Journal of Cleaner Production 100 (2015) 1–3

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of Cleaner Production

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jclepro

Call for papers

Making, buying and collaborating for more sustainable production and consumption

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 3 March 2015
Accepted 3 March 2015
Available online 29 April 2015

In response to external demands by regulators, consumers, and the public at large, firms are increasingly adjusting their product portfolios to incorporate sustainable inputs in their production processes and to provide more sustainable products, services and product–service combinations (Hoejmose et al., 2012; Vezzoli et al., 2012). Firms can make a variety of ***governance choices*** to improve the sustainability of their product portfolios and to better contribute to sustainability. They may decide to produce the sustainable products and services, to purchase them in the market, or to collaborate with others to make their supply chains more sustainable. These ***governance decisions*** are much more complicated for sustainable supply chains when compared to traditional supply chains for a variety of reasons.

First, the supply of sustainable products and services is complicated, since it requires commitments to sustainability in entire supply chains (Jolink and Niesten, in press; Seuring and Müller, 2008; Wu et al., 2012). When firms wish to sell sustainable products and services to end users, they need to consider sustainability in all their production processes, to establish and implement safeguards for sustainability in the market, and to decide how to collaborate with suppliers of sustainable inputs.

Second, in the transition to a more sustainable society, firms have been experimenting with new ways of meeting consumer demands that are less harmful to the environment. For example, firms may offer product–service combinations in which a shift takes place from supplying products to offering services in order to reduce material consumption (Vezzoli et al., 2012). The recent attention for the sharing economy is illustrative of this transition. Customer–supplier relationships in product–service combinations can be extremely complicated, due to difficulties with aligning incentives and objectives, with transferring risks, and the potential for knowledge leakage (Lockett et al., 2011). These difficulties create a variety of governance challenges for customers and suppliers.

Third, sustainable supply chains extend to the end-of-life product management, and thus help consumers to have products properly managed when they have finished using them. In that context 'an extended producer responsibility transfers the end-of-life product management costs from society to the relation between producers, retailers and consumers' (Hickle, 2014). The challenge lies in setting up governance structures that enable the internalization of external costs of safely managing end-of-life products.

This SV focuses on the effective governance of sustainable supply chains, and aims to demonstrate that ***effective governance*** will increase social, environmental and ecological benefits, and enable the transition to a more sustainable society. It will combine theories of governance with sustainability science to achieve these aims.

In the fields of organizational economics and strategic management, many theoretical and empirical studies have been focused on the decisions of firms to make, buy or to collaborate, or in other words, they focus upon the array of ***governance choices*** of firms (Barney, 2001; Coase, 1937; Williamson, 1996). Examples of governance structures include markets, hierarchies, trust, contractual alliances and equity-based alliances (e.g. Ménard, 2004). Research studies have shown that the choice for a governance structure depends on the characteristics of resources and transactions available within the supply chain (Barney, 2001; Williamson, 1996). When firms invest in specific assets and engage in transactions with a high uncertainty, they tend to choose more elaborate governance structures, such as joint ventures and hierarchies (Niesten and Jolink, 2014). These more elaborate governance structures reduce the chance of opportunistic behavior, and the chance of conflict among business partners. Firms will experience a higher innovative and financial performance when they match the governance structure to the nature of the underlying resources and transactions (e.g. Sampson, 2004), thereby, placing the effectiveness of ***governance choices*** at the forefront.

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http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2015.03.014
0959-6526/

While the body of literature on ***governance choices*** is elaborate, the application and extension of these theories to sustainable production is still limited (Wassmer et al., 2014). The Journal of Cleaner Production has published a considerable number of papers on sustainable supply chains. Some key publications in this field include special volumes in 2008 and 2013 (Seuring et al., 2008; Seuring and Gold, 2013) and recent comprehensive literature reviews (Martínez-Jurados and Moyano-Fuentes, 2014; Seuring and Müller, 2008). This SV builds on the contributions of these publications by extending research in this field to include the ***governance of sustainable supply chains***. The SV is designed to investigate the ways resources and transactions in sustainable supply chains differ from resources and transactions in traditional supply chains, and what the consequences are for effective ***governance within sustainable supply chains***. The SV will address the question of how resources and transactions in sustainable supply chains can effectively be ***governed***, and under what conditions firms should make, buy or collaborate to produce sustainable products, services and product–service combinations, and to manage their end-of-life products.

In his Nobel Prize lecture, Williamson (2009) highlighted that ***governance structures*** are important to mitigate conflicts among business partners in order to realize mutual gains. Traditional inter-firm research has been focused mainly on private gains accruing to business partners with much less attention having been paid to the potential public benefits (Wassmer et al., 2014, 759; Niesten and Jolink, 2015). Research on sustainable supply chains has also focused on private gains and has shown that green collaborations improve operational performance (Vachon and Klassen, 2006). This SV will apply the insights of the ***economics of governance*** to sustainable supply chains, and will research how the ***effects of governance*** on private gains of business partners can be extended to include public gains, such as social, environmental and ecological benefits as well.

