

Sustainability Blog

By PwC Deutschland | 13. November 2024

Sustainable Business Models: Insights into Conceptual Canvases for Starting Your Transformation

Our sustainable business model canvases provide a framework to help clients learn ecosystems, develop scenarios, and create innovative, sustainable solutions

With the help of our business models several core questions that form your sustainable transformation will be answered paving a structured way towards a holistic transformation: *How can sustainability potentials be prioritized within a business model? Which stakeholder needs within your ecosystem the most relevant? How could your business model develop and which core competencies would this require?*

Transformation and systemic change require a structured approach combined with visionary thinking. To guide this and set the foundation for a successful and sustainable shift towards sustainable business models, we have developed a series of business model canvases that we have been employed to a multitude of client projects successfully. These concepts are designed for a variety of purposes, can be applied in diverse context sector agnostically when developing a product strategy, analyzing the own stakeholder environment and needs, determining the way forward deriving from regulatory requirements or integrating new solutions in the existing portfolio.

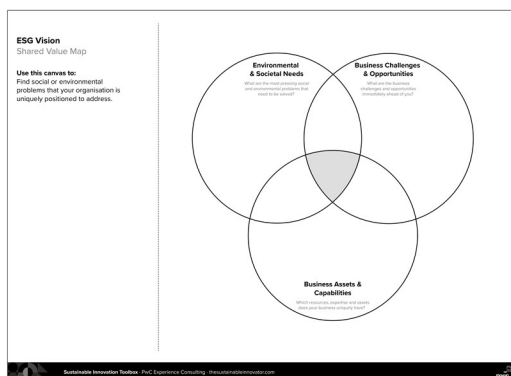
Three major sets of canvases were developed to fit three major project types and are related to:

1. Baseline & Vision
2. Transformation of Product & Service Ecosystem
3. Implementation of change

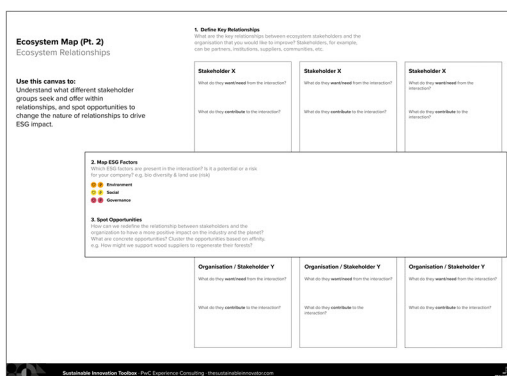
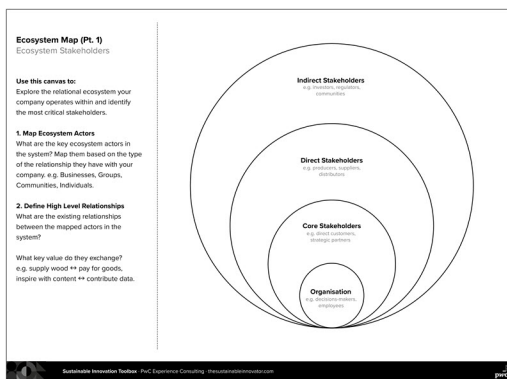
1. Envisioning a bolder, better future

The first set of canvases is core to set the ground and gain insights into internal perspectives and processes. It is core for success to build your transformation on a solid foundation and undergo a prioritization. Within this step, potentials of business related to sustainability and creating sustainable impact can be a topic or an ecosystem mapping can highlight needs of your stakeholders and identify opportunity for your business' development.

A core canvas within this set is the “ESG Vision – Shared Value Map”. This map is a good starting point to detect challenges related to environmental and social topics within your current business models and activities. It looks at the three dimensions “environmental and social needs”, “business challenges and opportunities” and “business assets and capabilities” and tries to find common problems to be priorities and solved in a meaningful manner. It will pinpoint the different values and create a shared understanding.



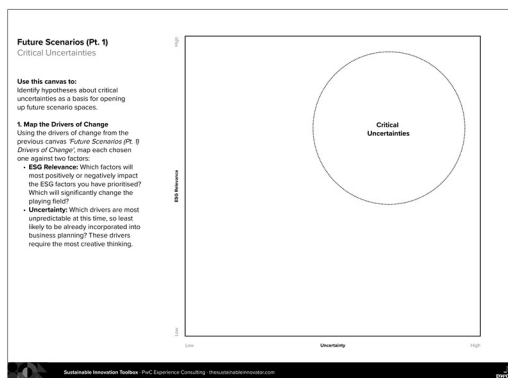
Further valuable canvases that we are using on a regular basis in our projects work are meaningful to highlight your ecosystem and needs of stakeholders. The “ecosystem map” can thereby be a useful tool to explore the relational ecosystem you are operating in and identify the most critical stakeholders. Based on that, the canvas “ecosystem relationship” can be applied to understand stakeholder needs in more detail, describe the nature of relationships and impact possibilities. This canvas can also be used to identify opportunities and come up with ideas for new formats of involvement and engagement.



