

What is the true meaning of circularity? Beverage packaging as a case study

An Open Online Discussion hosted by Brunel University London, Politecnico di Milano, Southern University Denmark and Wageningen Food & Biobased Research

DR ELENI IACOVIDOU

Systems Analysis and Sustainability Expert | Senior Lecturer in Environmental Management | Programme Director MSc Sustainability, Entrepreneurship and Design

Brunel University London



What is circularity?

Circularity is a contested idea

20 October 2023

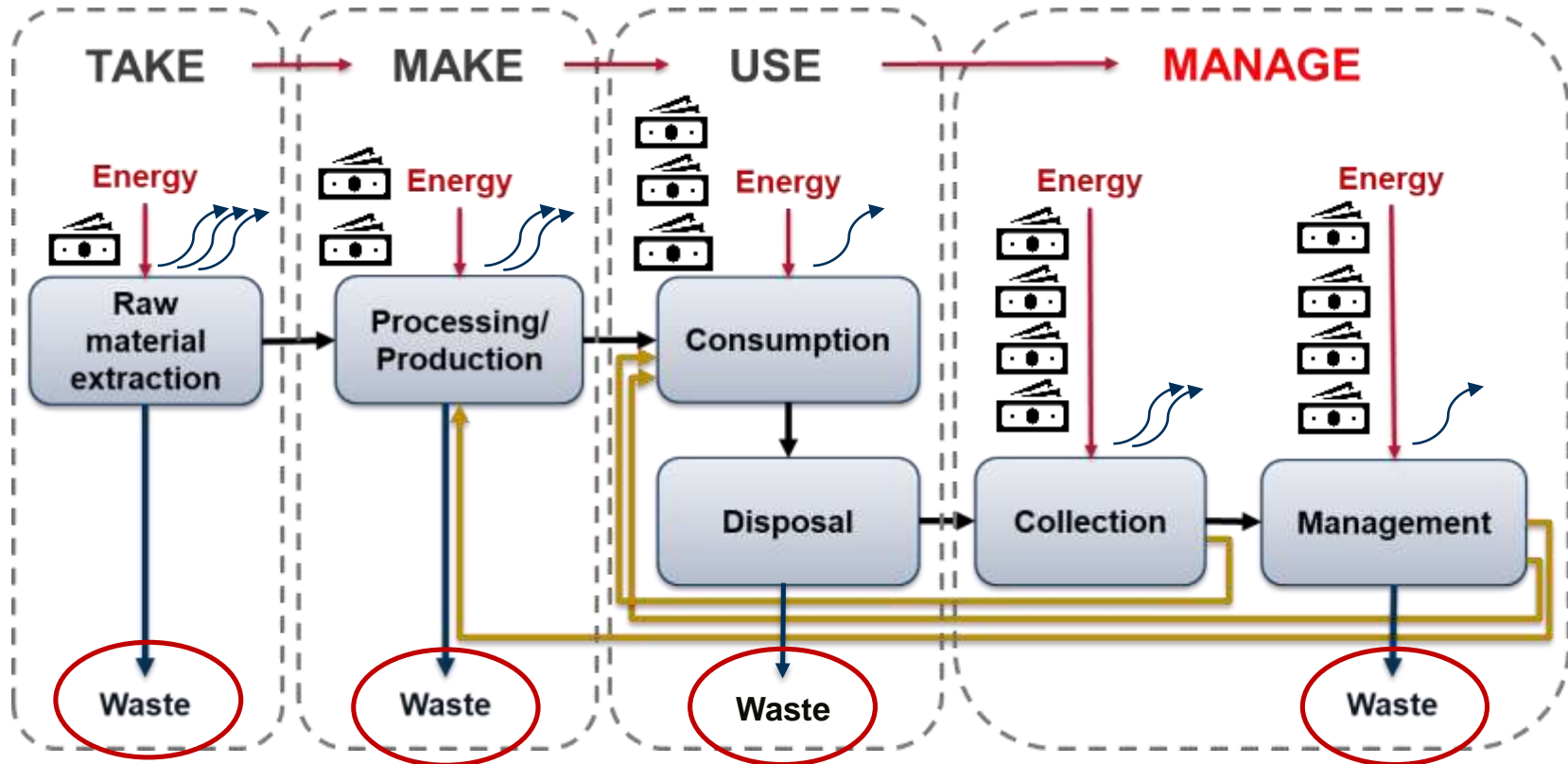
The idea of circularity is complex and ambiguous. Yet, when I think of circularity several words come to my mind: e.g., change, growth, efficiency, innovation, action, impact, natural wealth, and well-being.



Somehow current actions to promote circularity are overly focused on superficial effects, and losing sight of true circular economy goals.

Is there such a thing as meaningful circularity?

