

## [Call for Papers “Social and Cultural Aspects of Circular Economy”](#)

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Call for Papers

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### **Call for Papers**

#### **“Social and Cultural Aspects of Circular Economy”**

Circular economy is a relatively new concept within the frame of sustainable development, despite having received significant attention within the scientific community. The world’s most populous country, China enacted a law to transform its economy based on principles of circular economy. The circular economy concept, however, has been criticized to be one-dimensional, lacking social and cultural aspects. In this project we aim to integrate culture, society and circular economy.

#### **Background**

Until the second half of the twentieth century the great majority of people even in the most developed countries could not afford to discard household items until they were worn out. At that time most people had repair and recycle skills: men fixed work tools and furniture, women sewed and reused rags to create new household objects. (Strasser, 1999)

This old, relatively circular system, first opened only gradually, and then in the twentieth century change accelerated to an extreme. As of today, consumer culture has overtaken not only North America and Western Europe but several other regions of the world. The take-make-waste extractive industrial model creates an open system which is characterized by the continual influx of new products designed to be used briefly and then discarded. It is based on the cult of waste, where reparability is unimportant, and disposability is celebrated by the consumers.

It is the consensus of the environmentally focused social sciences community that the current global environmental crisis is one of the most complex challenges humanity is facing currently, and that the shift to a regenerative system in which resource input and waste, emission, and energy leakage are minimised by slowing, closing, and narrowing material and energy loops. (Geissdoerfer, Savaget, Bocken, Hultink, 2016)

Sustainability is based on three pillars: economic, environment and social, and is explicitly focused on human stakeholders, human well-being, and human rights. In 1987 the concept of sustainable development was coined as “development which meets the needs of the present without

compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987).

“The Circular Economy, however, is virtually silent on the social dimension, concentrating on the redesign of manufacturing and service systems to benefit the biosphere. While ecological renewal and survival, and reduction of finite resource use clearly benefits humankind, there is no explicit recognition of the social aspects inherent in other conceptualisations of sustainable development.” (Murray, Keith Skene, Kathryn Haynes, 2015)

### **About the Project**

It is the main goal of this publication project to explore how the concept of circular economy may include social and cultural dimensions beyond the engineering, environmental, and economic aspects. It is our understanding that trash making is not solely a technocratic question and it cannot be detached from human societies and human culture.

Currently we seek contributions of a planned edited volume, which explore the various social and cultural aspects of the shift from the current take-make-waste extractive industrial model to the restorative circular economy concept.

Editors have contacted top academic publishers which found this project promising and have expressed preliminary interest in publishing the outcome as edited volume.

Proposals are welcome from all related STS (Science, technology and society), social sciences, cultural and sustainability studies, as well humanities disciplines, with focus on any area globally, including past, present or future temporalities. Submissions should include a **300 words abstract and short author bio** and should be sent by September 30 to editors [viktor.pal@helsinki.fi](mailto:viktor.pal@helsinki.fi) and [idunmade@mtroyal.ca](mailto:idunmade@mtroyal.ca)

Contributors are expected to present their draft papers at a ZOOM (online) workshop organized by the University of Helsinki Environmental Humanities Hub in January 2020. Final manuscript submissions to book editors are expected in June 2021, with submission to press in September 2021.

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