

February 22, 2022

Topic description and team assignments

Distance Learning Project [MIM S2 12] on business models in the mobility sector: Investigating the challenges of sustainability-orientation in the sector of mobility

The Distance Learning Project (DLP) is an international cooperative course between i. University of Lodz, Poland, ii. Europa-Universität Flensburg, Schleswig-Holstein, Germany, iii. University of Applied Sciences Kempten, Bavaria, Germany and iv. Radboud University in Nijmegen, The Netherlands. This project is designed to acquaint the participants with theoretical and practical knowledge of the field to be specified below. Further, the participants gain experience in cooperating in international teams regarding the related topics.

The general aims and objectives of this project lie in:

- to experience working in an intercultural and interdisciplinary team
- to integrate knowledge from different modules and apply it into a research study
- to learn how to set up a small empirical research
- to learn how to present the research results
- to experience working in a distance learning project

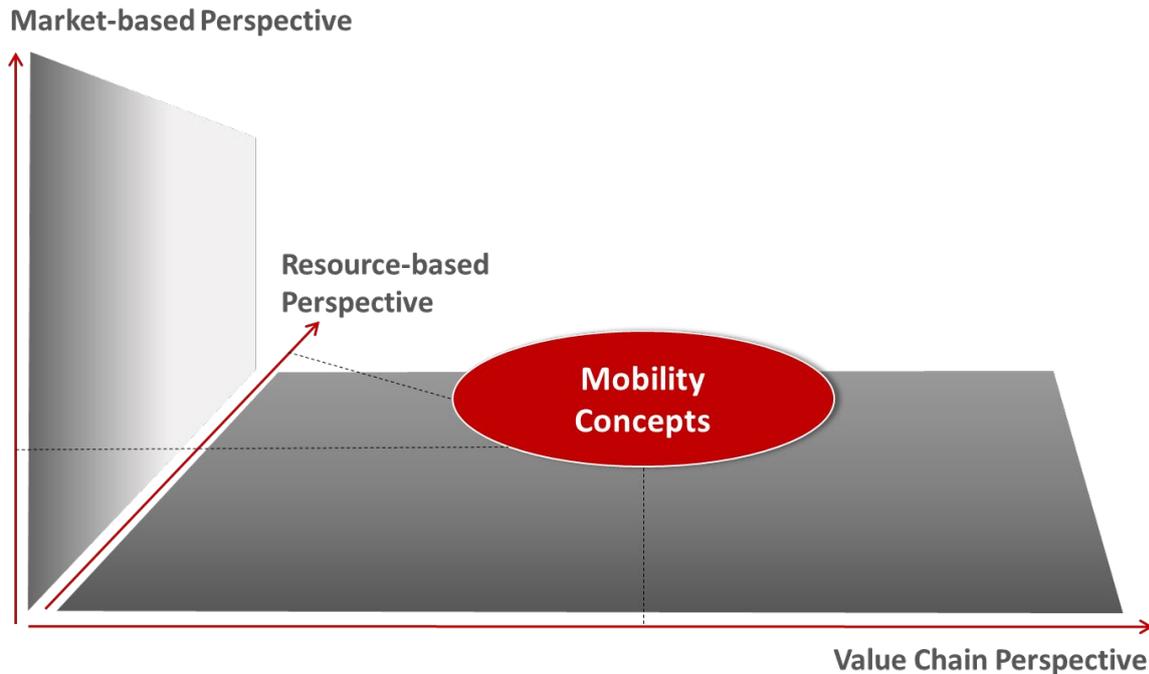
In the spring semester 2022 the course deals with business models in the mobility sector with a focus on understanding elements of sustainability in different cases of mobility providers. At first sight (environmental) sustainability and (especially individual) mobility do not seem to blend well. However, many providers of mobility solutions are at least giving the impression of operating green business models. We want to investigate the competitiveness and sustainability of such business models and identify potential trade-offs and challenges. We expect that the findings from different in-depth case investigations will not be black and white but that we may identify different degrees of sustainability in different mobility concepts.

The investigation of sustainability-oriented business models in the mobility sector is a relevant and at the same time challenging topic from a strategic management point of view but also from societal and environmental perspectives. It requires not only a rethink of the value that a firm delivers to its customers, but also to look at the role of all stakeholders involved. It becomes obvious that certain trade-offs are to be taken into consideration here. These, we want to identify and then discuss in the light of the different cases.

The aim of the DLP this year is to come to an in-depth understanding of three cases of mobility providers. Therefore, the analysis of mobility concepts should be carried out from different perspectives by different groups: While one group per case concentrates on coming to an in-depth understanding of the market environment, another focuses on internal resources and capabilities and a third sets the focus on the value chain structure a company is embedded into.

Broadly speaking, we would suggest one team to make use of tools stemming from the market-based view, while the second one uses a resource-based perspective and the third sticks to value chain analysis (so to consider all value-added activities needed to bring the mobility service to market). For a 360-degree approach the groups would analyse these three dimensions per case (see below).

Three-dimensional analysis of mobility concepts



Building on the understanding of the market, internal resources and capabilities and value chain structure each group is then asked to come up with trade-offs that can be identified at the different levels of analysis (i.e., industry level, organizational and inter-organizational level) with regard to achieving profitability as well as sustainability. According to that research approach we aim to investigate the following categories of mobility providers. Each team should focus on one case and one research dimension (see above):

- Category 1: an established mobility player with the focus on the activities in the car-sharing market, here SIXT SE (<https://www.sixt.com/#/>)
- Category 2: a mobility concept driven by established car manufacturers with the focus on the activities in the car-sharing market, here: ShareNow (<https://www.share-now.com/nl/en/>)
- Category 3: a young company with a new approach to offer mobility with a bike subscription model, here: Swapfiets (<https://swapfiets.com/>)

The following questions are relevant for all cases (please set your focus and further specify!):

- Which are the major facets of the investigated business model in terms of (a) market/industry attractiveness (b) resource profile and (c) value chain structure?
- Which trade-offs between profitability and sustainability can be identified specifically on the (a) industry level and (b) organizational level and (c) on the inter-organizational level where value chains transcend firm boundaries?

(c) How can the identified trade-offs be addressed respectively dealt with by the investigated mobility concept provider?

As starting points for getting into the strategic tool to use for the case investigation, we would suggest to use a strategic management text book (e.g., Barney & Hesterly, 2019; Grant, 2019) as the starting point and then get deeper into the literature by researching current articles via library resources. As a starting point for investigating trade-offs, we would suggest to read the article by Hahn et al. (2010) - that you find in the end of this outline – as a starting point.

The final goal of this course is the production of a paper dealing with one of the cases using one of the perspectives in a team of students from the different locations (please see the DLP guidelines for the research papers for relevant specifications). The student groups are also required to give presentations about their research online and in-person. Next to the Credit Points given for the course at the different Universities, the students get a joint certificate signed by the partners about their participation in the project.

References

- Barney, J. B., & Hesterly, W. S. (2019). *Strategic management and competitive advantage: Concepts and cases* (Edition 6, Global edition). Pearson.
- Grant, R. M. (2019). *Contemporary strategy analysis* (Tenth Edition). Wiley.
- Hahn, T., Figge, F., Pinkse, J., & Preuss, L. (2010). Trade-offs in corporate sustainability: you can't have your cake and eat it. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 19(4), 217–229. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bse.674>