

**Project Group (Number and Name): 49 – Circular entrepreneurs for a circular society**

**Comment**

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**Comment:**

Group 49 Critical Comment - Tom as a circular entrepreneur:

We see it everyday - in the news and on the street. Waste. Too much waste. Waste from our consumption. From our linear economic system. From cradle to grave. Every product is created to be wasted and thrown away one day. How can that be sustainable? We don't have to see the huge amounts of plastic polluting the oceans and the dwindling of fossil resources to realise that we can't continue like this forever. But what can be done? How can we break away from this self-destructive spiral?

This comment considers the circular economy (CE) as a possible answer to the crisis of our economic system. CE describes a regenerative system in which inputs and waste are minimised. Drawing on the perfect example provided by nature, the vision for CE is a symbiosis of sharing, recycling and repairing existing materials and products indefinitely. Decoupling economic growth from natural resource use should be a priority at this critical point in history. Disruptive innovation is central for developing sustainable systems through the alteration of accepted production processes and consumption behaviours. Research has revealed<sup>1,2</sup> that changing social values, behaviours and norms is key to enabling sustainable reconstruction of the economy.

The establishment of models of CE in our society faces many challenges. This comment will focus, in particular, on the necessity of behaviour change across all strata of society. The environmental impact of non-circular products is common knowledge but numerous studies show that behaviour doesn't necessarily align with values. This is called the value-action-gap<sup>3</sup>. People need to change their personal choices in the long term in order to change the system towards CE. The question is how to change mindsets?

Early years are most crucial for developing attitudes and setting behaviours. Sustainability education could play an important role in facilitating the transition to CE. There are additional possibilities to infiltrate our current system using financial incentives. The government could subsidise products that last longer and can be recycled. If such measures are realised, people will change their behaviour.

Even without these measures, each person can decide to change their habits. Meadows' model of leverage points for system change shows that personal leverage points act as the most significant levers of change in society<sup>4</sup>. It is important for each of us to discuss circular thinking, question our decisions and values, be the example and influence others in the right direction. More interest and financial support for this subject, would enable researchers to develop new products that have a higher quality to last longer and that are recyclable. Because the circular economy is based on both: reducing consumption and reusing the material we have.

We conclude that the question of who should start this transition is not black or white. Transformation needs everyone. From the individual to the big enterprise. The change must start somewhere and why shouldn't it start with you? Is the system we have right now really the one you want to leave to the next generation? All the pollution, just because we were too passive to make change. You are not alone, there are many start-ups and initiatives that already exist and create pressure on the system. You can buy second hand, repair, reuse and so much more. So what are we waiting for?

#### References:

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/economy/20151201STO05603/circular-economy-definition-importance-and-benefits> -European Parliament (created: 02-12-2015, last updated: 26-04-2022)

<sup>2</sup> Sehnem, S., Provensi, T., da Silva, T. H. H., & Pereira, S. C. F. (2022) 'Disruptive innovation and circularity in start-ups: A path to sustainable development,' *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 31(4), 1292–1307. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bse.2955>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00167487.2006.12094149?cookieSet=1>

<sup>4</sup> Meadows, D. H. (1999) "Leverage Points: Places to Intervene in a System," The Sustainability Institute.

## Video Information

**Title of the Video:** 049\_TomAsACircularEntrepreneur

**Authors of the Video:** Alina Reize, Geeske Dierken, Lara Penzel, Leni von Creytz, Leonie Schwarz, Marleen Nehls

**Music:** *music by Johanna Schoele (cover of the original Tom und das Erdbeermarmeladenbrot mit Honig score)*

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(13.10.2022)

<http://www.zeichentrickserien.de/tom-und-das-erdbeermarmeladebrot-mit-honig.htm>  
(13.10.2022)