Inland School of Business and Social Sciences

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Striving for Sustainability

Investigations of Sustainable Business Model Innovation as Practice

PhD in Innovation in Services – Public and Private
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SAMMENDRAG

Denne avhandlingen springer ut av en identifisert treghet i vårt kollektive globale svar på de enorme miljømessige og sosiale bærekraftsutfordringene samfunnet står overfor, og bygger på to ytterligere antakelser. For det første, antakelsen om at privat næringsliv kan være til hjelp ved å øke hvor raskt og besluttsomt vi svarer på utfordringene. For det andre, antakelsen om at økt kunnskap om innovasjonsaktiviteter for bærekraft som utføres av etablerte selskaper vil kunne øke evnen privat næringsliv har til å forbedre sin bærekraft. Med utgangspunkt i disse antakelsene er formålet med avhandlingen å bidra til rikere kunnskap om aktivitetene som inngår i bærekraftig forretningsmodellinnovasjon (SBMI).

Avhandlingen oppfyller sitt formål ved å konseptualisere SBMI som en prosess, og videre ved å gi et rikt og nyansert perspektiv på aktivitetene som utgjør SBMI-prosessen gjennom å anvende en praksisbasert teoretisk linse til å undersøke prosessen. Ved å bygge på dette praksisperspektivet utvikler jeg en konseptuell modell som beskriver SBMI-prosessen forstått som praksis. Den konseptuelle modellen blir brukt som et fundament for en gjennomgang av forskningslitteraturen om SBMI som finner at litteraturen gir begrenset kunnskap om SBMI-aktiviteter. Videre brukes den konseptuelle modellen til å tolke og organisere bidragene til de fire vedlagte artiklene. På bakgrunn av dette byr avhandlingen på funn som: (1) belyser videre hva som kjennetegner SBMI-prosesser når de blir forstått gjennom et praksisperspektiv, og (2) viser hvordan anvendelsen av praksissteori i forskningen på SBMI kan berike vår forståelse av fenomenet SBMI.

De fire vedlagte artiklene gir kunnskap om hva som kjennetegner SBMI-prosesser når de blir sett på som praksis ved å tilby ny kunnskap om SBMI-praksiser, –praktikere og –praxis. Artikkel I undersøker to aspekter av SBMI-praksiser gjennom et kvantitativt forskningsdesign: (1) organiseringen av forskjellige oppgaver i to typer større prosjekter («bedriftsintern SBMI» og «SBMI i det øvrige verdinettverket»), og (2) den målorienterte, eller teleologiske, karakteren til de studerte SBMI-praksisene. Artikkel II handler om styringspraksiser og utforsker konseptuelt hvordan bærekraftige forretningsmodeller nødvendigvis vil stille nye krav til eksisterende styringspraksiser og potensielt omvelte dem. Artikkel III består av en kvalitativ

casestudie av styringspraxis – det vil si de kontekstknyttede, daglige og improviserte handlingene til ledere og mellomledere – i en konkret SBMI-prosess. Artikkelen viser at mens toppledelsen i den studerte organisasjonen hadde problemer med å sjonglere ulike arbeidsoppgaver knyttet til bærekraft, så ble organisasjonens bærekraftsytelse reddet gjennom improviserte handlinger fra mellomledere i organisasjonen. Resultatet ble at SBMI-prosessen endte opp med å være preget av en viss emergens. Artikkel IV bidrar med ytterligere kunnskap om SBMI-praktikere og deres daglige praxis gjennom en casestudie av hvordan tre praktikere jobber for å fremme bærekaftsengasjement blant sine kolleger. Artikkelen avslører at utøvernes overtalelsesarbeid fulgte bestemte unike praxis-mønstre, som ble påvirket av de personlige historiene til utøverne og deres pågående samhandling med kolleger. Funnene i artikkel IV utfordrer dermed hvordan man best kan modellere og forstå de innsalgene som må gjennomføres av engasjerte ansatte eller ledere for å få gjennomført SBMI, og demonstrerer på denne måten kraften i praksisbasert empirisk forskning på SBMI.

Videre identifiserer og underbygger de vedlagte artiklene og gjennomgangen av SBMI-litteraturen i kappen to viktige temaer som karakteriserer SBMI-prosesser sett som praksis: *kompleksiteten* i prosessen og *sentraliteten* til SBMI i det overordnede prosjektet for å undersøke de indre arbeidene med hvordan oppnå bedriftens bærekraft og/eller samfunnsansvar (CS/R) i organisasjoner.

Gjennom bidragene den gir i de vedlagte artiklene og kappen sett under ett, byr denne avhandlingen på beskrivende kunnskap om SBMI-aktiviteter som beriker den samlede kunnskapen om fenomenet, samtidig som den kommer med forslag til hvordan praksisteori kan informere videre forskning på fenomenet. Slik beveger avhandlingens bidrag SBMI-litteraturen nærmere å kunne bli et forskningsfelt som leverer en solid grunnpakke med deskriptivt fundert og praktisk nyttig kunnskap om hvordan man kan arbeide med CS/R-initiativer for å oppnå økt bærekraft i organisasjoner—noe som igjen kan bidra til å bevege vårt globale samfunn i en mer bærekraftig retning før miljømessige og sosiale bærekraftsproblemer eskalerer så langt at de blir uhåndterlige.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation builds from an identified sluggishness in our collective global response to the massive environmental and social sustainability challenges we are currently facing, and from two further assertions. First, that business can be help improve the speed and decisiveness of our response to the challenges. Second, that increased knowledge regarding innovation activities for sustainability performed by established companies will help improve sustainability in business. Based on these points, the purpose of the dissertation is to contribute to richer knowledge regarding sustainable business model innovation (SBMI) activities.

The dissertation delivers on its purpose by conceptualizing SBMI as a process, and further by adopting a practice-based theoretical lens that provides a rich and nuanced perspective on the activities that make up the SBMI process. By building on this practice lens, I develop a conceptual model that describes the SBMI process viewed as practice. The conceptual model is in turn used to inform a review of the literature on SBMI, which finds that the literature offers limited knowledge on SBMI activities. Furthermore, the conceptual model is used to interpret and organize the contributions of four appended papers. Based on this, the dissertation offers findings that: (1) illuminate further what characterizes SBMI processes when they are viewed as practice, and (2) show how the application of practice theory in the research of SBMI can enrich our understanding of SBMI as a phenomenon.

The four appended papers provide knowledge on what characterizes SBMI processes when they are viewed as practice by offering new knowledge on SBMI practices, practitioners, and praxis. Paper I investigates quantitatively two aspects of SBMI practices: (1) the organization of different tasks into two types of bigger projects ("in-house SBMI" and "wider value-network SBMI"), and (2) the goal-directed, or teleological, nature of these practices. Paper II is concerned with management practices and explores conceptually how the nature and needs of SBMs by necessity will place new demands on extant management practices and potentially upheave them. Paper III provides a qualitative case study of management praxis—the situated, daily and improvised actions of practitioners—in an SBMI process. The paper finds that while top management in the studied organization had trouble juggling sustainability priorities, the

sustainability performance of the organization was saved through improvised actions from middle managers that resulted in the SBMI process exhibiting a certain degree of emergence. Paper IV contributes with further knowledge on SBMI practitioners and their daily praxis through a case study of how three practitioners work to foster engagement among their colleagues. The paper finds that the work of the practitioners took the form of persuasion praxis patterns, which were influenced by the personal histories of the practitioners and their ongoing interactions with colleagues. The findings in paper IV challenge how we should view "the selling of sustainability issues" that engaged employees or leaders must perform in order to make SBMI happen, and demonstrate the power of practice-based empirical research on SBMI.

Furthermore, the appended papers and the review of the SBMI literature taken together identify and corroborate two key themes that characterize SBMI processes viewed as practice: the *complexity* of the process and the *centrality* of SBMI to the overall project of investigating the inner workings of how to accomplish corporate sustainability and/or corporate social responsibility (CS/R) in organizations.

Through the contributions it makes with the appended papers and the dissertation cover, this dissertation offers descriptive knowledge on SBMI activities that enriches the knowledge on the phenomenon, as well as suggestions for how practice theory can inform further research. This increased knowledge moves the SBMI literature closer toward becoming a research stream that offers researchers and practitioners a strong base of descriptively grounded and practically useful knowledge on how to work with CS/R initiatives to achieve increased sustainability within organizations—something which, in turn, could help move our global society toward a more sustainable path before environmental and social sustainability problems escalate to intractable proportions.

It's chaos. Be kind.
– Patton Oswald, *Annihilation*

Hug too much. Smile too much.
And, when you can, love.
– Neil Gaiman

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

If you look beyond the technical jargon and towards the unifying thread that is woven through the tapestry of this project, this dissertation is ultimately about individuals and how they enact corporate sustainability. Put in other words, the dissertation is about the social side of making corporate sustainability happen. Social life can be defined as "the hanging together of human lives" (Schatzki, 2003, p. 194), and this dissertation is made possible by, and shaped by, the people I have been fortunate enough to hang with over the course of my life so far.

First and foremost, my good friends and my supervisors in the PhD project: Sveinung Jørgensen and Lars Jacob Tynes Pedersen. Your enthusiasm and important work were the sparks that triggered my move into academia, and you have offered continued support, inspiration and invaluable guidance during the PhD process. Sveinung, my main supervisor, has functioned not only as an excellent mentor on scientific writing and communication, but also as highly motivating coach and source of energy during the inevitable ups and downs of PhD life. Lars Jacob has provided both calm and humor in the face of troublesome review processes as well as sage advice on the intricacies and diplomacies of writing scientific papers and navigating said processes. I have both learned and laughed a lot with you both over the last six years, and I consider myself lucky to have you as friends. I look forward to joint adventures in both the near and the distant future!

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success in the PhD venture to you, and I value your guidance, our discussions and your friendship highly.

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Paraphrasing Orwell, I would like to add here that although all peers are equal, some are more equal than others. Roald, I consider our friendship as one of the greatest gifts from these PhD years. Since I am already paraphrasing popular culture, allow me to paraphrase the late, great Darth Vader as a summarization our relationship: "Roald, I am your long-lost twin brother!" Although our friendship has become wrought with geographical difficulties since I moved to Skien, I hope that it can continue to thrive over the coming years.

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Thanks are also due to the students I have had the privilege of teaching over the last six year period. They have both enriched my understanding of the sustainability and CSR field

through their thoughtful questions and provided me with important feedback that has allowed me to grow as a communicator and educator.

On a more personal note, my decision to move into academia and try my hand at social science was greatly informed by my love for reading and writing in general. By now, it feels like I have always been a writer. That, of course, is not true. I would like to thank my childhood friend Ân Ngyen for being a fellow reader in my formative years, and for introducing me by way of example to the idea of writing for the pure pleasure of it, at a time when I still thought writing was strictly for school purposes. My life would have been different, and duller for it, without your influence all those years ago. I would also like to thank my closest friend, Andreas Arntsen, for being a superb partner in crime in various writing projects—previous, present and future ones. Your humor, your creativity and your intellectual curiosity are a continuous source of joy and inspiration to me.

I come from a tightly knit family, and I owe all I am to them. So just by the fact that I have successfully completed the PhD, you can tell that they're a pretty awesome family to have. In particular, I would like to thank my brothers Peter and Endre and my mother and father for their unending support over not just the PhD years, but through my life in general. A special thanks to Endre and Aina is due here as well for letting me borrow their apartment as a writing recluse in a particularly hectic period.

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Finally, and most important and dear to me of all: my wife Siri and my son Wilhelm. I love you, and I am immensely grateful that you have supported me through these intense years, and that you fill my life with meaning, affection, joy and wonder through all the big moments and all the small moments we share every day. This dissertation is dedicated to you.

Skien, May 2021
Erlend Aas Gulbrandsen

To Wilhelm and Siri.

Størst av alt er kjærligheten.

CONTENTS

FIGURES

TABLES

KEY ABBREVIATIONS

BM: business model

BMI: business model innovation

CS: corporate sustainability

CSR: corporate social responsibility

CS/R: corporate sustainability and/or corporate social responsibility

LYOGOC: Lillehammer Youth Olympics organizing committee

SBM: sustainable business model

SBMI: sustainable business model innovation

APPENDED PAPERS

I.   Gulbrandsen, E. A. (2020). Managerial perceptions of sustainability motivations and sustainable business model innovation in service companies. Paper under review in *Beta. Scandinavian Journal of Business Research*.

II.   Gulbrandsen, E. A., Jørgensen, S., Kaarbøe, K., & Pedersen, L. J. T. (2015). Developing Management Control Systems for Sustainable Business Models. *Beta. Scandinavian Journal of Business Research, 29*(1), 10–25.

III.   Gulbrandsen, E. A. (2021). *Pink Games: Sustainability in the Youth Olympics.* Unpublished manuscript.[1]

IV.   Gulbrandsen, E. A. (2021). *Patterns of persuasion. Investigating social issue selling as practice.* Working paper.

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[1] This paper is a translated and extended version of Gulbrandsen (2017), a book chapter published in Norwegian. The extended version was last updated in March 2021, therefore the paper is dated 2021. However, most of the text is drawn directly from the Norwegian book chapter.

It's not the waking, it's the rising

It is the grounding of a foot uncompromising

It's not forgoing of the lie

It's not the opening of eyes

It's not the waking, it's the rising

– Hozier, *Nina Cried Power*

1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter sets the stage for the remainder of the dissertation by presenting the background for its topic and introducing its purpose, research questions and approach. The chapter also briefly presents the main contributions of the dissertation, and its organization.

The chapter is organized as follows. It opens with a section that presents the general background that the dissertation should be read against, including a description of the knowledge gap that the dissertation seeks to aid in closing. Next, I present the dissertation's purpose, research questions, approach, and main findings. The chapter ends with an overview of the organization of the dissertation.

1.1 BACKGROUND

For all our progress, mankind still faces enormous and mounting sustainability challenges, chief among them environmental degradation (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC], 2013; Rockström et al., 2009; Stoknes & Rockström, 2018) and social inequality within nations (Piketty, 2014) and between nations (Almås, 2012).[2] If we are to solve these monumental challenges and fulfill the ambitious sustainability goals that we as a global society have set for ourselves (United Nations General Assembly, 2015), it appears that "business as usual" is no longer an option (Møller, 2016).

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[2] These are, by necessity, only headlines. A full discussion of sustainability problems is outside the scope of this dissertation.

The message in the above paragraph is not new. In fact, the underlying themes of environmental and social problems have been known for some time, and we as a global society have failed to take decisive action during this time. As an example, consider environmental issues, which have been on the global agenda since at least the 1960s, when *Silent Spring* (written by Rachel Carson and published in 1962) set the agenda on the adverse and widespread effects of pesticide use. A further milestone occurred with the publication of the report *The Limits to Growth* (Meadows, Meadows, Randers, & Beherens III, 1972), which pointed out the need to curb economic growth and resource use in order to avoid over-exploiting and destroying Earth's natural systems. Forty years later, Jørgen Randers, one of the co-authors of the report, called the human response to the environmental issues since 1972 "sluggish" (Randers, 2012, p. xv). In essence, Randers (2012) described what he viewed as 40 years of near standstill between 1972 and 2012 when it comes to concrete action to combat climate change (although he acknowledges that important political background work has undeniably happened).

While things certainly have happened since Randers wrote his 2012 book, and engagement and ambition levels are arguably at a record high, it is impossible to claim that *enough* change has happened. Greenhouse gas emissions have, in fact, continued to rise since 2012, and 2017 was a record year for emissions, without any sign of a peak and turning point (United Nations Environment Programme, 2018). There appears to be no solution in sight either, as political action to curb greenhouse-gas emissions seem destined to fall short of the overarching political ambitions. Nations that have committed themselves to the 1.5-degree objective of the Paris Agreement have delivered too modest individual pledges on climate cuts, in the sense that the sum of the pledges does not result in large enough global cuts of greenhouse gases to realize the objectives of the Paris Agreement (United Nations Environment Programme, 2018).

In fact, it is even worse than simply a case of too-low ambitions: the G20 nations, taken as a collective, and based on their current and projected efforts, are not en route to achieving even their stated goals—the very same goals that are too modest to begin with—by 2030 (United Nations Environment Programme, 2018). Simply put, "tangible political action remains limited to rhetorical flourishes against a background of even greater fossil-fuel exploitation" (Wright, Nyberg, De Cock, & Whiteman, 2013, p. 648). In short, then, it appears that talk is

cheap and that the actual *walk* of making the needed changes happen is too hard. This lack of political solutions both highlights the need for non-political action to help change come about and sets the potential for such change in a grim light. If our politicians cannot succeed, how can anyone else?

Away from the example of climate change, similar points as the above could be made for other sustainability problems—both in the environmental and social sphere. The general sticking point seems to be how to convert concern and ambition to action, and to do so efficiently and swiftly in order to avert the highest possible amount of adverse effects.

This dissertation investigates the business side of how to affect the changes needed to put society on a more sustainable path. The choice of business as a focal point for the research rests on three assumptions. First, that positive sustainability effects can come from business engagement in sustainability-oriented activities. Second, that in order for society to change enough to secure a sustainable future, business—and the capacity for problem-solving inherent in business—must be a part of the solution (Jørgensen & Pedersen, 2015, 2018). Third, that while business efforts toward sustainability might be aided by stricter regulations and clever incentives, voluntary action by business likely has to play a key role alongside these tools if we are to succeed (Jørgensen & Pedersen, 2015, 2018).

Turning to the business world, we find a mirror image of what has happened on the political scene: business can be seen as part of the "sluggish" response mentioned by Randers (2012) above. In the business world, the distance between "walk" and "talk" can be indirectly traced to the system level through the criticisms that have been leveled against the business community in the corporate sustainability and/or corporate responsibility (CS/R) literature (e.g., Banerjee, 2008; Wright & Nyberg, 2017).[3]

In light of the need for change, as discussed above, and the apparent lack of sufficient change, a natural question arises: How can we prevent 40 new years of too little action, and how can business aid in this? The answer to this question is, by necessity, complex and multifaceted. A fundamental answer might be that that the lack of sufficient progress is caused by insufficient resource use and maybe even a lack of willingness to assign the needed resources, and thus a

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[3] See more on the shorthand "CS/R" in chapter 2.

simple solution is to increase the use of resources. It is hard to argue against the validity of this point. However, extra resources for CS/R work are not necessarily easy to conjure up. More generally, we all want more resources, but as economists like to tell us (e.g., Varian, 1992), resources are always scarce. Even if resource use on CS/R is increased, organizations still have to make the most of what they have available. Therefore, this dissertation will not examine whether sufficient resources are being used on CS/R, or make suggestions on how to increase resource use;[4] instead, I will endeavor to examine conditions that may contribute to better utilization of available resources. To accomplish this, I focus on how established companies innovate—that is, the activities they undertake—in order to become more sustainable.[5]

Schaltegger, Hansen and Lüdeke-Freund (2016) hold that working with business models is "a key initiating component of corporate sustainability" (p. 3) which promises to deliver more radical transformation towards a sustainable development than approaches such as "philanthropy, corporate social responsibility, and technological process and product innovation" (p. 3). Bocken, Short, Rana and Evans (2014) provide an elaboration of this argument, asserting that:

> "Business model innovation offers a potential approach to deliver the required change through re-conceptualising the purpose of the firm and the value creating logic, and rethinking perceptions of value." (p. 43)

The above arguments are in line with similar arguments by business model (BM) scholars, which hold that the BM concept is unique in that it puts interdependencies among activities at the forefront of analysis (Lonzella & Markides, 2020) and puts emphasis on the value creation of companies and on a wider set of stakeholders instead of just shareholders (Massa, Tucci, &

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[4] Research adopting CS/R resource use as a focal point is valuable and useful in its own right. In particular, it is useful from a societal point of view, for example as input for political decisions regarding business, e.g., regarding whether business should be regulated more strongly or incentivized somehow to increase CS/R spending. However, I focus on the business side in this dissertation, and I thus take an inside-out view which centers on how engaged individuals within organizations strive toward sustainability *within* current system-level ramifications. Current levels of resource use are one such system level ramification, and, as such, it is exogenous to the research here.

[5] I use the word "innovate" in the widest possible sense afforded by innovation scholars. As detailed by Fagerberg (2005), "innovation" refers to multiple types of change, namely: (1) new products, (2) new methods of production, (3) new sources of supply, (4) the exploitation of new markets, and (5) new ways to organize business. Furthermore, it can be used to refer to different degrees of change, from incremental (including changes that are new to the focal organization, but not to the world) to radical (Fagerberg, 2005).

Afuah, 2017). In general BM scholars hold that the BM construct offers "a systemic perspective on how to 'do business'" (Zott, Amit, & Massa, 2011, p. 1038)—in fact, there is a growing consensus amongst BM scholars that their field centers on the question of *how* a company delivers value (Santos, Spector, & Van der Heyden, 2015). In a similar vein, scholars hold, among other views, that practicing BM innovation (BMI) is key to company survival in uncertain environments (e.g., Spieth, Schneckenberg, & Matzler, 2016). More fundamentally, BMI scholars argue that engaging in and mastering BMI typically will lead to superior performance effects compared to "regular" innovation (such as technological innovation) pursued without accompanying BMI efforts (e.g., Chesbrough, 2010; Teece, 2010). Put plainly: scholars hold that BMI is required in order to achieve best possible performance from change efforts. While BMI scholars are concerned with economic performance, SBMI scholars see this point as transferrable to general sustainability performance as well (Bocken et al., 2014; Schaltegger et al, 2016).

Inspired by the arguments from the scholars referenced to above, as well as by similar arguments from other authors (e.g., Inigo, Albareda, & Ritala, 2017; Jørgensen & Pedersen, 2018), I adopt a business model approach to innovation for sustainability in this dissertation. In other words, I seek to build on and contribute to the literature on sustainable business models (SBMs) and SBM innovation (SBMI)—henceforth shortened to "the SBMI literature".[6] More specifically, I follow Zott and Amit (2010) and adopt an *activity-system perspective* on business models, in which the business model is viewed as 'a system of interdependent activities that transcends the focal firm and spans its boundaries' (p. 216). Such an activity-system perspective effectively equates CS/R activities with SBMs, and this perspective is already employed in several contributions in the extant SBMI literature (e.g., Dembek, York, & Singh, 2018; Inigo et al., 2017; Wadin, Ahlgren, & Bengtsson, 2017). Furthermore, I define SBMI as a process—in the sense of a concrete sequence of events performed by concrete actors (cf. Langley, 2007; Van de Ven, 1992)—of transition from the current business model of an organization toward a more sustainable business model.[7] In short, this dissertation seeks to investigate SBMI activities, understood as the activities that

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[6] For an overview of this literature, see e.g. Boons & Lüdeke-Freund (2013) or Geissdoerfer, Vladimirova, & Evans (2018). For an explanation of the choice of "the SBMI literature" as shorthand for the literature on SBMs and SBMI, see chapter 2.
[7] See more on definitions of SBM and SBMI in chapter 2.

constitute this process of moving an organization from its current business model to a more sustainable business model.

It should be noted that while the SBMI literature is considered to be a fruitful approach to investigating innovation for sustainability, it is not the only strand of the CS/R literature which is concerned with this topic. In fact, innovation—or, more broadly, change—has been a central topic in several different contributions by CS/R scholars. In addition to the literature on SBM and SBMI, see for instance the literature on CS/R development processes (e.g., Maon, Lindgreen, & Swaen, 2010) and on sustainability transitions (e.g., Markard, Raven, & Truffer, 2012). Finally, as a further illustration of the diversity of the literature on the topic, the contributions on SBM and SBMI can be viewed as a sub-stream within a larger literature on sustainability-oriented innovation (e.g., Adams, Jeanrenaud, Bessant, Denyer, & Overy, 2016; Kanter, 1999; Varadarajan, 2017) and sustainable entrepreneurship (e.g., Dean & McMullen, 2007; Johnsen, Olaison, & Sørensen, 2018; Schaltegger & Wagner, 2011). However, despite the other research streams that deal with innovation for sustainability, this dissertation is—as stated in the previous paragraph—built on and seeks to contribute to the SBMI literature. This does not mean that I view the business model approach as the only viable approach to studying innovation for sustainability. It only means that I side with the authors referenced above in their view that the business model approach is a highly useful approach to the issue.

While there is great potential inherent in the SBMI literature for theorizing innovation for sustainability, the literature is not without its weaknesses. Critique has been levelled against the SBMI literature for being too concerned with static representations of SBMs and SBMI in the form of normative frameworks or ideal-types, resulting in too little focus on the actual dynamics of change for organizations moving towards SBMs (Randles & Laasch, 2016; Roome & Louche, 2016). As a concretization of this critique, I conduct my own activity-oriented review of the extant SBMI literature in chapter 3, and find that when it comes to knowledge on SBMI as a process consisting of actions by concrete individuals, the extant SBMI literature is thin. Thus, more knowledge of SBMI activities are needed in order for the SBMI literature to live up to its potential. In particular, we should begin by building descriptive knowledge on how the activities are currently performed by practitioners before

seeking to build normative knowledge on the SBMI process.[8] Otherwise, we risk providing solutions for the wrong problem (or set of problems) and thus might end up with unnecessarily complicated and costly solutions, or even end up hindering rather than helping the success we are after (cf. Jørgensen, 2011; Pedersen, 2009). Thus, this dissertation seeks to contribute to the SBMI literature through new descriptive knowledge regarding SBMI activities.

In conclusion thus far, I have pointed out that the pace of change toward a more sustainable society has been too slow and suggested that more descriptive knowledge on SBMI activities could aid in picking up the pace through increasing the resource efficiency of organizations' efforts to become more sustainable. Thus, the specific knowledge gap concerning a lack of descriptive research on SBMI activities forms the basis for the purpose and research questions of this dissertation project.

1.2 PURPOSE, RESEARCH QUESTIONS, APPROACH AND MAIN FINDINGS

Given the knowledge gap identified in the previous section, *the purpose of this dissertation is to contribute to richer knowledge regarding SBMI activities.* This purpose has been present in the dissertation work from day one (although the exact formulation varied) and has guided what has been an exploratory journey to contribute to the young and emerging SBMI research field, which, in itself, offered relatively few fixed points to navigate from.[9]

As an additional contribution beyond the contributions made by each individual appended paper, the dissertation cover uses practice theory as a theoretical lens on the dissertation project as a whole. This theoretical lens organizes, connects, and enriches the overall contribution of the dissertation cover and the four appended papers viewed as a whole. Chapter 2 offers an overview of practice theory in general and of the particular brand of practice theory I employ: *site ontology* (Schatzki, 1996, 2002, 2010, 2019). My choice of practice theory—and in particular Schatzki's conceptualization—as a lens is inspired by

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[8] I use "normative" here in the sense of "offering guidance on how to achieve CS/R success".
[9] As I note in chapter 2, the paper by Stubbs and Cocklin (2008) is considered a founding resource in the SBMI research field. This means that the research field is 13 years old at the time I submit this dissertation.

insights from my empirical and conceptual work during the PhD project, as well as by recent developments toward a practice perspective found in strategy (Golsorkhi, Rouleau, Seidl, & Vaara, 2015) and innovation (Russo-Spena & Mele, 2012) research.[10]

Practice theory is a good fit for the dissertation given my focus on SBMI activities, as practice theory places activity front and center in the analysis of social phenomena (Schatzki, 2019). This is evident in the fact that in practice theory, *practices*, which can be minimally defined as "arrays of activity" (Schatzki, 2001, p. 2), are viewed as the central building blocks in social life (Reckwitz, 2002). The major advantage that practice theory in general and site ontology in particular offer this dissertation is a rich conceptualization of activity, and thus a richer conceptualization of what it means to research SBMI activities.

Given my use of practice theory as a clarifying theoretical lens on my PhD project, the general purpose of the dissertation can be concretized through two research questions, the first of which are:

> *RQ1. What characterizes SBMI processes when viewed as practice?*

This first research question forms the center of the dissertation, in the sense that most of the dissertation is dedicated to answering it; the development of a conceptual framework in chapter 2, the literature review in chapter 3, and the four appended papers all contribute to answering RQ1.

The work toward answering RQ1 proceeded in what can be summarized as a "zoom-in" movement toward an increasingly detailed view of the SBMI process viewed as practice. The conceptual model of the SBMI process viewed as practice that is introduced in chapter 2 and the literature review in chapter 3 form the basis for this movement. The conceptual model provides a concrete frame that informs the literature review and orders the findings from the literature and the appended papers. The review establishes the state of knowledge on SBMI activities by systematically investigating the presence of practice-relevant findings in the

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[10] Please note that the shorthand "practice theory" in actuality refers to a myriad of different theories, related only by general "family resemblances" (Nicolini, 2012). I discuss this and my choice of Schatzki's version of practice theory in chapter 2.

published literature, finding that, while there are some traces of practice-relevant findings, the literature lacks depth and nuance.

The appended papers are ordered chronologically by when the work on each paper started, and they continue the zoom-in movement from chapters 2 and 3. The papers start the work of filling in the knowledge gaps in the extant SBMI literature by offering knowledge on three central components of activity when viewed through a practice lens: practices, practitioners, and praxis (cf. Whittington, 2006).

In the first paper, I started with an organizational-level perspective, investigating SBMI practice through exploratory factor analysis of survey data from managers in Norwegian knowledge-intensive service firms. Viewed through a practice lens, paper I investigates quantitatively two aspects of SBMI practices: (1) the organization of different tasks into two types of bigger projects; and (2) the goal-directed, or teleological, nature of these practices. The interrelation between these aspects is also explored.

While the answers from paper I are illuminating in their own sense, I found that the paper took too much of a macro-level approach to the phenomenon of SBMI and did not capture some of the pertinent related practices that shape SBMI work. The subsequent two papers represent both a narrower focus on the inner workings of organizations and a shift in focus toward including a broader set of pertinent practices. This shift in focus was achieved by concentrating on concrete management practices and praxis and how these are challenged by SBMI. Paper II is concerned with management practices and explores conceptually how the nature and needs of SBMs by necessity will place new demands on extant management practices and potentially upheave them.

Inspired by a need for richer knowledge on implementation issues connected to SBMI that was identified in paper II, paper III zooms further in and investigates management praxis—the situated, daily, and improvised actions of practitioners.[11] This is done through a qualitative case study of the managers concerned with implementing sustainability in a project organization set up to deliver the sporting event "Youth Winter Olympics" at Lillehammer in 2016.

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[11] See more on how the findings from paper II informed the approach in paper III and paper IV in section 4.2.

Paper II and paper III get closer to the individuals performing SBMI than paper I by concentrating on management practices and praxis, which are closer to individuals than the overarching project- and organization-level view of SBMI practice offered in paper I. However, my choice of angle in paper II and paper III stops shy of actually incorporating single individuals in the picture. Instead, the individuals are reduced to a faceless and uniform group of managers. Given the focus on actions by individuals in the knowledge gap informing the dissertation, this lack of individuals felt unsatisfactory, as if missing some essential part of the puzzle. Thus, I sought to correct the lack of individuals in papers I through III by choosing an individual-centric research design in the final appended paper, which investigates how sustainability practitioners work to engage their colleagues. Paper IV consists of a qualitative case study that centers on three focal individuals situated in three separate organizations. The paper investigates how these individuals perform their daily work and relate to their colleagues.

The analysis in paper IV concerns the efforts that the studied practitioners made to persuade their colleagues to prioritize SBMI work. The paper draws on and contributes to the literature on social issue selling, and uses practice theory as an interpretive lens to offer suggestions and empirical findings that enrich this literature. In the dissertation cover, I lightly reinterpret paper IV to draw out findings that represent relevant contributions to the SBMI literature. Thus, I contribute to the SBMI literature by connecting it to the literature on social issue selling.

The appended papers offer a multi-angle collage of the SBMI process viewed as practice, with individual findings on the practices, practitioners and praxes that are pertinent to the SBMI process. Through this collage, the dissertation contributes to both the literature and to practitioners by increasing our understanding of the SBMI process viewed as practice. Furthermore, the papers highlight two key themes that characterize the SBMI process when viewed as practice: the complexity and centrality of the process. The latter theme is concerned with how the SBMI literature, with its focus on knowledge on the SBMI process, can be seen as an umbrella literature within CS/R research.

The second research question is informed by the accumulated knowledge from answering RQ1 and represents a "zoom-out" movement toward a research topic with a wider scope. In

particular, RQ2 attempts to tease out which broader implications the application of practice theory to SBMI research can have for our understanding of SBMI:

> *RQ2. How can the application of practice theory in research of SBMI enrich our understanding of SBMI as a phenomenon?*

This second research question—while grander in scope than RQ1—represents both less work and less output in the sense of page count than RQ1. However, the function of RQ2 in the dissertation is important: it builds on and draws inspiration from the work on RQ1 and moves beyond the main thrust of the dissertation in order to make an additional contribution that points out possible ways forward for scholars that want to continue the investigation of SBMI as practice. RQ2 does so in the sense that it discusses how different applications of practice theory can inform our understanding of SBMI as a phenomenon. In answer to RQ2, I draw on an organizing framework for practice-based studies (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011) and show that practice theory can be employed as a framework for understanding SBMI in three different ways. I then discuss the implications for SBMI research.