A few recent studies have begun to address the ***governance*** of sustainable supply chains (e.g. Boström et al., inpress; Hoejmose et al., 2012; Lozano, 2008; Lozano et al., 2015; Vurro et al., 2009). For example, Hoejmose et al. (2012) showed that developing trust among supply chain partners is crucial for green supply chain management among firms. This SV solicits authors to build upon these and related contributions by investigating the merits of effective ***governance of sustainable supply chains***.

In that context, firstly, the SV will include studies on the governance of sustainable supply chains, and in particular, research on why firms choose a particular governance structure for the R&D, design, production and marketing of more sustainable products, services, and product–service combinations.

Secondly, it will focus on the short and long-term costs and benefits of the 'make, buy or collaborate' decisions in sustainable supply chains, or in other words, on the results of ***governance decisions***. This SV will focus explicitly on sustainable public benefits, considering positive externalities or reductions in or internalization of negative externalities. Its authors are invited to investigate how ***effective governance*** can stimulate the transition to more sustainable societies.

By applying insights from the ***economics of governance*** to the field of sustainability, this SV will make an important contribution to sustainability sciences. The ***economics of governance*** has shown that it is crucial to understand the attributes of transactions and resources in supply chains, and to effectively align these attributes with ***governance structures***. An effective alignment reduces conflict among business partners and will enhance the gains of transactions in supply chains. The aim of this SV is to use insights from the ***economics of governance*** to better understand how to effectively govern sustainable supply chains so that this leads to increased public and sustainable gains (including social, environmental and ecological benefits), and thus a transition to sustainable societies. This includes extending insights on the ***governance*** of traditional supply chains to governance challenges of sustainable supply chains, such as the need to ensure sustainability in the entire supply chain, new ways of meeting consumer demands (product–service combinations), and end-of-life product management.

Some of the key research questions to be addressed in this SV include but will not be limited to:

Governance of sustainable supply chains:

- Why do firms choose to make, buy or collaborate when incorporating sustainable inputs, products, services and product–service combinations in the supply chain? And how can these governance choices be explained by the attributes of resources and transactions in sustainable supply chains?
- How do resources and transactions in sustainable supply chains differ from resources and transactions in traditional supply chains, and what are the consequences for ***effective governance***?
- How and why do ***governance choices*** for the R&D, production and marketing of sustainable products and services differ from the ***governance choices*** for products and services that are less concerned with sustainability?
- How does the commitment to sustainability along the entire supply chain impact the ***governance*** decisions of firms? And how does it influence effective governance?
- How do the differences in ***governance choices*** between sustainable and traditional supply chains relate to the need for governing sustainability in the entire supply chain?
- What strategies or agreements do firms use to convince upstream and downstream participants in their supply chains to make inputs more sustainable?
- What are effective forms of ***governance*** for the end-of-life product management between producers and retailers?

Private and public benefits:

- What are the private and public benefits of firms that make or buy sustainable products and services, and of firms that ally to co-develop, exchange or co-produce sustainable products, services, and product–service combinations?
- How does ***effective governance*** enable firms to integrate economic and sustainable benefits?
- What types of public benefits lead to the creation of positive externalities and to the decrease in negative externalities? In other words, what public benefits are concerned with creating new types of value and with transforming disvalue into value?
- What types of private and public benefits are associated with effective ***governance choices in*** sustainable supply chains?
- How does ***effective governance*** of sustainable supply chains stimulate the transition to more sustainable societies?
- What type of ***governance structures*** of product–service combinations (e.g. user-oriented and result-oriented types) increases the adoption of these combinations?
- How does ***effective governance*** of the relations between producers and retailers increase the end-of-life product management by firms, and thus increase the adoption of extended producer responsibilities?

Contributions

This SV will include literature reviews, case studies and quantitative studies on ***governance choices*** by firms in the area of (social and environmental) sustainability in a variety of industries (e.g. green gas and electricity, renewable and innovative technologies,

organic food etc.). Submissions should be 6000 to 8500 words for empirical research-based papers and 4000 to 5500 words for case studies. Comprehensive integrative reviews can be 9000 to 13,000 words.

All papers should be developed based upon the editorial and formatting guidelines provided in the Instructions for Authors of the Journal of Cleaner Production at this web address: www.elsevier.com/journals/journal-of-cleaner-production/0959-6526/guide-for-authors

All manuscripts will be submitted to single blind peer review. The accepted manuscripts will be published in this SV of the Journal of Cleaner Production.

Authors are encouraged to attend the **4th Edition of the Conference on the Governance of a Complex World** (gcw2015.sciencesconf.org) to be held from 1 to 3 July 2015 at the University of Nice Sophia Antipolis, France. At the GCW conference a session will be dedicated to the theme of this SV in the Journal of Cleaner Production.

Scholars who wish to submit a paper to the SV, but are not participating in the conference, can submit their papers to the Journal of Cleaner Production and should take into account the schedule:

Schedule

- Authors will be expected to submit their papers to the Journal of Cleaner Production via the EES system by December 15, 2015
- Comments by reviewers and the guest editor will be provided to the authors by March 1, 2016
- Final versions of all revised papers should be submitted by June 1, 2016
- Authors will be informed of decisions by September 1, 2016
- The special volume will be published in November 2016

Editors

Authors may contact the guest editor of the special volume (Eva Niesten) or the associate editor of the Journal of Cleaner Production (Rodrigo Lozano) for further information.

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