

Business networks in the change towards sustainability

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In the heat of the climate crisis, sustainability transition has become a necessity, and firms are learning how to create value from sustainability (Varadarajan, 2015). However, the change towards sustainability is complex and slow in many industries (e.g., Doganova & Karnøe, 2015; Ottosson et al., 2020). Sustainable innovations and systems are often introduced into existing business networks, where conventional solutions have strong market positions, and existing businesses depend on them. Also, value appropriation for new sustainable offerings and systems has appeared problematic.

As an example, even though bio-based plastics offer an alternative for fossil-based plastics, and biodegradable plastics have many promising applications, there are many challenges in developing the performance, availability, credibility, applications, and infrastructure for these materials. There is a need for new network actors to provide feedstock, to produce and process these materials, to redesign products, and to handle their end-of-life, to capture the value from bioplastics (Keränen et al., 2021). Altogether, existing business networks are adapted, and new actors, activities, resources, and interactions are needed.

To contribute to the still limited business-to-business marketing research on sustainability (Sharma, 2020), we welcome theoretical, empirical, and methodological papers to investigate how business network research (e.g., Lacoste, 2016; Möller et al., 2020) can help us to understand both ongoing and future changes towards sustainability in diverse industry contexts. Suggested themes include but are not limited to:

- Value appropriation for sustainable innovations and systems
- Instant and delayed sustainability value and their effects in business networks
- Commercialization of sustainable innovations
- Interaction between micro level and meso level activity in advancing sustainability
- Realization of circular economy in business networks
- Methods to study the future of sustainability development in business networks

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