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A REVIEW OF GREEN BUSINESS NEGOTIATIONS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS TRANSITIONS

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Introduction. Seeking consistency with the seventeen UN Sustainable Development Goals, business entities are transforming from “doing business as usual” to sustainable business practices. Businesses are encouraged to undergo a green transition process. Green business transitions form a specific context for business negotiations. The engagement of business entities in negotiations largely depends on the willingness of parties to find a solution for the contradictory interests of parties and to come up with a solution for the negotiation problem in the form of a joint decision.

Aim and tasks. The study aims to raise awareness of green thinking for a successful green business transition by using negotiations as a sustainable business practice. For businesses, the process of change that results in becoming successfully green is intertwined with negotiations, where parties strive to achieve outcomes complying with the green business transformation perspective and are constituted as sustainable business deals.

Results. This study justifies the need for a clear definition of green business negotiations and a framework that distinguishes them from conventional ones. Network maps of keyword searches do not reveal a clear link between negotiation and green business transition research. Although literature presents distinct theoretical models of negotiation and negotiation algorithms, they fail to establish cohesive research streams that could be categorized into clusters. This observation indicates that negotiation frameworks and green concepts exist independently in literature. VOSviewer tool was used to represent bibliometric relationships and co-occurrence in the literature visually. Exploration of the potential intersection between these areas is essential to clearly understand their interrelationships and implications for effective green business practices. Additionally, Barber’s Negotiation Phase Model demonstrates that the specific tasks and elements of green business negotiations are integral to all phases of the negotiation process. Understanding these elements can enhance the effectiveness of negotiations related to business sustainability.

Conclusions. The framework that integrates green business negotiation specifics into the Negotiation Phase model provides a nuanced understanding of green business negotiations, highlighting the importance of integrating environmental considerations at each stage of the negotiation process. Practitioners can enhance their strategies and outcomes by recognizing the distinct characteristics and requirements of green business negotiations, ultimately fostering more sustainable business practices. The findings emphasize that integrating green business negotiations within established negotiation frameworks is crucial for enhancing organizational strategies, promoting sustainability, and achieving effective outcomes in green business practice.

Keywords: green business transition, business negotiation, sustainability, environmental impacts, social responsibility.

1. Introduction.

The transition of business entities to sustainable business practices and the transformation towards business sustainability highlights the importance of harmonised integration of economic, social, and environmental aspects into business. The European Green Deal (EGD) is crucial to achieving the SDGs and embodies a package of policy incentives defining the path of the EU's green transition (European Commission, 2019). Achieving climate neutrality by 2050 is an ambitious goal of the European Union (EU), committing all EU member states to the EU Climate Law.

The problems caused by climate change cannot be overcome individually and require collective effort. Businesses are encouraged to undergo a green transition (GT) process. Companies should engage in business deals with clients, suppliers, partners, and other parties through negotiations. The so-called "negotiation capability of the company" has been briefly investigated in scientific literature and acknowledged as one of the dynamic capabilities of business entities, which is vital when adapting to changing business ecosystems (Brikena, 2023).

Negotiation skills are still among the top 15 soft skills demanded by employers, even in light of forthcoming changes (World Economic Forum, 2020). For businesses, GT is woven with negotiations where parties strive to achieve outcomes that comply with the green business transformation perspective. In terms of skills fostering GT, companies should focus on developing green innovation skills, including negotiation and contract management skills (Picaud-Bello et al., 2024). Understanding how business negotiations occur in specific contexts helps achieve agreements with lower transition costs (Hernandez, 2022).

Environmental issues are key to a comprehensive environmental strategy for business organisations, but more research is needed to determine how this integration should occur (Banerjee, 2001). To ensure GT, appropriate goals should be formulated within the strategy of business entities and linked to aspirations regarding these goals (Locke & Latham, 2013).

Green business transitions form a specific context for business negotiations. The engagement of business entities in negotiations largely depends on the willingness of parties to find a solution for the contradictory interests of parties and to come up with a solution for the negotiation problem in the form of a joint decision. Conflicting interests regarding the green business aspects of parties may cause negotiation problems. For these reasons, the authors aim to explore the presupposed specifics of green business negotiations (GBN) and to elaborate on the definition of GBN.

