

Open positions

PhD RESEARCHERS (3)

Entrepreneurship & Business Model Innovation

FEB Antwerp – Leuven & Flanders Business School

The Faculty of Economics and Business (FEB) – Campus Antwerp and Leuven - is currently looking for three full-time doctoral researchers to become involved in academic research on the nature of business model innovations, including the impact on the performance of entrepreneurial ventures and established firms.

Project

The research program aims to analyze and document the role and impact of business model innovation within three distinctive areas:

- [Project 1](#): social enterprises and companies operating in developing economies
- [Project 2](#): mature industries searching for sustainable business models (with focus on the retail sector).
- Project 3: creative and artistic industries/ventures

While each area introduces specific research questions that will be examined by one of the doctoral researchers, synergies and spillovers between the three PhD projects will be actively pursued.

Research team

This research program is shouldered by the Faculty of Economics and Business – Antwerp (marketing management and IBSE research group) and Leuven (MSI department), and has been defined jointly with Flanders Business School (Executive MBA and entrepreneurship oriented programs). For the research part focusing on social enterprises, FEB is partnering with the Stanford University Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society (PACS), the Hertie School of Governance (Prof. J. Mair).

The research will be conducted under the supervision of Prof.C.Seelos ([project 1](#), Social enterprises), Prof.K.Campo ([project 2](#). Mature industries) and Prof.B.Van Looy ([project 2](#). Mature industries and project 3. Creative and artistic industries).

Profile

You preferably have a Master degree and background in Applied Economics, Business (or Civil) Engineering, Management, or Economics and show a strong interest in

Entrepreneurship and (Business Model) Innovation. Preference will be given to students having completed a research Master. You should be able to show excellent ('honors'-level) results in prior studies and fluency in both spoken and written English. Most importantly, you should share our unbridled enthusiasm for scientific research.

Offer

We offer full-time employment for three doctoral researchers, starting 1 September 2014 (or later). The appointment will be for 4 years, annually renewable. While candidates will be working at the Antwerp Campus, they will enter the doctoral program of the Faculty of Business and Economics (Leuven Campus) and will develop a doctoral dissertation at KU Leuven (Faculty of Economics and Business).

Information

Further information on the vacancy can be obtained from:

- Prof. dr. Katia Campo (campus dean of FEB - Campus Antwerp; dean FBS): Katia.campo@KULeuven.be, 03/201.18.03
- Prof. dr. Bart Van Looy (vice-dean research FBS; Chair MSI Department FEB@Leuven): Bart.vanlooy@KULeuven.be, 016/32.69.01 (project 2 and 3)
- Prof. dr. Christian Seelos (Stanford University Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society): CSeelos@Stanford.edu (project 1)

For more information on the marketing management and IBSE research group (Antwerp), please consult www.econ.kuleuven.be/tma/onderzoek/mm and www.econ.kuleuven.be/tma/onderzoek/ib

For more information on MSI (Leuven), please consult www.econ.kuleuven.be/MSI

Application

You can apply for these PhD positions no later than April 18 via KU Leuven's [online application tool](#).

Please apply as soon as possible, the vacancies will be closed on the moment that suitable candidates have been found.

Project 1: Social Entrepreneurship – Business Model Innovation for Sustainable Development

This stream of investigation explores business model innovation in the context of deep poverty (Seelos & Mair, 2007) and immature institutional and physical infrastructure that challenges our ability to combine resources into robust and sustainable value-creating configurations (Seelos, Mair, Battilana, & Dacin, 2011).

The main target phenomena in our research are social entrepreneurs and the organizations they build. Social entrepreneurs create new business models for the provision of products and services that cater directly to basic human needs that remain unsatisfied by current economic or social institutions. Like business entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurs recognize and act upon opportunities to improve systems, create solutions, and invent new approaches (Seelos & Mair, 2005).

Currently, our research focuses on two important aspects that will define the scope of work at FBS:

1. **Understanding the dynamics of continuous business model innovation in established social enterprises:** Business model innovation and continuous innovation in organizations are key mechanism for coupled social and economic progress in developing countries (Seelos & Mair, 2012b). The inherent uncertainties of innovation processes make it imperative to support social sector organizations (SSOs) in their efforts to make innovation more productive and to build and strengthen organizational capability for continuous innovation (OCCI). In this project we endeavor an in-depth study of the long-term innovation trajectories of several SSOs to explore the actual organizational mechanisms that shape and define the characteristics of OCCI over time. We explore together with the SSOs, practitioners and researchers what can be learned from studying long-term innovation processes and how we can make emerging insights useful for SSOs. An important aspect of this work will be to develop ways of identifying and mapping organizational pathologies that stifle or derail the processes involved in business model innovation and OCCI. This line of research is co-funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, NY.
2. **Developing analytical models for productive theorizing and strategizing of business model innovations:** The fragmented and inconsistent state of knowledge on innovation and the particular characteristics of SSOs operating in a context of “deep poverty” require us to build new analytical instruments for studying business model innovation (Seelos, 2013). In this line of research we will further develop ways of researching these phenomena more

productively and to find ways in making research more available to and relevant for different decision makers.

