PhD course 2022-12-13

Sustainability transitions, firms, and strategy, 7,5 credits

Transition studies is a growing field of research that investigates major transformations of socio-technical systems. Leading theoretical concepts and frameworks that commonly guide research in this field have primarily supported meso-level analyses. This has resulted in a tendency of black-boxing firms, resulting in a limited understanding of the multiple roles firms can have in sustainability transitions. However, public debates often depict firms as frontrunners in sustainability transitions and there is an increasing interest in transition studies for the behaviours and strategies of firms, with several PhD students engaging in micro-level studies of transition processes involving firms. This PhD course is intended for to PhD students who are engaged in such studies by providing useful concepts, theories and perspectives on firms in sustainability transitions. The course will discuss the multiple roles and perspectives of firms in sustainability transitions by drawing on a broad range of classic and contemporary literature. It will address topics such as organisational boundaries and neo-institutional theories of firms, management behaviour and organisational learning, capabilities and path dependence, sustainable business models and critical perspectives on sustainability transitions and firms. The course covers five themes: Transition studies and the theory of the firm, Firm boundaries and Strategy, Resources and capabilities, Business models, and Critical perspectives.

Target group

The course is intended for doctoral students who have an interest in expanding and deepening their knowledge in sustainability transitions, firms and strategy, and who intend to use knowledge and skills gained in the course for completing their own doctoral thesis.

Course objectives

After completion of the course, the doctoral students will have developed abilities to:

• Explain, explain, compare, and discuss central concepts and theories within sustainability transitions, firms, and strategy

• Critically reflect on the role of firms in sustainability transitions

Literature

1. Transition studies and the theory of the firm

DiMaggio, P. J., & Powell, W. W. (1983). The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields. *American Sociological Review*, 48(2), 147–160.

Hart, S. L. (1995). A Natural-Resource-Based View of the Firm. *The Academy of Management Review*, 20(4), 986–1014. https://doi.org/10.2307/258963

Jensen, M. C., & Meckling, W. H. (1976). Theory of the firm: Managerial behavior, agency costs and ownership structure. *Journal of financial economics*, 3(4), 305-360.

Köhler, J., et al. (2019). An agenda for sustainability transitions research: State of the art and future directions. *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions* 31, 1– 32.

Magnusson, T., & Werner, V. 2022. Conceptualisations of incumbent firms in sustainability transitions: Insights from organisation theory and a systematic literature review. *Business Strategy and the Environment*

2. Firm boundaries and Strategy

Berggren, C., Magnusson, T., & Sushandoyo, D. 2015. Transition pathways revisited: Established firms as multi-level actors in the heavy vehicle industry. *Research Policy*, 44(5): 1017-1028.

Feldman, E. R. (2020). Corporate strategy: Past, present, and future. *Strategic Management Review*, *1*(1), 179-206.

Hoogstraaten, M. J., Frenken, K., & Boon, W. P. (2020). The study of institutional entrepreneurship and its implications for transition studies. *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions*, *36*, 114-136.

Santos, F. M., & Eisenhardt, K. M. 2005. Organizational boundaries and theories of organization. *Organization science*, 16(5): 491-508.

3. Resources and capabilities

Barney, J. (1991). Firm Resources and Sustained Competitive Advantage. *Journal of Management*, 17(1), 99–120.

Teece, D., & Pisano, G. 1994. The dynamic capabilities of firms: An introduction. *Industrial and Corporate Change*, 3(3): 537-556.

Helfat, C.E. and Peteraf, M.A., 2003. The dynamic resource-based view: Capability lifecycles. *Strategic Management Journal*, 24(10), pp.997-1010.

Musiolik, J., Markard, J. and Hekkert, M., 2012. Networks and network resources in technological innovation systems: Towards a conceptual framework for system building. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 79(6), pp.1032-1048.

Stalmokaitie, I., Hassler, B., 2020. Dynamic capabilities and strategic reorientation towards decarbonisation in Baltic Sea shipping. *Environmental innovation and societal transitions* 37,187–202.

4. Business models

Zott, C., Amit, R., & Massa, L. (2011). The business model: recent developments and future research. *Journal of Management*, 37(4), 1019-1042.