The approach is to combine relevant literature on green thinking, green business, and green business transition with relevant literature on business negotiation, negotiation complexity, and sustainable negotiation processes, which leads to the definition of GBN and their specifics.

2. Literature review.

2.1. Green Thinking and Environmental Orientation.

Environmental issues are the foundation of growing environmental concerns in business. However, more research is needed to determine how this integration should happen (Banerjee, 2001). Environmental issues could be solved more if business organizations and consumers embrace green thinking. The green thinking concept is attributed to and developed concerning sustainable consumption. Green thinking has been examined through a theoretical framework that prioritizes the hierarchy of values, attitudes, and behaviours (Jacobs et al., 2018). This green thinking concept is used to justify consumers' purchasing decisions for green products and services (Ali et al., 2020). Green thinking reflects one's negative environmental impact from unintentional behaviour (Wu & Long, 2024). From this perspective, green thinking as a cognitive process facilitates acceptance of messages delivered by green marketing activities. It generates a positive attitude towards green labels, products and services (Ali et al., 2020).

Banerjee (2001) states that environmental orientation reflects managerial perceptions of environmental issues inside a business organization and is grounded in stakeholder integration and accountability.

Additionally, Menguc and Ozanne (2005) described the idea of “natural entrepreneurial orientation,” identifying it as comprising three key aspects: entrepreneurship, corporate social responsibility (CSR), and dedication to the natural environment. Menguc and Ozanne (2005) admit that these three capabilities are rare, valuable, and difficult to imitate, leading to competitive advantage if implemented correctly.

Dean and McMullen (2007) assert that entrepreneurs who adopt an environmental orientation contribute to dismantling obstacles that hinder the efficient operation of markets and help eliminate the market failures that lead to environmental harm. The factors fostering green entrepreneurial orientation are mainly associated with actors playing a role in entrepreneurial settings. Environmental entrepreneurial orientation encompasses several strategic approaches shaped by influences from different dimensions.

It can be improved through micro-level initiatives (personality traits, perceptions and values, human and social capital, emotions, moods and feelings), meso (organizational characteristics like corporate governance, leadership, management’s awareness and pro-environmental behaviour, organizational mindfulness, entrepreneurial culture), and macro-level drivers (stakeholder demands, regulatory frameworks and incentives, green economy investments and promotion instruments, collaboration and networking, open-innovation strategy) (Ameer & Khan, 2023).

Top management awareness of environmental issues substantially contributes to the strength of environmental orientation (Yasir et al., 2020). The involvement of corporate governance stakeholders (owners, boards of directors, CEOs, and top management teams) along with employees is crucial, as their collaboration can influence the implementation of environmental sustainability initiatives (Ameer & Khan, 2023). Novel empirical research provides evidence that “if the entrepreneur or manager has a positive attitude towards the GT, it is more likely that necessary changes for the GT with the company will be made” (Kekkonen et al., 2023).

2.2. Green Business and Green Transition.

Green entrepreneurs are recognized as critical drivers in green business transition and as “game-changing agents” who are meant to abandon “doing business as usual” and balance their business aims with environmental aims (O’Neill & Gibbs, 2016). Green business transition embraces commitment from business entities to become greener such as green manufacturing (Puj et al., 2023), green supply chain management (Tseng et al., 2019), green product, green marketing and customer education (Shehawy & Khan, 2024), green human resource management practices (Telukdarie et al., 2024; Kandil, 2023) and green business models (Kabiraj et al., 2010).

In addition, novel research on the greenness of supply chains suggests that entrepreneurs and business representatives expect GT to increase costs and expenditures for their companies, and they do not perceive cost-saving opportunities. However, environmental licensing and labelling are opportunities for successfully launching green products (Kekkonen et al., 2023).

To pursue green business strategies, business organizations should incorporate these goals into their sustainability strategies, guaranteeing that their operations are environmentally friendly and aligned with broader global sustainability aims (Teymourifar & Trindade, 2023).