1.3 ORGANIZATION OF THE DISSERTATION

Beyond this introductory chapter, the dissertation is organized as follows. In chapter 2, the theoretical framework of the dissertation is laid out, in the sense of an introduction to the core constructs and theories I draw from in the rest of the dissertation. Chapter 2 also provides a central building block in the dissertation by developing a conceptual model of the SBMI process viewed as practice that is used as a tool for classifying current knowledge on SBMI activities in the remainder of the dissertation. Chapter 3 contains a practice-based review of the SBMI literature, which offers a contribution of its own by investigating the extant literature exploring how its findings can contribute to our understanding of SBMI processes viewed as practice. Furthermore, chapter 3 serves as a backdrop that I situate the contributions of the appended papers against in the remainder of the dissertation. Chapter 4 states my methodological position, provides an overview of the empirical material that I have obtained and utilized in the dissertation, and finally discusses how I worked to ensure quality in the appended papers in light of traditional quality measures for research. The fifth chapter

summarizes findings in the appended papers, with a special emphasis on those findings that are relevant to the purpose and research questions of the dissertation. Finally, in chapter 6, the contributions of the dissertation are discussed, alongside limitations and implications for practice and for further research.

> A thousand fibers connect us with our fellow men.
> Our actions run as causes, and they come back to
> us as effects.
> – Herman Melville

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of this chapter is to detail the theoretical building blocks of the dissertation, in order to ensure sufficient conceptual clarity in the rest of the text. To achieve this purpose, the chapter introduces and discusses terms and theories that are fundamental to the dissertation. Furthermore, a key takeaway from this chapter is a conceptual model of the SBMI process viewed as practice that forms a foundational part of the dissertation, in the sense that it will be used as an device for classifying the current knowledge on SBMI activities.

The rest of the chapter is organized as follows. In section 2.1 I introduce and discuss key concepts in the dissertation, and provide definitions of these concepts, as well as some background context on the SBMI literature. Section 2.2 provides a brief preamble on practice theory, including points on why practice theory is a useful lens for illuminating SBMI activities. I also give reasons for which sources I build on in the conceptual model that concludes the chapter. Finally, in section 2.3 I present and explain my conceptual model of the SBMI process viewed as practice.

2.1 KEY CONCEPTS

In this section I discuss and define CS/R (my umbrella term for corporate sustainability and/or corporate social responsibility), give an overview of the SBMI literature and provide definitions of SBM and SBMI.

2.1.1 Defining CS/R

The tradition of private-sector organizations engaging in voluntary practices to provide environmental and/or social benefits to society is more than 3,500 years old (Husted, 2015). The academic study of such practices traces its roots back to the 1950s (Carroll, 1999).

During the course of its (academically speaking) young lifespan, the research field has accumulated a rich history of different conceptualizations of its focal phenomenon (Carroll, 1999), and these conceptualizations are often marked by competition, overlaps, and rivalry (Montiel, 2008; Okoye, 2009; van Marrewijk, 2003).

In this dissertation, I will adopt a stance as an "umbrella advocate" (cf. Hirsch & Levin, 1999) and therefore base my work on a broad definition of the phenomenon—an umbrella construct—that covers the two overlapping but distinct constructs CS and CSR. In the rest of the dissertation, I will refer to this umbrella construct as "corporate sustainability and/or corporate social responsibility," shortened to "CS/R." A basis for this move is that I view the two terms CS and CSR as interchangeable for my purposes in this dissertation. This means that I will refer to papers that use each of the terms without focusing on their differences unless these are salient for my use of the findings in the relevant papers. I base my CS/R construct on the following definition by van Marrewijk and Werre (2003):

> "Corporate Sustainability, and also CSR, refers to a company's activities—voluntary by definition—demonstrating the inclusion of social and environmental concerns in business operations and in interactions with stakeholders" (p. 107).

I will add some slight modifications to this definition. First, I will remove the part about the voluntary nature of the activities, based on the fact that the line between "voluntary" and "required" seems to be somewhat blurred when it comes to CS/R (cf. Carroll, 1979, 1991; Matten & Moon, 2008). Second, the domain of this definition can be extended beyond companies to apply to all organizations by replacing the word "company" with the word "organization" and deleting the word "business" from the phrase "business operations." Third, I will perform some minor language edits for better flow and greater alignment with the understanding that CS/R is something an organization *does*. My revised definition becomes: the umbrella construct "corporate sustainability and/or corporate social responsibility" (CS/R)

is defined as an organization's activities that demonstrate the inclusion of social and environmental concerns in operations and in interactions with stakeholders.

The CS/R concept, as defined above, gives me a general and activity-oriented definition that describes what it is that organizations engage in when they "do CS/R." However, this definition does not offer any indication of what it means to be a fully sustainable or responsible organization—an aspect that is covered in several other definitions of CS and CSR, which can be seen as the end goal of engaging in CS/R.[12] To remedy this, I will adopt a second, complementary definition, which describes the phenomenon of "being a sustainable/responsible organization." This definition builds on the definition launched by the UN World Commission on Environment and Development (1987, p. 54): "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

More specifically, I will use the definition of ecological sustainability proposed by Starik and Rands (1995) as the basis for my definition of being a sustainable/responsible organization.[13] Although Starik and Rands (1995) are concerned primarily with ecological/environmental sustainability, they adopt a system perspective that is easily extended to the social system of society as well. Thus, my definition of "being a sustainable/responsible organization" is to be an organization that exercises the ability to "exist and flourish (either unchanged or in evolved forms) for lengthy timeframes, in such a manner that the existence and flourishing of other collectivities of entities is permitted at related levels and in related systems" (Starik & Rands, 1995, p. 909).

In sum, I have now established both a general definition of CS/R as a phenomenon in organizations, as well as a more specific and goal-oriented definition of what it means to be a sustainable/responsible organization.

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[12] As a nuance here, while "being a sustainable/responsible organization" can be seen as an end goal, it has been argued that this end goal is a moving target and that organizations should strive for continuous improvement (Jørgensen & Pedersen, 2018).

[13] For a simpler definition that also discusses the temporal aspect and the relationship between sustainability and strategy, see Bansal and DesJardine (2014).

2.1.2 Introducing SBM and SBMI

Research on SBMs and SBMI has emerged as a separate field within CS/R research in recent years. The paper by Stubbs and Cocklin (2008) is heralded as a seminal contribution to this research field (Schaltegger et al., 2016). In the study, Stubbs and Cocklin (2008) build on a multiple case study of two firms and use an abductive approach to identify central components of a what they term "the sustainability business model." Since this contribution, several studies have been published. In this section, I give a brief overview of the field, before I hone in on defining its key terms in the following subsection and outline my view of SBMI as a process in the final subsection.

A note on my use of terms are in order before we move on. In the rest of the dissertation, I will refer to the sum of contributions that centers on SBMs or SBMI or both as "the SBMI literature," since I hold that even papers that only reference SBM (or equivalent terms) explicitly , are implicitly about SBMI in the sense that they describe the desired end goal of SBMI.

From the initial contribution of Stubbs and Cocklin (2008), SBMI research has rapidly become an established research and practice field of its own (Lüdeke-Freund & Dembek, 2017). The SBMI literature combines the concepts of business models and business-model innovation from strategy research with insights and research topics from the CS/R field in order to shed light on "the value creation logic of an organization" (Schaltegger et al., 2016, p. 5), how this value creation logic is built up, and the effects this value-creation logic has on the wider set of stakeholders around the company, including the natural environment.

SBMI scholars argue that turning toward SBM as a concept holds important promises for research on CS/R—amongst these: 'value mapping' tools for planning and ideation that can improve sustainability thinking in business (Bocken, Rana, & Short, 2015); the potential to complement literature on the multi-level perspective on socio-technical transition toward sustainability and offer richer explanations on transitioning society toward sustainability (Bidmon & Knab, 2018); and the possibility that sustainable business model innovation could prove to be a central component in leveraging business case effects from corporate sustainability efforts (Schaltegger, Lüdeke-Freund, & Hansen, 2012). However, promising themes aside, the SBMI literature is also marred by some troubling issues, especially

regarding lack of construct clarity and cumulative theorizing (Bocken, Boons, & Baldassarre, 2019).

The SBMI literature is closely related to the literature on business models (BMs), a burgeoning and complex literature (cf. Massa et al., 2017) that centers on the 'how' of organizations (Santos et al., 2015), and that holds activities as the key components of BMs (Zott & Amit, 2010). As pointed out in chapter 1, the fact that the SBM construct builds on the BM construct and thus is poised to uphold the focus on 'how' and activities inherent in the BM construct is a central reason why the SBMI literature can be said to provide a promising avenue for investigating how sustainable change at the organizational level can be effected through activities.

However, it is worth noting that although the SBM construct builds on the BM construct and thus on the BM literature, SBMI scholars seem—based on my review of the SBMI literature (cf. chapter 3) and my knowledge of the BM and BMI literatures—to have imported insights from the BM and BMI literatures somewhat selectively, as I will illustrate below. This likely means that SBMI research could stand to gain from a better integration with the accumulated knowledge on BMs, something which could provide SBMI scholars with, among other things, different ways to conceptualize and thus investigate the business model construct.

A key way in which the SBMI literature incompletely incorporates insights from the BM literature is in how the BM is conceptualized. As shown by Massa et al. (2017) in their review of the BM literature, the current contributions on BMs build on one of three interpretations of the key term:

> "(1) business models as attributes of real firms, (2) business models as cognitive/linguistic schemas, and (3) business models as formal conceptual representations of how a business functions." (p. 73)

The authors show that many of the foundational sources in the BM literature subscribe to either interpretation (1) or (3), and go on to point out that there is a lack of contributions that integrate the three different interpretations, and that thus this is an opportunity for future contributions. Furthermore, the authors clearly view the work SBMI as a sub-stream of the general BM literature, as they include key SBMI contributions in their review. What is

interesting regarding missed opportunities for SBMI scholars is that Massa et al. group the SBMI contributions they include in their analysis as based on only two of the three interpretations of BMs: as attributes of real firms and as formal conceptual representations. In other words, Massa et al. identify zero SBMI contributions that are based on interpreting BMs as cognitive/linguistic schemas—an assessment that coincides with my reading of the SBMI literature. The lack of contributions based on this third understanding of BMs means that the SBMI literature misses key insights built on such an understanding.

As an illustration of what the SBMI literature misses by not integrating insights from the BM and BMI literatures, I will briefly highlight three contributions that build on the interpretation of business models as cognitive/linguistic schemas. First, Doganova and Eyquem-Renault (2009) build on an understanding of the BM as "both a calculative and a narrative device" (p. 1560), or, more plainly, a narrative which involves numbers (cf. Magretta, 2002). Based on this understanding, the authors show how BMs formulated by entrepreneurs are used as a tool to communicate future business opportunities and recruit a network of stakeholders who can help realize these business opportunities. Doganova and Eyquem-Renault highlight the performative role of the BM as a material object (in the form of, for instance, a PowerPoint presentation) that functions as a demonstration or "scale model" that enables experimentation and discussions rather than an objective description. Furthermore, the goal of this scale model is to produce "encounters" where the entrepreneurs, the BM and potential partners meet and are changed. Thus, the BM

> "[…] constructs both the object and the public of the demonstration: the new venture and its network." (Doganova & Eyquem-Renault, 2009, p. 1568)

The authors underscore that the influence goes both ways: through exposure to the public, the BM can end up changing as well, and the BM in the study went through several iterations. All in all, Doganova and Eyquem-Renault provide important insights into how BMs can be used to envision a future business, and more specifically how entrepreneurs use BMs to create new ventures.

The second contribution I will highlight here, by Perkmann and Spicer (2010), elaborates on Doganova and Eyquem-Renault's (2009) insight regarding the performativity of BMs by suggesting three different ways in which BMs can be performative. First, by providing a

narrative that persuades stakeholders. Second, by building legitimacy through imitating known and approved BMs from other organizations. Third, by offering recipes for making decisions in the form of mental models for managers that suggest which courses of action that are privileged over others (e.g., by instructing managers to favor efficiency over novelty, cf. Zott & Amit, 2007).

Finally, Demil and Lecocq (2015) build on an understanding of BMs as cognitive models that at the same time are materialized in different artifacts that represent the BM. The authors conceptualize a BM as a network of actants (Latour, 2005) and find that human actors try to change a company's business model by introducing new artifacts and modifying or dropping old artifacts to change the network.

In summary, the three contributions highlighted here not only build on an interpretation of BMs as cognitive and linguistic schemas; they also combine this interpretation with a strong focus on the material side of BMs, informed by actor-network theory (cf. Law, 2008; Latour, 2005). The resulting research offers a refreshing and promising take on BMs which clearly distances itself from the "essentialist" view held in traditional BM scholarship that that typically interpret BMs as either the attributes of real firms or formal models (Doganova & Eyquem-Renault, 2009; Massa et al., 2017). Pioneering efforts such as those of Doganova and Eyquem-Renault (2009), Perkmann and Spicer (2010) and Demil and Lecocq (2015) can be viewed as essential in moving a research field forward (cf. Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011, 2013; Whetten, 1989).

However, while the contributions above are valuable additions to the literatures on BM and BMI, they have not yet been integrated into the SBMI literature. As stated in chapter 1, I seek to build on and contribute to the SBMI literature, and thus the articles above are not directly part of the literature on which I base the dissertation. That being said, I acknowledge the potential for contributing to the SBMI literature by doing SBMI research inspired by the three highlighted contributions. However, I acknowledge this type of potential contribution as only *one of many* roads towards contributing to the SBMI literature. In this dissertation, I have chosen a different road, resulting in two different types of contributions. First, incremental additions to the literature through papers I, II and III. I have sought to start with incremental additions to the existing literature—contributing by addressing incompleteness rather than claiming inadequacy or incommensurability, if you will (cf. Locke & Golden-Biddle, 1997)—

as I view this to be a prudent strategy when starting out as a researcher.[14] This choice means that my research efforts have been based on the current SBMI literature and its interpretation of BMs as attributes of real firms or formal models (see more on this in section 2.1.3 below). To summarize, I have chosen not to engage directly with the papers by Doganova and Eyquem-Renault (2009), Perkmann and Spicer (2010) and Demil and Lecocq (2015) in this dissertation, since they are outside the SBMI literature and build on a different interpretation of BMs that the interpretations that are present in the SBMI literature.

The second type of contribution I make is through bringing in Schatzkian practice theory as a new theoretical lens on SBMI as a phenomenon through paper IV and this dissertation cover. The idea and execution of contributing to the extant SBMI literature by adding a practice lens grew out of the work on the papers.[15]

In the following sections, I will present my definitions of SBM and SBMI, as these terms form key building blocks in the dissertation. In the process, I will relate the SBMI literature to salient points from the general literature on business models and business model innovation drawn from the strategy field.

2.1.3   Defining SBM

The relative immaturity of the SBMI field has resulted in different and fragmented definitions of the terms SBM and SBMI. This problem is widely recognized for the term "sustainable business model" (cf. Bocken et al., 2019; Geissdoerfer et al., 2018), which also is plagued by confusion by several partly overlapping concepts such as "the strongly sustainable business model" (Upward & Jones, 2016) and "the normative business model" (Randles & Laasch, 2016).

In this dissertation, I will base my understanding of SBM on a recent definition by Laasch (2018). This definition is built on a systematic review of both SBMI literature and general business-model definitions. Laasch (2018) notes that an SBM is a type of "organizational

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[14] As a side note it is worth stressing that even though Alvesson and Sandberg (2011, 2013) and Whetten (1989) place a high premium on research that challenges fundemental assumptions, they do not dispute the necessity and value of incremental research efforts as such.

[15] See more on this in section 4.2.

value logic," an abstract model that "defines the essence of what the business is" (p. 160). Based on the business model literature, he adds that an organizational value logic consists of four value functions: value proposition, value creation, value exchange, and value capture. Laasch then defines an SBM as a type of organizational value logic that describes the following type of content for each of the value functions:

> "[…] what kind of value should be offered to which stakeholders, including customers, to contribute to sustainable development [value proposition]; what structures, activities, capabilities, and resources the organization needs to govern sustainably, to create the proposed value [value creation]; how to relate to stakeholders and actors to contribute to a sustainable system of exchange [value exchange]; as well as the organization's impact and its reproduction mechanisms to achieve optimum scale [value capture]." (p. 172)

This definition is built on work that consolidates business model and SBM definitions from the respective literatures, and thus it should provide a solid basis for an understanding of the SBM concept. However, some nuances should be added. I draw these from the general business model literature, as this literature is the direct foundation of the SBM concept.

In addition the general definition offered by Laasch (2018), I draw from Zott and Amit (2010), and adopt an activity-system perspective on SBMs in this dissertation, where an SBM is seen as "a system of interdependent activities that transcends the focal firm and spans its boundaries" (p. 216). This approach is adopted by several other SBMI scholars as well (e.g., Inigo et al., 2017; Oskam, Bossink, & de Man, 2018; Ritala, Huotari, Bocken, Albareda, & Puumalainen, 2018). Zott and Amit (2010) explain the terms activity and activity system thusly:

> An *activity* in a focal firm's business model can be viewed as the engagement of human, physical and/or capital resources of any party to the business model (the focal firm, end customers, vendors, etc.) to serve a specific purpose toward the fulfillment of the overall objective. An *activity system* is thus a set of interdependent organizational activities centered on a focal firm, including those conducted by the focal firm, its partners, vendors or customers, etc. (p. 217)

In other words, adopting an activity-system perspective on SBMs means that SBMs are fundamentally made up of the activities of the people involved in the value creation of the organization.

Combining the definition by Laasch (2018) and the activity-system perspective of Zott and Amit (2010) means that I view SBMs as activity systems that can be summed up and modelled as overarching value logics. The SBM is the sum of activities that make up the activity system described by Zott and Amit (2010). However, this sum of activities can be summarized in a value logic statement as per Laasch (2018). This means that I combine two of the interpretations of BMs coined by Massa et al. (2017)—BMs as attributes of real firms (i.e., activity systems) and BMs as formal models (i.e., value logics)—while leaving out the third interpretation suggested by these authors (BMs as cognitive/linguistic schemas).

2.1.4   Defining SBMI: a process approach

I have not succeeded in locating a satisfactory definition of SBMI in the extant SBMI literature. I will, therefore, combine several elements into a working definition that I use in the remainder of this dissertation. As a starting point, an established definition in the literature is that SBMIs are:

> "Innovations that create significant positive and/or significantly reduced negative impacts for the environment and/or society, through changes in the way the organization and its value-network create, deliver value and capture value (i.e., create economic value) or change their value propositions." (Bocken, Short, Rana, & Evans, 2014, p. 44)

The first part of this definition describes the effects Bocken et al. (2014, p. 44) view as sufficient for an instance of SBMI to occur: "significant positive and/or significantly reduced negative impacts for the environment and/or society." The second part of the definition (the part after the comma) essentially describes the elements of a business model, thus stating that

an SBMI occurs through changes in business model elements.[16] However, the definition is unclear on *how* an SBMI is carried out, and on *what* kinds of changes in business model elements qualify as constitutive of an SBMI. This lack of clarity is partly addressed by an alternative definition of SBMI presented by Geissdoerfer et al. (2018), based on a review of the definitions of SBMI and business model innovation in the extant literature:

> "We define sustainable business model innovation as *the conceptualisation and implementation of sustainable business models. This can comprise the development of entirely new business models, the diversification into additional business models, the acquisition of new business models, or the transformation from one business model to another.*" (p. 407)

The Geissdoerfer et al. (2018) definition features points on the two elements lacking in the Bocken et al. (2014) definition. The first of these is a specification of *how* the change of business model elements is carried out through conceptualization and implementation. This part of the definition briefly highlights the insight that SBMI is seen as a "process of business model exploration, adjustment, improvement, redesign, revision, creation, development, adoption, and transformation" (Geissdoerfer et al., 2018, p. 406). This process-oriented view of SBMI is in line with several scholars in the SBMI literature (e.g., Bocken et al., 2019; Gulbrandsen, 2015; Inigo et al., 2017; Jørgensen & Pedersen, 2018; Randles & Laasch, 2016; Ritala et al., 2018; Roome & Louche, 2016) as well as interpretations of innovation as a process in the general innovation literature (e.g., Kanter, 1988; Van De Ven, Polley, Garud, & Venkataraman, 2008).

The second element that Geissdoerfer et al. (2018) add is a description of *what* kind of changes in the overall business model that constitute an SBMI: "start-ups, business model transformation, business, model diversification, and business model acquisition" (p. 405). Geissdoerfer et al. (2018) explain that they arrived at these "generic configurations of business model innovation" inductively based on their reviewed business model innovation papers.

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[16] Note that while the business model elements here are slightly different to the ones presented by Laasch (2018), they are analogous.

In this dissertation, the focal point is changes in existing business models, in particular change achieved organically rather than through acquisition. As the Geissdoerfer et al. (2018) definition offers little detail on this subject, I turn to the business model innovation literature to bolster my working definition, as this is a key theoretical foundation underlying the SBMI literature.

Foss and Saebi (2017, p. 201) build on a review of the business model innovation literature and define business model innovation as "designed, novel, nontrivial changes to the key elements of a firm's business model and/or the architecture linking these elements." This definition allows for changes in one part of the business model to be categorized as business model innovation—a position not shared by all the papers in the business model innovation literature, but a position that I will base this dissertation on.

I now have all the elements in place to construct a working definition. By melding elements from Bocken et al. (2014), Geissdoerfer et al. (2018), and Foss and Saebi (2017), I arrive at the following working definition of SBMI:

> Sustainable business model innovation is a change process that results in significant positive and/or significantly reduced negative impacts for the environment and/or society through designed, novel, nontrivial changes to the key elements of an organization's business model (value proposition, creation, exchange, and capture) and/or the architecture linking these elements.

One loose end remains in this definition: the term "process." As I have adopted an activity-system perspective on SBM, it is implied that the change process part of the definition refers to the concrete activities of the people involved. Thus, in this dissertation, I approach SBMI as a process in the third sense offered by Van de Ven (1992), in other words as, "a sequence of events or activities that describes how things change over time" (p. 170).

As discussed below, in the section on affinities between practice theory and process theory, applying such a strong interpretation of process (cf. Langley, 2007) to SBMI also aligns my conceptualization of SBMI as a process closely with a practice perspective (cf. Burgelman et al., 2018).

With definitions of both key concepts established, what remains in this section are a few brief reflections on the implications of my choices. The main implication—which was present in the previous chapter, and which hopefully will become increasingly clear through the remainder of the dissertation—is that in my research, I see the process as a more important and interesting focal point for research than its end result. The focus on results inherent in the definition of SBM and in Bocken et al.'s (2014) definition of SBMI is useful in its own right, but mostly when evaluating or cataloging SBMs and SBMIs as a detached observer. I adopt the view that the SBMI process is a journey, and not necessarily along a straight line (cf. Van de Ven et al., 2008), and hold that charting the journey is equally important as describing the destination.

2.2 A BRIEF PREAMBLE ON PRACTICE THEORY

In this section, I briefly justify my use of practice theory as a lens to bring out nuances regarding SBMI activities. I then present a general overview of practice theory that serves as backdrop to my use of practice theory as a lens on my subject matter. The section ends with an explanation of why I have chosen to employ one specific practice theory from within the whole family of practice theories in this dissertation.

2.2.1 Why practice theory?

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, practice theory offers a promising theoretical basis for putting activity front and center in analysis of the SBMI process. In short, this is due to the fact that practice theory trains the eyes towards activity and offers a set of sensitizing concepts (cf. Blumer, 1954) that allows scholars to grasp nuances when studying activity. In practice theory, practices are viewed as "the primary generic social thing" (Schatzki, 2001, p. 1)—the building block that social life is made up of. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, practices are typically defined as "arrays of activity" (Schatzki, 2001, p. 2). This means that in practice theory, *activity* is seen as the very heart of all social life—including organizational life, CS/R efforts, the quest for SBMs, SBMI processes, etc. This makes practice theory an ideal resource for my dissertation, given that I focus on activity.

A further point in favor of practice theory is its affinity with process-oriented research, which makes practice theory a good match when researching the SBMI process. As argued by Burgelman et al. (2018) within the strategy as a practice field, there are useful affinities between a practice perspective and process research. Burgelman et al. (2018) take a combinatory view of process and practice research within the strategy field and suggest that the two research streams can be fruitfully merged into a single research stream. In the view of these authors, such an integration of process and practice research is facilitated when process research adopts a strong process ontology (cf. Langley, 2007; Langley, Smallman, Tsoukas, & Van de Ven, 2013) where "everything is seen as process, reflecting continuous activity." (Burgelman et al., 2018, p. 540). Thus, process and practice research meet in the way they highlight the primacy of activity, and this connection indicates great synergy between viewing SBMI as a process and adopting a practice-based lens on SBMI.

2.2.2 Backdrop: the broader vista of practice theory

In recent years, social theory and social sciences are said to have taken a "practice turn" in the sense that writings and research centered on or employing the term "practice" have come to occupy an increasingly central position, even to the point of being labeled a "bandwagon" (Corradi, Gherardi, & Verzelloni, 2010; Nicolini, 2012; Ortner, 1984; Schatzki, Cetina, & von Savigny, 2001).[17] The practice turn is evident in a wide variety of disciplines, such as philosophy, sociology, ethnomethodology, and cultural theory (Schatzki, 2001); anthropology (Ortner, 1984); and organization studies (Corradi et al., 2010; Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011). It is useful to distinguish between two broad research streams within the practice turn: (1) *practice-based studies* (cf. Corradi et al., 2010), understood as applied social-science research within various research fields that employs the term "practice" as a central component; and (2) *practice theory*, understood as the development of "social theories" (Reckwitz, 2002) or "social ontologies" (Schatzki, 2002, 2003), centering on the concept of practice as the fundamental unit of social life.

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[17] This practice turn has also been described as a "re-turn to practice," in the sense that social sciences are both returning to practice perspectives, as this is not a new phenomenon, and that this return also represents a necessary repositioning or restart of practice theory compared to the older versions of the theory, hence the emphasis on *re*-turn, as in taking a new turn and offering a fresh perspective (Miettinen, Samra-Fredericks, & Yanow, 2009).

The second stream of research within the practice turn, practice theory, is a type of theorizing that typically has taken place within philosophy and sociology. An important point regarding *practice theory* is the plurality of the literature. No such thing as a single, over-arching, or unified practice theory actually exists (Hui, Schatzki, & Shove, 2017; Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 2003). What is often referred to as practice theory is, rather, a heterogeneous set of different practice theor*ies*, which are typically built on the foundations of the work of Heidegger and Wittgenstein and which include, but are not limited to, the works of thinkers such as Bourdieu, Giddens, Foucault, Garfinkel, Latour, Taylor, and Schatzki (Reckwitz, 2002). This set of practice theories has only a somewhat stable core of shared assumptions or "family resemblances" in common (Nicolini, 2012). Thus, when I write about practice theory in this dissertation, it is only as a convenient shorthand for the research stream that encompasses the full family of practice theories and their shared minimum assumptions.

I not only draw on practice theory as an inspiration, I also draw on *practice-based studies*. The term encompasses a broad and diverse section of research. However, I have drawn primarily from research within management and organization studies. Three research streams are considered to be key in establishing and fueling the practice turn within this field: science studies, organizational learning and knowledge management, and "strategy as practice" (Corradi et al., 2010; Nicolini, 2012). Other research streams include practice-based innovation (Russo-Spena & Mele, 2012), managing (Korica, Nicolini, & Johnson, 2017), institutional work (Lawrence, Leca, & Zilber, 2013; Lawrence, Suddaby, & Leca, 2011), and marketing as practice (Skålén & Hackley, 2011).

2.2.3   My practice lens: Schatzki's site ontology and the Whittington (2006) framework

In my introduction of practice theory above, I briefly stated some key thinkers that have offered different forms of practice theories—and the list is quite impressive. The diverse family of practice theories constituted by the works of these thinkers forms what Nicolini (2012, p. 9) describes as "a complicated network of similarities and dissimilarities." There would be advantages to incorporating a multi-faceted amalgam of the works of several practice theorists as a theoretical lens in this dissertation (cf. Nicolini, 2012). However, I will

limit myself to using a very specific practice theory as my theoretical lens in the reminder of this dissertation. More specifically, I have chosen Schatzki's (1996, 2002, 2010, 2019) site ontology combined with Whittington's (2006) practice framework. The choice of such a focused theoretical lens over the option of building a lens based on a more varied amalgam of thinkers is made for the pragmatic reason of keeping the conceptual apparatus I employ in the dissertation relatively compact and tractable. As the family of practice theories contains a broad and comprehensive set of theories, the chosen thinkers represent only two of several possibilities. I have chosen them due to the strengths that I briefly detail in the next paragraphs. However, since the choice to confine myself to Schatzki and Whittington means that I have left other theories out, I necessarily miss the benefits that these other theories would have given the dissertation. See more on the limitations this entails in section 6.2.1.2.

Schatzki calls his practice theory a "site ontology" in order to highlight its central assumption, namely that the basic building block of social life—and thus a central concern in the analysis of social phenomena—is sites, in the sense of "a kind of context in which [social life] transpires" (Schatzki, 2005, p. 467). Sites are "bundles of practices and material arrangements" (Schatzki, 2019, p. 26), and in Schatzki's conception all human action transpires in, are informed by, and in turn help uphold or change one or more such sites. In this way, Schatzki's "sites" hold the place that practices hold in my general account of practice theory above, as the primary social thing. Schatzki's site ontology has been characterized as

> "[…] one of the strongest versions of practice theories [...] a far-reaching theory that takes practice as the principal constitutive element of social social life in all its manifestations […]" (Nicolini, 2012, p. 163)

Beside its properties as a strong practice theory, I have chosen to employ Schatzki's site ontology in this dissertation mainly due to its properties as a "flat" practice ontology, that avoids organizing practices in strict vertical hierarchies in the way that "tall" practice ontologies do—instead flat ontologies see individual practices as embedded in a flat and all-encompassing web of connections (Schatzki, 2019; Seidl & Whittington, 2014). Given that my primary research interest is related to the situated actions of individuals, and, further, that a focus on interconnections seems fitting for such a multidisciplinary and tangled topic as

CS/R, the "flat ontology" properties were deemed as useful for my inquiry.[18] A secondary reason why I employ Schatzki's site ontology is its preoccupation with the goal-directedness of human actions (see Schatzki, 2010, 2019). This preoccupation is in line with my general research interests, and furthermore, as we shall see, it is useful in this dissertation seeing as the SBMI literature is preoccupied with the goals of SBMI processes (see chapter 3 for more on this).

The practice lens I employ in the remainder of the dissertation combines Schatzki's site ontology with the Whittington (2006) framework for analyzing strategy as practice. Whittington's (2006) framework was added to Schatzki's site ontology because it provides a meta-frame that succinctly identifies three key elements that are included in both Schatzki's site ontology and other practice theories: practitioners, i.e. the acting individuals; praxis, i.e. their improvised actions; and practices, i.e. the common sources of knowledge that they draw from when performing their actions. In this way, Whittington's (2006) categories provide useful additional sorting devices for research on SBMI activities that complements Schatzki's account. They do so in a non-intrusive way, in the sense that the elements Whittington identify are essentially contained within Schatzki's account, and thus all Whittington's framework provides is a what I view as a summarization of insights that are already present in Schatzki's account.[19]

2.3   A CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF SBMI VIEWED AS PRACTICE

Figure 2.1 below presents a conceptual model derived from combining key elements from Schatzki's site ontology with the Whittington (2006) framework. The purpose of the conceptual model is to draw attention to five key aspects (as well as four sub-aspects) of SBMI viewed as practice. Separating between different aspects of the phenomenon in this

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[18] Another theory within the broad family of practice theories that have this property of "flatness" is actor-network theory (cf. Latour, 2005). Not employing actor-network theory in this dissertation constitutes a missed opportunity. See more on actor-network theory as a promising direction for further research in section 6.2.1.2.