Bocken, N. M., Short, S. W., Rana, P., & Evans, S. (2014). A literature and practice review to develop sustainable business model archetypes. *Journal of cleaner production*, 65, 42-56.

Sarasini, S., & Linder, M. (2018). Integrating a business model perspective into transition theory: The example of new mobility services. *Environmental innovation and societal transitions*, 27, 16-31.

Mignon, I., & Bankel, A. (2022). Sustainable business models and innovation strategies to realize them: A review of 87 empirical cases. *Business Strategy and the Environment*.

Ode, K. A., & Wadin, J. L. (2019). Business model translation—The case of spreading a business model for solar energy. *Renewable energy*, 133, 23-31.

5. Critical perspectives

Feola, G. 2020. Capitalism in sustainability transitions research: Time for a critical turn? *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions* 35, 241-250

Jasanoff, S. (2018). Just transitions: A humble approach to global energy futures. *Energy Research & Social Science*, 35, 11-14.

Lloveras, J., Marshall, A. P., Vandeventer, J. S., & Pansera, M. (2022). Sustainability marketing beyond sustainable development: towards a degrowth agenda. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 1-23.

Schot, J., & Kanger, L. (2018). Deep transitions: Emergence, acceleration, stabilization and directionality. *Research Policy*, *47*(6), 1045-1059.

Stirling, A. (2019). How deep is incumbency? A 'configuring fields' approach to redistributing and reorienting power in socio-material change. *Energy Research & Social Science*, *58*, 101239.

Faculty

Thomas Magnusson (examiner), Professor in Industrial Management at Linköping university and Professor in Innovation Science at Halmstad University, thomas.magnusson@liu.se

Solmaz Filiz Karabag, Senior associate professor at Linköping university and Senior associate professor in Industrial Engineering and Management at Uppsala University, solmaz.filiz.karabag@liu.se

Ingrid Johansson Mignon, Associate professor in Technology Management and Economics at Chalmers University, ingrid.mignon@chalmers.se

Ksenia Onufrey, Senior lecturer in Technology Management and Economics at Chalmers University, ksenia.onufrey@chalmers.se

Thomas Lennerfors, Professor in Industrial Engineering and Management at Uppsala University, thomas.lennerfors@angstrom.uu.se

Examination

The examination includes both written preparation and active participation. It is expected that participants participate in all scheduled activities and complete all tasks. The number of course points may be reduced based on incomplete participation and performance.

Organization

The teaching is mainly carried out in the form of seminars and study visits (see schedule in table below). Three 2-day schedule sessions are planned at different locations (Linköping, Gothenburg, Uppsala). Before each session, the participants read assigned literature and prepare assignments.

Course fee

There is no course fee. However, the participants must cover their own expenses for travel and accommodation.

Admission

Admission takes place on the basis of a letter of motivation in which the doctoral student explains how the course is relevant to her/his work. The application must also contain a letter of recommendation from the doctoral student's supervisor. In the letter, the supervisor certifies that the doctoral student will use the course in his doctoral education, and that the doctoral student's own employer will pay costs for travel and accommodation. As the number of participants is limited, the course manager reserves the right to make the final selection of participants among those who meet the prerequisites and have submitted the necessary documents. Please send applications to the course to thomas.magnusson@liu.se

Seminar Sessions and Schedule				
Session	***Session Chair***	***Contents***	***Date***	***Location***
Linköping	Thomas Magnusson, Solmaz Filiz Karabag	Course start and introduction 1. Transition studies and the theory of the firm. 2. Firm boundaries and strategy Study visit: Siemens Energy AB, Finspång	2-3 March 2023	Linköping university, Campus Valla
Gothenburg	Ingrid Johansson Mignon, Ksenia Onufrey	3. Resources and capabilities 4. Business models Study visit: Göteborg Energi	28-29 March 2023	Chalmers University, Gothenburg
Uppsala	Thomas Lennerfors Thomas Magnusson	5. Critical perspectives Course sum-up, synthesis and evaluation Study visit: Optima Planta	11-12 May 2023	Uppsala University