According to McGuire (2010), the environmental shift towards greener business might be reached by organizations through eight areas: 1) green consumption and environmental labelling; 2) green contract (social contract) with consumers; 3) green management modules; 4) environmental auditing; 5) scenario planning; 6) green redesign; 7) corporate consciousness; 8) environmental outreach.

Organizations might enhance their environmental orientation and thus achieve better environmental performance by developing respective dynamic capabilities. These capabilities mediate micro, meso and macro level factors influencing the environmental orientation of business organizations (Ameer & Khan, 2023).

These mediators include knowledge transfer and integration, green supply chain management practices (design of green products, green procurement, production, product delivery and recovery, logistic networks), environmental innovation, and mediators such as the organization's purpose, structure of an organization, resilience capacity of an organization, absorptive capacity of an organization (Ameer & Khan, 2023).

2.3. Green Business Negotiations.

From a broader perspective, negotiation is defined as a process in which a joint decision is made by two or more parties (Raifa et al., 2007). Although empirical research in different negotiation domains (diplomacy, law, business, etc.) agrees with the statement that the structure and process of negotiation remain the same, scientists still recognise that "attempts to generate a universal theory remain a work in progress" (Jang et al., 2018). The organisational context has been considered an inclusive concept. This viewpoint has impacted institutional theory by identifying and explaining the relationships among institutions, organisations, and actors (Farid & Waldorff, 2022).

Jang et al. (2018) have studied business negotiation extensively to elaborate on general descriptive and prescriptive knowledge. Extensive research has focused on business negotiations, such as mergers and acquisitions, sales, cooperation in forming alliances, procurement, and typical entrepreneurial activities, such as attracting financing and negotiations among shareholders. Research on negotiations with suppliers (Wei, 2020; Causil & Morais, 2023) and project contract negotiations (Koskinen & Mäkinen, 2009) provided examples of even more detailed research that contributes to general knowledge and advice from academia to foster better performance by negotiators.

Sustainability aspects in business negotiations are not new in the scientific literature and are characterised by mutually beneficial solutions, guiding better relationships and more significant innovation, as well as higher growth and profits (Karsaklian, 2017).

Negotiating frequency, the development of negotiation skills, and a willingness to change support the opinion that business negotiations are a source of competitive advantage (Vojvodić et al., 2020).

From a company perspective, GT is woven into negotiations. In these negotiations, parties strive to achieve outcomes that comply with the green business transition, which is constituted as sustainable business deals. Based on the applicability of the general negotiation structure and process that applies across negotiation domains (Jang et al., 2018), these business negotiations follow the flow of sequential phases (Koskinen & Mäkinen, 2009).

Considering that the general definition of negotiation implies that negotiation is a specific social interaction to reach a joint decision among parties that provides a solution to the negotiation problem (Jang et al., 2018), negotiations require concessions among parties on criteria under negotiations (Causil & Morais, 2023).

Typically, business negotiators make concessions on such aspects as price, quality and delivery time. While negotiation research refers to the specifics of business negotiations that facilitate green business transition, researchers have argued that negotiations involving business deals with at least one green aspect to be negotiated introduce specifics unique to GBN (Causil & Morais, 2023).

Causil and Morais (2023) argue that the green business criteria added to the negotiation objects vary across industries. For example, in the food industry, the following parameters are included in the negotiation protocol: 1) the amount of energy; 2) the amount of greenhouse gas emissions; 3) the amount of waste generated by packaging; 4) the beneficial impact on local biodiversity; 5) the beneficial impact on communities and employees.

Wei (2020) considers multiple factors when modelling the supply and demand relationship in green supply chain management: 1) how green is the supply chain; 2) the green product's price; 3) the demand and customer's environmental priorities, total demand, and government subsidies.

It can be implied from the scientific literature that the negotiation problem in GBN is focused on balancing resource efficiency factors and environmental impacts, aiming to maximise the utilisation of resources, minimise negative environmental influence, and optimise economic and social benefits (Wei, 2020).