[19] Non-intrusiveness is a key desirable feature for me here. It means that I get the advantage of summarizing insights from Schatzki's account somewhat without adding the complexity inherent in combining detailed accounts from several different thinkers. The minor and non-intrusive nature of adding the Whittington (2006) framework is easy to see when comparing the fact that the Whittington framework is contained in the single paper I cite here, while Schatzki's account dwarfes this, as it spans several books.

way allows the model to fulfill its main function: classifying the current knowledge on SBMI activities in order to highlight gaps and potentials for further research.
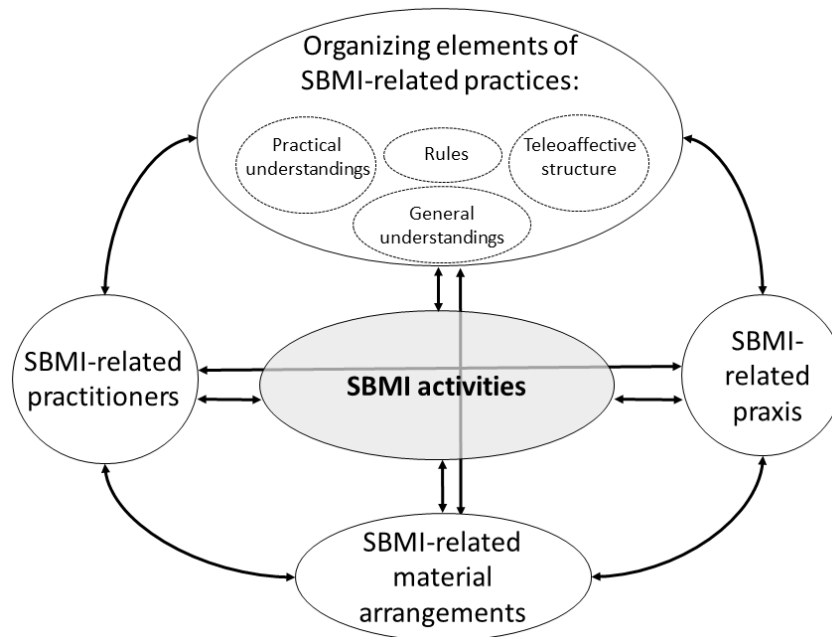
Figure 2.1: A conceptual model of SBMI viewed as practice.

Below I will discuss each of the elements in the model in turn. Three points are worth noting before this, however. First, the representation in Figure 2.1 obscures the processual nature of SBMI somewhat as it does not depict a sequence of events or activities. However, this is a small price to pay in order to avoid forcing the process into predefined stages, something which would have been a questionable move, given the inherently messy nature of "innovation journeys" in general (cf. Van de Ven et al., 2008). The model therefore offers a way to identify different aspects of SBMI activities, rather than trying to describe any form of general patterns in how SBMI processes play out.

Second, I must stress that division of the phenomenon into several distinct "boxes" in the conceptual model is not an indication that I view the phenomenon itself as separable in real life. I do not harbor any illusions that there exists activities without practitioners performing them, for instance. The separation is done for analytic purposes, in order to increase the usefulness of the model as a tool for classification. Note also that the model highlights the interconnectedness of the aspects through the bidirectional arrows between its individual elements. The exception is the organizing elements of SBMI-related practices, i.e. the four

sub-elements in the topmost ellipsis. These are drawn without arrows for reasons of simplicity, as they are simply a subdivision of "organizing elements". They are still to be considered as interconnected with each other and with all the other elements in the model, as implied by the perforated borders around these elements.

Third, the term "SBMI-related" is used in all the main elements in the model. This is done in order to acknowledge that elements can influence or enter into SBMI activities without being strictly confined to these activities. For example, material arrangements such as the physical production facilities of a company can enter into both SBMI activities and other activities. Similarly, elements organizing other practices, for instance "profit maximizing practices" can be internalized by SBMI practitioners—and also by colleagues that refrain from becoming SBMI practitioners—and as a result influence SBMI activities by conflicts or synergies between the ends of SBMI activities and the ends of profit maximizing activities. Furthermore, in general, it is true that most of us have internalized several different types of practices that we thus are "practitioners of", so a myriad of different practitioner roles can be applied to any one individual. For instance, one could be an SBMI practitioner and a financial accounting practitioner during the day and a chess practitioner and jazz practitioner at nights, as well as a child-rearing practitioner, a hobby cooking practitioner, etc. The internalized practices can influence each other and thus different "non-SBMI" practices can influence SBMI activities through this route as well.

SBMI activities form the heart of the model, and this is signaled by the gray highlight that is given to this element in Figure 2.1. Activities are at the heart of the model due to the fact that I—as mentioned previously—define SBMI as a process in the sense of a sequence of activities (cf. section 2.1.4). As I build on Schatzki, I operate with three basic levels of aggregation to describe activity: actions, tasks, and projects (Schatzki, 2002). An action is a single bodily doing or saying performed by an individual. Tasks are small "sets of doings and sayings" (Schatzki, 2002, p. 73) that are performed together (simultaneously and/or sequentially) in order to achieve some end or ends. Writing an e-mail, for instance, could be viewed as a task, as it involves several actions in the form of tapping different keys and clicking with the computer mouse. The project term represents another level of aggregation: sets of tasks that are performed together to achieve some end or ends. Arranging a meeting could be thought of as a project, as you have to perform such tasks as finding a date, sending out invitations, booking the venue, and preparing and leading the meeting. As will become

evident in chapter 3, I add to Schatzki's three basic levels of aggregation the possibility of different levels of meta-projects, which are projects so large in scope that they are composed of smaller sub-projects. This is a simple extension of Schatzki's insight regarding the usefulness of separating between different levels of aggregation when describing activity.

The elements *SBMI-related practitioners* and *SBMI-related praxis* are taken from the "practitioners" and "praxis" elements in the Whittington (2006) framework. Practitioners are defined by Whittington (2006) as the individuals "on whose skills and initiative activity depends" (p. 615), and praxis as "actual activity, what people do in practice" (p. 619). [20]

An important point of nuance in the conceptual model is the likenesses and distinctions between the two elements "SBMI-related praxis" and "the activities that make up the SBMI process" in the conceptual model. These aspects of SBMI as practice are alike in the sense that they both refer to doings and sayings—i.e., activities—performed by individuals. However, in the way I use these two concepts, there are important distinctions between them. The key to these distinctions is that the "activities" element of my conceptual model refers to the total array of activities that make up a practice, and these activities are *abstracted away* from the concrete individuals that perform them. Praxis, on the other hand, is directly tied to the "artful and improvisatory performance" (Whittington, 2006, p. 620) of concrete single individuals. Thus, I use the "praxis" element in Figure 2.1 as a category for accounts and findings that detail how concrete individuals perform their "artful and improvisatory" actions in their given circumstances. The advantage to such a division is connected to my use of the conceptual model: the model will be used in the reminder of the dissertation to sort and classify the contributions in the extant literature and in the appended papers that pertain to our understanding of SBMI activities. The division between general—and thus abstract— accounts of activity and praxis allows for separating between, on the one hand, general findings on SBMI activities, and, on the other, findings that deal with SBMI activities in a

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[20] It should be noted that while Whittington's (2006) definition of practitioners is uncontroversial, his definition of praxis is one of many available options. However, it is the established definition in the strategy as practice literature and was chosen for this reason. Whittington's definition is based on the modern-day definition of the Greek word *praxis*. Whittington's use of the term diverges from that of the Greek philosopher Aristotle. Aristotle makes a sharp distinction between *poiesis* and *praxis*, where the former describes activities directed toward achieving certain ends, while the latter describes activities that are "ends in themselves" (Balaban, 1990). I adopt Whittington's use of the word to facilitate connections between my dissertation and strategy as practice research. An investigation of the differences between *poiesis* and *praxis* when applied to empirical research of SBMI practices is outside the scope of the dissertation, but could prove to be an interesting topic of future research.

more context-sensitive manner that includes acting individuals situated in certain circumstances.

The element *SBMI-related material arrangements* in the conceptual model is drawn from Schatzki's site ontology. It as an element that is missing in its entirety from Whittington's (2006) framework, but that is central in Schatzki's ontology. Material arrangements are defined as "arrangements of material entities" (Schatzki, 2019, p. 35). With this term, Schatzki refers to the state of the physical surroundings where activity takes place, including tools used to perform the activity. Schatzki holds the view that practices are always entangled with corresponding material arrangements, as activity must be based on both elements. In Schatzki's account, practices and material arrangements form interconnected nexuses (Schatzki, 2002) or bundles (Schatzki, 2019) that he calls "sites." These sites are the basic unit of social life in Schatzki's conception, in that they form arenas for the actions of individuals and supply the impulses prompting these actions. Thus, accounting for material arrangements are crucial to our understanding of the social world.

The fifth and final main element in the conceptual model—*organizing elements of SBMI-related practices*—and its four sub-elements refers to that which organizes practices in Schatzki's account: "practical understandings, rules, teleoaffective structure, and general understandings." (Schatzki, 2002, p. 87). I will detail these elements below.

"Practical understandings" refers to understandings that the participants in a practice share regarding what is appropriate actions and responses at any given time when engaged in the practice.

"General understandings" is arguably the least well defined of Schatzki's four organizing elements. Nicolini (2012) offers the most succinct interpretation of the term, as "reflexive understandings of the overall project in which people are involved, and which contribute to practical intelligibility and hence action" (p. 167).

The most straightforward organizational element to understand is, arguably, "rules." Here, Schatzki is quite literally referring to rules, explicitly formulated "principles, precepts, and instructions that enjoin, direct, or remonstrate people to perform specific actions" (2002, p. 79).

Finally, a key element in the organization of practices is the concept of a "teleoaffective structure," defined as "a range of normativized and hierarchically ordered ends, projects, and tasks, to varying degrees allied with normativized emotions and even moods" (Schatzki, 2002, p. 80). Schatzki goes on to state that by "normativized" he means normativity, first in the sense of what one ought to do, and second in the sense of what is allowed. Put plainly, then, a teleoaffective structure is a set of ends, actions and emotions that are considered desirable and/or acceptable when one is engaged in a practice. As I advertised above, this organizing element—and teleology more generally—is central in Schatzki's account of practices (cf. Schatzki, 2019). Schatzki adds several nuances to this, among them points on the timespace of human activity (Schatzki, 2010), which we will not delve further into here.[21]

2.4 Summing up

This chapter has introduced and discussed key concepts employed in the dissertation, and then introduced a conceptual model of SBMI viewed as practice. This model will function as an interpretive lens and an organizing device in the reminder of the dissertation. In particular, it will be used for classifying the current knowledge on SBMI activities in order to highlight gaps and potentials for further research.

In the next chapter I perform a practice-oriented review of the SBMI literature and use findings from the extant literature to elaborate on the conceptual model.

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[21] Some of these nuances in the theory are introduced and put to use in paper IV.

Action speaks louder than words
but not nearly as often.

– Mark Twain

3 A PRACTICE-ORIENTED REVIEW OF THE SBMI LITERATURE

In this chapter, I review the SBMI literature in search of traces of practice-related elements in order to incorporate findings from the extant literature into my investigation of how CS/R practitioners work to make SBMI happen.

The purpose of the chapter is to provide an overview of the SBMI literature that the contributions of the appended papers can be compared with. In the process of delivering on its purpose, this chapter also makes a contribution of its own, which forms an integral part of the overall contribution of the dissertation: it delivers a practice-oriented review that explores the knowledge on SBMI activities in the current literature. Such a review appears to be a novelty in the SBMI literature. Several other reviews and overviews have been performed (e.g., Boons & Lüdeke-Freund, 2013; Boons, Montalvo, Quist, & Wagner, 2013; Geissdoerfer et al., 2018; Lüdeke-Freund & Dembek, 2017; Nosratabadi et al., 2019; Schaltegger et al., 2016). However, to the best of my knowledge, no reviews focusing on activity exist in the SBMI literature—and certainly no practice-oriented reviews. Thus, a practice-oriented review of extant SBMI research is a contribution to the literature in its own right.

In order to deliver on its purpose, this chapter is organized as follows. I open with a description of the method of the review. Then I move on to a general summary of the literature. This is followed by an overview of the practice-relevant findings within the literature. The chapter ends with reflections on the findings and some closing points.

3.1 METHOD OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW

To get a comprehensive overview of the literature, I performed a literature search in the Web of Science database, with the goal of obtaining an overview of scientific articles on SBMI published in established journals.[22] I searched for papers with titles, abstracts or keywords that matched the following search string:

> "sustainable business model*" OR "business model* for sustainability" OR "normative business model*" OR "sustainability business model*" OR "business model* for sustainable innovation" OR "business model innovation* for sustainability" OR "business model innovation* for corporate sustainability"

This search was run at regular intervals during the dissertation project in order to replenish it with new papers. When the final addition of new papers from the search was completed, the search included result up to the end of 2019 and had yielded a total of 367 hits in the Web of Science database. By reading through the titles and abstracts of these results, the number of relevant papers was narrowed down to 101. The principle used for evaluating relevance was that either SBM or SBMI were presented as a central part of the contribution of the paper. In other words, papers were discarded if they appeared to only use SBM or SBMI as side-points or empty buzzwords in research that appeared to be mainly about something else.[23] The 101 papers that remained were then downloaded and formed the basis for my literature review. A brief scan of the downloaded papers resulted in the exclusion of an additional 14 papers by using the same criteria as above (i.e., upon closer inspection the papers did not use SBM or SBMI as a central element in their analysis and contribution). The remaining 87 papers were read and analyzed in detail.

The analysis started by categorizing the papers according to the method of inquiry, using the general categories of "conceptual," "qualitative," and "quantitative." Furthermore, I categorized the papers based on which levels of analysis were present in the analysis and

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[22] The choice of Web of Science as database meant that I excluded working papers, books, and book chapters from the review. This was an intentional choice as I wanted to concentrate on the established common platform of knowledge in the research community. Scientific articles published in well-established journals arguably constitute a good approximation of such an established common platform.

[23] As an example: a paper with the title "Global Forum on Telemedicine: Connecting the World through Partnerships," which only briefly mentions the phrase "sustainable business model" in its abstract, was an obvious discard. A large number of the initial search results were of this type.

contribution, distinguishing between the micro- (individual), meso- (organizational) and macro- (institutional) level (cf. Rousseau & House, 1994).[24] Given my focus on practice, which in essences centers on the situated actions of individuals, papers that incorporate the individual level of analysis were of particular interest. In order to clearly differentiate this level of analysis from the meso-level, I operationalized the individual level of analysis to mean that the contribution incorporates individual actors in its empirical or conceptual modeling and/or discussion, with clear references to the actions and/or characteristics of single individuals and/or their interactions. This means that contributions that just mention groups of individuals such as "managers" or "decision-makers" or in any other fashion just reference individuals in passing were not sorted as situated at the individual level of analysis. Such contributions were typically sorted as situated at the meso-level of analysis instead.

Furthermore, I inductively developed a set of main topics in the SBMI literature based on my reading of the papers in order to get a broad overview of the literature. This was done by assigning a general topic label to each paper upon reading and then seeking out patterns in these topic labels in order to establish a handful of main topics. In the end, each paper was assigned to one main topic.

After completing the general sorting, I looked for points in the papers that could be interpreted as useful additions to a practice-based understanding of SBMI as a process and collected and organized these points by mapping them onto the conceptual framework derived in chapter 2.

3.2   GENERAL RESULTS

In Table 3.1, I give a quantitative overview of the main topics in the SBMI literature. The label *frameworks for SBMI* is used to denote contributions that center on providing some sort of static model of SBM and/or SBMI as a phenomenon. This includes overarching frameworks, conceptual models, tools for analyzing or planning SBMI, propositions,

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[24] Other ways to separate exist, such as in Aguinis and Glavas (2012), who separate between institutional, organizational, and individual levels but group the institutional and the organizational together as a single macro-level. I find that the approach of Rousseau and House (1994) gives more precision.

ontologies for SBMI, and so on. Papers that apply a framework to empirical material in order to test the framework or simply use it to descriptively sort case-information categories were grouped into this category as well. The topic *the SBMI process* collects papers that in one way or the other deal with SBMI as a process, and model, or at least explicitly discuss, processual elements of SBMI. Literature review papers and editorials providing overviews of the SBMI literature are collected under the label *review of the SBMI literature.* Papers sorted into the topic *networks and SBMI* use network models and network-related literature to theorize aspects of SBMI. *Drivers of SBMI* is used as a label for papers that investigate this facet of SBMI. Finally, the label *other topics* was given to papers that did not fit into any of the other main topics.

Table 3.1: Main topics within the SBMI literature.

Topic	# of papers	Percentage	Examples
Frameworks for SBMI	35	40.7 %	Bocken et al. (2014), Starik et al. (2016), Stubbs & Cocklin (2008)
The SBMI process	14	16.3 %	Inigo et al. (2017), Roome & Louche (2016)
Review of the SBMI literature	8	9.3 %	Boons & Lüdeke-Freund (2013), Geissdoerfer et al. (2018), Lüdeke-Freund & Dembek (2017)
Networks and SBMI	8	9.3 %	Oskam et al. (2018), Neumeyer & Santos (2018)
Drivers of SBMI	4	4.7 %	Rauter et al. (2017)
Other topics	18	20.7 %	--
Total	*87*	*100 %*	--

My review supports the view that frameworks are the most prominent type of contribution offered in the extant SBMI literature (as argued by Randles & Laasch, 2016), in the sense that *frameworks for SBMI* is by far the most popular topic among the reviewed contributions.

Table 3.2: The SBMI literature broken down by level of analysis.

Level of analysis	# of papers	Percentage
Individual (micro)	2	2.3 %
Organizational (meso)	57	65.5 %
Institutional (macro)	10	11.5 %
Multi-level	10	11.5 %

Meta	8	9.2 %
Total	*87*	*100 %*

In Table 3.2, the papers in the meta category are highly conceptual papers without clear levels of analysis, for example editorials and reviews that deal with classifying the research on SBMI. Within the multi-level category, 6 of the 10 papers include the micro-level of analysis, which brings the total of papers that touch on the micro-level up to 8—still a relatively small proportion of the overall literature.

Table 3.3: The SBMI literature broken down by method.

Method	# of papers	Percentage
Conceptual	30	34.5 %
Qualitative	50	57.5 %
Quantitative	4	4.6 %
Mixed	3	3.4 %
Total	*87*	*100%*

Based on Tables 3.2 and 3.3, two general points about the literature can be made. First, there appears to be a strong underrepresentation of papers that center on or incorporate the individual level of analysis. Second, the papers show an underrepresentation of quantitative work: of the 87 papers, only three mixed-method studies and four pure quantitative studies are featured. In the qualitative category, most of the qualitative studies are case studies. In addition to these points, a closer inspection of the publication channels used reveals that the literature is marked by a strong overrepresentation of contributions to a single journal in the literature: *Journal of Cleaner Production.* 40 papers—i.e., 46% of the reviewed papers—come from this journal.

3.3   PRACTICE-RELATED RESULTS

In this section, I will summarize and discuss findings in the extant SBMI literature that are relevant when viewing the SBMI process through a practice lens. I must stress at the outset that I limit myself strictly to extant SBMI literature in order to hone in specifically on knowledge that combines the SBMI perspective with practice-relevant insights. I thus

deliberately dispense with other CS/R literature in order to maintain a strict focus on the substantive area. This is not to say that there are no practice-relevant points in the general CS/R literature or that such points are irrelevant to the topic at hand—in fact, in chapter 6, I highlight some promising results from the general CS/R literature that could be used to inform further practice-based research on SBMI. I postpone the inclusion of results from outside the SBMI literature in this way in order to separate in the clearest way possible between papers that identify as part of the SBMI literature and papers that fall outside it.

To give a sense of the extent that practice is represented in the extant SBMI literature, I will first briefly sum up my search for practice in numbers.[25] Of the 87 papers from the literature search, I found that 20 included more or less practice-relevant findings. Of these 20, only two explicitly applied some form of practice theory (Randles & Laasch, 2016; Ritala et al., 2018). A further 15 papers did not explicitly employ practice theory but did include findings that were more or less directly importable to a practice framework, while the final three papers had some relevant elements that had to be subjected to a degree of reinterpretation in order to untangle practice-relevant findings.[26] Below I provide an analysis of the literature, where I group the relevant findings based on the conceptual model derived in chapter 2, analyze the findings and use them to expand the model and draw implications for our understanding of SBMI. A general note here is that not all the 20 identified practice-relevant SBMI papers are presented in the analysis below; pure meta-level papers without concrete findings relating to one or more of main elements in Figure 2.1 are omitted in the analysis.

The results that follow in the subsections and sections are based on an inductive analysis of the literature that followed four main steps. First, the activity-related findings in the literature were sorted into the main categories I presented in Figure 2.1 based on my interpretations of the findings when viewed through the practice theoretical lens detailed in chapter 2. Second, each group of findings was analyzed in detail, as described in subsections 3.3.1 and 3.3.2

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[25] It is not my intention here to award the quantification that these numbers represent any greater value than the textual analysis that follows below. Nor is it my intention to represent the numbers here as unshakable truths. Rather, they are representations of a set of interpretations I have done in my reading of the literature, and thus constructions. Reciting the numbers is simply used here as a convenient way to provide a condensed and fairly concise representation of how overall patterns emerge from my interpretations of the individual papers.

[26] My view, after going through the 87 papers, is that a number of papers beyond these three might be possible to read in a practice light to use some elements from their findings. However, such a reading would be more of a stretch. Furthermore, given my knowledge of the 87 papers, I view the points that are likely to be unearthed through such an exercise likely to be simply echoes of points already present in the 20 selected papers. Thus, I believe that there are no substantial new insights to gain from such an exercise.

below. Third, based on my analysis of each group of findings, a graphical overview of the total state of knowledge on SBMI as practice was created (section 3.3.3). Finally, all of the preceding steps formed the basis for identifying and reflecting on the overall state of the knowledge on SBMI activities (see section 3.4).

3.3.1 Findings on organizing elements, practitioners, praxis, and material arrangements

In this section I deal with findings that connect to four of the five main categories in the conceptual model from chapter 2 (cf. Figure 2.1): SBMI-related practitioners, SBMI-related praxis, SBMI-related material arrangements, and organizing elements of SBMI-related practices.[27] Findings regarding organizing elements of SBMI-related practices are dealt with first, in Table 3.4 and the subsequent text. After this, findings regarding the other main elements in the conceptual model are summarized in Table 3.5 and discussed in turn.

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[27] The final and key element in Figure 2.1—SBMI activities—is treated in section 3.3.2. It is separated from the other main elements because the findings pertaining to this element required some further analysis.

Table 3.4: Findings in the literature regarding the organizing elements of SBMI-related practices.

Organizing element	Summarized findings from the SBMI literature
Teleoaffective structure	Win-win increase in own sustainability (implicit in most of the SBMI literature)
	Using SBMs as a vehicle for commercializing new and more sustainable technology (Boons & Lüdeke-Freund, 2013)
	Maximize material and energy efficiency (Bocken et al., 2014)
	Create value from waste (Bocken et al., 2014)
	Substitute with renewables and natural processes (Bocken et al., 2014)
	Replacing the neoclassical economical worldview with alternative paradigms (Boons & Lüdeke-Freund, 2013)
	Deliver functionality rather than ownership (Bocken et al., 2014)
	Adapt a stewardship role (Bocken et al., 2014)
	Encourage sufficiency (Bocken et al., 2014)
	Maximizing social profit (Boons & Lüdeke-Freund, 2013)
	Repurpose for society/environment (Bocken et al., 2014)
	Develop and scale up solutions (Bocken et al., 2014)
	Evolutionary SBMI: risk and cost reduction, maximizing market opportunities (Inigo et al., 2017)
	Radical SBMI: remove unsustainable lock-in, leapfrogging over competitors (Inigo et al., 2017)
	The value proposition (an end in the organization) moves from "simple" products in the old business model to a more advanced value proposition in the new SBM (Roome & Louche, 2016)
	Traditional business focuses on short-term financial gain; SBM firms redefine their purpose in wider terms: long term-value creation combining ethical and economic reasons (Stubbs & Cocklin, 2008)
	Tension management to enable serving economic, social and environmental ends simultaneously (Laasch, 2018; Stubbs, 2019; van Bommel, 2018)

Organizing element	Summarized findings from the SBMI literature
Rules	Practitioners voice that current taxation rules are a hindrance to the spread of SBMs (Stubbs & Cocklin, 2008) Self-imposed intra-organizational rules (e.g., structure, policies) to achieve good tension management (Stubbs, 2019)
Practical understandings	*No findings.*
General understandings	Understandings underlying radical SBMI: a system-based transformation approach to sustainability-oriented innovation, an orientation toward sustainable development and customers goals as firm goals in themselves (Inigo et al., 2017) Facilitating understandings in senior managers: learning has value, everyone in the company can contribute to increased sustainability, willingness to experiment, belief in the desirability of person-to-person communication (Roome & Louche, 2016) Understandings present in the organization after realizing new SBM: seeing the company value creation as part of a bigger system (rather than just as their own products/services), belief in the desirability of questioning assumptions and mental models, belief in the positive value of opportunity seeking, listening, transparency, strong business values, and accountability (Roome & Louche, 2016)

Note: The text in this table in many instances paraphrases the original articles; thus, the formulations in the table are, to a large extent, the product of the authors of the papers, with slight truncations and rewrites on my part.

Regarding the *teleoaffective structure* of SBMI-related practices, the extant SBMI literature offers a set varied set of findings which implicitly and explicitly deals with "the ends of SBMI" and how these ends relate to each other and to different ends in other practice that come into contact with SBMI practices. While the topic of ends is not really given much explicit attention in the SBMI literature, my reading of the literature provides much indirect evidence for the existence of a multifaceted and complexly ordered set of SBMI ends. This set can be viewed as hierarchically ordered. On top of this hierarchy sits an overarching end goal for SBMI activities that repeatedly crops up in the literature: to move society as a whole toward a more sustainable path through voluntary actions that move the organization and/or other relevant stakeholders in the direction of increased environmental and/or social sustainability (i.e., non-financial performance). This ultimate goal is, in many instances, linked directly to a second, organizational goal for SBMI activities: to secure financial or

other strategic benefits from its efforts (i.e., financial performance). When taken together, as they often are in the literature, these two ends describe the joint end of achieving a win-win increase in sustainability, in the sense that the organization increases its contribution to a more sustainable society by increasing its non-financial performance, while it simultaneously gains a boost in financial performance. As an example of how the contributions in the literature typically contain such a win-win end for SBMI practices, consider the oft-cited article by Bocken et al. (2014), which in the opening states:

> "One of the key challenges is designing business models in such a way that enables the firm to capture economic value for itself through delivering social and environmental benefits […]" (p. 44)

This passage is representative for most of the literature. Based on my reading, I posit that in the literature all other ends of SBMI can be seen as subordinate to these two combined ends, since the literature assumes that the overall goal of sustainability activities, almost by definition, is to contribute to increased sustainability through such win-win efforts.[28] While the exact relationship between the non-financial and the financial end is an interesting topic in and of itself, I will bracket this point at the moment and concentrate on the other ends in the extant SBMI literature.

When it comes to ends situated below the end of win-win, two key papers stand out: Boons and Lüdeke-Freund (2013) and Bocken et al. (2014). Although these papers do not explicitly deal with the ends of SBMI, their approach and findings support a reading that uncovers certain ends of SBMI. Boons and Lüdeke-Freund (2013) sort the SBMI literature according to three different approaches to SBMI: a technical approach, an organizational approach, and a social approach. Each of these approaches operate according to an overarching end that is distinct from the other two approaches.

In Boons and Lüdeke-Freund (2013), the technical approach is described as concerned with using SBMs as a vehicle for commercializing new and more sustainable technology. This can

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[28] This does not mean that these two ends in themselves are uncontroversial *outside* the extant SBMI literature. Neither does it mean that this dominant view within the SBMI literature goes completely unchallenged. The points on tension management offered by van Bommel (2018) and Stubbs (2019) are examples of more nuanced voices.

be viewed as an end subordinate to the end of win-win sustainability. The organizational approach is described as business models that adapt and are driven by "alternative paradigms other than the neoclassical economic worldview" (Boons & Lüdeke-Freund, 2013, p. 15). Slightly rephrased: the organizational approach is driven by the end of replacing the neoclassical economical worldview with alternative paradigms. In fact, this end potentially supplants the traditional win-win approach, in the sense that it could potentially be more concerned with other goals than win-win sustainability and profit maximization. Whether win-win sustainability or replacing the neoclassical economical worldview is the end with highest priority likely depends on the organization question. However, it should be noted that organizations that consistently prioritize ideological concerns at the expense of profits might have trouble with long-run survival (see, e.g., Carroll, 1979). In this sense, the win-win end seems more fundamental. In the social approach, an SBM is described as a "market device that helps in creating and further developing markets for innovations with a social purpose" (Boons & Lüdeke-Freund, 2013, p. 16); further, the SBM helps the entrepreneur "maximize social profit" (p. 16). The end implicit in the social approach, in other words, is to maximize social profit. This end also holds the potential to supplant the traditional win-win end. However, the previous caveat on long-run survival applies here as well.

Bocken et al. (2014) added another level of ends below the ends described by Boons and Lüdeke-Freund (2013): they reviewed the literature and practice on SBMI and developed eight SBM archetypes that they sorted across the three main approaches launched by Boons and Lüdeke-Freund (2013). Just as with by Boons and Lüdeke-Freund (2013), Bocken et al. (2014) never directly reference "ends" or "goals" as such when they describe the archetypes, but each of the archetypes contains a separate overarching end, which can be read from the naming of each archetype. Grouped under the technical approach, Bocken et al. (2014) list three archetypes, which also represent ends: maximize material and energy efficiency; create value from waste; and substitute with renewables and natural processes. Thus, these three archetypes represent three different types of ends that can be adopted in support of the overall end of commercializing new and more sustainable technology. Bocken et al. (2014) offer three archetypes connected to the social approach: deliver functionality rather than ownership; adapt a stewardship role; and encourage sufficiency. Each of these can be regarded as ends as well. The same holds for the final two archetypes offered by Bocken et al. (2014), those connected to the organizational approach: repurpose for society/environment; and develop and scale up solutions. One final note: each of the eight ends in Bocken et al. (2014) will in

turn give rise to a set of subordinate ends when one of the SBM archetypes offered by the authors is implemented in an organization. These subordinate ends are not described by the authors.

The complexity of ends does not end there, however. Inigo et al. (2017)—again, implicitly only—separated between two different types of SBMI ends: the end of "evolutionary SBMI" versus "radical SBMI." Furthermore, Roome and Louche (2016) noted that the SBMI processes they studied were started based only on a vision, without a clear map or goal with regards to the setup of the final SBM. In other words, they pointed out that the ends that guide an SBMI process might surface during the process (rather than being set at the outset) and/or morph during the process. Related to the point on change of ends during the SBMI process, Stubbs and Cocklin (2008) pointed out that the transition from a traditional business model to an SBM involves a change in objectives: from narrow and short-term oriented financial goals to a focus on more holistic and long-term value creation. Roome and Louche (2016) added to this that the value proposition in the business model—which is a key end for any organization, seeing as it represents a promise to its customers/users/clients that the organization needs to uphold—typically becomes more complex when organizations move from a traditional business model to an SBM.

A further complicating factor when it comes to ends that is highlighted in the literature is that there are tensions present between economic, social and environmental ends when one attempts to create and operate an SBM (Laasch, 2018; Stubbs, 2019; van Bommel, 2018). This means that tension management becomes an end in itself when creating, operating and changing an SBM.

Regarding *rules* as an organizing element of SBMI-related practices, the only two papers touching on this are Stubbs and Cocklin (2008) and Stubbs (2019). Stubbs and Cocklin (2008) are only partially relevant here, as they only discussed how SBMI practitioners are concerned with how taxation rules influence business choices and wish for more SBMI-friendly taxation rules. Thus, this finding only describes wishes regarding SBMI rules, not actual rules. Stubbs (2019), on the other hand, investigates how a case company utilizes self-imposed rules incorporated into its structure and policies to achieve the end of tension management. Examples of rules highlighted by Stubbs (2019) include ownership structure as well as an explicit strategy regarding integration of financial, social and environmental performance.

The category *practical understandings* is not afforded any attention in the extant literature.

Findings regarding *general understandings* shared by SBMI practitioners—the final organizing element of SBMI-related practices—were covered by Roome and Louche (2016) and Inigo et al. (2017). Between them, the papers covered both some general understandings that when present in practitioners can aid SBMI, as well as some general understandings that they suggest manifest themselves in organizational members after a successful transformation into a fully realized SBM.

This concludes the discussion of organizing elements of SBM-related practices. In the remainder of the section, I will go through findings in the SBMI literature regarding practitioners, praxis, and material arrangements. These findings are summarized in Table 3.5, and I will discuss them below.

Table 3.5: Findings in the literature regarding practitioners, praxis, and material arrangements.

