

THE TRIPLE LAYERED BUSINESS MODEL CANVAS IN PRACTICE

“Always leave enough time in your life to do something that makes you happy, satisfied, even joyous. That has more of an effect on economic well-being than any other single factor.”

Paul Hawken (2021)

The canvases in this book are available as fillable PDFs that allow students to work on their own Triple Layered Business Model and Business Model You. You can obtain these canvases by scanning the QR codes in this book. If this does not work, please check the website:

www.lerenmetflood.nl/English3LC

Additional materials are available for lecturers using the book in their classes.

Cover and book design: MAT Design, bno

Illustrations: Retus

Translation: DeepL

Revision: Laurie Schiet-Heath, In Other Words

Print: Veldhuis Media

ISBN 978 90 833774 14

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In January 2020, Kate Raworth was appointed Professor of Practice at the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (*Hogeschool van Amsterdam*). This marked the beginning of my active involvement with sustainability and the significance of environmental solutions and inclusivity within the economy. The “old” economic model – rooted in linear thinking and focused primarily on growth – started to feel outdated. A “new” economic paradigm that emphasizes long-term, circular approaches became my new focus. Motivated by the work of Kees Klomp, I eagerly embraced this fresh perspective.

As a lecturer in higher education, I feel a deep responsibility to make students aware of sustainability and the future of economic thought. I take pride in having co-launched a new program, “*Brede Economische Richting*” (translated as “Broad Economic Direction”), with a team of colleagues in the Faculty of Business and Economics. From day one, we teach our students that the new economy – often referred to as the “purpose economy” – prioritizes sustainability, economic prosperity, and social well-being over traditional financial metrics (Hurst, 2014). It’s exciting to explore how this vision can be applied in practice.

We collaborate with real clients, ranging from large corporations to small businesses and start-ups – many of which are either already engaged in sustainability efforts or are just beginning to explore them. Some students approach sustainability goals with skepticism, especially when clients are hesitant, but this often motivates the students to dig deeper and find convincing arguments to inspire change. For others, this “new” way of thinking feels so intuitive that they question what’s genuinely new about it after all.

Students develop their strategic and economic insights using the Triple Layered Business Model Canvas. This model is remarkably clear, accessible and well-structured, which makes it a cornerstone of our curriculum. Personally, I’m a big fan of the model, especially its second and third layers (the ENVIRONMENTAL LAYER and the SOCIAL LAYER), which provide valuable direction and depth. I’m often impressed by how much companies are already doing in terms of sustainability and how much more students can contribute using this framework.

Beyond the second and third layers, the Business Model You framework, which acts as a PERSONAL LAYER, has also proven to be invaluable in guiding students' professional and personal growth.

While there's plenty of information available online and in books about the first layer, also known as the Business Model Canvas, there's relatively little on the ENVIRONMENTAL and SOCIAL LAYERS, let alone their integration with the PERSONAL LAYER. That's why I've developed teaching materials that address this gap. In this book, each layer is explored in detail: I break down the nine blocks from the Business Model Canvas for every layer, providing concrete examples and references.

The book is designed not as a textbook to be read in one go, but as a workbook that encourages students to actively engage with each layer or block. It includes bridges between theory and practice, with numerous examples to help students grasp the content. Every paragraph concludes with an inspiring exercise, and each chapter ends with a larger project. The structure of the book and its explanation of each block explicitly encourage students to contribute their own exercises and projects.

This book provides students with a practical and inspiring approach for driving sustainable innovation at the business level and sparking change in both current and future organizations.

