



## Call for Papers

International Conference on Circular Economy, Business Strategy & Management

Organized by EM Normandie Business School & University of Massachusetts Boston

Caen, 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> October, 2025

# What can management sciences really say about the circular economy?

The rise of the circular economy (CE) as a strategic response to environmental pressures, social tensions, and the structural limits of linear growth models has led many organizations to reconsider their fundamental approaches to value creation, resource management, innovation and governance. This shift no longer concerns only technical optimisation or end-of-pipe solutions. Instead, it implies a reconfiguration of business models, production systems and institutional frameworks, with consequences across all functions of the firm and within broader territorial dynamics (Schaltegger et al. 2016; Geissdoerfer et al., 2017).

In this context, circularity no longer appears as a marginal concern delegated to sustainability departments. Senior executives, innovation managers, marketers, HR directors and operations leaders now increasingly engage with circularity as a strategic and operational issue. Several firms have begun to redefine their competitive positioning, their product and service offerings, and their performance evaluation tools in light of environmental regeneration, resource preservation, and long-term resilience (Lüdeke-Freund et al., 2019; Pieroni et al., 2021). This transformation requires a deep understanding of how internal capabilities, routines and structures evolve when organizations commit to models that privilege durability, reparability, shared use and systemic collaboration (Urbanati et al., 2020; Bocken et al., 2023).

This evolution extends beyond corporate boundaries. Numerous cities, regions and public institutions have initiated transitions toward circularity through local experimentation, public

procurement frameworks, infrastructure planning and support for circular entrepreneurship. These efforts often result in the formation of territorial circular ecosystems, where firms, public authorities, civil society actors and service providers interact through shared infrastructures, platforms, and institutional arrangements to effectively deploy circular projects (Bourdin & Torre, 2024). These ecosystems illustrate the importance of spatial proximity, socio-technical coordination and institutional embedding in the deployment of circular strategies.

Although circularity now appears as a promising avenue for corporate and public transformation, the contribution of management sciences to this field remains fragmented and under-theorised. Empirical studies continue to focus on emblematic case studies without necessarily clarifying the theoretical implications for organizational behaviour, decision-making processes, or inter-organizational dynamics (Franco, 2017; Kumar et al., 2019). Circular economy in the manufacturing sector: benefits, opportunities and barriers. *Management decision*, 57(4), 1067-1086.). Questions related to trade-offs between environmental goals and economic performance still lack coherent analytical frameworks (Kristoffersen et al., 2021), and the articulation between firm-level practices and broader systemic transitions remains conceptually fragile (Pieroni et al., 2021; Bocken et al., 2023).

Efforts to assess the outcomes of circular strategies also face limitations. Existing indicators often favour technical or environmental dimensions, but neglect social and economic consequences, especially in multi-actor and multi-level governance settings (Elia et al., 2017; Ranta et al., 2021). Moreover, few studies offer robust approaches to evaluate the transformative depth of circular initiatives, particularly in terms of their organisational, behavioural and institutional implications. Theoretical contributions in accounting and finance still rarely address the integration of circularity into performance systems, investment evaluation or risk modelling.

For these reasons, a more ambitious research agenda appears necessary. Management sciences hold the potential to produce original knowledge on circular transitions if they address key issues related to the coordination of actors, the evolution of managerial logics, the diffusion of innovation, and the transformation of value paradigms across space and time. The circular economy calls for a reinvention of management itself, which cannot be reduced to operational optimisation but must incorporate complexity, long-term thinking, and attention to spatial and societal embeddedness.

Against this backdrop, the International Conference on Circular Economy, Business Strategy & Management aims to answer a central question: what do management sciences have to say about the circular economy?

We invite contributions from all subfields of management—including but not limited to: (i) Strategy (circular business models, dynamic capabilities, competitive advantage); Marketing (circular consumption, sustainable branding, customer engagement); (iii) Human Resource Management (employee involvement, learning processes, change management); (iv) Operations and Supply Chain (reverse logistics, circular procurement, performance measurement); (v) Innovation and Entrepreneurship (eco-design, circular startups, open innovation); (vi) Accounting and Finance (measurement systems, ESG reporting, impact investing); (vii) Public Management (governance, inter-organizational collaboration, policy evaluation); (viii) Territorial Management (ecosystem coordination, regional strategies, local experimentation).

The conference welcomes theoretical, empirical, and methodological contributions that critically engage with circular economy practices and principles. Submissions may adopt qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods approaches, and explore the CE through lenses such as stakeholder theory, resource-based view, institutional logics, complexity theory, or systems thinking.

## References

- Bourdin, S., & Torre, A. (2024). Economic geographys contribution to understanding the circular economy. *Journal of Economic Geography*.
- Elia, V., Gnoni, M. G., & Tornese, F. (2017). Measuring circular economy strategies through index methods: A critical analysis. *Journal of cleaner production*, 142, 2741-2751.
- Franco, M. A. (2017). Circular economy at the micro level: A dynamic view of incumbents struggles and challenges in the textile industry. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 168, 833–845.
- Geissdoerfer, M., Savaget, P., Bocken, N. M., & Hultink, E. J. (2017). The Circular Economy—A new sustainability paradigm? *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 143, 757–768.

Kristoffersen, E., Blomsma, F., Mikalef, P., & Li, J. (2021). The smart circular economy: A digital-enabled circular strategies framework for manufacturing companies. *Journal of Business Research*, 120, 241–261.

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Schaltegger, S., Hansen, E. G., & Lüdeke-Freund, F. (2016). Business models for sustainability: Origins, present research, and future avenues. *Organization & environment*, 29(1), 3-10.

Urbinati, A., Chiaroni, D., & Chiesa, V. (2020). Towards a new taxonomy of circular economy business models. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 255, 120988.

## Submission guidelines

Authors are invited to submit either a long abstract (1,000 to 1,500 words) or a full paper. Submissions should clearly outline the research question, theoretical positioning, methodology, and key contributions—whether conceptual, empirical, or methodological. Both completed studies and high-quality work-in-progress will be considered for presentation.

Each submission must include two PDF files:

- (i) A blind version with no identifying information, for peer review.
- (ii) A full version including the name(s), institutional affiliation(s), and email address(es) of the author(s).

All submissions should be sent to: [abonifacio@em-normandie.fr](mailto:abonifacio@em-normandie.fr)

A Best Paper Award will be granted during the closing session. To be eligible for the award, authors must submit a full paper by the submission deadline.

Accepted contributions will be presented at the conference and considered for inclusion in a Special Issue of a leading peer-reviewed management journal. More information on journal partnerships will be shared with selected authors in due course.

## Important dates

Submission Deadline: June 30, 2025

Notification of Acceptance: July 15, 2025

Conference Dates: October 13-14, 2025

Venue: EM Normandie, Caen (France)

We welcome PhD students, early career researchers, and senior academics from across the globe. The conference will also support student involvement through session chairing, conference volunteering, and mentoring activities.