Category	Summarized findings from the SBMI literature
SBMI-related practitioners	Decision-makers in organizations, stakeholder partners (NGOs, local communities, industry associations), customers, suppliers (Inigo et al., 2017) Employees, senior managers, external concept owners, stakeholders in the wider value network (suppliers, clients) (Roome & Louche, 2016) Team members in an innovation project (Weissbrod & Bocken, 2017)
SBMI-related praxis	Supportive roles played by managers and employees: vision holders, concept champions, ideas providers, networkers, local champions, implementers (Roome & Louche, 2016) Innovation team-member praxis: old ways of innovating persist in the daily work despite ambitions to the contrary; unclear articulation of innovation goals hamper the process; team members do not work full time in the project and thus juggled multiple work responsibilities; team members engage in unplanned and action-based learning (Weissbrod & Bocken, 2017)

SBMI-related material arrangements	Systematic maps of SBM components and/or process stages as visual aids in planning SBMs (Bocken et al., 2019; Heyes et al., 2018)
	Sticky notes as tools in brainstorming (Baldassarre et al., 2017; Bocken et al., 2019; Geissdoerfer et al., 2016)

Note: The text in this table in many instances paraphrases the original articles; thus, the formulations in the table are, to a large extent, the product of the authors of the papers, with slight truncations and rewrites on my part.

Regarding *SBMI-related practitioners*, the extant literature highlights a set of different types of practitioners involved in the SBMI process, from senior managers in the focal organization to NGOs and several categories in between. A point of note here is that most of the practitioners listed in Table 3.5 are simply mentioned and not discussed in detail in the papers. However, some of these practitioners get a more detailed treatment than others in the literature, in a way that showcases the potential inherent in studying practitioners closely. In particular, both Roome and Louche (2016) and Inigo et al. (2017) offered some details on the managers involved in SBMI—but not much. Weissbrod and Bocken (2017) went the furthest toward providing detailed findings on practitioners, highlighting how previous experiences and expertise shape the decisions of the practitioners they studied.

Concerning *SBMI-related praxis*—the daily improvisation of practitioners—Weissbrod and Bocken (2017) discussed the daily actions and considerations of the practitioners they studied, finding a host of specific characteristics of these daily actions. Roome and Louche (2016) is the only other paper that contains findings related to praxis. The author discussed a set of informal roles that were adopted by organizational members in successful SBMI processes, such as "vision holder", "idea provider" and "networker". These roles can be reinterpreted as describing types of praxis, in that they describe a tendency to perform certain daily actions in those individuals who choose to adopt these informal roles. The two papers provide findings that seem to suggest that there is more to be learned from studying and theorizing SBMI praxis further.

The contributions in the extant literature regarding the final general category, *SBMI-related material arrangements*, is summarized in two main findings that highlight how practitioners use certain material tools in the process of planning new SBMs. First, the use of systematic maps of SBM components and/or process stages as visual aids in planning SBMs (Bocken et al., 2019; Heyes et al., 2018). Second, the use of sticky notes as tools in brainstorming

(Baldassarre et al., 2017; Bocken et al., 2019; Geissdoerfer et al., 2016). This rather limited set of findings suggest that there is much to be gained in the SBMI literature by drawing inspiration from contributions in the general BM literature that include material arrangements more strongly in their analysis (e.g., Demil & Leccq, 2015; Doganova & Eyquem-Renault, 2009; Perkmann & Spicer, 2010).

This wraps up my points on findings from the SBMI literature that pertain to the first four main elements of my conceptual model (cf. Figure 2.1). Next, I turn to findings that are relevant to the final element in the model: SBMI activities.

3.3.2   Findings on SBMI activities

In this section I deal with findings pertaining to the "SBMI activities" part of the conceptual model from chapter 2 (cf. Figure 2.1). Below I first describe how the analysis was done, and then present the results from the analysis.

The analysis done in this section consists of condensing all findings I have uncovered in the extant SBMI literature that concern SBMI activities into an overall data structure. The condensation was achieved through two main steps. First, interpreting what level of aggregation Schatzki's (2002) framework the findings represented. The findings were deemed to primarily represent projects, with some metaprojects (i.e., projects that consist of further subprojects) and a few tasks. No action-level activities were found.

Second, I complemented the sorting into levels of aggregation with inductive coding, where I looked for patterns across findings and assigned these patterns a set of new codes where appropriate (cf. Charmaz, 2006: Saldaña, 2013; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

In the analysis, I made a conscious choice to disaggregate the findings in the extant literature into their component parts in order to investigate patterns across individual papers and recombine single findings from separate papers into a larger, consolidated picture. Also, I wished to free myself from previous analysis and build anew in order to open up for the possibility that SBMI processes could be radically different from each other and also

potentially non-linear, in line with my strong process approach (cf. section 2.1.4). This meant that I chose to set aside aggregated "process steps" and "process types" suggested in individual papers (e.g., Inigo et al, 2017; Roome & Louche, 2016), and instead just included the activities that were subsumed under steps and types in these papers as freestanding elements in my inductive analysis.

Figure 3.1 below presents the data structured that was arrived upon through the analysis. The figure contains a complete set of references to the papers from the SBMI literature that contain the findings it summarizes. The overall structure as well as the individual entries and patterns in the figure will be discussed in detail in the following.

Tasks	Projects	Metaprojects	2nd order metaprojects

Tasks

Registering and responding to a trigger event (Roome & Louche, 2016)

Setting clear project goals (Weissbrod & Bocken, 2017)

Adjusting project goals (Weissbrod & Bocken, 2017)

Arranging team meetings (Weissbrod & Bocken, 2017)

Giving presentations educating potential buyers of new products (Oskam et al., 2018)

Projects

Recognizing a need for change (Roome & Louche, 2016); Anticipating regulations (Inigo et al., 2017); Identifying industry challenges (Inigo et al., 2017)

Arranging stakeholder dialogues (Inigo et al., 2017); Engaging critical and disruptive stakeholders (Inigo et al., 2017); Searching for new sustainability technologies (Inigo et al., 2017); Creating/participating in CS/R networks (Inigo et al., 2017)

Consolidating information (Baldassarre et al., 2017; Geissdoerfer et al., 2016; Inigo et al., 2017; Roome & Louche, 2016); Analyzing the current BM (Bocken et al., 2019; Geissdoerfer et al., 2016; Heyes et al., 2018); Disseminating knowledge internally (Inigo et al., 2017; Roome & Louche, 2016)

Recruiting stakeholders for change (Inigo et al. 2017; Roome & Louche, 2016); Creating internal buy-in (Weissbrod & Bocken, 2017); Enabling learning (Inigo et al. 2017; Roome & Louche, 2016)

Developing a vision and goals (Baldassarre et al., 2017; Bocken et al., 2019; Heyes et al., 2018; Roome & Louche, 2016); Brainstorming (Baldassarre et al., 2017; Bocken et al., 2019; Geissdoerfer et al., 2016); Designing (Bocken et al., 2019; Geissdoerfer et al., 2016; Heyes et al., 2018)

Prototyping (Bocken et al., 2019; Geissdoerfer et al., 2016); Experimenting (Baldassarre et al., 2017; Bocken et al., 2019; Roome & Louche, 2016)

Interacting with a wider network of actors (Oskam et al., 2018; Roome & Louche, 2016); Creating new markets (Inigo et al., 2017); Modifying the value chain (Inigo et al., 2017); Educating existing clients (Inigo et al., 2017)

Modifying the management control systems (Buffa et al., 2018; Maltz et al., 2018; Inigo et al., 2017); Building new organizational units (Inigo et al., 2017)

Metaprojects

Noticing CS/R risks

Collecting information (Baldassarre et al., 2017; Geissdoerfer et al., 2016; Roome & Louche, 2016)

Processing information

Obtaining financial resources (Inigo et al. 2017; Roome & Louche, 2016)

Securing allies and momentum for change

Obtaining technological resources (Inigo et al. 2017; Roome & Louche, 2016)

Crafting plans

Testing and adjusting plans

Changing the value network

Changing the internal structure

2nd order metaprojects

Generating knowledge on the status quo

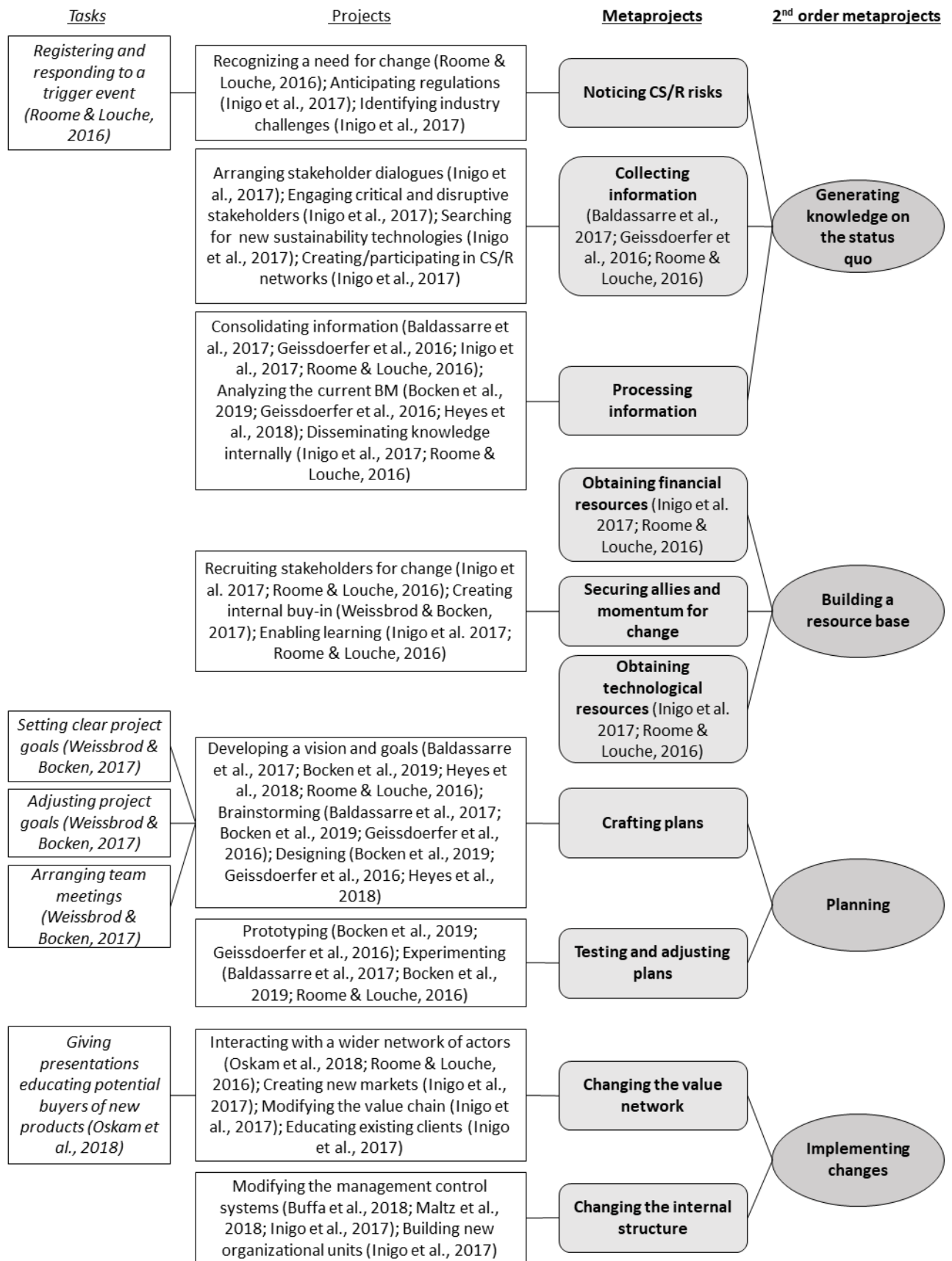Building a resource base

Planning

Implementing changes

Figure 3.1: Inductively derived data structure of findings from the literature detailing SBMI activities.

Regarding the overall structure, as represented by the headings in the figure, I separate between tasks, projects, metaprojects (each consisting of a set of projects), and second order metaprojects (each consisting of a set of metaprojects). This separation is inspired by Schatzki (2002). However, the two metaproject categories were created during the coding work as patterns emerged first between entities in the project category (which gave rise to the first order metaproject category as a way to label these patterns), and then between entities in the metaproject category (which gave rise to the second order metaproject category).

Three points of nuance are due at this juncture. First, it is worth noting that even though Figure 3.1 separates cleanly between the different entities in the data structure, this is done for the practical purposes of highlighting some key differences between the activities and creating a useful visual representation of these differences. It is not meant to indicate that these entities will be strictly separate when practitioners engage in SBMI practices. On the contrary, different activities can be expected to overlap and intermingle. They are simply kept separate here for analytical purposes, based on the assumption that even though the activities will overlap and intermingle in reality, it is useful to catalogue a full and fine-grained set of different types of SBMI activities as a basis for further research (e.g., research on how different activities intermingle during SBMI processes will necessarily have to base itself on identifying different activities). Second, even though I in the following paragraphs consign myself to discussing the findings that are present in the literature, I do not claim that this is the full and complete picture of SBMI activities. I am not blind to the shortcomings in the literature—these will be discussed in due time; towards the end of this section, as well as in section 3.4. Third, I must stress that the data structure in Figure 3.1 is a descriptive summary of the extant literature on SBMI. It is not meant as a normative model in any sense. This means, among other things, that the model is not meant to signal that all organizations performing SBMI must in any way perform all the activities represented in Figure 3.1 or touch on all the second order metaprojects given herein in order to be successful in SBMI. Rather, investigating such normative matters might be a task for future research efforts.

All the entries grouped as tasks and projects in Figure 3.1 are drawn directly from the literature, and the words/phrases used to describe them mirror the wording in the literature closely. The labels of the metaprojects and second order metaprojects are inductively produced, in other words they are labels made as attempts to describe the common thread of

all entries grouped below them in the hierarchy. The exception to this is three metaproject entries—recognizable by the references given in their boxes—that were drawn from findings in the literature. These entries were interpreted to represent metaprojects rather than just projects, despite being drawn directly from the literature, based on the nature of the findings themselves as well as—where appropriate—the relations between the entry and other entries. In particular, I consider "Obtaining financial resources" and "Obtaining technological resources" to be metaprojects based on the inference that these activities must by necessity consist of several related "subprojects". For example investigations of needs and possibilities, calling formal and informal meetings with sponsors in the form of e.g. leaders, board members, investors, or the like, preparing these meetings, working on persuasion, and so on. "Collecting information", on the other hand, naturally presented itself as a metaproject based on the logical status of this entity as a concise summary label for the entities I came to group below it in the hierarchy.

Moving on to the content of the data structure, as seen in Figure 3.1 it consists of four second order metaprojects which organize the metaprojects, projects and tasks described in the literature: (1) generating knowledge on the status quo; (2) building a resource base; (3) planning; and (4) implementing changes. Below, I delve into details regarding each of these and their subordinate entries in the data structure.

The second order metaproject *generating knowledge on the status quo* is comprised of a set of activities that are concerned with getting to know and understand the current state of affairs pertaining to CS/R within and outside the organization, subdivided into three metaprojects. First, *noticing CS/R risks*, which is concerned with recognizing a need for change in the first place (Roome & Louche, 2016), for instance by accomplishing the task of registering and responding to "an event or a problem—which is often different from previous norms" (p. 15). Work done in order to anticipate regulations fall in under this metaproject, as does work on identifying industry challenges (Inigo et al., 2017).

While activities concerned with noticing CS/R risk are specifically concerned with the early, and sometimes surprising, discovery of problems with the status quo, the metaproject labelled *collecting information* consist of more systematic information collection activities that typically are performed once CS/R risks are already discovered (Baldassarre et al., 2017; Geissdoerfer et al., 2016; Roome & Louche, 2016). Activities include: engaging with

different types of stakeholders formally and informally (Inigo et al., 2017); actively searching for new technological solutions to employ to deliver improved CS/R performance (Inigo et al., 2017); and creating and/or participating in CS/R related networks or fora in order to learn about for instance "new trends and business models" (Inigo et al., 2007, p. 529).

Collecting information goes hand in hand with activities concerned with *processing information*, through general consolidation of information (Baldassarre et al., 2017; Geissdoerfer et al., 2016; Inigo et al., 2017; Roome & Louche, 2016) and through such means as employing the information in analysis of the current BM (Bocken et al., 2019; Geissdoerfer et al., 2016; Heyes et al., 2018). Knowledge produced through such consolidation and analysis can also be disseminated internally in the organization (Inigo et al., 2017; Roome & Louche, 2016).

Building a resource base is a second order metaproject that contains a set of activities aimed at strengthening the organization's ability to follow through with CS/R changes and deliver results. This includes the metaprojects of obtaining financial and technological resources (Inigo et al., 2007; Roome & Louche, 2016), which are not elaborated by any further subordinated projects or tasks due to a lack of relevant findings from the literature. It also includes the metaproject *securing allies and momentum for change*, which in essence is concerned with obtaining relational resources for the innovation process. Three different projects from the literature are grouped under this metaproject. First, recruiting stakeholders in support of the coming changes, both in the form of recruiting internal stakeholders by building "an open, participative culture" (Roome & Louche, 2016, p. 29) and in the form of recruiting external stakeholders through partnering with new organizations (Inigo et al., 2017). Second, creating internal buy-in, in particular among senior staff in the organization (Weissbrod & Bocken, 2017). Finally, momentum for change is also built through acquiring and honing competences and capabilities for organizational learning including a culture for learning (Inigo et al., 2017; Roome & Louche, 2016) and through learning with and from partner organizations (Inigo et al., 2017).

Activities concerned with both developing plans and testing and adjusting them are collected in the second order metaproject labelled *planning*, which groups together both the crafting of plans and the adjustment of plans. The *crafting plans* metaproject is concerned with activities that are preoccupied with the making of plans in the first place, such as developing a CS/R

related vision and corresponding goals for the organization (Baldassarre et al., 2017; Bocken et al., 2019; Heyes et al., 2018; Roome & Louche, 2016). Crafting plans also includes various brainstorming activities (Baldassarre et al., 2017; Bocken et al., 2019) that can be useful both in establishing goals and how to achieve these goals, such as arranging "value ideation" meetings (Geissdoerfer et al., 2016), through such tasks as setting clear project goals, adjusting goals and in general arranging team meetings with such purposes in mind (Weissbrod & Bocken, 2017). The final project from the extant literature included in crafting plans consists of activities concerned with *designing* a new business model, as in making the blueprint for change (Bocken et al., 2019; Geissdoerfer et al., 2016; Heyes et al., 2018).

The final metaproject included in the *planning* second metaproject is *testing and adjusting plans*, comprised of a set of activities aimed at trying out and making adjustments to already existing plans—often described as happening in an iterative fashion of planning, experimenting and making new and adjusted plans which are then subjected to further experimenting (Baldassarre et al., 2017; Bocken et al., 2019; Roome & Louche, 2016). A further activity that enters into this metaproject is *prototyping*, described in the literature as the building of a conceptual representation of a value propositions through figurines (Geissdoerfer et al., 2016) and as testing out a new service in practice through digital and physical service prototyping (Bocken et al., 2019).

The final of the four second order metaprojects, *implementing changes*, contains activities specifically geared towards affecting permanent changes in the focal organization and its value network (i.e., the business model of the focal organization). This second order metaproject contains two metaprojects inspired by the extant literature. First, the metaproject *changing the value network*, which collects activities aimed in particular at changing the parts of the BM that are located outside the formal boundaries of the focal organization. This includes efforts aimed at interacting with a wider network of actors in general (Oskam et al., 2018; Roome & Louche, 2016), and activities aimed specifically at creating new markets for the new SBM to serve (Inigo et al., 2017), through such tasks as giving presentations educating potential buyers of new products (Oskam et al., 2018). It also includes activities that modify the value chain by adding or dropping suppliers (Inigo et al., 2017) and efforts towards educating existing clients in order to keep them as clients in the face of the changes the new SBM might entail for them (Inigo et al., 2017). The second metaproject—*changing the internal structure*—is aimed at making adjustments in the formal organizational elements

of the organizations, such as the management control systems (Buffa et al., 2018; Maltz et al., 2018; Inigo et al., 2017). This includes activities that change the composition of the organization by building new organizational units were this is thought appropriate (Inigo et al., 2017).

3.3.3   An overview of the state of knowledge on SBMI as practice

Figure 3.2 below collects the results from the previous two sections (3.3.1 and 3.3.2) into a visual summary. In this way, the figure sums up my review of the literature and thus completes the discovery of findings on SBMI activities that emerge from the SBMI literature when it is viewed through the practice lens I constructed at the end of chapter 2 (cf. Figure 2.1). The end result is an overview of the current state of knowledge on SBMI activities viewed as practice.

Some explanation of Figure 3.2 is due. There are two notable changes in the conceptual model offered in Figure 3.2 when compared to the previous iteration as found in Figure 2.1. The first change is an expansion of the core element in the conceptual model: SBMI activities. This part of the model has been built out with the insights on activities derived in section 3.3.2, by adding dashed circles that represents the entities in the data structure from section 3.3.2. The circles are dashed in order to represent the lack of strict boundaries between the different types of SBMI activities. In order to keep the figure tractable, only the metaprojects and second order metaprojects are described with text in the figure. Projects are signaled by dashed circles contained within the metaproject circles. Tasks are signaled by dashed circles contained within the project circles.

The second change in Figure 3.2 when compared to Figure 2.1 is the addition of colored dots to represent findings in the extant SBMI literature. Each dot in the figure represents a practice-related finding in the SBMI literature. More specifically, there is one dot in the figure for each reference given in Table 3.4, Table 3.5, and Figure 3.1. For example, a finding described in Table 3.4 which is backed up with three references from the literature will result in three dots added to the appropriate element in Figure 3.2. This way of counting up the relevant findings also mean that each finding in a single paper that includes several practice-

related findings will be represented as a separate dot in Figure 3.2, often resulting in more than one dot per paper. The dots appear inside the element that the finding covers. For instance, a finding concerning the metaproject "Collecting information" is placed inside this circle, while a finding pertaining to one of the projects organized under the "Collecting information" metaproject is placed inside one of the three smaller circles within the metaproject circle, to signal that the finding is specifically tied to one of these projects. The same principle applies to findings which detail tasks. However, as these circles are quite small (due to space constraints) the task circles are just visible as dashed halos surrounding the dots that signal each task related finding in the literature. There is one exception to the dots appearing inside the element that the finding in question covers: the two dots that signal findings concerned with the connections between "organizing elements of SBMI-related practices" and "SBMI activities"—these dots are instead connected to the arrow they pertain to by a new dashed arrow. As a final note, the special case of the end "Win-win increase in own sustainability" in Table 3.4, which is only implicitly covered in the SBMI literature and not explicitly covered in any of the papers, is represented with a single unfilled dot, to indicate the implicit nature of this finding.
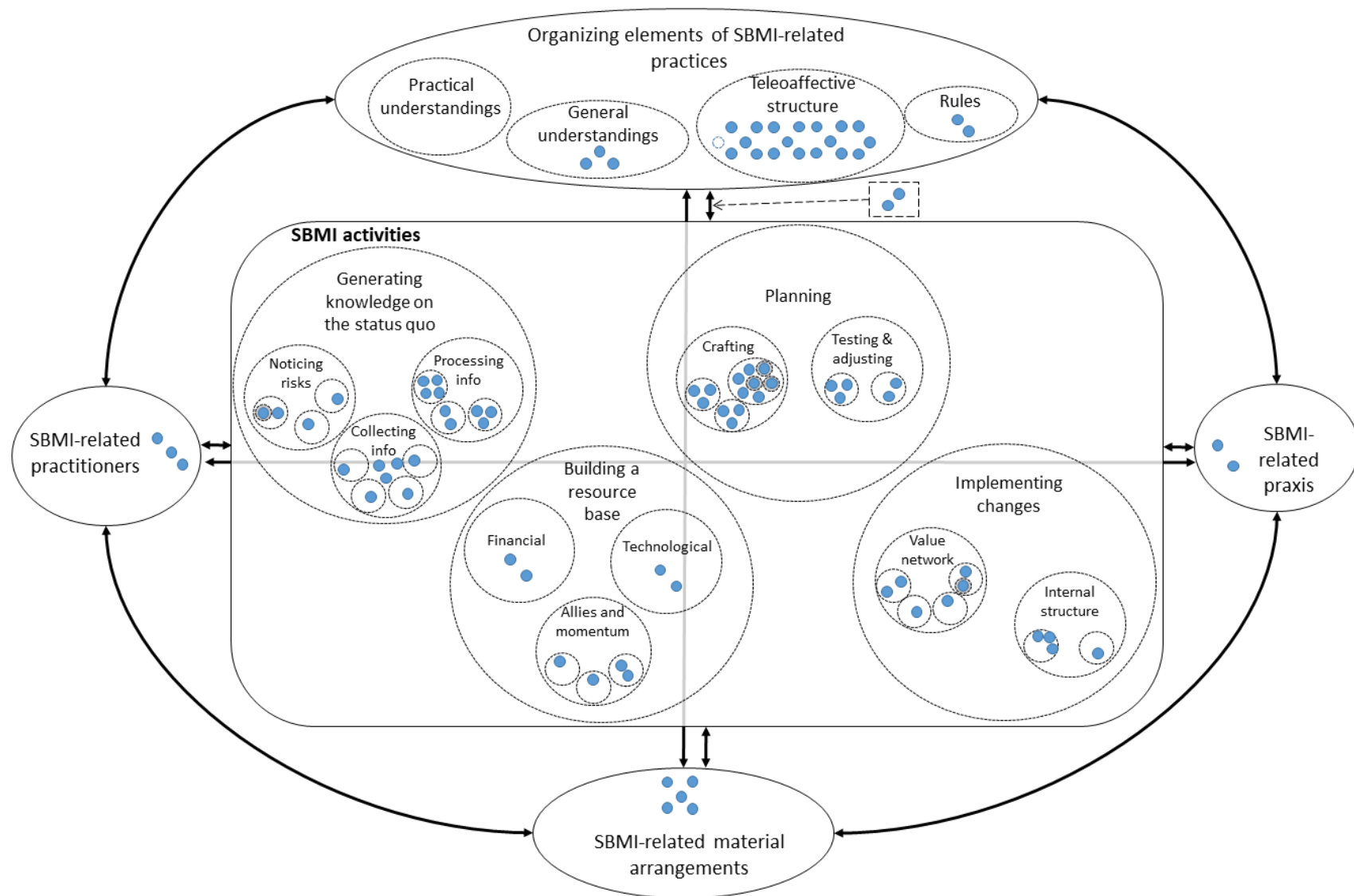
Figure 3.2: Overview of the state of knowledge on SBMI as practice.[29]

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[29] For ease of reference when it comes to the "teleoaffective structure" element: This element is covered by a total of one implied finding plus 18 explicit findings in the extant literature.

In the next section, I discuss some reflections on the practice-relevant findings from the SBMI literature based on overall points deduced from the entirety of section 3.3.

3.4 REFLECTIONS ON THE PRACTICE-RELEVANT FINDINGS

From the results presented in section 3.3, we can deduce two main points. First, the sum of findings highlight the fact that the SBMI process is highly complex. This complexity is revealed to consist of both an internal complexity within the SBMI process when viewed as practice and a complexity that results from interactions between SBMI activities and established practices within organizations. Second, the SBMI literature shows promising, but limited, findings regarding activity, and lacks depth and nuances in its treatment of the phenomenon. I deal with each of these main points below.

3.4.1 The SBMI process is highly complex

The first main point that springs out of the literature review is that the practice-relevant findings from the literature reveal that the SBMI process is highly complex. This is evident in the form of two key aspects. First, SBMI—when viewed as a process consisting of the activities of individuals, and understood through a practice lens—unveils itself as an intricately connected and ordered set of projects and projects-within-projects accompanied by a related hierarchy of ends. Second, during SBMI processes complexity results from the fact that SBMI activities interact with established practices within organizations. The extant literature provides little knowledge regarding this second point.

In terms of the first aspect of the complexity of SBMI—the internal organization of SBMI practices—the literature review paints a picture of SBMI as a phenomenon that consists of a large set of interrelated activities. In fact, the SBMI process is too complex to characterize as a single practice. In Schatzki's (2002) terminology, the SBMI process can more meaningfully be conceptualized as a *confederation of practice nets*, where each net includes a collection of single practices and the confederation includes a set of such nets. In other words, the SBMI process can be viewed as an intricately interwoven set of individual practices. Some of which

are horizontally related in a web. Others which are nested in levels, one on top of the other, in structures made up of projects-within-projects-within-projects accompanied by a similarly complex hierarchy of ends. The metaphorical distance—horizontally and vertically—between a single action by an individual and the parts of the SBMI confederation that are furthest away from this action is considerable. The same holds for the ends in the teleoaffective structures. The distances involved could explain why many of the contributions to the literature stop short of including the individual level of analysis—the distances that are spanned by the web of related but distinct practices that make up the entire confederation makes "taking in the whole picture of SBMI" too daunting a prospect.

This complexity is also a challenge seen from the level of the individual SBMI practitioner. In order to realize a new or improved SBM by going through an SBMI process a practitioner must choose priorities from a highly complex set of different ends, followed by choosing (or inventing) tasks and projects from a large pool of possible jobs that need doing. Thus, the practitioner is faced with a multitude of interconnected options when choosing which activities to engage in. The sum of these options necessarily means that practitioners trying to implement SBMI face a great deal of complexity in making their choices and performing the resulting activities.

It is worth noting that the complexity I discovered and have described here is probably just the tip of a larger iceberg as it is based on the limited number of contributions in the extant literature that cover SBMI activities. One can only speculate as to the complexity that will emerge when researchers assemble a more complete picture of the SBMI process and its activities.

Even if I, in fact, should have happened to uncover the entire iceberg of the SBMI-process complexity through my review, this degree of complexity in itself has clear consequences for research that aims to enable practitioners to increase the sustainability of their organizations through SBMI. Specifically, the complexity indicates a need for overview, in the sense of a need for research projects that seek to obtain consolidated overviews of the SBMI process and findings contained in the current literature. My conceptual model and review provide a first small dent in such an effort. Furthermore, more research on how the practitioners themselves work with SBMI is needed—both in the sense of more holistic research of the type offered by Inigo et al. (2017) and Roome and Louche (2016), and in the sense of research that

disaggregates the process and offers in-depth looks at its constituent parts.[30] Finally, research that investigates the potential for synergy and overlap with other research streams within and outside the CS/R literature would offer a welcome addition to the development of SBMI knowledge.

Regarding the second aspect of the complexity of SBMI—the relationship between SBMI activities and the established practices of an organization—only four papers in my sample really address this theme: Weissbrod and Bocken (2017), Laasch (2018), van Bommel (2018) and Stubbs (2019). Weissbrod and Bocken (2017) illustrate in a good way what is lacking in the remainder of the literature. The authors conducted a rich process study of an internal "sustainability innovation team" at a large clothing manufacturer, revealing, among other things, how participants in the team would fall back on habitual behavior rather than making use of new working methods inspired by "lean startup thinking" that they have been requested to use in their work. In the vocabulary I use, one can say that the team had a stated mission to change their praxis—their daily work—by basing it on a new type of practice in the form of lean startup thinking. However, the established practice that team members already carried with them still dominated their praxis: the established practice blocked the new practice. The discovery by Weissbrod and Bocken (2017) can be seen as a critical case (Flyvbjerg, 2006) for the presence of established practices blocking new sustainability-related practices in SBMI processes in general.

The discovery can be said to represent a critical case in Flybjerg's (2006) meaning in the sense that one can assume that when a blocking problem arises in this particular instance, similar blocking problems are likely to arise in several other cases. The claim that this could be a critical case rests on the assumption that certain factors in the Weissbrod and Bocken (2017) case should have contributed to less likelihood of a blocking problem than in many other SBMI activities. Several factors present likely reduced the potential for blocking problems compared to other cases of trying to introduce a new SBMI-related practice: the practice of lean startup thinking is more business-ready than some of the more "idealistic" practices inherent in SBMI; the new practice was signaled as desired, even ordered from

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[30] Note that, in line with the arguments in chapter one, such contributions should initially be descriptive, so that later prescriptive models can build on a descriptive knowledge base that properly understands and defines the problem one could attempt to solve with the prescriptive models (cf. Jørgensen, 2011; Margolis & Walsh, 2003; Pedersen, 2009).

above; in other words, the team had a clear mandate. Hence, when the blocking problem appears in the Weissbrod and Bocken (2017) case, it is likely to appear in many other situations, possibly most situations, in other SBMI processes. Furthermore, it can be noted that although Weissbrod and Bocken (2017) provide an important finding regarding negative tension between SBMI activities and established practices, positive synergies and more mixed interaction effects between established practices and new SBMI-related practices are also likely to exist. Research on such positive or neutral interaction effects seems to be completely lacking from the literature, which indicates a need for further research.