20 October 2023

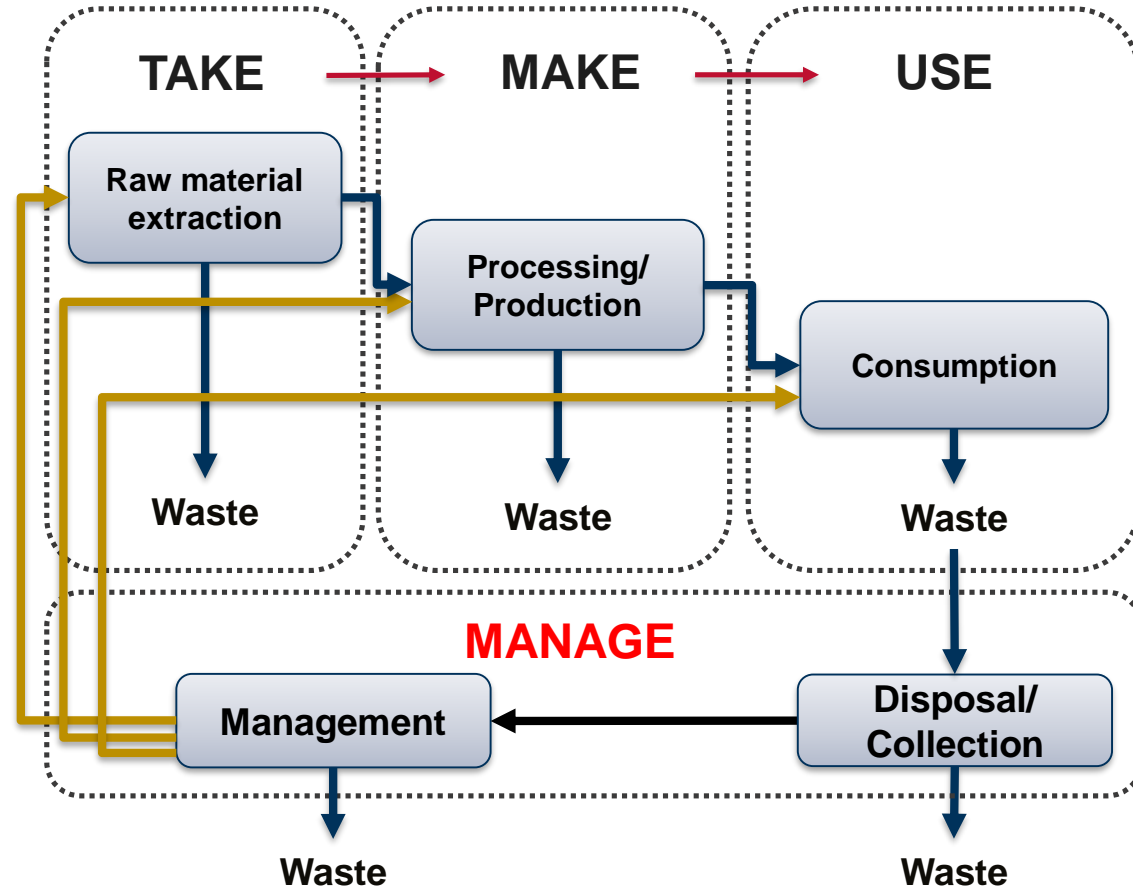


Is there such a thing as meaningful circularity?

20 October 2023

There is no such thing as circular materials, components, and products.

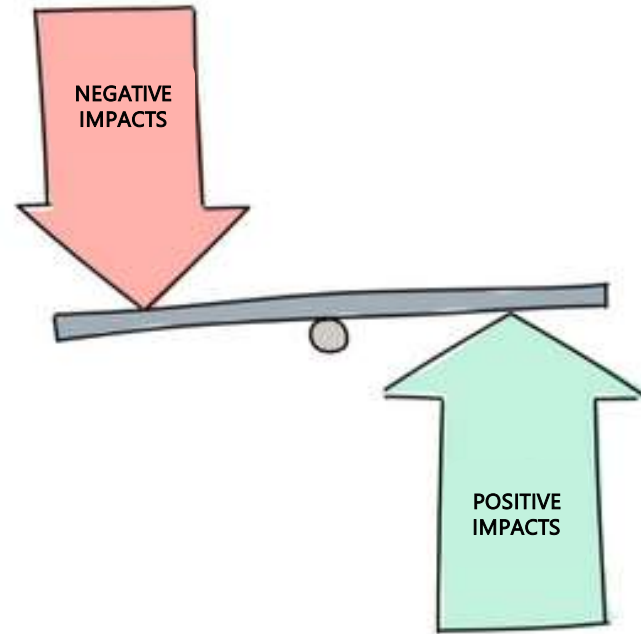
There are only different degrees of circularity or resource efficiency, dependent on **inherent**, **designed**, and **created** attributes and **external variables**.



A meaningful circularity is a sustainable circularity!

Assessment and evaluation can help us choose the course of action that can result in optimal value recovery; i.e., fewer trade-offs and a sustainable cascading of resource value, instead of focusing on the unrealistic perfect circles.

This involves integrated cross-value chain approach that allows appropriate decision-making at different scales (local to global) and system levels (societal, economic and political).



Circularity is a mission

20 October 2023

To accomplish this mission we need a well-calculated plan – executed to perfection.

- Avoid impending risks of cementing policy and infrastructures that may not contribute to true sustainability.
- Develop future technologies that address circularity.
- Help developing regions to keep at pace with current circularity strategies.
- Retain simplicity and inclusivity to help all stakeholders understand the varying levels of circularity of their products.

Using plastic packaging as an example, we deliberate on the following:

“does measuring circularity address its goals?”

“does it cover new technologies and regional specificities?”

“can its goals be addressed with simple assessment approaches?”

