Fostering Multi- and Interdisciplinary Business Model Research

Inviting Contributions from the 4th International Conference on New Business Models 2019 & 3rd Business Model Conference 2019

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Aim and motivation
While the field of business model research is getting more diverse and the number of publications is literally exploding, there seems to be an increasing tendency towards 'silo-building'. This silo-building occurs in two different ways. First, at least two different business model communities are emerging: one community dealing with 'traditional' or 'mainstream' business models, and another one interested in 'new' or 'sustainable' business models. The existence of two conference series (International Conference on New Business Models and Business Model Conference) is an indication for the existence of these different, yet unconnected communities. Second, silo-building takes place within these communities as researchers tend to use and limit themselves to community- and discipline-specific phenomena, theories, and methods.

Already in 2011, Zott, Amit, and Massa found that “[t]he literature is developing largely in silos, according to the phenomena of interest to the respective researchers. The main interest areas identified are (1) e-business and the use of information technology in organizations; (2) strategic issues, such as value creation, competitive advantage, and firm performance; and (3) innovation and technology management” (Zott et al., 2011). More recent reviews find that this tendency is getting even...
more pronounced (e.g., Dentchev et al., 2018; Lüdeke-Freund & Dembek, 2017; Massa et al., 2017; Maucuer & Renaud, 2019).

Increasing specialization within maturing research fields is without doubt necessary to gain more detailed insights into the studied phenomena and to improve the applied research methods and theories. In this regard, Lecocq et al. (2010) argue for the advantages of developing a ‘research programme’ for business models, which was followed by Nielsen et al.’s (2018) analysis of the field, in which they identify four distinct phases of business model research that scholars can use to frame their research. Taking these developments into consideration, this call for papers builds on the conviction that the increasing specialization and search for a research programme must be complemented by multi- and interdisciplinary approaches. These can help to improve our understanding of the phenomena, methods, and theories that business model scholars deal with (Lüdeke-Freund & Dembek, 2017; Dentchev et al., 2018; Maucuer & Renaud, 2019). Multi- and interdisciplinary approaches might also be better suited to study business models as ‘complex systems’ (Massa et al., 2018). As such, business models integrate human interactions, organizational structures, markets, and society, and thus cross different levels of different social systems. Therefore, the field of business model research is in need of bold cross-over conversations and research projects to make sure that progress in specialized streams translates into progress of the whole field, and not into further silo-building.

Accordingly, Maucuer and Renaud suggest that “disciplines should cross-fertilize in order to enrich their own conceptualization [of business models] and reinforce the co-development of their respective fields ... [and to] combine their efforts in developing transversal issues ...” (Maucuer & Renaud, 2019, p. 38). The benefits of such an approach can be illustrated with an example: Some researchers are working on the cognitive micro-foundations of business model development and propose that these micro-foundations involve configurations of simple design and decision making rules, so-called heuristics (Loock & Hacklin, 2015); or schemas representing firms’ value creating activities (Martins et al., 2015; Massa et al., 2017). Cognitive perspectives are also important to understand how actors deal with ambiguous issues such as corporate sustainability (Hahn et al., 2014). How these issues can be addressed effectively through the development of new business models is a question that might be answered by building on two decades of research on business models and business model innovation (Wirtz et al., 2016a, 2016b).

This special issue is meant to create a snapshot of the diversity of business model research at the end of its second decade, and to facilitate future multi- and interdisciplinary conversations and research projects. The combination of a conference dedicated to ‘new’, i.e., sustainable, circular, and socially inclusive, business models (4th International Conference on New Business Models) and a conference stemming from the roots of ‘traditional’ business model research (3rd Business Model Conference) offers a unique opportunity to take stock of the state of the art and to motivate much needed cross-over conversations and research projects in the future. As a first step, this special issue aims at exploring commonalities and differences between different streams of business model research, for example by further exploring and explaining the reasons for silo-building or by presenting best-practice examples of multi- and interdisciplinary business model research.

**Scope and topics**

This Journal of Business Models special issue is thematically open within the scopes of the two aforementioned conferences. The goal is to present papers that deal with cutting-edge research methods, theories, and empirical phenomena related to business models, and papers that help to redefine the boundaries of the field of business model research. Submitting authors should explicitly consider currently available literature reviews to identify relevant research gaps and opportunities to advance the state of the art (e.g., Dentchev et al., 2018; Klang et al., 2014; Massa et al., 2017; Maucuer & Renaud, 2019; Nielsen et al., 2018; Schneider & Spieth, 2013; Wirtz et al., 2016a, 2016b; Zott et al., 2011). Contributions to this special issue can address, but are not limited to, the following exemplary topics:

- What are differences and commonalities between different business model research streams?
- Which disciplinary perspectives are dominating, which are under-represented?
- How can multi-, inter-, and even transdisciplinary
business model research be designed, and what are appropriate theoretical and methodical approaches?

- Which theoretical foundations and empirical methods are considered useful to support progress in business model research beyond disciplinary boundaries?
- Which research strategies might lead the different business model communities towards less fragmentation and more holistic perspectives?

These research questions and related issues can be addressed either at a ‘meta-level’ by providing reviews, theoretical papers, or reflective essays, or by providing best-practice examples and showcase projects, such as multi-, inter-, and transdisciplinary case studies or quantitative empirical studies. Naturally, this second type of articles may be informed by the thematic foci of the different sessions at the two conferences, such as the following selected ones:

- Business model scalability
- Dilemmas and paradoxes relating to the performance of business models
- Disruptive business models and industry dynamics
- Ecological and social entrepreneurship business models
- New business models for sustainability transitions
- Open innovation and its implications for new business models
- Value creation for stakeholders, beyond shareholder value

Contributions
We invite authors from various scholarly disciplines (e.g., management, entrepreneurship, design, innovation, environmental studies, organization studies, transition theory, etc.) to address a broad variety of topics and industries (e.g., e-business, health, agriculture, food, finance, retail, etc.) from a broad variety of theoretical perspectives (e.g., economics, psychology, business ethics, philosophy, etc.).

Submitted papers should make clear their academic significance and relevance, their methodological rigour, and how they contribute to our theoretical and practical knowledge about business models, their development and management beyond disciplinary boundaries.

The special issue is open to diverse types of submissions, for example:

- Theoretical, conceptual, and empirical papers
- Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods research
- Experimental research
- Literature and practice reviews
- Single, multiple, large-sample case studies

Full original research papers as well as short papers are invited. Full and short papers must follow the formatting and submission guidelines of JoBM:

Guidelines for full papers: https://journals.aau.dk/index.php/JOBM/information/authors

Guidelines for short papers: http://journalofbusinessmodels.com/short-papers-repository/

Schedule
The final set of papers shall be ready 15 months after initial submission. Authors considering submitting to this JoBM special issue must make sure that they are able to follow the special issue schedule:

- Full paper submission: Between 1st August and 30th September 2019
- Initial review: December 2019
- Revised papers: February 2020
- Second review: May 2020
- Revised papers: August 2020
- Handing in papers for final review by JoBM and production: October 2020
- Publication of complete special issue: End of 2020

Papers that are ready for publication will be published on an ongoing basis (online first), before the special issue volume will be finally compiled.
References