Related to the point on tension in the Weissbrod and Bocken (2017) case, Laasch (2018), van Bommel (2018) and Stubbs (2019) all deal with tension between financial and non-financial objectives in SBMs. Laasch (2018) underscores that tensions are by nature present in the heart of SBMs. Van Bommel (2018) approaches the complexity from a more aggregated level of analysis, and offers insights into how organizational members face difficult balancing acts in how they understand and work towards attaining financial and non-financial performance simultaneously. Stubbs (2019) adds points on concrete practices in a hybrid organization through a qualitative case study.

3.4.2 The findings regarding activity in the literature are limited

The second main point on the SBMI literature is that knowledge on SBMI activities are limited. Of the 87 papers reviewed, I found 20 that cover activity in some way. The relative quantity in itself is decent—just over 20 percent of the reviewed papers—even though 20 papers is a quite limited knowledge base. In any event, the overall content covered through the findings of these 20 papers, appears to be on the thinner side. This is especially evident when examining the papers through a practice lens, as I have done in my review, as the practice lens brings out a lack of depth and nuance in how activity is treated in the contributions. This shows in the fact that the extant SBMI literature fails to account in a well-rounded manner for the full breadth of practice elements in the conceptual model (cf. the main elements covered by few or no findings in Figure 3.2). Thus, the literature fails to describe the activities inherent in SBMI processes with the full richness that the inclusion of all these elements has to offer. The lack of depth and nuance shows in how the literature covers all of

the five main elements in the conceptual model in Figure 3.2, and this can be summarized in three points on what is currently lacking in the literature.

The first point concerns the fact that the even though the main element *SBMI activities* is covered by a number of findings in the literature, the treatment of the element still suffers from a lack of depth and nuance. The most striking lack in the findings in the matrix is concerning *tasks and actions*, as tasks are discussed in only four findings in the literature, spread across three papers, and actions are not directly referenced at all. The three papers that cover tasks highlight the potential power in focusing on the task level of SBMI activities. Oskam et al. (2018) showed how value shaping—the mutual strengthening of the business model and the network of a firm through repeated network interactions—happens through concrete actions, for example through calling meetings to educate potential buyers of new and innovative sustainability products. Roome and Louche (2016) highlighted how concrete sustainability-related experiences made by senior managers can be pivotal in starting an organization on a sustainability journey. Weissbrod and Bocken (2017) reported rich process findings from an innovation team within a large clothing-producing company and highlighted the difficulties facing the team from within and from the rest of the organization.

However, while the three papers covering tasks hint at the potential inherent in studying the tasks and actions that make up SBMI practices, they simultaneously indicate how much more there is to learn about these elements. This point is apparent in a different way in Figure 3.1 and Figure 3.2 as well, in the sense that projects are overrepresented compared to tasks and actions, even though projects by Schatzki's (2002) definition are made up of tasks which in turn are made up of actions. In other words, for each project-level activity that is present without accompanying tasks and actions, there lies a research gap waiting.[31]

An additional shortcoming in the coverage of SBMI activities in the literature is concerning *projects*. This shortcoming is less visible in Figure 3.2, as a few projects, metaprojects and second order metaprojects are present. Still, the total set of projects found in the literature is not necessarily particularly varied or complete for a literature that aims to describe such a complex phenomenon as the SBMI process. Furthermore, the total ground covered by the findings on projects are even more limited than the number of individual findings suggest.

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[31] In addition to this comes any potential actions that belong to projects that are currently not investigated in the SBMI literature and therefore not present in the review, as per the point in the next paragraph.

While the set of entries in the data structure reported in Figure 3.1 *might* be sufficient to cover all relevant types of projects that must be undertaken in order to move successfully through an SBMI process, this seems unlikely. As an example, consider the need for working systematically with persuasion of employees and colleagues in order to create momentum for change, as identified in the literature on social issue selling (e.g., Sonenshein, 2006, 2016). Such work seems to go mostly uncovered in the current SBMI literature, with only brief references to such points as building "an open, participative culture" (Roome & Louche, 2016, p. 29) or building momentum in the organization. While there certainly are overlaps between persuasion and building a culture, the former is a distinct type of activity in its own right, which is likely to correspond to at least one new project type that is required during the SBMI process. Zooming out, this is just one example of a likely omission. Further such omissions are likely to mar the literature, and research should endeavor to uncover and fill the relevant gaps in the knowledge.

A final shortcoming in the coverage of SBMI activities in the literature is that the different projects and metaprojects identified in my review have not received equal amounts of attention. This is evident by just with a quick visual inspection of the dots in Figure 3.2. It shows that there is a greater wealth of findings covering the metaproject concerned with "crafting plans", followed by the metaprojects "processing information" and "collecting information". In some ways, the overall skew toward these metaprojects is even worse than a brief visual inspection of Figure 3.1 reveals. Thanks to the holistic approach and impressive efforts of Inigo et al. (2017) and Roome and Louche (2016), several other project types and metaprojects are covered by one or more findings. However, the fact remains that many projects are covered only by, or mostly by, results from only these two papers. With so much ground to cover, the two papers must by necessity truncate and simplify matters to provide tractable overviews of the entirety of the process. Thus, these two papers—while they are important and detailed contributions to the study of SBMI practice—only provide a start for the investigation of the process stages and the related practices, practitioners and praxes. As such, they provide fruitful impulses for further research that could delve into and unpack their findings further.

I must stress that I am not attempting to claim it is desirable that the SBMI literature deals with all SBMI projects in equal detail. On the contrary, I recognize that there may be good

reasons why some projects should get more attention than others.[32] However, I want to argue—based on the literature review—that the unequal attention afforded to the projects gives reason to question whether this skew is desirable in the SBMI literature going forward. Such questions must necessarily be answered by the community of SBMI researchers, through the exploration of the various potential research topics represented by the different projects. However, my working hypothesis at the moment is that, although it may not be desirable that the literature offers completely equal coverage of all projects that are included in SBMI practices, it is probably desirable to have a somewhat larger breadth and variation in the contributions than what is currently the case.

The second point on what is currently lacking when it comes to depth and nuance in the SBMI literature is concerned with *SBMI-related material arrangements*, *SBMI-related praxis* and *SBMI-related practitioners*—three of the five main elements in the conceptual model (see Figure 3.1). These elements have in common that they are covered by few findings from the current SBMI literature.

Regarding *SBMI-related material arrangements*, the literature contains five findings on this topic. However, these findings are highly clustered, as all the findings are concerned with tools used to arrange brainstorming workshops to plan a new SBM. This means that the findings are unlikely to have covered the complete picture regarding the role of material arrangements. Thus, there is much work to do for scholars if we are to achieve greater knowledge on material arrangements in the SBMI process.

SBMI-related praxis is covered by two findings, and these findings suggest that there are further unexplored areas on the knowledge map.

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[32] As an example, since the concept of the "business model" is the key to the distinctive character of this research literature, it might be natural that the literature initially deals more with how to analyze and design business models (a key theme in the literature on business models) than with how to implement them. It is also quite possible that some of projects included in SBMI practices should be left entirely to other literature streams. For example, the issue-selling literature (e.g., Alt & Craig, 2016; Carrington, Zwick, & Neville, 2018; Dutton & Ashford, 1993; Sonenshein, 2016) offers a vital stream of literature on the persuasion of co-workers which will largely be able to find direct application within the "securing allies and momentum for change" metaproject, and possible other projects as well.

Three findings in the literature detail *SBMI-related practitioners* (Inigo et al., 2017; Roome & Louche, 2016; Weissbrod & Bocken, 2017). These papers offer abstract examples of the different types formal organization positions SBMI practitioners might inhabit (e.g., senior managers, innovation team members), and which stakeholders outside the organization might be involved as practitioners in its SBMI processes (e.g., customers, suppliers, independent sustainability experts). While these findings offer a promising start, there is not much here in the way of detail. Thus, there is room for new contributions that study concrete SBMI practitioners more in detail, perhaps to learn what types of know-how they bring to the table in the SBMI process, or how differences in practitioner backgrounds might inform their praxis.

The third and final point that supports the assertion that the SBMI literature lacks nuance and depth on SBMI viewed as practice, is the treatment of the fifth main element in the conceptual model: *organizing elements of SBMI-related practices*. This element is covered by 23 findings and one implicit finding in the literature, as well as two more findings concerned with the link between the organizing elements and SBMI activities. Thus, the relative number of findings is not the problem here. However, as with the findings on SBMI activities, that the relative number of findings is impressive does not mean that the organizing elements are covered in sufficient depth, given the relatively small total pool of papers and findings. Furthermore, the relevant findings on the organizing elements of SBMI-related practices are not uniformly divided between the different organizing elements. The *practical understandings* element is not covered by any findings in the literature. Furthermore, there are scant findings on *rules* and *general understandings*. These thinly researched elements constitute a knowledge gap that should be researched further.

The *teleoaffective structure* is the organizing element of SBMI-related practices that is covered in greatest detail. However, despite a relatively high number of findings that discuss the teleoaffective structure—in particular, the *ends* component of the this structure—it is possible to pinpoint shortcomings in the literature when it comes to a lack of depth and nuances in the treatment of this element as well. In the following, I will concentrate on four points where the findings on the ends of SBMI run thin and thus could be extended in order to provide greater knowledge on this element. First, while several points in the literature can be interpreted as describing the ends of SBMI, few of these points come from papers that *center* on ends. Rather, end-relevant points mostly surface in passing in the literature and are not

discussed in depth. As an example of this, consider the eight findings in Bocken et al. (2014) that I have registered as concerning ends. Bocken et al. (2014) write about SBM archetypes, not ends specifically. The ends are simply present in this paper because each archetype is geared towards realizing a certain main end, and these ends are described in the paper as part of the general description of each archetype. Second, the literature could probably gain by drawing insights on ends from the literature on CS motivations (see paper I for a glimpse into this literature), as this does not appear to be done presently. As it is, the findings on the ends of SBMI are uncoupled from insights in the general CS/R literature. Third, the findings in the literature hardly connect ends with concrete activities except for the findings by Inigo et al. (2017). Thus, there is room for contributions that investigate how certain types of ends might be associated with particular SBMI actions and projects. Fourth, the current findings on the ends of SBMI only briefly touch upon an interesting research track that are likely to award rich findings upon further study: tensions between "business as usual" and SBMI-related requirements and activities (cf. Laasch, 2018; van Bommel, 2018; Stubbs, 2019).

3.5 CLOSING POINTS

The review in this chapter explores findings on SBMI activities in the current literature and sorts them by relating them to—and expanding—the conceptual model of the SBMI process viewed as practice that was derived in chapter 2 (cf. Figure 2.1). Furthermore, the review highlights two main takeaways regarding the SBMI literature. First, that the set of findings taken together add further levels of complexity to the picture of the SBMI process viewed as practice in addition to that which my conceptual model of the process already represents. And, second, the findings on SBMI activities in the literature are promising, but limited, and lack both depth and nuance.

The takeaways from this chapter impact the rest of the dissertation, in particular how I can best contribute to the literature, both in the sense of which findings might meaningfully complement the current literature and in the sense of which methodological choices might suit this task.

The limited supply of current knowledge combined with the identified complexity of SBMI as a phenomenon, suggests that when it comes to methodology an exploratory approach should prove a good fit (Yin, 2014). As I detail in the next chapter, where I explain my methodological approach, this is precisely the road I have taken.

Regarding which findings that could best complement the literature, the two main takeaways from the literature review suggest that findings that add further depth and nuance, as well as findings that can provide some measure of order to our understanding of the complex phenomenon of SBMI, should be sought out. I discuss how the findings in the appended papers (as introduced in chapter 5) contribute to the literature in chapter 6.

> You see, idealism detached from action is just a dream. But idealism allied with pragmatism, with rolling up your sleeves and making the world bend a bit, is very exciting.
>
> – Bono

4 METHODOLOGY

The goal of this chapter is to supplement the methodological points offered in the appended papers and thus provide a transparent account of how the dissertation project was conducted. To achieve this goal, I address four main topics: (1) my position as a researcher, in particular the philosophical approach I take in the dissertation work; (2) an overview of the empirical material of the dissertation and reflections on my use this material; (3) how I have worked to ensure the trustworthiness of the research in the appended papers; and (4) steps taken to ensure the ethical soundness of the research.

4.1 PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH

Regarding my philosophical approach, I draw on Delanty and Strydom (2003) and surmise that the core subjects within the philosophy of social science can be summarized as: methodology (including the ethics of social science), epistemology, and ontology.[33] In line with Moses and Knutsen (2012) I view methodology as the sum of the ontological and epistemological stances the researcher holds, combined with the methods the researcher masters and can bring to bear on research questions.[34]

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[33] The inclusion of the ethics of social science as a sub-category of methodology is inspired by Benton and Craib (2011). I deal with ethics in a separate section later in this chapter.
[34] Implicit here is that I define *method* as a narrower concept distinct from methodology. More specifically, I define methods as the "research techniques, or technical procedures of a discipline" (Moses & Knutsen, 2012, p. 5).

My general position on epistemology and ontology is one of *moderate constructionism*, where I hold that

> "something is going on out there and there may be better or worse ways of addressing things, but also that the frameworks, preunderstandings, and vocabularies are central in producing particular versions of the world" (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007, p. 1265).

A bit more formally, moderate constructionism, as I adopt it here, entails that I believe in a physical reality and a true world that exists independent of our awareness of it (i.e., a realist ontology), while I, at the same time, question our ability to know this reality fully (van den Belt, 2003). The first part of this position equals the "moderate." The second part of this position, questioning our ability to know true reality, is the "constructionism." Taking this position means being skeptical of the ability of language to mirror reality directly (cf. Rorty, 1978/2018). However, instead of dismissing outright the capacity of language to convey information about objective reality, the moderate constructionist position I take means accepting that language—and thus much of the empirical and theoretical raw materials we work with in social science—can provide useful clues about a reality "out there", but in an imperfect way (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2011).

It is possible to adopt and defend a moderate constructionist approach to natural science (cf. van den Belt, 2003). And such a position is even easier to accept and defend in social science, given that, as a Alvesson and Kärreman (2011) argue, in social science "most phenomena worth investigating are complex, dynamic and difficult to observe" (p. 28). When dealing with and attempting to describe such phenomena,

> "Employing different languages produces partly different empirical materials and reality by its nature does not simply invite and make self-evident the use of a particular set of words to describe itself." (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2011, p. 34)

The inherent skepticism towards our ability to know reality fully that is at the heart of moderate constructionism means that I take a flexible approach towards exact ontological choices. Even though ontological concerns technically are more fundamental than epistemological concerns, I hold that since objective knowledge about true reality is unattainable, all detailed ontological accounts that go beyond establishing that "there is

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something out there" are in essence conjectures. Thus, my approach allows me to see different social ontologies (and also "social theories", cf. Reckwitz, 2002) simply as different lenses on social phenomena—or bundles of "sensitizing concepts" (cf. Blumer, 1954)—that can and should be both questioned and purposefully changed between in order to offer creative impulses in theorizing. This is in line with the views held by Schatzki (2019) on the matter:

> "[…] multiple good theories—ontological and explanatory—exist in social research: this is the ineradicable condition of the enterprise. Arguments cannot pick out a small unique set of best approaches, and usefulness is to varying extents in the eye of the beholder. Students and empirical researchers must simply live with this plurality and search out the approaches and frameworks that are most useful in their empirical work. One task of theory is to develop concepts—the approaches and frameworks—from which they can choose. Which they do choose is dependent on pragmatic matters." (p. 120)

Apropos Schatzki, my use of practice theory and Schatzki's site ontology in this dissertation should be understood in the light of my flexible approach towards the use of social ontologies. I view site ontology as a particular lens that I bring to bear on SBMI, and not the only possible or desirable lens on the subject. Site ontology is just the lens that suited my research interest best in this particular project, given that practice theory and site ontology, for reasons stated in chapters 1 and 2, encourage detailed investigations of activity, the focal topic of this dissertation.

In a similar fashion to my open-ended approach to ontologies, my moderate constructionist stance makes me an advocate of methodological pluralism (cf. Moses & Knutsen, 2012), in the sense that switching methodologies—i.e., sets of ontological and epistemological stances combined with compatible uses of methods—between projects based on research needs is perfectly permissible and reasonable.

Related to the point on methodological pluralism, one final methodological debate that my moderate constructionist stance renders less relevant is the debate on whether nomothetic or ideographic knowledge production is the ideal for social science (cf. Flyvbjerg, 2001; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). My approach, informed by moderate constructionism and the accompanying stance of methodological pluralism, is that nomothetic and ideographic approaches to

knowledge generation simply grasp at and thus describe different facets of a social reality that can only be imperfectly known. Thus, both approaches have their place, as each one complements the other. That being said, I maintain a healthy dose of skepticism towards overly ambitious nomothetic claims in social science.

As argued by Alvesson and Kärreman (2007, 2011), a moderate constructionist approach has consequences for my approach to empirical material, which I view as a critical dialogue partner in the construction of theories rather than as a final judge of some objectively measurable "final truth." However, as I will return to below, my approach to empirical material is anything but frivolous.

My moderate constructionist stance leads me to use abduction as an important general methodological approach in my work with empirical material. Abduction can be described as a way of reasoning where we infer a possible—and non-observable—pattern from one or more observations (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Tavory & Timmermans, 2014). The difference between abduction and the standard alternatives (deduction and induction) lies in the use of creative (cf. Weick, 1989) and theoretically informed *guesswork* to produce explanations. Both Tavory and Timmermans (2014) and Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009) underscore the importance of having a rich vocabulary of different theoretical perspectives when you engage in abductive theorizing. Both contributions give two reasons for this. First, a rich vocabulary of theoretical perspectives allows the researcher to separate well between readily explainable and surprising observations (and recognizing surprising observations is valuable, as they are held to be particularly useful for making abductive leaps). Second, a rich vocabulary of theoretical perspectives means that the researcher can draw in theory that is new to the phenomenon in question and enrich theory building by cross-fertilization.

Returning to the point on empirical material as a dialogue partner, Alvesson and Kärreman (2007, p. 1266) note on theory construction that "some constructions make more sense than others." The empirical material acts as an anchor that keeps the constructions made by the researcher honest; I place great weight on this anchor and draw extensively on methods of qualitative data analysis, such as coding and memo writing, drawn from sources such as Charmaz (2006), Saldaña (2013) and Miles and Huberman (1994). I utilize these methods to move back and forth between creative theorizing based on my available theoretical repertoire and the disciplining (and inspiring) effects of close, inductive readings of the empirical

material. Always on the lookout for surprises and discrepancies—which can often generate important creative moments of abduction. This way of working is also in line with the approach to abduction advocated by Tavory and Timmermans (2014), which in hold that, while abduction is a good tool for generating new insights, these insights need to be sharpened through inductive or deductive work (or both) at a later stage. In light of this recommendation, my efforts in this dissertation can be seen as primarily exploratory in nature.

4.2 EMPIRICAL MATERIAL

In this section, I give an overview of the empirical material that is incorporated in the dissertation and an account of how this has been obtained. I also reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the empirical material in light of the purpose and research questions of the dissertation.

Table 4.1 provides an overview of the empirical material the dissertation has been based on and my methods of collection. The papers and the cases in Table 4.1 are presented in chronological order. Below the table I give an overview over how I gained access to the material. Note that issues related to the trustworthiness of the material are discussed separately, in section 4.3.

Table 4.1: Overview of empirical material.

Paper	Focal organization	Type of material	Volume	Details
Paper I & paper II	n/a	Survey	n = 103	• Population: Norwegian knowledge-intensive service firms • Sample size: 360 firms • Response rate: 28.6% • 87% of respondents were high-level managers • No relevant missing value issues in the utilized items[35]
Paper III	LYOGOC	Interviews	5	1. Head of CS/R – first interview. Approx. 75 minutes. 2. Head of CS/R – second interview. Approx. 180 minutes. 3. Head of Markets in GLØR, an external partner organization. Approx. 70 minutes. 4. Top management member #1, leader to the Head of CS/R Approx. 85 minutes. 5. Top management member #2. Approx. 100 minutes. Interview 2 was conducted by telephone. The rest of the interviews were conducted on-site. All interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format and recorded by handwriting, and transformed to field notes right after each interview were completed.
		Documents	18	• 2 documents from the International Olympic Committee (questionnaire for applicants, • 3 official reports from previous Games • 1 official document from the Norwegian Government (the case papers for a vote on supporting the Games financially) • 4 reports from external certifying company regarding the sustainability certification of the Games • 7 internal documents from LYOGOC (early PPT-presentations, strategic platforms, internal sustainability report, etc.) • 1 official report from the LYOGC
Paper IV	Tango	Observation	1	Guided tour of the company HQ by Hannah, Head of CS/R. Informal talks with Hannah and CEO Glenn, including talk over lunch. Approx. 3.5 hours. Handwritten notes transformed to field notes.

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[35] There are no missing values in the variables used to provide the empirical findings in paper I and paper II, i.e.: the variables used in the statistical analysis in paper I and the variables included in Figure 1 in paper II exhibit no missing values. One variable reported in the descriptive statistics in paper I had missing values: the variable for respondent gender, which had five missing values—i.e. 4.9% of the 103 respondents did not answer this question. As this variable was not used in analysis, no corrective measures were taken.

		Interviews	2	1. Hannah, Head of CS/R. Approx. 70 minutes. 2. Glenn, CEO. Approx. 40 minutes. Both interviews were conducted on-site in a semi-structured format. Audio was recorded and transcribed in full.
		Documents	19	• 2 internal information brochures on CS/R in Tango • 17 annual CS/R reports delivered to Ethical Trade Norway
	Financial sector background	Interview	1	1. Caspar, top-level executive in an a financial organization. On-site semi-structured interview. Approx. 50 minutes. Audio recorded and transcribed in full.
		Documents	3	• 1 report by the industry organization Finance Norway • 2 reports by Norwegian forum for responsible and sustainable investments (Norsif)
	Sierra	Interviews		1. Adam, Head of CS/R. Approx. 85 minutes. 2. Benjamin, middle manager, Adam's leader. Approx. 70 minutes. Followed by informal talk over lunch (not recorded). 3. Diana, middle manager, informally engaged in CS/R. Approx. 80 minutes. 4. Simultaneous interview with Frank, Chief of Communications, and Gustav, Chief Investment Officer. Approx. 40 minutes. All interviews were conducted on-site in a semi-structured format. Audio was recorded and transcribed in full for all interviews except number 4, which contained little useful information and was summarized in a short field note.
		Documents	17	• 17 annual reports, with included chapters on CS/R
	Echo	Interviews		1. Hugo, team member central CS/R unit. Approx. 70 minutes. 2. Iris, team member central CS/R unit. Approx. 60 minutes. 3. Julia, Head of unit for responsible investments. Approx. 80 minutes. All interviews were conducted on-site in a semi-structured format, with audio recorded and transcribed in full.
		Documents	24	• 18 annual reports with CS/R sections • 6 standalone CS/R reports
	Pertinent to all of paper IV	Analytical memos	>300 pages	Analytical memos written by the researcher over the course of the project as part of data collection and analysis.

Note: In addition to the material in the table comes informal browsing of the webpages of the organizations that are represented in the empirical material. The webpages are not included in the table since I have not included this material in my analyses, as the reports covered they same type of information.

The survey responses forming the basis for the analysis in paper I and the empirical illustration in paper II was collected at the very start of my PhD project. The survey was made when an opportunity for a collaboration with the employers' association Abelia arose. Abelia wished to map status on CS/R work among its member firms, and agreed to distribute the survey to its member companies in exchange for a report that summarized the results. Abelia had no hand in the design of the survey.

I negotiated access to the case organization in paper III (the LYOGOC) through a cold-call approach. I did not have any connections to the organization before I contacted the Head of CS/R directly, and I used a snowball approach from there. I also cold-called the informant located at the external partner organization handling renovation. I did not offer the organization or the individual informants any form of collaboration or partnership, only the option to read early drafts of the research, as well as the finished version.

When obtaining empirical material for paper IV, I was introduced to the CEO of Tango through a common acquaintance, and the CEO in turn put me into contact with the Head of CS/R in the company. I was also able to leverage acquaintances to get a high-level executive in a financial organization to do an interview that provided me with background information on the financial sector. The rest of the empirical material that forms the basis for paper IV was drawn from companies and individuals I had no prior connections with before the research began. The first step I made towards getting access to more companies was a mapping of relevant candidate companies based on my knowledge on the finance sector and also information on the CS/R efforts of individual companies tracked down via company websites. By investigating the publicly available information I found on different candidate companies, I decided on the final candidates as well as prepared for the first contact with the companies.

Based on the information at hand, I made contact with four companies I considered as suitable. For those companies that listed an individual with CS/R responsible, I contacted this individual. For the companies that did not list such an individual, I made my first contact with the media contact person and asked who I should talk to regarding the CS/R efforts of the organization. Finally, if the organization provided no information that indicated either a CS/R person or a media contact, I used the general contact information and asked the virtual "front desk" for suitable contact persons. This cold-call strategy mostly paid off. Three of the four

companies I approached gave me access to interviews with relevant employees. However, one of the three companies that agreed to give access turned out to be less relevant to the study as it lacked a relevant case individual to interview. This left me with two companies: Sierra and Echo.

A general challenge across most of the qualitative interviews I conducted is that I had not met the informants before I interviewed them, only communicated briefly by phone and e-mail.[36] This meant that I did not have the opportunity to build rapport before the interview. As establishing a certain level of rapport is considered useful in interviewing (Seidman, 2013), I employed five main strategies to build rapport in the interview setting itself. First, I made the choice to adopt a semi-structured interview type in order to be prepared in the form of having a rough guide for the conversation and several ready-made follow-up questions if the need arose (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). At the same time, I was prepared to improvise the content of the conversation and interrupt as little as possible in order to let the informants talk freely (Seidman, 2013). Second, I came prepared to each interview with a prior knowledge on the organization where the informant in question worked.[37] Third, I conducted all interviews on site at each informant's workplace in order to give them a familiar and comfortable setting for the interview.[38] Arriving at the scene and being shown by the informant to the exact location they had chosen for the interview (typically a meeting room) also provided an occasion for the type of informal chat that is suggested to help ease informants into the interview setting (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Fourth, I approached each interview as a conversational partnership, in which I took it upon myself to "make the interview as pleasant as possible" (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 71) for the informants by being an interested, encouraging and attentive listener (McCracken, 1988; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Seidman, 2013). Fifth, I tried to set the stage at the beginning of each interview by assuming a clear role, chosen in order to put the informants at ease (Kvale & Brinkman, 2014; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The role I aimed for

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[36] There were three types of positive exceptions to this pattern. First, the interviews that were preceeded with informal talks prior to the interview. This included the interviews with Hannah and Glenn in Tango and Eva in Papa. Second, the interviews where I got extra rapport through drawing on a common acquaintance to set up the interview, such as the GLØR informant in paper III and Glenn in Tango. Third, informants that I was acquainted with before the interview was set up, namely Caspar (for paper IV).

[37] For interviews in paper III prior knowledge was gained through informal conversations with colleagues that also studied the LYOGOC (albeit not the CS/R efforts of the organization) as well as online news articles. Prior knowledge on organizations for the paper IV interviews was found through open web searches, as well as company web pages and yearly reports.

[38] This point is in line with authors that point out the effects that the physical surroundings of the interview situation has on the informant (and the researcher as well, although that is a different matter). See e.g. Saldaña and Omasta (2017).

was as a friendly, interested, grounded and slightly naïve researcher that was enthusiastic about CS/R in general and the informant's CS/R efforts in particular.[39] In order to achieve this role in the conversational partnership, I took pains in my interview preparations to create some short key phrases for the start of the interview that were designed to cast me in the desired role. I had also made sure that the role was not too far removed from my own personality and preferences, as suggested by Rubin and Rubin (2012).

Having provided an overview of the empirical material and how it was obtained, I will now reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the empirical material in light of the purpose and research questions of the dissertation. As a reminder, the purpose of the dissertation is "to contribute to richer knowledge regarding SBMI activities". It is an exploratory purpose, and it could be fulfilled by increasing the breadth of knowledge on SBMI activities or the depth of this knowledge. In light of this, a key strength of my empirical material is its contribution to greater breadth as well as greater depth in our knowledge on SBMI. The broad snapshot provided by the survey offers greater breadth and a complementarity with a literature that mainly building its knowledge of SBMI on qualitative case studies (cf. chapter 3). My qualitative material, on the other hand, offers greater depth by zooming in on certain features of the SBMI work, such as planning (paper III) and persuasion (paper IV).

The combination of breadth and depth in the material comes from mixing quantitative and qualitative methods. As such, my empirical material illustrates a key strength that can be obtained through such a mix, namely that it can result in a richer picture of the studied phenomenon (Lund, 2012; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

My particular way of mixing quantitative and qualitative methods across the papers in the dissertation can best be described as a *development* design (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989) that emerged during my work. In a development design, studies with different methods are conducted sequentially, so that results from one study can inform the design of the next in order to better illuminate a phenomenon of interest (Greene et al., 1989).[40] This was what

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[39] The role was consciously designed to avoid being typecast into a role that could prove less helpful in achieving a conversational partnership. Examples of problematic roles I wished to avoid were: a moral guardian out to judge the informant or "dig up dirt" on their company; or a pedantic expert that knew "too much" about the topic at hand (risking making the interview feel like a quiz or some arena for competition).

[40] This approach is one of five main approaches to mixed methods described by Greene et al. (1989). The authors hold development design to be significantly more flexible than e.g. a triangulation based approach.

happened in my work when findings from the quantitative and broad survey in the first part of the PhD project (paper I and paper II) were allowed to direct what subtopics within SBMI that should be explored in the qualitative efforts at depth that went into the second part of the PhD project (paper III and paper IV). In particular, the empirical finding regarding a lack of key performance indicators for CS/R in the surveyed companies (as seen in paper II) opened my eyes to the existence of what looked like unsolved implementation problems in the SBMI processes of the companies. This topic was not afforded much attention in the extant literature on SBMI activities. At the same time, the survey data did not answer any questions as to how or why these issues arose. Moreover, it seemed clear to me that further survey research likely would not give satisfactory answers to my question regarding implementation, given the processual and complex nature of such efforts. Therefore, I concluded that I needed to take a qualitative approach and study the phenomenon "on the ground". Thus, the breadth-oriented quantitative empirical material directed the more focused qualitative efforts in paper III and paper IV towards an interesting and potentially important gap in our knowledge.

The limitations of the material are in a sense related to its strength: splitting my efforts between providing breadth and depth has stretched the research effort somewhat thin and resulted in a kind of fragmentation. Concentrating my efforts on only breadth or only depth—and concentrating the choice of subtopics more as well—would probably have yielded a more coherent and in that sense stronger contribution to our knowledge on SBMI activities. It might also have resulted in a more streamlined use of methods, instead of the more eclectic approach that I have used. However, such a contribution would have been smaller in scope, and, I would argue, less suited to the immature and fragmented nature of the extant body of knowledge on SBMI activities.

An additional limitation of the survey material is its cross-sectional nature, which makes it a snapshot of SBMI activities. As argued in chapter 2 I see SBMI as a process, and thus, a static snapshot can be seen to be of limited value compared to empirical material that is processual in nature. This limitation however, is again related to the "breadth versus depth" dimension. The survey offers a birds-eye view of a broad set of practitioners in a moment in time by sacrificing the depth that comes with following a set of these practitioners over time. Furthermore, the survey offers insights regarding the current end-point of the ongoing efforts of the practitioners at the time they responded. As such, this provides a useful glimpse into the current status quo and where the shoe pinched for the practitioners at the time, so to speak.

While this glimpse told me very little regarding the history and reasons behind the current state of affairs and also provided little in the way of details, the glimpse nonetheless provided an indication of where to direct my efforts at depth—including which processes to study.

A similar line of argument concerning the strength of the empirical material applies to the fit between the empirical material and my first research question ("What characterizes SBMI processes when viewed as practice?"). The scope of the material is a strength when the goal is to investigate SBMI as practice. This point gets even clearer when considering that practice theory typically rejects the traditional separation between different levels of analysis—typically 'macro', 'meso' and 'micro'—in social science research (e.g., Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 2002). Thus, it is a strength of my empirical material that it encompasses both a large static snapshot of the subject matter through the survey and more detailed and dynamic material through the case study materials. When the insights from these different materials are put together in the dissertation cover, they provide a richer and fuller view of the former micro, meso and macro elements that form SBMI practices than any part of the material could have offered separately. However, again, the main limitation is a lack of depth and detail. This is made even clearer by the fact that the dissertation lacks a type of empirical material that practice theorists hold to be especially useful: close observations of the daily practices of practitioners over time. That said, this does not render the empirical material useless—it merely points towards an area of improvement and a venue for further research.