On top of that, green contract mechanisms are recognised as crucial in implementing green supply chain management. Green contract mechanisms serve as a tool for achieving better green performance (Teymourifar & Trindade, 2023). Business organisations set legally binding terms for green business practices by implementing green contract mechanisms. Among factors that play a role when negotiating green contracts are environmental performance and benefits of improved environmental performance, cost savings and the cost of implementing sustainable business practices, legal compliance, and economic benefit (Teymourifar & Trindade, 2023). In addition, Teymourifar and Trindade (2023) note that a price differentiation strategy (for example, offering lower prices for clients who perform well on environmental criteria and comply with environmental performance indicators mutually confirmed by parties during negotiations) is effective in negotiating terms of green contracts.

3. Methodology.

The methodology is based on a thematic review of scientific literature, which covers such areas such as green thinking, green business, and green business transition, and scientific literature focused on business negotiation, negotiation complexity, and the sustainable negotiation process. The assumption of existing green criteria and the organisational context of GBN were identified through this integration of scientific literature, thus leading to clarification of a definition of green business negotiations. For network analysis, the VOSviewer tool was used.

This tool facilitates the exploration of the relationships and patterns in scientific literature. According to Sandberg and Alvesson (2021) proposed categorisation of descriptions of GBN, particularly in relation to green business transition, contributes to the scientific literature by providing a structured understanding of the concept.

It provides theoretical clarity and is a crucial framework for future empirical research. Additionally, to represent GNB specifics, the author uses the Barbers' Negotiation Phase Model (Barber, 2018) for analytical purposes.

The current model presents the lifecycle of negotiation activities. The described methodology offers a holistic approach that integrates different perspectives from different fields to improve the understanding of GBN. This structured categorization also improves clarity, helps identify underlying assumptions, and provides a solid foundation for future research, ultimately supporting informed decision-making and effective transitions in the context of green business.

4. Results.

The sustainability agenda has become increasingly important for businesses, and the green business transition is expected to evolve through green innovation. A deficient awareness of green thinking entails inefficiency in the sustainability of business deals that foster GT in businesses, thus challenging the success of the green business transition. First, the network analysis results generated using the VOSviewer tool were produced by setting a criterion of at least seven occurrences from a sample of 200 highly cited articles for each keyword identified in Europe. Additional filters included the most cited articles and English-language articles only. Keywords used in the search included "Green AND business" OR "Green AND thinking" OR "Environmental AND Orientation" AND "Sustainability". All the papers were sourced from the Scopus database. The results are shown in Figure 1.

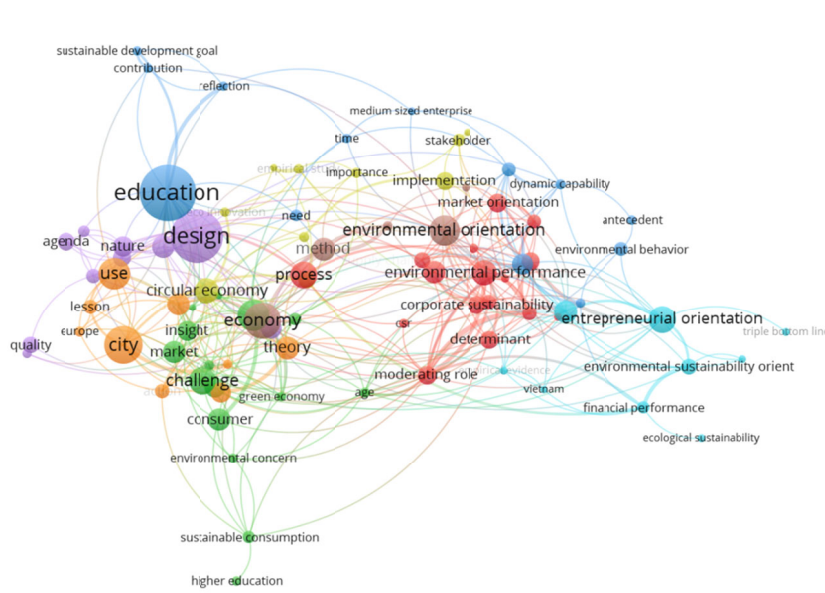


Fig. 1. Keyword co-occurrence in the analysed articles with criterion of at least seven occurrences.