We envision the main thrust of research at FBS as a deeper development and continuation of these two main lines of investigation. The exact nature of the research project(s) will depend on availability of funding and the preferences and interests of a PhD student who will be a main driver of the research agenda together with the holder of the research chair.

The expectation is to develop a number of publications in scholarly journals as well as practitioner outlets such as the Stanford Social Innovation Review (Seelos & Mair, 2012a) and present our work globally at the leading conferences in our field. We also intend to organize dedicated workshops that bridge academic and practitioner interests. We will contribute to the development of new teaching material for undergraduate-, MBA-, and executive –level education.

References

- Seelos, C. 2013. Theorizing and Strategizing with Models: Generative Models of Social Enterprises. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Venturing*, (forthcoming).
- Seelos, C., & Mair, J. 2005. Social entrepreneurship: Creating new business models to serve the poor. *Business Horizons*, 48(3): 241-246.
- Seelos, C., & Mair, J. 2007. Profitable Business Models and Market Creation in the Context of Deep Poverty: A Strategic View. *The Academy of Management Perspectives*, 21(4): 49-63.
- Seelos, C., & Mair, J. 2012a. Innovation is not the holy grail. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, 10(4): 45-49.
- Seelos, C., & Mair, J. 2012b. What determines the capacity for continuous innovation in social sector organizations? PACS Report to the Rockefeller Foundation: Stanford University.
- Seelos, C., Mair, J., Battilana, J., & Dacin, M. T. 2011. The embeddedness of social entrepreneurship: Understanding variation across local communities. In C. Marquis, M. Lounsbury, & R. Greenwood (Eds.), *Communities and Organizations (Research in the Sociology of Organizations)*, Vol. 33: 333-363: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Project 2: Defining sustainable business models for mature industries (retailing)

During the last decades, technological developments, most notably in terms of ICT platforms enabled new forms of distribution. In the grocery retail sector, several chains have explored and implemented a series of new distribution forms (such as online stores with pick-up or home delivery service) and have been able to arrive at a profitable scale in a number of cases. At the same time, margins remain fragile and contingencies are not always well understood. This research project aims to provide a systematic analysis of the sustainability of different business models that can be envisaged within the changing retail environment.

Currently we plan three different research stages, each consisting of a time period of +/- 1 year. In total we aim for a time period of four years, starting with a PhD program in Business Economics (KU Leuven), and an extensive analysis of the relevant literature and the specifics of the retail sector.

Phase 1: Defining different business models

Within the first research phase (Year 1/2) research efforts will focus on the creation of an exhaustive inventory of business models and an assessment of their constituents and consequences.

Envisaged efforts imply a quantitative approach (analysis of sales/margin trends, benchmarking) as well as a qualitative approach (in depth cases studies of relevant practices). Data which will be used for these activities imply publicly accessible data (such as financial accounts, annual reports, industry analysis, ...) and interviews. In order to obtain a fine-grained insight in terms of constituents (relevant practices, business model choices), we will engage in interviews with relevant experts and practitioners. In addition, the behavior of customers will be analyzed by relying on ongoing research efforts conducted by Prof. K. Campo (based on purchase panel data of the grocery sector).

This analysis will result in a typology of business models based on distinguishing characteristics and implied contingencies. In addition, we aim to identify relevant contingencies that affect the value appropriation potential and the sustainability of different business models.

Phase 2: Sustainability of different business models

Within a second phase, the emphasis shifts towards the notion of sustainability. Sustainability is understood as twofold: what are the implications for employees and implied partners on the one hand, and for the environment on the other hand (ecological footprint, including energy/mobility and waste). How can partners (or customers) become involved in parts of the supply chain and how might this effect

the ecological footprint? If one involves other parties, which type of actors (community members) are most relevant in terms of value creation and commitment (and hence (social) sustainability)? If one recalibrates the decoupling point (situated on the 'stock-order' continuum), what are the social and environmental implications?

While part of the activities will build on the empirical material collected during the first phase, additional relevant cases will be documented and scrutinized. The experience of Christian Seelos is relevant to mention in this respect. As this phase will benefit from specific expertise on environmental impact as well, relevant experts (present at KU Leuven, but also FBS and beyond – cfr. ORSTAT) might become involved during this stage. Specific attention will be devoted in this phase to model and simulate different options and scenario's in order to assess the impact. Finally, it is clear that options assessed in this phase also require an assessment in terms of economic sustainability, which will become the focus of the final, third, phase.

Phase 3: Assessment in terms of growth, margins and profitability.

During the final phase, a more economically oriented – integrative - modeling of the value chain – will be undertaken. This will include growth potential (sales) as well as profitability and will look specifically at potential trade-offs and/or complementarities between on and off line activities. Finally, implications in terms of organizing and implementation will be assessed and analyzed (differentiated structure, prototyping, organizational impact assessment, co-creation dynamics,.....).

In addition to the doctoral dissertation, the research should result in three papers that can be published in leading academic journals within the field. The key findings will also be presented to retail practitioners through management reports and workshops.