Finally, as already signaled in chapter 1, my second research question ("How can the application of practice theory in research of SBMI enrich our understanding of SBMI as a phenomenon?") *grew out of* my involvement with the empirical material, and is answered conceptually. Thus, the research question is inspired by the empirical material rather than answered by it.

The existence of research question two is a result of my choice to adopt practice theory as a lens in the dissertation. This decision was in turn informed by an abductive use of my empirical material, in particular the empirical material that in the end went into paper IV. Through a headlong collision with the empirical material in the spirit of abduction, the material opened my eyes to the power of practice theory to inform both the analysis in paper IV and my understanding of the PhD project in general. In short, in my work on paper IV I encountered what seemed to be a mystery in my empirical material (Alvesson & Kärreman,

2007, 2011): the literature on issue selling that I drew on in my research design seemed to be based on an assumption that persuasion was achieved through concrete and clearly delimited persuasion events which resulted in victory or defeat for the persuader over key opponents. Then, once such a battle of wits was won, the literature seemed to suggest, the issue was settled and the desired changes would happen in the organization. This did not fit well with the reality described by my informants. They seemed to suggest that persuasion occurred through "muddling through" a series of interactions that occurred over time with several different colleagues. The battle was seldom lost or won outright, and even when change happened, my informants seemed to suggest that it did not necessarily come as a result of a victory in their persuasion efforts.[41] This mismatch between the assumptions in the literature and the accounts provided by my informants led me on a search for a more fitting theoretical frame, a search that in turn led me to strategy as practice and finally to practice theory. When I found this resource, the fit with both the empirical material for paper IV and with my overall PhD project seemed striking to me, and this led me to adopt practice theory as a lens, both on the subject matter in paper IV and in the dissertation cover as a whole. The abductive mystery encountered in my work on paper IV thus allowed me to formulate research question two in the first place, and further, it allowed me to suggest an answer to the question through a conceptual discussion (see section 6.1.2).

This concludes my reflections on the strengths and limitations of the empirical material. In the next section, I highlight how I worked to ensure trustworthiness in the appended papers.

4.3 STEPS TAKEN TO ENSURE THE TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE APPENDED PAPERS

Below, I will go through how I approached the task of ensuring that the work is trustworthy. This section and its subsections is intended to supplement the method sections in the appended papers, not replace them, and I will thus try to keep unnecessary repetition to a minimum.

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[41] See more on this in paper IV.

In order to account for the quality of the conclusions in my qualitative works (paper III and paper IV), I draw on Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four criteria of trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. I concentrate on trustworthiness and these criteria as a way to deliver on the goal of this chapter (i.e., providing a transparent account of how the dissertation project was conducted). At the same time, I acknowledge that trustworthiness is just one of many criteria for judging the quality of the results and theory construction that arise from the handling of empirical material—other criteria, such as interestingness, emotional resonance and ethical beneficence are also relevant (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007; Davis, 1971; Flyvbjerg, 2001; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Weick, 1989; Weick, 1999). However, while I find that such criteria can be useful guidelines and inspirations in the act of doing research and in evaluating the research of others, the degree to which my contributions might fulfill any these criteria are in the eyes of the beholder—and thus speculation on my part is unproductive. I provide some brief reflections on beneficence in section 4.3, and hope the contributions speak for themselves as to their fulfillment of other criteria.

One final note is that I use only the categories from Lincoln and Guba (1985), and I will not pay particular attention to the strategies for ensuring trustworthiness proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as I view these as a bit too single-mindedly inductive given my philosophical stance.

4.3.1 Paper I: "Managerial perceptions of sustainability motivations and sustainable business model innovation in service companies"

In discussing the quantitative work in paper I, I draw on the quantitative equivalents to Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four criteria of trustworthiness: internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity.

Paper I is an exploratory quantitative study based on survey data. The exploratory nature of the study meant that there were no ready-made instruments to draw on when constructing the survey items, something that represents a threat to reliability, as we had no sure knowledge on whether the items in the study were easy to understand and would produce consistent responses from respondents over time. However, we sought to strengthen the reliability of the

study by pretesting the survey on individuals similar to the target group and adjusting the survey according to their feedback in order to ensure that the items were easily understandable and resulted in univocal understandings from single respondents and across respondents.

The internal validity of the results reported in paper I was ensured by adopting standard statistical analysis tools and tests for investigating whether threats to internal validity were present, such as tests regarding whether the data matched the assumptions of the analysis methods used. These tests did not indicate any problems.

Regarding external validity, the study draws from a very specific, non-random sample. The sample is a result of a research collaboration with the Norwegian employers' association Abelia, which organizes knowledge-intensive service companies, and the sample is therefore drawn from their member organizations. Furthermore, the sample was restricted to companies with more than 20 fulltime employees. This non-random sampling means that the findings based on the 103 completed responses are only statistically generalizable to the total sample of 360 companies. To sum up, the selected sample consisted of Norwegian knowledge-intensive service companies, Abelia members, and with 20 or more fulltime employees. This does not result in the most impressive external validity. However, the external validity can be increased—as argued in the paper—by adopting a case logic of analytic generalization (Yin, 2014). In this way findings that in a statistical sense apply only to the population that the sample is drawn from can, in fact, be extended to other populations. I use this strategy in the paper, and thus, external validity is expanded through a mixed-method approach to generalization.

Finally, objectivity should not be a problem in the sense that we, as researchers, have not exercised any undue influence on the respondents, as the survey was conducted online. The wording of the survey itself can, of course, create bias in the respondents, but this possibility was kept in check by pretesting the survey.

4.3.2 Paper II: "Developing management control systems for sustainable business models"

Paper II can best be described as a conceptual paper with an added empirical illustration (pp. 12-13 in the paper). The empirical illustration is based on raw data drawn from the same survey data that forms the basis of paper I, and uses items from this survey that were not used in paper I.

The points on the reliability and external validity of the survey material from section 4.3.1 apply to the survey material used in paper II as well. Thus, I will not repeat these points here. Below, I will briefly cover the specific trustworthiness issue pertaining only to paper III: the internal validity of the finding gleaned from the empirical illustration in paper II.

The empirical illustration in question consists of a bar chart (Figure 1 in the paper, p. 13) which compares the frequency of "yes" and "no" answers to a series of questions regarding which concrete CS/R characteristics that are present in the surveyed companies. In the paper, we interpret the figure as showing a pattern that suggests that the management control systems and organizational characteristics of the surveyed companies lag behind their development of strategies for CS/R. We base this on the fact that 48.5% of the companies report having a dedicated CS/R strategy, while only 19.4% of companies report having key performance indicators for sustainability and still fewer (8.7%) report having financial incentives for CS/R.

The empirical illustration simply provides a snapshot of our raw data on some key variables. In other words, we do report statistical tests results like we did in paper I to demonstrate the internal validity of our claims. While we do temper our claims to internal validity in that we do not claim that there is an ironclad pattern to be found, only that we see a possible pattern, this lack of statistical checks of the result could be seen as weakening the trustworthiness of the results. Therefore, I will report statistical support of the results here.

The result we discuss in paper II is that there is a higher percentage of companies that report having a CS/R strategy than having key performance indicators and financial incentives connected to their CS/R work. This result has statistical merit. The variables are, as is conventional, dummy coded with negative responses ("no") coded zero and positive

responses ("yes") coded one. Thus, the mean of each variable represents the proportion of positive responses to the corresponding survey question. A calculation of 99% confidence intervals (CIs) for the means of the three variables shows that the lower bound of the CI for CS/R strategy was higher than the upper bound of the CI for both the key performance indicator variable and the financial incentives variable.[42] Thus, we can conclude that the finding that more companies have CS/R strategies than CS/R-related key performance indicators and financial incentives is significant at the 99% level. By consequence, this means that a number of firms have only CS/R strategies and no key performance indicators or financial incentives—in other words, their management control systems lag behind their strategic ambitions. Thus, statistical tests confirm the internal validity of our findings.

Apart from this short empirical illustration, paper II is a strictly conceptual paper (as in not an empirically driven paper or a systematic literature review). The conceptual work in paper II was informed by a combination of the established theoretical repertoire of the authors and supplementing literature searches. We sought to fulfill the Lincoln and Guba (1985) criteria in our conceptual work in the following way: credibility and dependability were ensured by staying true to the cited literature; transferability was aimed for by drawing conclusions in the paper that were aimed at guiding further research and practice on the topic; and finally, confirmability was ensured by following good citation practices.

4.3.3 Paper III: "Pink games"

Paper III is based on four semi-structured interviews of three informants (one key informant was interviewed twice) and a set of organization-internal documents, which together describe and reflect on the process of planning the Youth Olympic Games 2016 at Lillehammer by the organizing committee (LYOGOC). Based on this empirical material, I built my analysis by combining inductive pattern building with the visual and temporal bracketing strategies for making sense of process data suggested by Langley (1999).

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[42] Since the variables in question are binomial, the Agresti-Coull method of estimating confidence intervals was used, as recommended by Brown et al. (2001) for $n \geq 40$.

I choose the case because I saw an opportunity to gain unique access to insiders in an event built from scratch where sustainability had been a stated goal from the start. It appealed to me as a "pure implementation project," in the sense that the building from scratch meant that there was no positive or negative history within CS/R to build on. More concretely, my choice to engage with the case, collect empirical material, and finally write the paper, arose from analyzing the opportunity based on a case-selection logic (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Yin, 2014). I selected the case based on two main factors. First, the LYOGOC was a project organization that started from scratch—a beneficial factor for ensuring that sustainability played a key role in the planning processes of the organization in the sense that the newness of the organization meant that it lacked established "business-as-usual" practices that might have hindered or drowned out sustainability efforts. The second beneficial factor was that the LYOGOC came with a clear sustainability goal built into its stated mission, which should ensure that sustainability was high on their agenda. Due to these two factors, I considered LYOGOC a possible critical case (Flyvbjerg, 2006) for how sustainability is treated in planning processes. Therefore, if the LYOGOC did not prioritize sustainability, or in other ways treated sustainability sub-optimally, then the problems I would identify were likely to apply to most other organizations as well because sustainability likely had more adverse conditions to combat in these other organizations than in the LYOGOC. The application of this case-study logic increased the transferability of my findings.

When it comes to the conclusions of the study, the relatively limited empirical material and the restricted number of informants threatens primarily the credibility of my conclusions. This is due to the danger of attaining a too-small sliver of the empirical phenomenon and missing out on important perspectives and insights beyond this sliver. Put crudely, I risk being at the mercy of the conscious and unconscious biases and agendas of my informants. I tamed this problem through four strategies. First, by keeping an eye on the particular bias that I most strongly suspected that the informants would exhibit: a need—conscious or unconscious—to establish that the event was a sustainability-success story. I report carefully in the final text that any claim to the success of the event is only in the eyes of the informants. In this way, I combat bias by acknowledging that I do not have good empirical data on the success of the event. Rather, I focus on how the informants construct a certain link between claimed success and the story of how the project was handled. Second, I sought out documents as a complementary data source to the interview data in order to ensure some measure of data source triangulation. Third, I also used each consecutive interview to confirm and corroborate

information from the previous ones, as well as from documents and informal information sources. Fourth, I increased credibility by selecting key informants centrally placed in the organization and from different levels in the organizational hierarchy.

In general, I adopted a strategy of careful modesty in the analysis and conclusions as a way to avoid problems with confirmability, dependability, and credibility. By not over-extending my analysis or theorizing, I ensured that my conclusions remained confirmable, dependable, and credible.

I also increased the credibility of my conclusions by drawing in short quotes from informants in the text to illustrate the themes I found in my material. As I did not record and transcribe the interviews, these quotes were based on my written notes. I ensured the dependability of these notes by taking the time to do extensive write-up immediately after the completion of each interview.

4.3.4   Paper IV: "Patterns of persuasion"

The case selection for paper IV and some key points on data analysis in the paper are covered in the method section of the paper, and I will thus not deal with these points here.

A central point which is only briefly alluded to in the paper, however, is the emphasis on intensive reflection. This method of reflection was complemented with and fueled by three mutually reinforcing research activities that I engaged in simultaneously in an abductive fashion. First, close involvement with the empirical material through inductive coding methods (inspired by Charmaz, 2006; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Saldaña, 2013). The inductive coding started with line-by-line open coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Saldaña, 2013), which generated a set of 230 unique codes worded in such a way as to stay close to the empirical material, primarily by using gerunds and *in vivo* codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Saldaña, 2013). Then, there was a process of further refining these codes into a consolidated set ensued. This set was, in turn, used as a basis for generating higher-order codes, which finally resulted in the uncovering of an overall theme within the material. The second research activity consisted of parallel reading of scientific literature in search of a theoretical lens that

fit what I believed I was beginning to see in my empirical material while I coded—thus using the strategy of extending my interpretive repertoire through broad scholarship (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2011). The third and final research activity was analytic memo writing to capture and develop ideas from the coding and the reading—and the synergy between the two activities (cf. Charmaz, 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Saldaña, 2013). This approach has been a constant during the entire span of the paper IV project, and it has so far generated over 300 pages of single-spaced text in just analytic memos.

This tripartite approach of written reflection, empirical grounding, and continued work to expand my theoretical repertoire is typical of abductively oriented research. Furthermore, this was my main way of ensuring the credibility and the dependability of my analytic efforts, even though these efforts were decidedly based on creativity.

On the more mundane side, I also worked to ensure credibility and dependability in my collection of empirical material through well-planned semi-structured interviews that were recorded and transcribed to ensure a faithful representation. To ensure good quality in the interviews, I drew inspiration from several of the interview practices suggested by Rubin and Rubin (2012). I also conferred with colleagues regarding interview guides.

I worked toward the highest possible degree of confirmability without breaching anonymity by including direct quotes and similar illustrations in the finished paper were possible.

Finally, in the writing of the research, I aimed to maximize transferability through the creation of general theoretical insights from the material.

4.4 STEPS TAKEN TO ENSURE THE ETHICAL SOUNDNESS OF THE RESEARCH EFFORTS

In this section, I will give a brief account of the steps taken to ensure ethical soundness in the research efforts that made up the PhD project. I will structure this account around three core principles for ethical qualitative research: beneficence, respect, and justice (cf. Sieber, 1992, in Miles & Huberman, 1994, pp. 289–290). *Beneficence* concerns maximizing good outcomes

and minimizing the harm for all that are directly or indirectly touched by the research, including society in the widest sense. *Respect* concerns the respect for individuals and their autonomy and/or vulnerability. *Justice* concerns fair dealings in all aspects of research, for example regarding how the benefits from a research project are divided between researcher and participants.

As a point that covers all of these three principles, I adopted what might be termed a "low-informant effort, low-informant reward" approach—a variant of a "low risk, low reward" approach—to the informants involved in my PhD project. In short, I tried to ask as little of them as possible—both for ethical reasons and as a strategy for increasing the likelihood of gaining access to new organizations and informants. As part of this approach, I met and interviewed most of my informants in this PhD project only once, thus asking for a limited effort on their part. In addition to this, I took steps to further reduce the required effort on their part by always going out of my way to meet and interview informants at the site where they work.[43] Finally, regarding informants, the nature of my research topic as I have approached it in my PhD project relates only to the work-life of the informants, and not even particularly dark or difficult parts of this work-life. Thus, participating in my research projects put little emotional strain on my informants compared to participation in qualitative research on more personal and painful topics.

I adopted the low-informant effort, low-informant reward approach as an ethical measure as I did not find myself in a position where I could promise a lot in return to my informants for the efforts they put in—given the early stage of my research on the subject. I still might have chosen a different route and gambled that I might have been able to give more back to the informants. However, I chose the low-risk, low-reward approach as a risk-management tactic on my own behalf, seeing as I was quite inexperienced in the use of qualitative methods at the outset of the dissertation project.

In general, my chief concern when it comes to ethics has been my relationship with my informants. In addition to the approach outlined above, I took steps to ensure that I treated them with beneficence, respect, and justice. Particularly important in this—besides good etiquette in the field setting and the follow-up—is informed consent (including issues of

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[43] Incidentally, this has other benefits as well, such as an increased sense of security for the informants. And it also offers me a sliver of observation and thus an added feel for the context that the informants participate in.

anonymity or confidentiality) and the safe handling of any person-identifying materials, such as interview recordings. These issues were handled correctly, but in different ways, in the appended papers. In paper I, the sending of the survey and the handling of any person-identifying or otherwise sensitive materials were handled by Abelia (the project partner organization); thus, no issues, except ensuring trustworthy research results, were incumbent on the research team. Paper II was a purely conceptual paper and thus no informants were present. In paper III, I collected verbal consent from the informants and avoided gathering any sensitive material. In paper IV, I applied for approval to handle person-identifying data from the appropriate authorities and created a written-consent form which was distributed to the informants a few days ahead of interviews, followed by a discussion of the main points in the consent form at the start of each interview. Informants in both paper II and paper III were promised anonymity in the paper texts, something that I implemented throughout.

Finally, a separate point on beneficence is due. Miles and Huberman (1994) presented a related specific ethical issue, "worthiness of the project," of which they wrote:

> The question might sound pompous and hortatory, but the issue is not trivial: Is my contemplated study worth doing? Will it contribute in some significant way to a domain broader than my funding, my publication opportunities, my career? And is it congruent with values important to me?' (p. 290)

This approach, that researchers have an obligation to seek "doing good," represents a specific flavor of ethical questions that often appear to be lost in the more procedural view of research ethics concerned primarily with the imperative of "do no harm" but that have started to gain favor within management research in recent years (Flyvbjerg, 2001; Martela, 2015; Wicks & Freeman, 1998).[44]

The approach of seeking to do good with my research efforts has always appealed to me; it represents one of the main reasons why I chose CS/R as a field of study. Furthermore, the

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[44] Two points apply here: first, I have borrowed the term "procedural research ethics" from Guillemin and Gillam (2004). Second, I do not to mean here to suggest that doing good and do no harm are in any conflict, neither that doing good implies a license to do harm (though a utilitarian could certainly argue along these lines). I am simply alluding to the point that for some reason, doing good has gotten little attention, while do no harm has gotten more.

desire for a PhD project that would aid in doing good is also a central motivation behind the purpose of the dissertation (cf. the arguments in chapter 1).

> Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.
>
> – Margaret Mead

5 FINDINGS FROM THE EMPIRICAL AND CONCEPTUAL STUDIES

In this chapter, I summarize the four appended papers.[45] An initial overview of the papers is provided in Table 4.1.

As is the case for papers in other dissertations (e.g., Jørgensen, 2011), the appended papers in this dissertation were written with the overall dissertation project in mind, while at the same time being shaped by the particular circumstances they were written in. This means that, while the four appended papers fit within the overall dissertation, this fit might need further explication. Such explication, when needed, is provided in brief in the present chapter in the form of two types of light reinterpretations of the appended papers. The first type is a reinterpretation in light of my practice lens. The second type is a reinterpretation that reintroduces how paper III and paper IV contribute to the understanding of SBMI as these papers that do not reference the concept directly in their text, even though the research behind these papers was started and conducted with the overall goal of contributing to the SBMI literature in mind.[46]

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[45] While four papers were selected for inclusion in the dissertation, I wrote and co-wrote three additional papers that, for reasons of fit, were left out of this dissertation: Gulbrandsen (2015), a practitioner-oriented conceptual paper on implementation of CS/R; Gulbrandsen (2017), a practitioner-oriented conceptual paper on issue selling for sustainability; and Lesjø and Gulbrandsen (2018), a book-chapter on the institutionalization of sustainability in the Olympic Games.

[46] Thus, my light reinterpretation of paper III and paper IV to bring out SBMI does not add anything to the research projects that were not already there when the research was executed. In a way, what I am doing is simply to return to the original intention behind the research projects that ended in the appended papers and redraw the findings in this light.

Table 5.1: Overview of the appended papers.

#	Title	The authors' contributions
I	Managerial perceptions of sustainability motivations and sustainable business model innovation in service companies	I am the sole author.
II	Developing management control systems for sustainable business models	Co-authored with Sveinung Jørgensen[47], Katarina Kaarbøe[48], and Lars Jacob Tynes Pedersen. [49] I contributed to all parts of the paper.
III	Pink Games. Sustainability in the Youth Olympics	I am the sole author.
IV	Patterns of persuasion	I am the sole author.

5.1 PAPER I: "MANAGERIAL PERCEPTIONS OF SUSTAINABILITY MOTIVATIONS AND SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS MODEL INNOVATION IN SERVICE COMPANIES"

Full reference:

> Gulbrandsen, E. A. (2020). Managerial perceptions of sustainability motivations and sustainable business model innovation in service companies. Paper under review in *Beta. Scandinavian Journal of Business Research*.

The purpose of the first paper is to provide insight into organizational-level motivations for engaging in SBMI as well as into how SBMI work is organized. This purpose is accomplished through combining results from a survey of Norwegian knowledge-intensive service firms with relevant findings from the literature on CS motivations and on SBMI. The survey is analyzed through two exploratory factor analyses (EFAs) The first EFA explores CS motivations and finds three factors that represent distinct motivation types: win-win motivation, external pressure, and control motivation. The second EFA reveals two factors

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[47] Assistant Professor at Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences and my supervisor during the PhD project.
[48] Professor at NHH Norwegian School of Economics.
[49] Assistant Professor at NHH Norwegian School of Economics and my co-supervisor during the PhD project.

that correspond to separate SBMI process types: "wider value-network SBMI" and "in-house SBMI." These factors were related to the motivational factors through a partial correlation analysis to investigate motivations for SBMI.

Through its findings, paper I contributes to the SBMI literature in two ways. First, it offers two empirically grounded SBMI process types based on the content of changes rather than just their magnitude, something lacking in the extant literature. Second, by connecting the SBMI process types to motivations, the paper offers new knowledge on the motivations behind initiating SBMI and how these might be connected to the initiation of different types of SBMI processes.

Given that paper I already contributes directly to the SBMI literature, no re-interpretation is necessary to place the findings of the paper within the context of SBMI. However, the paper does not incorporate practice theory in any way, so here a light reinterpretation is still in order. When viewed through a practice lens, the "SBMI process types" discovered in the paper can be relabeled as "SBMI projects." This is due to the fact that the process types are equivalent to "projects" in Schatzki's (2002) terminology; Schatzki uses the term to denote sets of actions, and, as evident by the survey items that make up the SBMI process types, the types are comprised of sets of actions and hence can be called projects in Schatzki's terminology. The CS motivations that drive SBMI, as uncovered in the partial correlation analysis, can be recast as ends that are incorporated in the teleoaffective structure of SBMI practices. Win-win motivation is concerned with simultaneously serving the end of increased profits and the ends of upholding moral standards and creating positive effects in society. External pressure motivation is concerned with the end of living up to external expectations and thus securing a license to operate. Finally, control motivation is concerned with the end of controlling and reducing waste and risks.

To conclude, paper I makes two distinct contributions to our knowledge on SBMI processes viewed as practice. First, paper I increases our knowledge of the ends of general SBMI practices. Second, paper I increases our knowledge regarding two meta-projects that are part of general SBMI practices.

5.2 PAPER II: "DEVELOPING MANAGEMENT CONTROL SYSTEMS FOR SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS MODELS"

Full reference:

> Gulbrandsen, E. A., Jørgensen, S., Kaarbøe, K., & Pedersen, L. J. T. (2015).
> Developing management control systems for sustainable business models. *Beta.*
> *Scandinavian Journal of Business Research, 29*(1), 10–25.

Paper II aims to enhance understanding of the role played by management control systems (MCS) in realizing SBMs. It accomplishes this through two means: (1) an empirical illustration; and (2) a conceptual analysis that draws on the literature on CS/R and MCS as well as knowledge on SBMs.

The empirical illustration, based different items from the same survey as the one reported on in paper I, highlights that a high proportion of the surveyed companies had dedicated CS/R strategies but no CS/R-related key performance indicators or financial incentives. This finding indicates an implication problem in the form of a lag between strategic ambitions and appropriate management control support of these ambitions.

In its conceptual analysis, the paper argues that, although the importance of MCSs for successful SBMs in firms has been established in the literature, there is little detail on how such MCSs should function. The paper makes a conceptual contribution by highlighting challenges faced by organizations that aim to build and implement MCSs that support SBMs. In particular, the paper highlights three key challenges: multidimensionality, identification, and increased complexity in performance measurement and incentive design. These challenges can be seen as direct opportunities for further research, as well as useful advice on pitfalls for practitioners striving to create functioning SBMs.

As pointed out in Gulbrandsen (2015), an MCS is a crucial part of an SBM. Thus, engaging in SBMI typically includes changing the MCS and implementing these changes. In other words, paper II contributes to greater detail and nuance in our understanding of SBMI by detailing challenges and requirements regarding a crucial part of the end goal of the journey—the MCS of the new SBM. In particular, changes to the MCS of an organization are directly tied to the

move stage of the SBMI process model introduced in chapter 2 of the dissertation. Thus, paper II contributes with knowledge pertinent to this stage of SBMI process.

When the findings of paper II are reinterpreted through the practice lens employed in the dissertation, they can be described as centered on established management practices within the firm and how these need to change to accommodate the general features of SBMs. In this sense, the empirical finding suggests that the many of the surveyed companies struggle to establish new management control practices in support of their CS/R strategies. The conceptual findings are concerned with how established management practices are challenged by SBMI processes and that these established practices need to be altered in order to meet the identified three key challenges. More specifically, paper II details the rule-component—in Schatzki's (2002) sense of the word rule, i.e. explicitly formulated "principles, precepts, and instructions that enjoin, direct, or remonstrate people to perform specific actions" (p. 79)—of SBMs as practice. This is true since an MCS is defined as a formalized—and thus explicitly formulated—system for controlling organizational members (cf. paper II).

In addition to the previous elements, paper II can also be said to offer points on the ends of general SBMI practices. This is due to the fact that the paper discusses performance, which is in essence is about success in the pursuit of certain ends. Thus, the paper discusses the difficulties inherent in choosing appropriate ends to pursue and measuring the attainment of these ends.

To summarize, paper II contributes to our knowledge on SBMI processes viewed as practice in four main ways. First, it highlights empirically that establishing new organizational rules in support of CS/R ambitions is difficult or seen as undesirable in some organizations. Second, it discusses key rules, in Schatzki's understanding of the word, that must be in place to uphold an SBM as a practice. Third, it suggests that the project "transforming the management system to suit a new SBM" is a central part of the move stage of the SBMI process, and provides details regarding the challenges inherent in this project. Fourth, it touches on aspects of the ends of general SBMI practices, in particular the challenges that stem from organizations pursuing financial and non-financial ends simultaneously (multidimensionality, identification, and increased complexity in performance measurement and incentive design).

5.3 PAPER III: "PINK GAMES"

Full reference:

> Gulbrandsen, E. A. (2021). *Pink Games: Sustainability in the Youth Olympics.*
> Unpublished manuscript.[50]

The stated purpose of the third paper is to investigate how organizers of grand sports events work to integrate sustainability concerns into their events through the case of the Lillehammer Youth Olympic Games 2016. The paper accomplishes this through an exploratory case study of the Lillehammer Youth Olympic Games Organizing Committee (LYOGOC) and how this organization went about planning and organizing for the inclusion of sustainability in the event. Based on interviews with key decision-makers within the LYOGOC, as well as internal LYOGOC documents, the paper establishes a timeline for the work of planning and organizing for sustainability.

The findings of the paper can be summarized in four key themes that characterized the planning and organizing process. First, the process exhibited a prioritization of social sustainability over environmental sustainability in the formal planning process. This prioritization revealed that the LYOGOC reacted to inherent tensions in resource use issues across the three main dimensions of sustainability by interpreting these tensions as dilemmas that should be solved by trade-offs. Through this finding, paper III illustrates the challenge of "multidimensionality" from paper II: the studied organization appeared to prioritize social sustainability over environmental sustainability due to difficulty juggling both concerns in its planning and organizing efforts. Second, the process featured "planned improvisation," in the sense that the organization planned for and encouraged emergence in their work to achieve social sustainability. This was done through outreach to the local community, encouraging citizens to supply their own initiatives and projects that the LYOGOC could help realize. Third, the process showed clear signs of an emergent environmental-sustainability strategy forming in the course of the work. The process of establishing the environmental-sustainability strategy could be characterized as emergent rather than deliberate (cf. Mintzberg, 1978; Mintzberg & Waters, 1985): while some overall goals were established,

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[50] As noted previously: this paper is a translated and extended version of Gulbrandsen (2017), a book chapter published in Norwegian.

others were not, and the precise road to these goals was mostly left to improvisation by middle managers in the organization. Fourth, the emergent environmental-sustainability strategy appeared to be driven by a concern for environmental sustainability carried by the managers as second nature, likely based on the attitudes and work habits of the managers, which, in turn, were based on their previous experiences.

The stated contributions of paper III are strongly tied to the studied phenomenon—the Youth Olympic Games—and its context. However, the paper makes an important implicit contribution to the general CS/R literature and the SBMI literature by highlighting how the daily praxis of managers shapes efforts to realize increased sustainability within organizations. The paper points out that processes of planning and organizing for CS/R can be both highly emergent in nature and contingent upon the second nature of organizational members.

These contributions are particularly relevant to SBMI processes as the work of the LYOGOC can be viewed as an SBMI process concerned with establishing a business model from scratch and simultaneously ensuring that this business model incorporated sustainability.

As for reinterpreting paper III through a practice lens, the finding regarding environmental concern as being second nature in organizational members is particularly relevant. It underscores the appropriateness of adopting a practice lens on CS/R and SBMI—particularly given the points made by informants in the LYOGOC that this second nature was likely based on the previous experiences of organizational members (e.g., upbringing and previous work experience). Based on the assertion that the environmental sustainability of the LYOGOC hinged upon the particular previous experiences of its particular managers, the leap is short to a conclusion that without the LYOGOC being located at the particular place and time that it was, its environmental-sustainability performance could have been radically different. In other words, the environmental-sustainability performance of the LYOGOC was fundamentally context dependent. In this sense, the findings in paper III can be seen as an argument in favor of adopting a practice-based social ontology when studying CS/R since such an ontology highlights and brings to the fore the context-dependent nature of individual behavior and social phenomena. Furthermore, paper III contributes to a practice-based view of SBMI by highlighting the connections between the background of involved practitioners, their praxis, and the final results achieved by their organization.

Regarding contributions to our knowledge of the SBMI process understood as practice more specifically, paper III makes two main contributions. First, paper III examines how management praxis unfolds in a concrete SBMI process. Second, paper III provides concrete knowledge on how prioritizing between different ends—social ends and environmental ends, in particular—can be a challenge in SBMI practices.

In addition to these two contributions, paper III suggests a third, but less solid contribution to our knowledge on the practitioners involved in SBMI processes viewed as practice in the sense that the paper suggests a connection between the personal histories of the practitioners and their current praxis.

5.4 PAPER IV: "PATTERNS OF PERSUASION"

Full reference:

> Gulbrandsen, E. A. (2021). *Patterns of persuasion. Investigating social issue selling as practice.* Working paper.

The fourth and final paper aims to enrich the knowledge on social issue selling by providing a practice based view of the phenomenon. The paper fulfills this aim through the combination of a conceptual and an empirical contribution. The conceptual contribution consists of filtering the literature on social issue selling through a practice lens to unveil three key themes that appear underdeveloped when social issue selling is interpreted as a practice: the modelling of the social issue sellers; how persuasion is conceived in the literature; and an apparent lack of dynamic modelling. The empirical evidence—based on interviews and documents—is centered on three individual sustainability practitioners embedded within separate organizational contexts. Through careful qualitative coding and interpretation, the paper gives an understanding of the situated daily praxis of the studied individuals. In particular, the paper offers the concept of persuasion praxis patterns, a pattern in the part of the individuals' praxes that were concerned with persuading colleagues to increase their CS efforts.

The practice lens of the dissertation is directly employed in the paper and thus does not need further unpacking here. Regarding the connection between paper IV and SBMI, paper IV does not reference SBMI directly. However, the paper contributes to the dissertation by investigating how key practitioners engage in persuasion efforts to help their company in its journey towards increased CS/R performance. This connects the paper to SBMI, as previous papers have shown that creating internal buy-in through persuasion is needed in order to move organizations forward in SBMI processes (e.g., Inigo et al, 2017). Paper IV elaborates on these findings by showing that persuading individual colleagues is still needed even after the SBMI process is up and running and has official support in the organization.