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Amsterdam: September 19, 2024

I would like to thank the following people:

- **the thinkers and theorists Osterwalder, Pigneur, Paquin, Raworth and Klomp**
- **all lecturers, students and others involved in the *Brede Economische Richting*, Hogeschool van Amsterdam**
- **the publisher Wouter Nalis of FLOOT publishing house**
- **my fellow readers from whom I received substantive advice, help and feedback:**
 - **Matthijs de Feber, lecturer in Entrepreneurship and chairman Beraad Examencommissievoorzitters, Hogeschool van Amsterdam**
 - **Marc Brunnekreeft, lecturer in Sustainable Marketing & Sustainable Business and Change Agent Sustainability, Hogeschool van Amsterdam**
 - **Eric van Gennip, lecturer in Business Innovation and Entrepreneurship & Retail Management, Avans University of Applied Sciences**
 - **Nathalie Pot, lecturer in Commercial Economics, Windesheim University of Applied Sciences**
 - **Isabelle Langeveld, learning experience designer, Helder & Wijzer**
 - **Vincent van Warmerdam, author, guitarist and composer**



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INTRODUCTION

This book is about the Triple Layered Business Model Canvas. The basis of the Triple Layered Business Model Canvas is the familiar **Business Model Canvas** (BMC). The Business Model Canvas was originally developed by Osterwalder and Pigneur in 2010 and has been widely used by economists since. The Business Model Canvas shows how a company creates, delivers and retains value.

The Business Model Canvas is a strategic tool to capture a business model of a start-up or existing company and to visualize it so we can communicate about it. At a later stage, the business model is used to drive change in this company. The word “canvas” in Business Model Canvas derives from a blank canvas which is ready to be painted. In this context, it is a metaphor for a blank sheet of paper on which an entire business model can be mapped out.

Originally, the creators of the Business Model Canvas were looking for a way to represent a business model in a simple and clear way. To that end, they created this canvas model that fits on one sheet of paper. The Business Model Canvas contains nine fixed blocks to be filled in, but it’s not meant to be a fill-in-the-blank exercise. It is intended as a starting point for a search.

Each of the nine blocks in the Business Model Canvas serves as a building block. These blocks are interrelated and reinforce each other: if one block changes, then the other blocks change with it. Therefore, the Business Model Canvas is intended to be a dynamic model.

In higher education, the Business Model Canvas is used as an instrument to teach students when setting up a new business or providing strategic advice to a company. By completing a Business Model Canvas, you map the success factors and the potential risks of a company and note where improvement can be made for the future business.

The **Triple Layered Business Model Canvas** is an extension of the Business Model Canvas. Since 2012, users have looked for ways to include sustainability in the Business Model Canvas. The result of this search is the Triple Layered Business Model Canvas, as described by Joyce, Paquin and Pigneur (2015). In this Triple Layered Business Model Canvas, the original Business Model Canvas is the first layer: the **ECONOMIC LAYER**. To this first layer, two user-friendly layers are added: the second layer is the **ENVIRONMENTAL LAYER**, and the third layer is the **SOCIAL LAYER**. Using the Triple Layered Business Model Canvas, companies can be encouraged to become more sustainable.

In this book, we refer to the Triple Layered Business Model Canvas with the abbreviation 3LC. The names of the blocks and layers in the

3LC are always in capital letters. This makes them easy to recognize. Each layer in the 3LC is described in its own chapter and each building block is developed in a separate paragraph. If you want to know more about a specific layer or building block, you can find a lot of information by searching the Internet.

The canvases from the Triple Layered Business Model Canvas can be completed for any business, whether or not it considers itself sustainable. In fact, it is a good tool to explore where sustainability can be achieved. It is also very necessary to assess companies by this canvas measuring rod, because it makes clear where (too much?) environmental impact is being made and where improvement can or must be made to continue to exist in the future.

The 3LC follows the same format as the **three P's: People, Planet, Profit**. These terms were introduced by Elkington (2004) as the Triple Bottom Line in the early 1990s and have been used as a yardstick for sustainable development ever since. The order of the Triple Layered Business Model Canvas in terms of the three P's is: Profit (economic), Planet (environmental), People (social).

In 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were established by the United Nations (UN). There are seventeen Sustainable Development Goals, in various areas such as poverty, education and the climate crisis, to which the 196 member countries of the UN have committed to achieve by meeting challenges. These goals can be made concrete at a corporate level using the 3LC.



Scan this QR code for a video on the SDGs.

