

Environmental claims and contributions of circular business models

A literature review

Department: Copernicus Institute of Sustainable Development

Research group: Innovation Studies

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Project description

The project: This project aims to reveal the sustainability assumptions made in circular business model literature. The circular economy concept is widely embraced by academics, policy makers and practitioners alike as a way to improve sustainability. Businesses adopt this concept through circular business models that are expected to change the value creation, delivery and capture logic of firms to contribute to resource efficiency. However, the environmental sustainability of circular business models is still discussed and has necessitated assumptions in order to use the concept. These sustainability assumptions are now perpetually repeated in literature and practice but rarely questioned and tested. In this research, through a systematic literature review approach, the assumptions made about the environmental sustainability of circular business models will be identified, and the extent to which they are supported by empirical studies will be assessed. The result will be a critical reflection on the sustainability assumptions and potential of circular business models. This research will add reflexivity to the academic discourse on circular business models. The results will also be valuable for policy makers, sustainability managers and circular economy entrepreneurs. This project is jointly developed by dr. Vivian Tunn, Copernicus Institute and dr. Tomas Santa-Maria, Assistant Professor Circular Economy from Universidad del Desarrollo, Chile.

The activities: The research assistant will be part of a research team exploring the sustainability of circular business models. The tasks will include a systematic review of academic literature and subsequent analysis and clustering of the identified sustainability assumptions. The supervisor will provide a list of literature and a review form to guide this process. The papers need to be read carefully as assumptions about environmental sustainability might be stated implicitly. The supervisor will advise the researcher throughout the process and meetings will be held weekly in the first month and every 2-3 weeks thereafter to discuss preliminary results and adjust the process and focus if necessary.

Covid-19: Covid-19 will not negatively impact the progress of this project. It is up to the research assistant to decide whether working from home or the institute is preferred.

Job requirements

We are looking for a highly motivated student who wants to experience academic work and is keen to reveal sustainability assumptions of circular business models. The applicant should enjoy reading, have a critical and analytical mindset, and the capacity to self-motivate. Very good proficiency in English is required.