The contributions paper IV makes to our knowledge on SBMI processes viewed as practice can be summarized in four main points. First, paper IV gives a detailed snapshot of the praxis of three SBMI practitioners and dissects the anatomy of these praxes. Thus, showing how praxis forms in a dynamic way and increasing our understanding of SBMI praxis at the same time. The contribution is a glimpse in the sense that it covers just one aspect of the praxis of the three practitioners (their persuasion praxis patterns). However, in this way paper IV highlights the rich findings that still awaits when one continues to investigate the praxis of SBMI practitioners in detail, thus pointing the way forward for future research. Second, paper IV offers details on the practitioners themselves, a set of single individuals that strive to make SBMI happen. Despite the limited number of practitioners studied and the focus on persuasion praxis, paper IV still describes how people of different backgrounds fill the role of CS/R responsible in organizations. Third, paper IV provides evidence that the project "continuous persuasion of colleagues" can be part of the move stage of the SBMI process. Fourth, and related to the previous point, the persuasion praxis patterns in paper IV provide more knowledge on specific tasks that can be a part of this new project.

6 CONTRIBUTIONS

In the opening of this dissertation, I suggested that quicker and more decisive action on moving our society toward increased sustainability, could be facilitated by generating more knowledge regarding the activities established firms undertake in order to innovate for sustainability—and that a business model approach to investigations of such innovation would be fruitful. On this basis, the purpose of my dissertation has been *to contribute to richer knowledge regarding SBMI activities.*

I have sought to deliver on this purpose by drawing on practice theory as a lens and through answering two research questions:

RQ1. What characterizes the SBMI process when viewed as practice?

RQ2. How can the application of practice theory in research of SBMI enrich our understanding of SBMI as a phenomenon?

In the following section, I will discuss the theoretical contributions of the dissertation. The second and final section will highlight implications (research-wise and practitioner-wise).

6.1 DISCUSSION AND THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

In this section, I discuss and reflect on the theoretical contributions of the dissertation. The section is divided into three subsections. The first (6.1.1) discusses the first research question by drawing on the concerted contributions of my conceptual model of the SBMI process viewed as practice (chapter 2), the practice-oriented review of the literature (chapter 3), and the four appended papers. In subsection 6.1.2, I provide a discussion in answer to the second

research question by building on the knowledge generated from answering RQ1. In the final subsection (6.1.3), I briefly summarize how the dissertation as a whole answers the overall purpose set out at the start of the PhD journey.

6.1.1 Regarding RQ1: exploring and extending the knowledge base on SBMI as practice

Figure 6.1 summarizes how the dissertation answers RQ1.[51] The foundational contribution present in the figure is the construction of a practice-informed framework for understanding SBMI, which I drew up in chapter 2 and refined by adding activity types identified through my review of the extant SBMI literature in chapter 3. Furthermore, the dots in Figure 6.1 represent previous findings and thus provide a map of the knowledge base on SBMI as practice through the literature review offered in chapter 3. Finally, the stars in the figure represent findings from the appended papers that extend the knowledge base on SBMI as practice.[52] The stars are placed in Figure 6.1 based on the contributions by the individual papers. See chapter 5 for a walkthrough of these contributions. The Roman numerals on the stars represent which appended paper the finding stems from, with letters added to separate between the different contributions each paper makes. I will discuss each of the contributions contained in Figure 6.1 in a separate subsection below. In a final subsection (6.1.1.4), I will add another contribution by identifying and discussing two overall key themes that are implied by the sum of the contributions that are highlighted in Figure 6.1.

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[51] As remarked in the introduction, the answer to RQ2 builds on the answer to RQ1 and abstracts further in order to point beyond the dissertation and offer suggestions for future research. Thus, RQ2 lies beyond the task of investigating the SBMI process as such, and therefore does not fit into Figure 6.1.

[52] Star IIIc is represented with dashed lines and no fill color to visually underscore that this finding is less strongly supported in paper III (as mentioned in chapter 5).
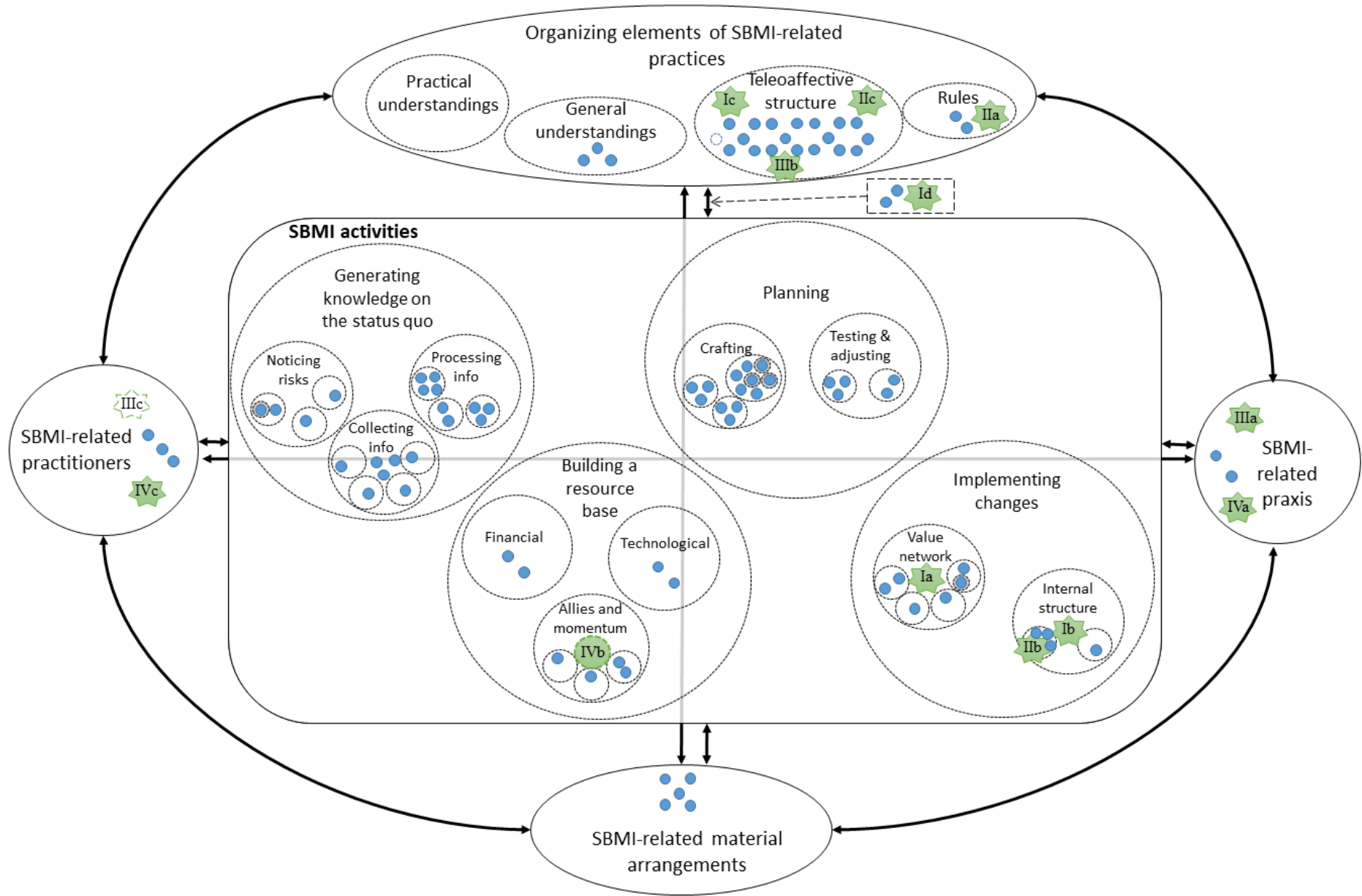
Figure 6.1: Visual summary of contributions that answer RQ1.

6.1.1.1   *The practice lens and my conceptual model as a contribution*

The conceptual model depicted in Figure 6.1 visually represents the fact that as an addition to the contributions in the individual papers, I have chosen to deliver on the purpose of the dissertation by applying a practice lens on SBMI activities. This lens has informed the design of both my research questions (cf. chapter 1) and my responses to these questions.

Using practice theory as a lens on SBMI is a contribution in its own right, in the sense that it is done in order to enrich the SBMI literature through cross-pollination. This dissertation is not the first contribution to the literature that uses this strategy. As noted in chapter 3, Randles and Laasch (2016) used practice theory as part of their conceptual armature.[53] Their contribution consisted mainly of a critique of the current paradigm in SBMI research and key points for a new and richer paradigm. The use of practice theory in this dissertation can be seen as a complementary extension of the work done by Randles and Laasch (2016). It is complementary in the sense that where Randles and Laasch (2016) used practice theory as one part of a general critique of the SBMI literature, I employ practice theory (in the specific form of Schatzki's site ontology) as an organizing framework for a detailed review of the literature and a backdrop for new activity-oriented contributions to the literature. In this way, my use of practice theory represent a deepening and a concretization of the initial application of practice theory offered by Randles and Laasch (2016). Thus, my use of practice theory complements and extends the use of practice theory on SBMI compared to previous contributions in the SBMI literature, in the sense that my use of practice theory has facilitated a specific and detail-sensitive look at SBMI activities allowing for a focus on specific facets of these activities.

My use of practice theory has enabled me to contribute to richer knowledge of SBMI activities in three additional ways beyond the contributions of the individual papers. First, in my review of the SBMI literature, the practice lens has allowed me to look for details in the knowledge of SBMI activities in the extant literature that I might otherwise have missed. For example: (a) the link between goals and activities is illuminated by the emphasis on the goal-

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[53] Ritala et al. (2018) also draw on practice theory, however, they do so in a more general and superficial fashion than Randles and Laasch (2016). I therefore restrict myself to discussing the latter paper here.

directedness of activities in practice theory and (b) the role of single individuals and their actions is brought to the fore, rather than just theorizing activities at a more aggregated and abstracted organizational level of analysis. Second, the practice lens has been useful in contributing to a richer knowledge of SBMI activities by allowing me to reinterpret the individual papers in the dissertation to bring out additional details and a deeper layer of meaning beyond what was already highlighted in the appended papers as they were written. An example of this is how management control systems for SBMI, the topic of paper II, can be seen as "the rules of SBMI practices". A further example is how the concept of praxis highlighted the potential for drawing more general inferences from how the personal histories of managers in the LYOGOC might have changed their CS/R work for the better.

Third, the practice lens allowed me to enrich our knowledge on SBMI activities by showing me how practice theory could be fruitfully used to inform SBMI research. In essence, the act of employing practice theory in my analysis of the extant literature and the appended papers made it possible for me to formulate and answer RQ2 (see more on this in section 6.1.2).

6.1.1.2   *The practice-oriented review of the SBMI literature as a contribution*

The circles in the activity-part of Figure 6.1 as well as all the dots in the figure represent the contribution offered by chapter 3 of the dissertation cover: a systematic review of findings regarding activity in the current literature on SBMI. As noted in the opening of chapter 3, my review adds to and complements previous reviews and overviews of the SBMI literature (e.g., Boons & Lüdeke-Freund, 2013; Boons et al., 2013; Geissdoerfer et al., 2018; Lüdeke-Freund & Dembek, 2017; Nosratabadi et al., 2019; Schaltegger et al., 2016). My review complements the previous reviews and overviews by zooming in on activity, which can be seen as particularly relevant to SBMI when SBMI is understood as a process. In other words, my review has a different scope and a greater level of detail regarding the SBMI process than the birds-eye overviews of the research field and research agenda offered by several authors (Boons and Lüdeke-Freund, 2013; Boons et al., 2013; Lüdeke-Freund & Dembek, 2017; Nosratabadi et al., 2019; Schaltegger et al., 2016). In contrast to the birds-eye approaches, there is a greater degree of overlap between my review and the review provided by Geissdoerfer et al. (2018), as their review centered specifically on SBMI. However, Geissdoerfer et al. (2018) still represent a higher level of abstraction than what is found in my

review, as they contributed by considering and consolidating different definitions of SBMI, and by summarizing overall strategies for SBMI, as well as pinpointing main gaps found in current SBMI research. My review complements the review by Geissdoerfer et al. (2018) by providing a detailed view of the activities that comprise SBMI. As such, my review can be seen as a step towards filling the gaps in the literature identified by Geissdoerfer et al. (2018), which were "[…] 1) the implementation of the business model innovation process; 2) its tools; and 3) its challenges" (p. 408). By focusing on activity in particular, my review brings implementation and its challenges into sharper focus, for example by highlighting the lack of research on how company-specific "rules" and how they inform SBMs and SBMI processes.

My review finds two key themes that characterize the current SBMI literature. First, the findings in the literature taken together indicate that the SBMI process is highly complex in nature. Second, the review shows that as its stands, the literature contains promising findings on SBMI activities, but it is still too limited in its treatment of this topic, and lacks depth and nuance in how it covers all of the practice-elements in my conceptual model of the SBMI process viewed as practice.

6.1.1.3   *The contributions of the appended papers*

The stars in Figure 6.1 highlight how the four appended papers start the work of filling the identified gaps in the literature and provide knowledge on what characterizes the SBMI process viewed when viewed as practice. I will not go over the single contributions that the stars represent in isolation here, as this is done in chapter 5. Below I will discuss how the findings from the papers contribute to the SBMI literature. On a general note, the papers primarily complement the current SBMI literature by adding further depth and nuance to the limited supply of knowledge on SBMI activities. However, paper I in particular also contains some findings that try to increase the degree of order in our knowledge on SBMI activities somewhat, hopefully helping with grasping at the complexity of the phenomenon.

As seen in Figure 6.1, the findings from the appended papers cluster into four distinct groups. First, findings regarding the organizing elements of SBMI-related practices. Second, findings regarding SBMI-related practitioners. Third, findings regarding SBMI-related praxis. Fourth,

findings regarding concrete activity types in the SBMI process, related to building a resource base and implementing changes respectively. I deal with each of these groups in turn below.

Regarding the first group, paper I, paper II and paper III contribute with findings on *the organizing elements of SBMI-related practices*. More specifically, all the three papers contribute with findings regarding the *ends*-component of the teleoaffective structure that organizes SBMI practices. In addition to this, paper II contributes with knowledge on *rules*—in the form of management control systems—that organize SBM practices. Finally, the correlations between project types and motivation types in paper I provides some early findings regarding the possible links between ends and certain activities.

The contribution in paper II regarding *rules* strengthens the SBMI literature in an area where it is relatively sparsely populated. The only other relevant finding in the literature is Stubbs (2019). The clear likeness between paper II and Stubbs (2019) is the emphasis on tensions and complications that arise when the financially oriented business as usual practices in organizations meet with the non-financial dimensions of sustainability. Stubbs (2019) described self-imposed policies and rules put forth in a hybrid organization to manage tensions between economic ends and social ends. These can be seen as concrete examples of certain elements of a management control system. The discussion of management control systems for SBMs in paper II handles how certain key challenges are bound to arise when one tries to build management control systems that deliver three-dimensional performance control (i.e., simultaneous environmental, social and financial performance) in a more general and conceptual way. Thus, Stubbs (2019) and paper II complement each other: paper II provides general challenges regarding establishing rules for SBM practices within an organization, while Stubbs (2019) provides concrete examples of these general challenges. In addition to its findings, paper II suggests a fruitful track for further research by drawing in links between the SBMI literature and the management-control literature, as well as the sub-stream of the management-control literature that deals with management control for sustainability (e.g., Costas & Kärreman, 2013; Gond, Grubnic, Herzig, & Moon, 2012). Drawing in and theorizing further over frameworks from this literature could strengthen knowledge on the rules component of SBMI as practice.

Another set of contributions in the group of findings concerned with general SBMI-related practices pertain to *the ends of SBMI practices*. Paper I finds three general motivations which

speak of the ends of SBMI practices, while paper II and paper III both provide points on the difficulties of working towards social, environmental and financial ends simultaneously. In essence, all three papers deal with the juggling of different ends as an inherent part of SBMI as practice. The juggling of ends described in paper I, paper II and paper III resonate with findings in the literature regarding the presence of tensions between financial and non-financial objectives and the need for managing these tensions (Laasch, 2018; Stubbs, 2019; van Bommel, 2018)

Paper III deals with the juggling of ends in the most theoretically informed manner, by drawing explicitly on points regarding tensions in CS/R management (Hahn, Pinkse, Preuss & Figge, 2015; van Bommel, 2018; van der Byl & Slawinski, 2015) and general management (Smith & Lewis, 2011). Thus, paper III showed that the LYOGOC's handling of tension was characterized by in part an alignment strategy ("win-win") but mostly an avoidance strategy (i.e., dilemmas solved by trade-offs). In this way, paper III gives a further example of the existence of tensions between different ends inherent in SBMI as practice that adds to the work of van Bommel (2018).

Through its conceptual findings, paper II discusses how tensions—in the form of juggling ends from the three different performance dimensions inherent in CS/R (social, environmental, financial)—also manifest themselves in management control systems for SBMI, the rule component of SBMI as practice.

While paper II and paper III approach tensions directly, paper I does this in a more indirect fashion. In particular, the points from paper I echo key points in van Bommel's (2018) qualitative interview study regarding strategies for managing tensions. The win-win motivation in paper I is consistent with van Bommel's alignment strategy for handling tensions, which van Bommel describes as engaging in activities that "focus on those social and environmental aspects with the potential to contribute to profitable business outcomes" (p. 836). The external pressure motivation in paper I, on the other hand, is consistent with van Bommel's avoidance strategy for handlings tensions, which van Bommel describes as informed by the opinion that "a win-lose trade-off situation guides how to cope with sustainability tensions" (p. 836). In an avoidance strategy CS/R work is seen as an expense, a threat to the financial performance of the organization—a box to be ticked off with as little resource use as possible. Drawing in van Bommel's strategies illuminates new facets of the

win-win and external pressure motivations in paper I by seeing them as instances of alignment and avoidance of CS/R related tensions in SBMI. Simultaneously, paper I bolsters van Bommel's findings in three ways. First, by drawing in the literature on CS motivations in conjunction with insights similar to van Bommel's strategies, paper I widens the theoretical base that van Bommel's insights might engage with. Second, by adding quantitative results to van Bommel's qualitative findings, paper I strengthens the insights with an indirect form of triangulation of methods. Third, by adding empirical material from a different national context (Norway), paper I bolsters the transferability of van Bommel's insights.

In addition to its points regarding tensions, the findings in paper I also further develop our understanding of the complex hierarchy of SBMI-related ends. As discussed in chapter 3, the SBMI literature taken together detailed a complex hierarchy of ends (cf. Bocken et al., 2014; Boons and Lüdeke-Freund, 2013; Inigo et al., 2017). Paper I adds further understanding on the hierarchy of ends by providing a small measure of order to the complexity. Paper I achieves this by offering a preliminary grouping of certain ends, as seen in the three motivational factors offered in paper I. Each factor represent a grouping of a set of ends, based on the accounts offered by the surveyed practitioners. The win-win factor in paper I can be considered as an echo of the win-win end that is implicit in most of the SBMI literature. Thus, the win-win factor offers the least amount of new information on the hierarchy of ends. Rather, the win-win factor seems to confirm that the surveyed practitioners hold similar worldviews to those expressed by the majority of SBMI scholars. The external pressure factor offers a grouping of ends that is well-known in the literature on CS motivations, but new to the literature on SBMI. Thus, this factor offer new insights to the SBMI literature through cross-pollination with the literature on CS motivations. The bundle of ends that the control factor represents has similarities to the ends suggested by two of the archetypes offered by Bocken et al. (2014): (1) maximize material and energy efficiency; (2) substitute with renewables and natural processes. The control factor provides an end that can be said to lie above the end of maximizing material and energy efficiency in the hierarchy of ends: the end of cost reduction. Furthermore, the control factor provides an end that can be said to lie behind the end of substituting with renewables and natural processes in the hierarchy of ends: the end of adaptation to future resource scarcity. Bocken et al. (2014) touches on both of these higher ends. However, paper I provides some additional order to the hierarchy of ends by tying these four ends together in a way that Bocken et al. (2014) did not.

Finally, paper I contributes to the treatment of ends in the SBMI literature by drawing connections between the pursuit of certain types of ends and engagement in the two SBMI project types identified in paper I (in-house SBMI and wider value network SBMI). This move echoes literature on CS motivations and suggests a promising venue for future research on connections between the ends and activities of SBMI.

The second group of findings from the appended papers that stand out in Figure 6.1 is findings regarding *SBMI practitioners*. Paper III and paper IV both offer relevant contributions. At the most basic level, paper IV details how a certain type of practitioners, namely individuals that are part of the central CS/R team of an organization, are involved in the daily activities that are needed to uphold the SBMI process and move it forward. Paper IV also offers three examples of what kinds of backgrounds practitioners bring with them into such work.

In addition to this basic contribution, both paper III and paper IV offer contributions on the connections between the personal histories of practitioners and their praxis. Paper III suggests that the personal histories of the involved practitioners shape their praxis in a way that helps determine the final outcomes of the SBMI process.[54] My informants in this paper suggested that expertise in handling environmental performance during sporting events had already become second nature to several of the middle managers that were hired into the studied organization. By drawing on this second nature, the middle managers achieved good results even in the absence of top management agenda setting by improvising the handling of the environmental dimension of the organization's sustainability efforts. Similarly, in paper IV there is also evidence that suggests a clear link between the personal histories of practitioners and their praxis. These findings are very much in line with practice theory (e.g., Schatzki, 2010). Moreover, the SBMI literature offers similar findings. Particularly, Weissbrod and Bocken's (2017) account of the work of an innovation team showed how team members consistently—and unwittingly—used practices they were familiar with from beforehand rather than practices more suited to the project at hand. Paper III and IV do not offer such striking examples of personal histories trumping rational choices. However, paper IV does provide something similar when it highlights how two of the case individuals (Adam and Iris) seem to exhibit persuasion praxis patterns ways of acting that seemed to go against traditional

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[54] However, as noted previously, this contribution is of a tentative sort, given the limited empirical and/or conceptual development of this particular point in paper III.

conceptions of rationality. In addition to this, paper IV explicates how the link between personal histories—both distant and in the form of recent interactions—can be modelled through drawing on Schatzki's (1996, 2002, 2010, 2019) concept of practical intelligibility. Thus, paper IV both corroborates and extends the findings in Weissbrod and Bocken (2017) regarding how personal histories shape praxis.

The points on praxis in the previous paragraph lead us on to the third group of contributions from the appended papers, namely contributions concerning *SBMI praxis*. Paper III and paper IV offer additional—albeit related—contributions beyond the points in the previous paragraph regarding the connections between practitioners' personal histories and their praxis. Paper III highlights the possible power inherent in the praxis of individuals for transforming SBMI processes and thus the resulting SBMs in an organic and emergent manner. This was evident in how improvised action from middle managers in the case organization were as important in realizing good environmental performance as the planning done by top management. Thus, the empirical material in paper III is in agreement with Carrington et al. (2018), which stress that researchers need to account for the power of individuals and their praxis to fully understand CS/R in general. Furthermore, this finding from paper III suggests that the SBMI literature, which is currently more centered on planning than on execution of SBMI processes, would benefit from more focus on the execution of SBMI and the emergent properties of the process.

Paper IV continues the focus on praxis started in paper III and further corroborates the point by Carrington et al. (2018) that praxis matters. More specifically, paper IV provides knowledge on what characterizes SBMI as practice by investigating persuasion praxis, a particular form of praxis in the service of SBMI that seeks to rally colleagues to CS/R work in the organization, in order to facilitate the SBMI process. This type of praxis has not been explored in detail in the SBMI literature, so paper IV offers a new contribution in this regard. Furthermore, paper IV introduces the concept of "praxis patterns". This concept is new, and can be seen as related to the term "informal roles". As discussed in chapter 3, Roome and Louche (2016) suggest a set of informal roles played in the SBMI process that can be interpreted as types of praxis. Paper IV suggests that new knowledge on these roles could be generated by researching them further as praxis patterns, with an emphasis on the dynamic interplay between individuals in their daily actions.

The fourth and final group of findings from the appended papers is findings concerning the *SBMI activities* themselves. Paper I, paper II and paper IV offer such findings. As suggested by the placement of the relevant stars in Figure 6.1—that is, Ia and Ib—I consider paper I to offer findings regarding the metaproject level of SBMI activities. This stems from the observation as the two process types found in paper I—inhouse SBMI and wider value network SBMI—can be recast as metaprojects, since each of the survey items that these process types consist of can be seen as a project in its own right. As indicated by their names, these two empirically derived metaprojects replicate the two metaprojects derived from the literature that are designated as "changing the internal structure" and "changing the value network" respectively. Thus, paper I provides empirical support for the these metaproject types from the literature review. In addition, these two project types, as remarked in paper I, complement the two project types found in Inigo et al. (2017): the evolutionary SBMI project and the radical SBMI project. The distinction between the two project types found in Inigo et al. (2017) is based on the degree of change affected by the project (small or big), whereas the distinction between the project types offered in paper I is based on the placement of the activity relative to the formal boundary of the organization in question.

Paper II, with its focus on requirements and challenges in updating the management control system in an organization to support an SBM, expands upon the project type "Modifying the management control systems" as identified in Figure 3.1. Two papers in the literature mention this project in passing (Buffa et al., 2018; Inigo et al., 2017). However, paper II is closely related to findings by Maltz et al. (2018) on benchmarking sustainability performance, in the sense that both paper II and Maltz et al. (2018) are concerned with managing ends in the form of performance goals and the challenges inherent in this endeavor. Maltz et al. (2018) concentrate specifically on benchmarking and offer detailed suggestions regarding this, while paper II takes a complementary approach in that it discusses general challenges regarding management control systems for SBMs that will be present regardless of whether an organization chooses to benchmark its performance against others or not. Thus, the challenges and suggestions offered by Maltz et al. (2018) can be seen as additional to the more fundamental challenges inherent in establishing management control systems for SBMs that paper II addresses.

Finally, the findings in paper IV suggests a new project type under the metaproject "Securing allies and momentum for change", a project type we could tentatively call "Continuous

persuasion of colleagues". This differs from a related project type already identified in the literature, namely the project type "Creating internal buy-in" (cf. Weissbrod & Bocken, 2017). The difference between the two projects is similar to the difference between the findings in paper IV and the established literature on issue selling: the creation of internal buy-in is described as persuasion of relevant top managers, and winning these over is the key hurdle to CS/R improvements. The findings in paper IV, on the other hand, underscore the importance of persuading both horizontally and downward in the organization, and doing so over time. The three individuals studied in paper IV all had to engage in persuasion work to gain the support of colleagues for SBMI activities. They had to do this even though they worked in organizations were formal support for SBMI were already anchored at the top of the organization. Thus, paper IV shows—in line with findings in papers outside the SBMI literature (e.g., Wickert & de Bakker, 2018)—that even though top managers are behind SBMI efforts, CS/R practitioners still have to work continually to win over colleagues. In addition, paper IV details some of the types of actions performed by the studied individuals in service of persuasion. These contributions from paper IV open a new venue in the SBMI literature, as none of the papers in the literature deal directly with this type of project and these types of actions.

6.1.1.4 *Overall key themes: The complexity and centrality of SBMI*

Having discussed above the contributions of the conceptual model, the literature review and the appended papers, I will now discuss two key themes that the sum of the previous contributions illuminate regarding SBMI as practice: the complexity of the process (including its connectedness with other practices) and the centrality of SBMI processes for CS/R as a phenomenon. The latter point underscores the potential role of the SBMI literature as umbrella literature within CS/R research, a role that has already been alluded to by several SBMI scholars (e.g., Lüdeke-Freund & Dembek, 2017).

Regarding the first key theme, the appended papers and the literature review in the dissertation offer additional insights on the complexity of the SBMI process—a complexity that has already been pointed out in the literature (e.g., Bocken et al., 2014; Lüdeke-Freund, Carroux, Joyce, Massa, & Breuer, 2018).

My conceptual model brings this complexity into focus and provides an order to it by drawing on elements from practice theory. My literature review locates and explores findings that together describe the complex nature of the SBMI process in further detail. Complexity is present in the SBMI literature both in the sense of the sheer complexity of SBMI practices in themselves—which are revealed, even by the limited evidence available in the extant literature, to consist of multiple layers of projects and projects-within-projects organized by a complex hierarchy of ends—and in the sense that SBMI practices interact with other established practices within organizations to shape the praxes of organizational members.

The appended papers, when taken together, offer further evidence of the complexity of the activities comprising the SBMI process when viewed through a practice lens. In particular, the papers offer more knowledge on the hierarchy of ends; they find additional project types that must be added to the ones already accounted for in the literature; they explicate the connections between practitioners and their daily praxis and organizational level outcomes; and they offer concrete examples of new action types (in persuasion, in particular) that must be considered in order to account for the fullness of the SBMI process understood as practice.

As a consequence of all this uncovered complexity, a natural question becomes whether the SBMI process really is best described as a linear process consisting of orderly stages, or whether the process exhibits a more non-linear nature and even emergent nature. The divide between linear and non-linear processes has been extensively discussed in the innovation literature (e.g., Eisenhardt & Tabrizi, 1995; Van De Ven et al., 2008). Further investigations of the degree of linearity in SBMI processes could usefully draw on this literature. Emergent processes, on the other hand, are a staple within strategy research (Mintzberg, 1978; Mintzberg & Waters, 1985), and thus theoretical resources could be drawn from this literature going forward. Emergence becomes particularly relevant to investigate given the high dependence on the work of engaged individuals in driving CS/R efforts and SBMI processes, as evident in both paper IV and in the literature on social issue selling (Alt & Craig, 2016; Sonenshein, 2006, 2012, 2016; Wickert & de Bakker, 2018). The emphasis on outside pressure as a driver of CS/R efforts in the general literature (cf. Aguinis & Glavas, 2012) could also be interpreted as a driver of emergence, given that the exact form such pressure takes, for example in the form of concrete episodes, can be unpredictable and thus lead to unpredictable responses and outcomes.

The second key theme regarding SBMI as practice that the literature review and the papers taken as a whole illuminate is the potential centrality of SBMI to research on "the how of CS/R," referring to the inner workings of how to accomplish CS/R in organizations (cf. Margolis and Walsh, 2003).

My review of the SBMI literature provides evidence on the potential centrality of SBMI to research on the how of CS/R by uncovering how preoccupied the extant literature is with tools and frameworks for enhancing CS/R performance organizations. In this sense, the extant SBMI literature coincides with the normative part of the Margolis and Walsh (2003) research agenda for investigating the how of CS/R: answering how organizations best can and should deliver non-financial and financial performance concurrently. The quest for tools and frameworks in the extant SBMI literature, however, does not seem to be built on a basis of careful descriptive research, as is recommended by Margolis and Walsh (2003). In this sense, the extant literature does not follow the advice offered by Margolis and Walsh (2003) and thus its value is lessened seen from this perspective, something which underscores the value of the descriptive approach I take in this dissertation.

The appended papers indirectly provide further evidence on the potential centrality of SBMI to research on the how of CS/R by illustrating a set of potential overlaps between the SBMI literature and different sub-streams of the CS/R literature. Paper I connects the SBMI literature to the literature on CS/R motivations. Paper II draws from literature on management control—both in general and the specific subset of this literature that deals with CS/R—to contribute to the SBMI literature. Paper III makes its primary contribution to the literature on CS/R within sports management, while at the same time implicitly contributing to the SBMI literature. Paper IV contributes to the literature on social issue selling while simultaneously providing implicit contributions to the SBMI literature.

By corroborating the centrality of SBMI to research on the how of CS/R, the papers also support the observation already made by SBMI scholars that the SBMI literature has the potential to function as an umbrella literature within CS/R research that integrates relevant research streams both within and outside CS/R to illuminate how organizations work to achieve increased sustainability. Lüdeke-Freund and Dembek (2017) in particular suggest that the emerging SBMI research field should adopt a role as an *integrative* research field that thrives on the "integration of frameworks and methods from different scientific and practical

disciplines" (p. 1676). My literature review and the appended papers support this suggested path for the SBMI field in two ways. First, the diverse types of activities associated with the different metaprojects inherent in the SBMI process (as detailed chapter 3) in themselves suggest a *need* for a sizeable toolbox of concepts, theories, and models. The required size of this toolbox is, in all likelihood, too large for the SBMI literature to supply by itself without resulting in several instances of reinventing the wheel when it comes to theory construction. This need for a sizeable toolbox is further exacerbated by the inherent complexity present in each stage and across stages, as highlighted by the previous key theme I discussed above. Second, the overlaps between concerns in the SBMI literature and the other literatures featured in the appended papers provide leads on concrete research streams that the SBMI literature could draw from in order to expand its conceptual toolbox.