Source: constructed by the author by usage of VOSviewer.

The VOSviewer’s settings were modified to group keywords into separate clusters based on their co-occurrence relationships. Subsequently, the clusters displayed on the network maps from various periods were compared and analysed in relation to each other. Overall, the 78 items were grouped into eight clusters. The map demonstrates a diverse yet interconnected landscape of research that focuses on green business practices. Multiple clusters are indicated, which delineates that research field has developed in various dimensions. Indication of clusters suggests that integrated approaches in future research could

potentially lead to more effective application of green business practices.

In addition, the network analysis using the VOSviewer tool was performed by setting a criterion of at least 16 occurrences across a sample of all related articles per keyword. Additional filters included the most cited and only the English language. To find the articles, keyword search such as “Green business negotiations” or “business negotiations” along with the keywords “Negotiating”, “Bargaining”, “Context”, “Complexity”, “Issues”, “Tasks”, “Contracts”, and “Value chains” were used. The results are shown in Figure 2.

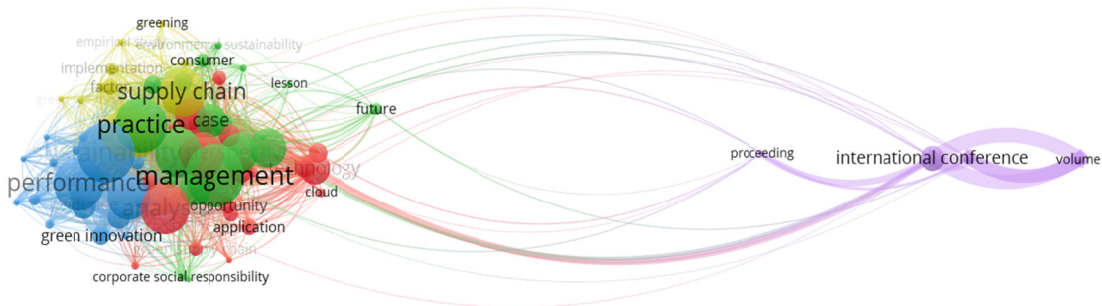


Fig. 2. Keyword co-occurrence in the analysed articles with criterion of at least 16 occurrences.

Source: constructed by the author by usage of VOSviewer.

The VOSviewer tool and settings were adjusted to categorise the keyword clusters based on their co-occurrence associations. Subsequently, the clusters represented on the network maps across different periods were juxtaposed and analysed with each other (Du et al., 2021). Overall, there were 78 items grouped into five main clusters. The limited number of clusters could indicate a relatively straightforward structure in the current literature, indicating initial explorations of intersections rather than a highly complex system of interconnected ideas. Network maps do not reveal a clear link between negotiation and green business transition research. Although distinct theoretical models of negotiation and negotiation algorithms have been presented in the literature, they fail to

establish cohesive research streams that can be categorised.

On the other hand, such components within the identified clusters as supply chain management and organisational context suggest negotiation topics in research devoted to green business. Based on that, it is assumed that while negotiation frameworks and green business transition (GBT) concepts exist independently in the literature, further exploration is necessary to fully understand their interconnections and implications for effective green business practices.

As indicated above, the current study provides a descriptive formulation of the GBN. These descriptions are presented in Table 1. After this structuring, a unique element that forms the specifics of GBN was identified.

Table 1. Descriptions of green business negotiations.

No	Description	Specific element	Authors	Publication year
1.	The negotiation problem in green business negotiations is focused on balance of resource efficiency factors and environmental impacts, aiming to maximize utilization of resources, minimize negative environmental impact, and optimize the coordination among economic and social benefits.	Specific negotiation problem	Wei, D.	2020
2.	Negotiation on the greenness of the supply chain, the price of green products, the demand and environmental preference of each consumer, total consumer demand, and the amount of government subsidy.	Green supply chain management negotiations	Wei, D.	2020
3.	Negotiation of business deals having at least one green aspect (or criteria) to be negotiated.	Green business criteria	Causil, O. M. M., & Morais, D. C.	2023
4.	Green contracts legally binding terms for implementing green business practices. They might cover environmental performance of parties and benefits of improved environmental performance, cost savings and cost of implementing sustainable business practices, legal compliance, economic benefit.	Green contract terms	Teymourifar, A., & Trindade, M. A. M.	2023

