

Project Group (51 Circular Entrepreneurs for a circular society):

Comment

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Comment: A Critical Comment Regarding the Circular Society

To continue living on this planet, we as humans must rapidly transition towards a sustainable system of living, which includes everyone inhabiting the earth. With a finite amount of resources available to us, the current linear mode of production is impossible to uphold for much longer. We must therefore consider approaches that are both circular as well as inclusive. Traditional circular economies often lead to closed systems, in which sustainability is based on the exploitation of groups and communities outside the closed loop. The idea of a circular society includes these groups, as well as their skills and approaches toward a future in which all humans can survive and thrive for generations to come. In the pursuit of this goal, several challenges may arise, which all require adequate and permanent solutions. These solutions have to be approached from multiple angles, including our personal consumer behaviour as well as the behaviour of businesses and political legislation.

The main problem with consumers is often the lack of mindset. Many people find it difficult to overcome the hurdle of consciously doing without. For example, consulting local tailor shops instead of running to the nearest chain fashion store every month or cutting down one's own meat consumption can already move us toward a more circular society.

Another big problem in establishing fair and circular systems is the current profit-oriented mindset, which most big global businesses are built on. These actors must be persuaded into changing their business models, both through potential benefits as well as strong consequences for unfair and unsustainable practices. In the past, we have seen systems that were introduced to monitor business behaviours, which have been cheated or bribed into portraying these enterprises in a better light to cash in bonuses they didn't earn, a process commonly called "greenwashing".

Similar corrupt practices are also a common factor in politics. Through lobbying, politicians are paid off to act in the interests of big companies and enterprises, instead of pursuing goals that would benefit a fair, equal and sustainable society. But even political actors that are in pursuit of these goals often have to make concessions to comply with political pressure from their contemporary policymakers, as well as the constant nagging questions regarding the costs of these policies, both in financial terms as well as the allocation and sourcing of resources.

Solving these issues will require an education that imparts a sustainable mindset, not only in schools but inside homes and other communities as well. Furthermore, pressure must be put on businesses and politicians to work towards the unified goal of a circular society. Businesses need to be observed and monitored closely in all aspects so that unethical and unsustainable practices can be discovered. The systems put in place for this will need to be transparent, so as to avoid greenwashing and similar practices. Politicians must likewise be expected to be transparent, to avoid corruption such as lobbying. These parties will have to work together, to ensure an inclusive approach to solving problems, which considers not just the needs of a few in the short term, but the needs of society in the long term.