

# Towards Systemic Sustainability: Exploring Interrelations, Feedback Loops, and Adaptability in Sustainable Business Models

*Idea: Advancing a systems thinking perspective on sustainable business models (SBMs).*

Business models that are hailed as sustainable might unintentionally create negative environmental impacts. For instance, a clothing rental service designed to reduce textile waste may through increased availability and convenience encourage more frequent outfit changes, driving higher transport and cleaning demands. Such patterns highlight how ignoring interrelations and feedback loops can lead to unintended consequences or system lock-ins.

The sustainable business model (SBM) literature often overlooks how business models function as part of dynamic systems. Therefore, this thesis explores how the integration of three Systems Thinking elements (1) interrelations, 2) feedback loops, and 3) adaptability) can explain and improve business model sustainability.

The research could build on a structured literature review to map the use of systems thinking elements in SBM research, followed by a typology or framework development. Optionally, the thesis could include case studies to illustrate how selected firms operate at the intersection of these three Systems Thinking dimensions.

**Study design:** Qualitative research design, such as structured literature review, conceptual framework development, and/or exploratory case study.

## Relevant Literature:

Schlüter, L., Kørnøv, L., Mortensen, L., Løkke, S., Storrs, K., Lyhne, I., & Nors, B. (2023). Sustainable business model innovation: Design guidelines for integrating systems thinking principles in tools for early-stage sustainability assessment. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 135776. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2022.135776>

Stubbs, W., & Cocklin, C. (2008). Conceptualizing a "Sustainability Business Model". *Organization & Environment*, 21(2), 103–127. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1086026608318042>