From the descriptions presented in Table 1, it is clear that the specifics of GBN, as currently defined in the scientific literature, are determined by such constitutes as a specific negotiation problem that contains green business criteria to be negotiated. GBN is mainly present in the management of green supply chains. Green contract terms facilitate the practical implementation of green

business transition. Existing research that unites green business transition and business negotiation as research objects strongly supports the statement that the general negotiation structure and process relates to GBN; based on a literature review, the main tasks and specifics of GBN criteria were incorporated according to Barber's Negotiation Phase Model (Barber, 2018).

Table 2. Negotiation phase model and green business negotiations.

No.	Phase title	Participants	Main tasks	Specifics
1.	Preparatory phase	Company's executives, negotiators	Information gathering on interests and BATNAS, identification of a negotiation problem, goal setting, agenda development, negotiation planning, formation of a negotiation team.	Are green business criteria added to negotiation goals?
2.	Pre-negotiation phase	Negotiators	Information gathering by direct interaction with opposing party.	Should green business criteria be negotiated?
3.	Bargaining phase	Negotiators	Joint decision making with opposing party.	To what extent green business criteria are considered in the solution for negotiation problem?
4.	Contract negotiation phase	Company's executives, negotiators	Setting of mutually acceptable legally binding terms of negotiation outcomes.	How negotiated green business criteria should be transposed into legally binding terms?
5.	Implementation phase	Company's executives, negotiators	Materialization of negotiation outcomes.	To what extent green business criteria should be negotiated?
6.	Ex-post phase	Company's executives, negotiators	Information gathering as systematization, reflection.	How sustainability criteria should be modified to support sustainability strategy of the company more effectively?

Considering that Barber's Negotiation Phase Model presents the lifecycle of negotiation activities while indicating the boundaries or decision gates of each stage along with outputs, artefacts, and the roles of key actors, it becomes evident that the tasks and specifics of Green Business Negotiation (GBN) are present throughout all phases of the negotiation lifecycle. This framework facilitates the understanding of GBN and identifies the importance of including environmental factors at each stage of the negotiation process. Therefore, it is equally important to consider green criteria and their adherence during green business negotiations to promote more sustainable business practices.

5. Conclusions.

Green business transition for businesses is a process of transformation guided by companies' sustainability strategies. This study justifies the necessity for a consolidated definition of GBN and a framework for GBN specifics that differentiates them from business negotiations.

Network maps of keyword searches do not reveal a clear link between negotiation and green business transition research. The management's understanding of environmental issues, their environmental focus, stakeholder pressure, corporate culture and green business capabilities play a significant role in the success of the green business transition process.

It is recommended that the general negotiation structure and process be consistent with green business transition to successfully use negotiations for GBT and identify its features. The framework that integrates green business negotiation specifics into the Negotiation Phase model provides a nuanced understanding of green business negotiations, highlighting the importance of integrating environmental considerations at each stage of the negotiation process.

By recognizing green business negotiations' distinct characteristics and requirements, practitioners can enhance their strategies and outcomes, ultimately fostering more sustainable business practices.

Considering traditional negotiation objects (prices, quality, and delivery time), monetary interests might be identified as primary opposing interests when negotiating contracts facilitating green business transitions. Moreover, negotiations in the form of bargaining over prices and costs may dominate. Environmental licencing and labelling are the ultimate preconditions in green contracts.

Therefore, in real-world negotiations, GBN specifics should be apparent in the negotiation problem, but the problem's extent depends on the negotiating parties' desired outcomes. Green supply chain management has attracted significant research attention in the context of green business transformation. Green supply chain practices include green procurement, green operations, and green logistics that are good for business and important for the environment.

This study contributes to decision-making by providing a framework that helps differentiate GBN from traditional business negotiations, thereby providing practitioners with a tool to use negotiations for green business transition effectively. By integrating environmental considerations into each stage of the negotiation process, the results offer practical insights that improve negotiation outcomes.

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