



Circulus

Opportunities and challenges of transition to a sustainable circular bio-economy
Newsletter n°7, September 2021



Greetings from Circulus!

The circular economy is a longstanding concept that only found its way into public policy a few years ago. Since then, it attracted a lot of attention from politics, industry and research alike. Nevertheless, its efforts have mainly concentrated around technological improvements while insights on political, social, ecological and ethical aspects are only emerging. To foster these developments, Circulus aims to drive research and discussions towards an environmentally sustainable and socially just understanding of the circular economy. Our community effort research and panels at various international conferences are examples of our work. Enjoy reading!



Happy Birthday!

This summer, the **Circulus** project has celebrated its **5th anniversary** and we are happy to announce that the project has been extended until February 2022. These final months will be characterized by synthesizing the main findings as well as sharing and discussing our insights with the wider public. Stay tuned!

Lessons, narratives and research directions for a sustainable circular economy

As announced in the newsletter #5 of September 2020, Circulus has initiated a community effort on a CE research agenda. Here is a summary of our main insights:

The circular economy (CE) is not only a buzzword, it also offers a unique opportunity to advance the impact of research on sustainability transitions. At the same time, the rapidly growing CE scholarship produces partly opposing assessments of its potential benefits, which can hinder progress. Our paper therefore synthesizes diverse interpretations of the circular economy by 54 key scholars and offers research directions for a sustainable CE. We identify three scholarly narratives, which underpin the ambiguity in CE assessments:

1. Optimist: the circular economy will move us towards sustainability
2. Reformist: the circular economy may move us towards sustainability if we create the right conditions
3. Skeptical: the circular economy may be counterproductive for sustainability

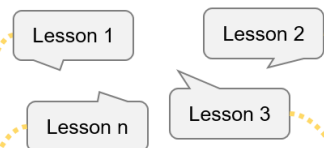
Furthermore, we highlight three research needs that may develop CE scholarship and policy, being the articulation and discussion of ontologically distinct CE narratives; the bridging of technical, managerial, socio-economic, environmental and political perspectives on the CE; and the critical assessment of opportunities and limits of CE

science-policy interactions. Our findings offer practical guidance for scholars to engage reflexively with the rapid expansion of CE knowledge, identify and pursue high-impact research directions, and communicate more effectively with practitioners and policymakers.

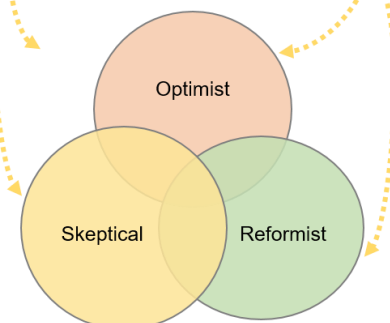
Scholars formulate



Policy-relevant lessons



Narratives



You can read the full paper here:

<https://www.researchsquare.com/article/rs-429660/v1>

Find us on:



Medium



A summer full of conferences

With several conferences postponed from 2020 to 2021, this summer was full of Circulus panels on various virtual international conferences. Our colleagues Anran Luo and Machteld Simoens also presented their ongoing research in the various panels:

13th Interpretative Policy Analysis Conference

(June 28th – July 2nd, 2021)

with a panel on *Environmental (Policy) Discourse Analysis: Novel Approaches, Methods, Topics*.

We organized two well-visited sessions with vibrant discussions on the role of discourses and narratives in environmental policy and sustainability transitions.

5th International Conference on Public Policy

(July 5th – 9th, 2021)

with a panel on *a socially just and ecologically sustainable circular economy*.

We divided the contributions between “concepts & principles” at the one hand, with more conceptual insights, and “politics & practice” at the other hand with empirical works, both covering social and environmental aspects of the circular economy.

26th World Congress of Political Science

(July 10th – July 15th, 2021)

with a panel on *the Circular Economy from a Political Perspective*.

In their contributions, the panelists gave insights on political dynamics regarding the circular economy at various governance levels, evoking interesting discussions and elaborated insights.

New Phd Researcher, Carolina Moreno:

Circular Economy in Latin American Cities.

In Latin America there are emerging efforts to integrate the circular economy concept on policy strategies and planning instruments, but their implementation is at a very early stage. My PhD purpose is to provide a better understanding on how to facilitate a transition towards a circular economy in Latin American cities and generate recommendations for local (primarily municipal) public policies.

Press & Outreach

- **Wieso wir Lebensmittelabfälle vermeiden sollten.**
fudder-Interview with Hanna Helander.
- **Fears prevent successful circular economy.**
Press release on the new publication Simoens & Leipold (2021)
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/mvx5q>
University of Freiburg
- **Lebensmittelverschwendung durch vegetarische Ernährung?**
Interview with Hanna Helander on MDR Wissen.
- **More veg, less dairy. Freiburg researchers have studied how changing their diet could influence the ecological footprint of Germans.**
Press Release about the new publication Helander et al. (2021)
DOI: [10.1088/1748-9326/abe673](https://doi.org/10.1088/1748-9326/abe673)
University of Freiburg

Announcements

1) CIRCULUS ONLINE EVENT:

ABSCHLUSSWORKSHOP 2021

Nov 9 2021 – Praxispartner Workshop (auf Deutsch)
“5 Jahre Circulus Forschung
Erkenntnisse und Zukunftsperspektiven“

FINAL WORKSHOP 2021

Nov 10 2021 – Scholar Workshop (in English)
“5 years of Circulus research
Lessons learned and future directions“

for more information and registration please contact:
vera.marx@transition.uni-freiburg.de

2) CIRCULUS FINAL PROJECT REPORT 2021

**Reaching a Sustainable Circular Bioeconomy
Challenges and Opportunities for Research and
Practice**

will be published soon

Check our blog on medium

Circular economy stories