Although this is not a complete list, a 3LC can be created:

- to start a new business
- for product development
- for the purpose of strategic planning
- to make business analyses
- to communicate with stakeholders and (cooperating) parties
- to advise on sustainability
- to get the SDGs off the ground within an organization
- to provide concrete tools for future-proof innovations
- to develop ideas for ways to become more sustainable

The three layers of the Triple Layered Business Model Canvas should reinforce each other to have a richer discussion about the future of the company. So, pay attention to the connections within the three layers and also between them. Completing a 3LC provides an organization with a creative and surprising exploration of improvements, innovations and sustainable opportunities that lie ahead for the organization. The 3LC provides an accessible and attractive way to get started on corporate-level sustainability.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

In Chapter 1 the ECONOMIC LAYER is explained, followed by the ENVIRONMENTAL LAYER in Chapter 2 and the SOCIAL LAYER in Chapter 3. Each chapter also includes examples, exercises, assignments and a step-by-step plan for completing the canvas. The final chapter, Chapter 4, addresses the PERSONAL LAYER. This is the extra, fourth layer that we added to the Triple Layered Business Model Canvas. The PERSONAL LAYER returns to the **Business Model You** (BMYou for short). Here, you are the subject of investigation: What steps can you take in your life – in your professional as well as personal development – to develop a “responsible mindset”? This is a mindset that allows you to take care of your own well-being, but also enables you to contribute to a more sustainable world through long-term thinking.

A fillable PDF of each canvas is available for buyers of the book. Take this opportunity to fill in these for real companies and real clients or apply them to your own (to-be-started) business! That’s the way to experience what it’s like to be a genuine positive influence. You can find the canvases by scanning the QR codes in this book. If you don’t manage to scan the QR codes, check the website accompanying this book: www.lerenmetflood.nl/English3LC



Scan this QR code to learn more about the canvases that accompany this book.

EXAMPLE

In these four chapters you will find examples that explain the theory based on real practices found in real companies. You can recognize these examples by the **EXAMPLE** icon shown above. As this book is a translation of the original Dutch book, the examples mainly come from Dutch companies. However, their practices are also inspiring for students who don’t speak Dutch. Some of the Dutch websites mentioned are (also) in English.

EXERCISE

At the back of this book (on page 99), you’ll find a list of all the exercises and assignments you can use to practice applying the theory. The exercises and assignments are arranged according to the chapter to which they belong. This way, you can quickly find an exercise to practice or assignment to complete. You can recognize the exercises and assignments by the icon above and the vertical line on the left. Each chapter concludes with a paragraph **GETTING STARTED**. Here you carry out several larger assignments that ultimately result in four completed canvases

OVERVIEW

	ECONOMIC LAYER	ENVIRONMENTAL LAYER	SOCIAL LAYER	PERSONAL LAYER
UNIQUE OFFER	VALUE PROPOSITION	FUNCTIONAL VALUE	SOCIAL VALUE	HOW YOU HELP
CUSTOMER	CUSTOMER SEGMENTS	USE PHASE	END-USER	WHO YOU HELP
	CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP	END-OF-LIFE	SOCIETAL CULTURE	HOW YOU INTERACT
	CHANNELS	DISTRIBUTION	SCALE OF OUTREACH	HOW THEY KNOW YOU & HOW YOU DELIVER
REVENUES / BENEFITS +	REVENUES	ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS	SOCIAL BENEFITS	WHAT YOU GET
ORGANIZATION	ACTIVITIES	PRODUCTION	GOVERNANCE	WHAT YOU DO
	RESOURCES	MATERIALS	EMPLOYEES	WHO YOU ARE & WHAT YOU HAVE
	PARTNERS	SUPPLIES & OUT-SOURCING	LOCAL COMMUNITIES	WHO HELPS YOU
COSTS / IMPACTS -	COSTS	ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS	SOCIAL IMPACTS	WHAT YOU GIVE

Figure 1: Overview of the three layers of the Triple Layered Business Model Canvas and the fourth layer of the Business Model You.