitions and identify three roles of business models and their respective impact on transition dynamics: (1) *As part of the socio-technical regime*, existing business models hamper transitions by reinforcing the current system's stability; (2) *as intermediates between the technological niche and the socio-technical regime*, business models drive transitions by facilitating the stabilization process of technological innovation and its breakthrough from niche to regime level; and (3) *as non-technological niche innovation*, novel business models drive transitions by building up a substantial part of a new regime without relying on technological innovation. We illustrate our findings with examples from the German energy sector and discuss our contributions to (sustainable) business model and transition research.

## Keywords

Business models, sustainable business models, societal transitions, sustainability transitions, socio-technical transitions, multi-level perspective

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