

Language Matters: Aiming for Consolidation or Sticking to Complexity in Circular Business Models Literature?

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Abstract

Since the 1970s humanity has been in ecological overshoot: we consume natural resources by a measure that exceeds what Earth can regenerate each year. How can we stop this unsustainable path and build prosperity whilst catering for growing needs and respecting ecological boundaries? Broad consensus has emerged around what might be a plausible solution: the circular economy (CE hereafter). However, despite the burgeoning interest it is attracting and its huge potential to decouple economic growth from consumption of finite resources, CE implementation in industry is slow paced. On one hand, this outcome is not surprising considering the systemic innovations that are required for a CE to emerge and the existing barriers to its implementation. On the other hand, it is disappointing that despite the existence of a fairly voluminous scholarly literature on the subject, practitioners are either uncertain or struggling about how to implement CE strategies and models. Since the literature on circular business models is populated by varying constructs adding complexity and potentially hindering implementation, this article asks: *how can divergent circular business model perspectives be merged into a coherent and simplified business model framework for a CE?* By answering to this question, this research responds to the need to consolidate the literature on circular business models, which suffers from a lack of conceptual clarity and fragmentation.