

Harmonising the Circular Economy: An Analysis of 160 Papers

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Abstract : The circular economy has grounded itself amongst scholars and practitioners operating across governments and enterprises. The aim of this paper is to augment the circular economy concept by identifying common core and enabling circular business models. To this aim, we have analysed over 150 papers regarding circular activities and identified 8 clusters of business models and enablers. We have mapped and harmonised the most prominent frameworks conceptualising the circular economy. Our findings indicate that circular economy core business models include regenerative in addition to reduce, reuse and recycle activities. We further find enabling activities in design, digital technologies, knowledge development and sharing, multistakeholder collaborations, and extended corporate responsibility initiatives in various forms. We critically contrast the application of these business models across the European and African contexts. Overall, we find that seemingly varied circular economy definitions distill the same conceptual business models. We hope to contribute towards the coherence of the circular economy concept, and the continuous development of practical guidance to select and implement circular strategies.

Keywords : Circular economy, content analysis, business models, definitions, enablers, frameworks

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