2. Transforming your product & service ecosystem

The second set of canvases are intended to dive deeper into the product and service offerings to innovate them in a sustainable manner. Whether designing a business model in a sustainable way from scratch or innovating a certain product or service with desirable functions in a customer-centric way considering the planet and society are key pathways that shall be addressed and structured with the help of our canvases. Thereby, future scenarios can be drivers for change.

We often experience that hypotheses about critical uncertainties can be a good starting point to open up future scenario spaces and invite our clients to map their drivers of change using the “Critical uncertainties” canvas.



Continuing from this, the “preferable futures” canvas can then be applied to map and discuss potential future scenarios based on guiding questions such as: *How would you categorize your scenarios? Are they utopian futures or dystopian futures? Are they possible, plausible or probable? How futuristic are they?*



Bringing a future scenario to life is often not so easy. To really make the consequences visible and experience what it means to implement a certain path, a story or newspaper article can be a great opportunity for visualization. We developed the “Future News” canvas for this purpose. Coming up with a background, headline, certain images and evidence will then provide a good ground and often helps direct decisions.

Future Scenarios (Pt. 4)
Future News

Use this canvas to:
Bring a future scenario to life, in the form of news articles in a future publication with a focus on ESG-impact and stakeholder benefits.

1. Pick 1 scenario
Which scenario would you like to explore further? e.g. the one you feel most uninspired for, the one that you think would be the most preferable one, the one that feels most relevant for your industry.

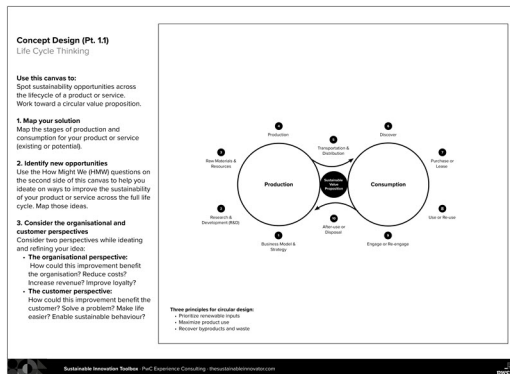
2. Tell 3 future stories about your scenario
What are three stories that you would read in a future newspaper in this specific scenario? Who would be affected the most? How would they be affected and what's the positive impact on them and the world? Fill in the blanks.

Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3
<p>The Background What is the background leading up to your scenario? What is the situation that is affected most by the scenario?</p> <p>The Headline What is a positive headline about your company and its positive impact on the world, industry or environment?</p> <p>The Imagery What is a positive headline about your company and its positive impact on the world, industry or environment?</p> <p>The Evidence What would be a source or story that would make the scenario most relevant for your company?</p>	<p>The Background What is the background leading up to your scenario? What is the situation that is affected most by the scenario?</p> <p>The Headline What is a positive headline about your company and its positive impact on the world, industry or environment?</p> <p>The Imagery What is a positive headline about your company and its positive impact on the world, industry or environment?</p> <p>The Evidence What would be a source or story that would make the scenario most relevant for your company?</p>	<p>The Background What is the background leading up to your scenario? What is the situation that is affected most by the scenario?</p> <p>The Headline What is a positive headline about your company and its positive impact on the world, industry or environment?</p> <p>The Imagery What is a positive headline about your company and its positive impact on the world, industry or environment?</p> <p>The Evidence What would be a source or story that would make the scenario most relevant for your company?</p>

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3. Operationalising and implementation of change

Embedding ESG into your culture and brand might be a long but also very inspiring path. Working towards a circular value proposition and spot opportunities can thereby be started with a Life Cycle Thinking approach. Our canvas “Concept Design” is thereby used to map solutions and identify opportunities in a cycle. Looking at consumption and production, not only raw materials but the whole life cycle of your products and services is screened and relevant questions raised from an organizational and customer perspective.



All the presented canvases that form part of a big variety of canvases we are using depending on individual problem statements and requirements, have become not only a good visualization but have been proofed as useful framework to start and guide discussions on various levels and fields of sustainability and business model transformation.

Building on this blog post, we will be delivering more exciting deep dives on Sustainable Business Model Canvases in the future, so stay tuned!

Also interesting:

- [More than a Fashion Trend: Transitioning to a 1.5°C Lifestyle](#)
- [World Economic Forum in Davos: Future scenarios for sustainable economic growth](#)

Get ongoing updates on the topic via regulatory horizon scanning in our research application, [PwC Plus](#).
Read more about the opportunities and offerings [here](#).

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