6.1.2 Regarding RQ2: discussing different practice lenses on SBMI

My answer to the second research question—regarding how the application of practice theory in SBMI research can enrich our understanding of SBMI as a phenomenon—is built on the accumulated insights from the analysis that went into answering RQ1. As such, the formulation of and answer to RQ2 represents a final zoom out motion in this dissertation, that moves up from the territory covered in RQ1 and views it from a higher altitude, in order to draw out additional points that can help scholars navigate the way forward when studying SBMI activities.

In essence, the answer to RQ1 as given in the dissertation cover so far, represent a concrete example of how the application of practice theory in SBMI research can enrich our understanding of SBMI as a phenomenon. To summarize and abstract from this example, the application of practice theory can train our eyes towards the complexity of SBMI activities are, and provide concrete sensitizing concepts that help us order and describe this complexity. Furthermore, practice theory helps ensure that we never lose sight of concrete activities and wander into pure abstraction or speculation. All these benefits are in line with suggestions from the literature on practice theory (cf. Nicolini, 2012).

To zoom even further out, we can speak of three different ways to apply practice theory to SBMI research, in the form of three different levels of involvement with it, as described in Feldman and Orlikowski's (2011) framework for practice-based studies. I will rename Feldman and Orlikowski's (2011) three levels slightly here, as "level 1," level 2" and "level 3." Level 1, the most superficial level of involvement, corresponds to Feldman and Orlikowski's (2011) "empirical approach" to practice. Level 2 is equivalent to the "theoretical approach" described by Feldman and Orlikowski (2011). Finally, level 3, the deepest level of involvement with practice theory, is based on Feldman and Orlikowski's (2011) "philosophical approach" to the use of practice theory in practice-based studies. Table 6.1 provides an overview of the three levels, including illustrative findings from the SBMI literature. Below, I discuss how each of the three different levels of application of practice theory to SBMI research can enrich our understanding of SBMI. I illustrate my discussion with examples from the extant SBMI literature and from this dissertation.

Table 6.1: General overview of the three different ways to apply practice theory (PT) to SBMI research, based on Feldman and Orlikowski (2011).

	Level 1: Practice as a research topic	Level 2: PT as a theoretical lens	Level 3: PT as ontology
Theoretical frameworks in research	Unrestricted	Elements of practice theory used as a theoretical lens	Practice theory
Ontological basis of research	Unrestricted	Unrestricted	Practice-based
Example findings from the SBMI literature	Empirical investigation of SBMI archetype-related practices (Ritala et al., 2018)	The theoretical construct the Normative Business Model (Randles & Laasch, 2016)	Persuasion praxis (paper IV)

Level 1 represents the most basic level of involvement with practice theory—simply using the term "practice" as a unifying term when researching the activities of SBMI. Researchers that apply practice theory at level 1 will, based on how this level is defined by Feldman and Orlikowski (2011), fulfill three criteria: (1) they study activity, (2) they use the term "practice" as a central element in the text, and (3) they define the term "practice" in a way that is compatible with practice theory. Beyond these three requirements, anything goes;

researchers are free to use any theoretical basis and build on any ontological assumtpions they see fit.

The first criterion of level-1 research concerns choice of research topic: research is oriented toward practice, in other words, activity. Thus, the first criterion represents involvement with practice theory in spirit only. I mean this in the sense that the only common point between practice theory and research employing the first criterion is that they deal with the same basic focal point: arrays of activity. This criterion still, on its own, has an important bearing on our understanding of SBMI as a phenomenon. Focusing on concrete activities as the topic in SBMI research has a power in itself, as I would argue is evident in the appended papers as well as in the 20 practice-relevant papers found in my review of the SBMI literature (cf. chapter 3). What these papers have in common is that they are grounded in the concrete reality of the practitioners striving to make SBMI happen. As an illustration of the power inherent in this groundedness, compare the non-activity paper by Tolkamp et al. (2018) with the activity-oriented papers by Inigo et al. (2017) and Roome and Louche (2016). The general and somewhat abstract user-involvement process map offered by Tolkamp et al. (2018) lacks the detail and the richly described process models offered by Inigo et al. (2017) and Roome and Louche (2016). Further, the level of detail offered by Weissbrod and Bocken (2017) and in paper III and paper IV offers an even greater contrast to general and abstract models such as the one by Tolkamp et al. (2018).[55]

As I discuss in chapter 2, focusing on activity as a research topic also typically means focusing on the people performing the activities (the practitioners), their daily work (praxis) and the environments they act in, as well as the tools they act with (material arrangements) (cf. Schatzki, 2002; Whittington, 2006). These concepts—as well as the concept of practice— can be used as focal points for researchers that take a level-1 approach to SBMI as practice. As indicated by the wThe use of these concepts can facilitate a rich and nuanced approach to the study of SBMI activities.

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[55] I do not mean to imply that the focus on concrete activities and details in level 1 practice-based research is meant to *replace* general and abstract models. Rather, I take the view that practice-based research—at any level in the Feldman and Orlikowski (2011) framework—offers a complementary approach compared to the more abstract aggragated sp, that enriches our understanding of the phenomenon when viewed in concert with these general and abstract models.

Studying *practitioners* can, for example, mean studying which practitioners engage in making SBMI happen, as I do in paper III and paper IV. Practitioners here can be anyone engaged in sustainability work within the organization—anything from formally appointed chief sustainability officers (Strand, 2013) to frontline employees informally adopting a role as an internal champion or issue seller of CS/R vis-à-vis their co-workers (cf. Wickert & de Bakker, 2018). Knowing who these practitioners are entails knowing details such as their roles in the formal hierarchy, their job descriptions, their histories, their attitudes—and how such factors influence their work with SBMI and their success in such work.

Furthermore, in order to study *praxis* scholars can investigate the daily work and actions of the practitioners and how these actions make SBMI happen—or how they, knowingly or unknowingly, hinder it from happening. Focusing on the daily actions of practitioners can mean, for example, focusing on what kind of strategies they employ to establish a mandate for SBMI or what concrete tasks they are involved in during the implementation phase of establishing a new and more sustainable business model.

Practices can be studied by investigating how the daily actions of practitioners draw on established practices, in the sense of routinized forms of behavior (cf. Reckwitz, 2002), for example how practitioners draw on recommendations for how to organize SBMI processes as found in the SBMI literature or management-system recommendations found in such formal systems as ISO14001 (Boiral, 2007).

Finally, studying *material arrangements* would mean studying how the physical surroundings and objects used by practitioners help or hinder them in achieving SBMI, for example which tools are used, what kind of documents are produced, and how they are distributed. In addition, material arrangements comprise the physical layout of the organization, and where the SBMI practitioners are located and move within it. Such a physical layout could be envisioned to play a central role in shaping how the SBMI process plays out and the success of such processes, for example if the practitioners in charge of the SBMI processes are located remotely from the actual operations of the organizations (cf. Gallo, Antolin-Lopez, & Montiel, 2018).

The second criterion in level 1 of the Feldman and Orlikowski (2011) framework ensures that the topic of research is referred to with the common term "practice" across contributions and

thus helps identify the research as part of a practice-based research stream. When enough individual contributions adhere to the second criterion, these contributions can begin to coalesce into a distinct discourse on SBMI as practice. If such a discourse emerges, it could serve to enrich our understanding of SBMI by cementing the focus on activity into a permanent topic in the discussion of SBMI as a phenomenon. However, without also fulfilling the third criterion, which ensures this common term is defined in a way compatible across contributions, it would still be difficult for individual contributions to form a coherent and cumulative academic discourse (cf. Corradi et al., 2010). Thus, without the application of the third criterion, our understanding of the practice dimension of SBMI as a phenomenon would still be fragmented, in spite of the emergence of a distinct discourse.

When I apply the second criterion of level-1 involvement with practice theory from the Feldman and Orlikowski (2011) framework to the extant SBMI literature, the results are meager. There are only two published papers that qualify as belonging to level 1 in the framework: Ritala et al. (2018) and Randles and Laasch (2016). These papers not only refer to "practice," they also build on an understanding of the word drawn from practice theory—thus fulfilling the third criterion as well. In other words, 18 of the 20 papers in the extant SBMI literature that give practice-relevant findings fall outside the basic level in the framework due to the lack of a practice label in the texts. Thus, these 18 papers cannot be called practice-based contributions by Feldman and Orlikowski's (2011) standards. Having reviewed the literature, I can appreciate why the level-1 criteria are designed in such a way that these 18 papers fall short of fulfilling them: it took some detective work to trace and evaluate whether or not there was any activity-oriented material in each of them. Such a degree of stealth in handling activity could be said to hinder the cultivation of a cumulative academic discourse on the subject, as pointed out above.

This same point on unwelcome stealth applies to the appended papers as well: of the four papers, only paper IV explicitly uses the practice term, and thus three of my four papers hide their practice-relevant findings by not explicitly labelling them with the term.[56] This does not diminish the value of the findings in themselves, neither for the 18 papers from the extant literature nor for my papers. However, it disqualifies the papers from being part of an explicit practice-based discourse. These papers march without a banner, so to speak. They contribute

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[56] Paper IV also fulfills the third criterion for level-1 research as it builds on an understanding of the term "practice" drawn from practice theory.

with knowledge on SBMI as practice but they do not contribute to the formation of a coherent and cumulative research stream on the subject.

In general, applying practice theory in a level-1 sense to SBMI will enrich our understanding of SBMI as a phenomenon mainly through training our eyes toward concrete activities performed by concrete individuals in concrete circumstances, rather than toward more abstract models of the phenomenon, for example as shown in paper III and paper IV. This shift in focus has informed my research efforts in this dissertation project, as seen in the appended papers as well as the review of the SBMI literature in chapter 2 and my discussion here in this chapter.

Level 2 of the Feldman and Orlikowski (2011) framework represents a significantly deeper involvement with practice theory than level 1. Like in level 1, employing this level of involvement means to hone in on concrete practices, practitioners, praxis, and/or material arrangements. The deeper involvement with practice theory at level 2 consists of incorporating one or more practice theories directly as a theoretical lens to inform our understanding of SBMI as a phenomenon.

As noted in chapter 3, there is only one paper in the extant SBMI literature that employs practice theory as a theoretical lens: Randles and Laasch (2016), in which the authors introduced the new theoretical construct "the Normative Business Model" and drew on practice theory to make their contribution. However, the level of abstraction in the paper is high, and thus, the paper does not really get to demonstrate fully the potential inherent in different practice theories informing empirical and conceptual analysis of activities. Given the lack of examples in the extant SBMI, literature, we can look to the general CS/R literature for examples. I offer two here: Gond and Nyberg (2017) and van Aaken et al. (2013). Gond and Nyberg (2017) point out that through "CSR ratings, metrics and management tools" (p. 1127), CS/R is currently "materialized at an unprecedented scale within and across organizations" (p. 1127). The authors draw on actor-network theory (ANT) to show how this materialization is related to power within the CS/R field and provide suggestions as to how these insights can inform tactics to reclaim power and "recover" CS/R. The authors thus provide an example of how material arrangements can be included in the analysis of CS/R and implicitly SBMI research. Van Aaken et al. (2013) employ Bourdieu's theory of social practice in a conceptual article that offers a new perspective on CS/R as a phenomenon, highlighting, among other

things, how managers utilize CS/R activities in attempts to increase their own social power. Taken together, the two articles show two different approaches to using practice theory as a theoretical lens in studies of CS/R. Similar moves could be employed in the SBMI literature, either to highlight the role of material arrangements and the role of power in SBMI processes or to highlight other facets of SBMI as practice.

In this dissertation, my use of site ontology (Schatzki, 2002, 2003)—in combination with Whittington's (2006) general categories—as a theoretical lens on both the extant SBMI literature and on the appended papers represents a level-2 application of practice theory to SBMI as a phenomenon. I argue that this use, particularly in the literature review in chapter 3, illustrates the potential for employing practice theory as a lens on SBMI. In the literature review, I use the theoretical lens to evaluate whether the extant literature has captured a rich set of features inherent in SBMI activities. Site ontology and Whittington's general categories provided me with a useful set of sensitizing concepts that sharpened my reading of the literature, as well as a direction and framework for the organizing and further analyzing the findings therein. As argued by Nicolini (2012) and Reckwitz (2002), this offering of sensitizing concepts is highly useful in sharpening the eye and guiding analysis in empirical work as well.

Applying practice theory to SBMI at level 3, the deepest level of engagement in the Feldman and Orlikowski (2011) framework, means letting practice theory play the role of the social ontology informing our understanding of SBMI as a phenomenon, and thus steer our methodological choices. In addition, level-3 research will incorporate the characteristics of the other two levels: a focus on activity, use of the practice term, and employment of elements of from one or more practice theories as an explicit theoretical lens. What separates research on level 3, however, is that it takes the view that practices are "the primary generic social thing" (Schatzki, 2001, p. 1), in the sense that they represent the most basic building block in social life. This stance then informs all aspects of the research effort. This means that, unlike contributions situated on level 2, level-3 research has to accept several things as a given in their research of SBMI, for example that SBMI practices are entangled in a wider web of practices not easily delimited (cf. Schatzki, 2002), that individual actors are better described by models of practical coping or suchlike than by rational choice models (e.g., Chia & Holt, 2006), that usual workhorse dichotomies like "micro versus macro" and "individual versus system" are problematic at best. Furthermore, it means accepting that the research effort itself

is a practice, entangled with the practices studied. Conducting SBMI research at level 3 means that the researcher must show great respect for these ontological attributes in her/his methodological choices and her/his final research text. As an example, Nicolini (2012) suggests that to carry out true practice-based research, one must include observations in the empirical basis of one's study. This has to do with the model of agency in practice ontologies. Given that we, as individuals, get by largely through unarticulated and even partly unconscious practical coping, researchers will never get complete answers by asking people what they do, simply because, in truth, we do not fully know what we do—even though we often think we do.

Another point that changes when adopting practice as a social ontology is that the traditional impartial and disconnected role that scholars adopt vis-à-vis their informants—the studied practitioners—disappears. Orlikowski (2015) points out that when research is seen as a practice that stands in mutual relation with the object of study, then we as researchers need to reflect on what kinds of practices we feed and help to uphold through our research. Thus, the ethics of research—in the widest sense of the term—becomes central when building research on a practice ontology.

While there are no examples of involvement with practice theory on level 3 in the extant SBMI literature, I submit that paper IV can be interpreted as a level-3 contribution. It might have some problems with satisfying the criterion of practice-based use of methods due to the lack of observation-based empirical material. However, I submit that while the paper lacks observational methods, it makes up for this through its focus on the mutually constitutive relationships between the three case individuals and their surroundings. In addition to this, my interpretative approach—where I use a highly detailed coding scheme to tease out underlying patterns not directly articulated by the participants themselves—should enable me to go beyond what is explicitly communicated regarding the praxes of the individuals to get a glimpse of their unconscious practical coping.

Regardless of the verdict on the practice-compatibility of the research methods, paper IV certainly fulfills the criterion of using a practice-based ontology, as a key part of the raison d'être of the paper is to argue for the benefits of adopting a practice-based ontology as a basis for research on social issue selling. Through this approach, paper IV illustrates the analytical power that level-3 involvement with practice theory can afford research efforts. Paper IV does

not just contribute to the SBMI literature by connecting it to the literature on social issue selling, it leverages practice theory to make a theoretical contribution to the literature on social issue selling by probing and modifying its underlying assumptions, or "theoretical glue" (Whetten, 1989).

To summarize and answer RQ2, practice theory can be applied to the research of SBMI in several ways, which, in turn, can enrich our understanding of SBMI as a phenomenon in several ways. At its most basic level, the focus on activity as a research topic inherent in practice theory can be transferred to SBMI research in order to form an ongoing discourse on SBMI seen as activity—or "SBMI as practice," if you will. This could enrich our understanding of SBMI through deeper knowledge of concrete activities, the practitioners performing these activities, the daily work of these practitioners, and the environment and tools that shape these activities. Engaging more deeply with practice theory and employing it as a theoretical lens enriches our understanding of SBMI as a phenomenon by giving us access to richer theoretical vocabularies to explore the exact workings of the practices, practitioners, praxis, and material arrangements of SBMI. Finally, engaging with practice theory in the deepest sense, as an ontological basis for understanding the social world in general and performing research, enriches our understanding by highlighting the entangled nature of SBMI as practice, for example its relationship of mutual dependence with the other practices that surround and permeate organizations that engage in SBMI practices. This, in turn, has implications for methodological choices. It also implies a need for a reflective approach to how academic practices regarding SBMI—including the discourse we produce through our research—are shaping SBMI practices.

6.1.3 Fulfilling the purpose of the dissertation: enriching the knowledge of SBMI activities

The purpose of this dissertation has been to contribute to richer knowledge regarding SBMI activities.

Several contributions have been made in this dissertation in order to deliver on this purpose. The conceptual model of the SBMI process viewed as practice that were constructed in chapter 2 offers a new way to view SBMI activities, that both highlights and provides a

certain structure to the complexity of these activities. The literature review in chapter 3 has enriched the knowledge of SBMI activities by mapping the status quo on such knowledge. Furthermore, the literature review has explored the current state of knowledge by interpreting and ordering it with the conceptual model from chapter 2 and expanding on this model. The literature review has also uncovered both further complexities of SBMI activities as described in the literature and also that the knowledge base is limited. The isolated contributions of the papers have enriched the knowledge of SBMI activities in themselves by offering points on SBMI practices, practitioners and praxis which add further nuances to the extant literature. The contributions listed so far when taken as a whole, have all helped to illuminate two overall patterns regarding SBMI activities: the complexity and centrality of these activities. Finally, in this concluding chapter, I have contributed to richer knowledge on SBMI activities by answering RQ2 and thus highlighting how different ways of applying practice theory to our analysis of SBMI activities can enrich our understanding of SBMI as a phenomenon.

These contributions aside, the dissertation could be criticized for not being focused enough— and perhaps for not taking the knowledge generation deep enough. These are certainly valid criticisms. However, these weaknesses are the result of the conscious decision to take an exploratory approach due to the nascent state of the knowledge on SBMI activities (cf. Yin, 2014). Such an approach demands breadth, and breadth is difficult to combine with focus and depth, even though I make an attempt at this. In practical terms, the weaknesses of the dissertation means that it should be followed by further research. I discuss possible directions for further research inspired by the limitations of the dissertation in section 6.2.1.2.

6.2 IMPLICATIONS

6.2.1 Implications for further research

In this section, I will discuss implications for further research. As I see it, there are ample opportunities. However, I will limit myself to what I view as a set of key implications. As an organizing device, I have separated my suggestions into two main categories: opportunities for expanding my contributions further and opportunities for further research that become apparent when considering the limitations inherent in the dissertation.

Regarding opportunities for expanding my contributions further, I will highlight three main ideas for further research. The first idea is that my answer to RQ2 offers an opportunity for launching an overarching and inclusive research agenda on "SBMI as practice," welcoming research on SBMI that belongs to any of the three levels of involvement with practice theory described in the Feldman and Orlikowski (2011) framework. As highlighted in section 6.1.2, involvement with practice theory on any of the three levels holds the promise of greatly informing our understanding of SBMI as a phenomenon and thus offers unique research opportunities for scholars to further enrich our understanding of SBMI activities.

My second suggested opportunity builds on the first idea and expands it to include not only the SBMI literature but also the general CS/R literature, of which the SBMI literature is merely a subset. In short, I suggest there is potential for a wider "CS/R as practice" research agenda that includes, but is not limited to, research on SBMI as practice. Three good reasons spring to mind why the wider CS/R research field could benefit from a strong sub-field of research that investigates CS/R from a practice perspective: first, a lack of grounding in the individual level of analysis as well as a lack of good multilevel theorizing has been lamented within the field (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012; Crane et al., 2018; Wickert et al., 2017). Adopting a practice perspective could be one way of addressing these gaps. A practice perspective typically comes with a natural affinity for facilitating individual-oriented research that is still mindful of the meso and macro, as practice theories typically deny the separation into levels. Furthermore, adopting a practice perspective has already been suggested as a fruitful approach to multilevel theorizing on sustainability transitions (Shove & Walker, 2007, 2010). Second, while fruitful practice-based contributions are already being made to the CS/R literature (e.g., Andersen, 2017; Fuentes, 2014; Gond & Nyberg, 2017; Lodhia, 2015; Moraes, Carrigan, Bosangit, Ferreira, & McGrath, 2017; Shove & Walker, 2010; van Aaken et al., 2013; Weller, 2017a, 2017b), these contributions appear scattered and isolated at the moment, hardly referencing each other or any common agenda. A glance at the neighboring field of strategy research provides a hint of the power inherent in adopting a unified practice-based agenda within the CS/R field as the strategy-as-practice research agenda has become a force within this field (cf. Golsorkhi et al., 2015; Vaara & Whittington, 2012). Third, adopting a practice perspective could prove to be a fruitful way to overcome the separation thesis that, according

to central scholars, is a plague on CS/R research and practice (Freeman, 1994; Freeman, Harrison, Wicks, Parmar, & de Colle, 2010). In brief, the separation thesis is concerned with how we—both practitioners and researchers—have erected a false wall between business and ethics. Adopting a practice perspective can provide a counterweight to this tendency, as practice theories typically hold that all social practices have a normative component—as is evident in the central role of teleology and teleoaffective structures in Schatzki's (2002) site ontology. Thus, drawing on practice theory in empirical research in order to provide descriptive knowledge on the normative component inherent in business practices might reveal the normativity of everyday business activities more clearly and, in turn, put researchers on track to finding the morality inherent in business and the business inherent in morality.

The third and final opportunity for expanding on my efforts through further research that I will highlight here is the need for a story collecting and storytelling "Brothers Grimm approach" to SBMI and CS/R. I conceive this as a specific approach to research inspired by level 3 in the Feldman and Orlikowski (2011) framework which can be applied to both research within SBMI as practice and CS/R as practice. I would argue that, for scholars basing themselves on a practice ontology, the construction of abstract theories is not necessarily the only objective of scientific activity. Another purpose, could be to gather and disseminate stories of practices, or, put differently, work to disseminate good practices. And also work to locate and account for good praxis and help it spread and thus become a practice shared by many. As Flyvbjerg (2001) points out, stories that aspire to be foundational exemplars within a discipline must necessarily be concrete. This is true since the level of detail required to inspire the daily actions of practitioners quickly disappears when one tries to create general and universal theoretical insights by abstraction (see also Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Inspired by Flyvbjerg's (2001) reflections on the need for exemplars in a field, we can say that an important job for researchers going forward, seen from a practice perspective, is to collect rich, intrinsic cases (cf. Stake, 1995) in the form of stories about how sustainability activities can best be done—as well as matching cautionary tales or bad cases that describe what one should *not* do to achieve sustainability. In general, this type of research could be summarized as scholars adopting a "Brothers Grimm approach" to SBMI and CS/R, by collecting stories and spreading them to a larger audience.

6.2.1.2 Opportunities for further research evident from the limitations in the research

Regarding the opportunities that become apparent when considering the limitations inherent in this dissertation project, I will point out three main limitations and their implications here.[57] The first of the limitations I will discuss is that I draw on only a limited part of the available set of theoretical resources within practice theory. As explained in chapter 2, I have limited myself to the use of Schatzki's site ontology—complemented with some elements from Whittington's (2006) framework for analyzing strategy as practice—as my theoretical lens in this dissertation project. This choice has offered me a streamlined conceptual clarity in the dissertation work which I have considered as highly valuable in this exploratory project. However, the choice is not without cost. Nicolini (2012) points out that each individual practice theory has its strengths and weaknesses and that there is much potential in combining several theories to illuminate the phenomenon one is studying.

In particular, Nicolini (2012) suggests that Schatzki's flavor of practice theory has much to gain from being combined with resources from actor-network theory (e.g., Latour, 2005) to account for the material dimension of practice in a deeper way and to draw on the methodological resources found in actor-network theory. This could be a fruitful way forward for research within the SBMI field. The usefulness of actor-network theory in analysis of BMs in general is illustrated by key papers that have drawn on the theoretical resources of actor-network theory to make important contributions to the general BM literature (Demil & Leccq, 2015; Doganova & Eyquem-Renault, 2009; Perkmann & Spicer, 2010). These contributions show that there is much to be gained by investigating the sociomateriality of business models (cf. Demil & Leccq, 2015). For instance, Doganova and Eyquem-Renault (2009) highlight the performative role of concrete representations of business models—such as PowerPoint presentations—showing that non-human actors can have important roles in solidifying networks around them and help develop a business model idea into a reality (Doganova & Eyquem-Renault, 2009). Studying CS/R and SBMI through this kind of sociomaterial lens could yield new interesting insights and bring the fields forward.

As a further example of how actor-network theory could be fruitfully applied to studies of SBMI, the findings regarding issue selling presented in paper IV could be complemented and

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[57] This does not mean that the list is meant to be exhaustive. It does, however, mean that I see the listed limitations as the most central ones.

deepened further by investigating the role of non-human actors in internal persuasion processes geared towards increasing an organization's sustainability performance. In particular, the moment of *interessement* in translation processes (cf. Callon, 1986) seems strongly related to issue selling. Therefore, insights regarding interessement—such as insights on how various non-human actors can be mobilized to aid in interessement (cf. Callon, 1986; Latour, 1991)—could be used as inspiration for empirical investigations of the material side of issue selling.

As a final note on the limitations of the dissertation when it comes to the scope of the employed theoretical lens, drawing on actor-network theory is but one opportunity for further research. Scholars could draw on a host of different practice theories, for example the work of Bourdieu, as exemplified in the wider CS/R field by van Aaken et al. (2013). Such a move would offer, among other things, a way to conceptualize and discuss power as part of SBMI work.[58]

The second limitation is that the dissertation does not extend to or connect with different CS/R perspectives in general (cf. Garriga & Melé, 2004) and critical CS/R in particular. This is a natural consequence of the fact that I have placed this dissertation within mainstream CS/R (cf. Carrington et al., 2018) and, as such, is a necessary limitation to avoid an intractably large scope. Connection with critical CS/R is thus an opportunity for further research beyond this dissertation. Several of the findings offered herein could likely be drawn on to inform future research on critical CS/R. As an example, consider the teleoaffective structure of CS/R, and in particular the teleological components in the different persuasion praxis patterns in paper IV. The narratives inherent in the different teleological components might fruitfully be studied as part of more general and even problematic discourses on CS/R, as described, for example, by Banerjee (2008). Further research could enrich both the literature on critical CS/R and the activity-oriented literature on SBMI by putting the two research streams into further contact with each other.[59]

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[58] For an example of a work that combines perspectives from both ANT and Bourdieu on CS/R, see Andersen (2017).
[59] Carrington et al. (2018) offer an example of a paper from the general CS/R literature that combines a practice lens with insights on critical CS/R.

The third and final limitation that I will mention here is that the work lacks grounding in observation-based empirical material. This lack is a result of the "low-informant effort, low-informant reward" strategy described in chapter 2, which I used both to avoid the unethical practice of taking undue amounts of effort from my informants and as a strategy to make gaining access to new organizations and informants easier. Thus, I see the lack of observation-based empirical material as a necessary result of my overall research strategy. The important point here is that the use of observation-based data collection in further research efforts could meaningfully complement my findings. In fact, stronger empirical findings on SBMI—especially when viewed through a practice lens (cf. Nicolini, 2009, 2012)—are likely to result from engaging in fieldwork through observation and similar tactics.[60]

6.2.2   Practical implications

The dissertation offers several implications for practitioners as each individual paper offers its own implications. Paper I, through uncovering new types of SBMI projects, offer practitioners two implications:[61] first, the fact that the surveyed practitioners subdivide and focus their SBMI efforts into concrete project types suggests that such subdivision of efforts in general could be a prudent way forward for other practitioners that want to engage in SBMI; second, the fact that two concrete SBMI project types emerge from the empirical analysis suggests that the surveyed practitioners see this division of tasks as the most feasible or efficient way to organize SBMI efforts. This suggests the division could be fruitfully tried out by others as well.

The challenges in adapting management control systems to support SBMs, a central part of the contribution in paper II, offer the implication to practitioners that there are certain key problems they need be aware of and address if their work is to realize management control systems that support SBMs. Being aware of these problems might increase the chances of succeeding in their SBMI process.

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[60] Within CS/R, see, e.g., Bass and Milosevic (2018) and Crane et al. (2018).
[61] I use the practice-based label "SBMI project types" here. It is directly interchangeable with "SBMI process types," the term used in paper I.

The third appended paper shows that latent forces of positive transformation and problem-solving for sustainability can be found at the manager level in an organization and that unleashing these forces might strengthen the SBMI process and the resulting SBM—while at the same time introducing an emergent and organic element to the process. The identification of these latent forces implies that top-level management would do well to nurture, and be open to, engagement and improvisation from managers lower down the organizational hierarchy.

In paper IV, a different aspect of the non-calculated nature of SBMI activities is showcased, namely, the fact that unconscious behavioral patterns seem to inform aspects of SBMI work. From this, an implication in the form of a warning can be drawn: Do not underestimate the role of habitual, unconscious behavioral patterns in SBMI processes. The corollary of this warning covers the implications from both paper III and paper IV: do not overestimate the role of calculated top-down strategic planning in SBMI processes.

In addition to the implications from the individual papers, I would argue that the dissertation as a whole offers the following implication for practitioners: practitioners cannot operate in the belief that one should rely on established theories and recipes alone if they are to foster increased CS/R engagement and succeed with SBMI. Instead, they must complement such formalized knowledge by engaging in experimentation and informal knowledge development and knowledge sharing. I base this implication on the two main insights from the dissertation's individual components and the sum of these components: first, my review of the SBMI literature shows that there is a very limited supply of knowledge on detailed SBMI activities in the established research literature. One can find overall recipes and models that can be used as sources of inspiration—especially when it comes to analyzing today's business model and planning what the finalized sustainable business model should look like, as these are the themes that are most heavily covered in the literature. However, there is little substance to be found, for example, on how the work of implementing the planned SBM is done. Secondly, my work reveals that SBMI processes are highly complex. Such processes are driven by a complex and tension-wrought set of ends, and consist of a high number of interconnected projects and projects-within-projects. Furthermore, as shown in paper III and paper IV, SBMI work can take on emergent properties through the way it is shaped by the actions of individuals, their previous experiences and their habitual and unconscious patterns of action, as well as the specific context in which the work takes place. Such context

dependency might apply generally to SBMI processes, and in that case abstract models and general recipes are of limited use in SBMI work beyond applying them as stylized sources of inspiration.

Given the current status in the SBMI field and the complex nature of SBMI processes, a point can be made that practitioners can be just as effective in producing knowledge—through testing out and absorbing new practical ways of doing things—as those academics that build abstract and general models and traffic in formal knowledge. In fact, one could argue that in the current situation, practitioners should award equal or higher prestige and energy to tinkering and experimenting in order to generate know-how as they do to the pursuit of formal knowledge through methods inspired by hard science. Based on my work on this dissertation, I suspect that such a shift in attitudes could prove highly beneficial to the state of CS/R efforts in organizations.

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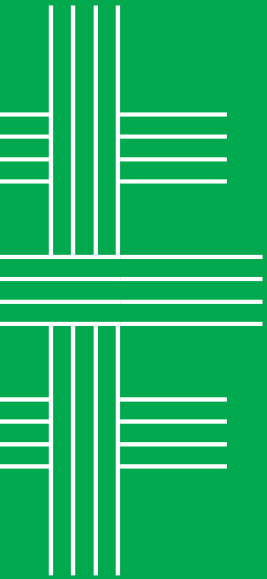
This dissertation builds from an identified sluggishness in our collective global response to the massive environmental and social sustainability challenges we are currently facing, and from two further assertions. First, that business can help improve the speed and decisiveness of our response to the challenges. Second, that increased knowledge regarding innovation activities for sustainability performed by established companies will help improve sustainability in business. Based on these points, the purpose of the dissertation is to contribute to richer knowledge regarding sustainable business model innovation (SBMI) activities.

The dissertation delivers on its purpose by conceptualizing SBMI as a process, and further by adopting a practice-based theoretical lens that provides a rich and nuanced perspective on the activities that make up the SBMI process. The dissertation develops a conceptual model that describes the SBMI process viewed as practice. This conceptual model is used to interpret and organize the contributions of four appended papers. Based on this, the dissertation offers findings that: (1) illuminate further what characterizes SBMI processes when they are viewed as practice, and (2) show how the application of practice theory in the research of SBMI can enrich our understanding of SBMI as a phenomenon.

Through the contributions it makes with the appended papers and the dissertation cover, this dissertation offers descriptive knowledge on SBMI activities that enriches the knowledge on the phenomenon, as well as suggestions for how practice theory can inform further research. This increased knowledge moves the SBMI literature closer toward becoming a research stream that offers researchers and practitioners a strong base of descriptively grounded and practically useful knowledge on how to work with CS/R initiatives to achieve increased sustainability within organizations.