

THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY AS A SOCIAL INNOVATION



SYLLABUS

VU Amsterdam Summer School

6-20 July 2024



Any general questions for the Summer School support team? Contact amsterdamsummerschool@vu.nl.

Course Details

Welcome to this course about the circular economy as a social innovation! This interdisciplinary course teaches about business, policy, and civil society innovations that are necessary to transition to the circular economy. The course features examples from the Netherlands and Europe, as frontrunners in the circular economy. This syllabus will detail various learning activities and assignments to help you learn.

Title	The circular economy as a social innovation
Coordinator(s)	Katinka Quintelier
Other lecturers	Marina Bosman, Wouter Spekkink, Amba van Erkelens, Laura Franco-Garcia
Study credits	3 ECTS
Form(s) of tuition	Lectures & lunch seminars on campus. Workshops & excursions on campus or on location
Approximate contact hours	44
Approximate self-study hours	40

Teaching staff (in order of appearance)



My name is Katinka Quintelier, the coordinator and main lecturer for this course. I am very much looking forward to our time together! As an associate professor in business strategy and ethics at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, I teach and investigate how business can create value for people and the natural environment. It's my pleasure to host you in Amsterdam.



Marina Bosman is a PhD student in circular business models at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and the director of blossoming meadows, a business that contributes to nature inclusive cities in the Netherlands. She will present how her company changed from a start-up into a scale up aiming to transform cities into socially and ecologically healthy areas.



Wouter Spekkink is an assistant professor in governance at Erasmus University Rotterdam. His research focuses primarily on complex governance processes around circularity. He will present novel insights in social innovations for the circular economy, such as repair cafés and how they influence European policy.



Amba van Erkelens is an assistant professor in sustainable entrepreneurship at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Her research focuses on sustainable business models. She will elicit insights in circularity with a walk in the forest, inspired by eco-pedagogical interventions and shinrin-yoku.



Laura Franco-Garcia is an assistant professor in social and environmental sciences at the University of Twente. She worked for the Mexican Environmental Ministry and investigates among other things circular cities, sustainable industrial parks, social and environmental Life Cycle Assessment, and social entrepreneurship.

Course description

The current linear take-make-waste economy negatively impacts the natural and social environment. The circular economy is an alternative that promises ways to regenerate the natural environment. In addition, the circular economy also promises to enhance social justice and it relies on innovative forms of social organizing. However, despite these promises, the social aspects of the circular economy are often overlooked in teaching.

In this active and innovative summer course you will learn what the circular economy is, how it deals with environmental and social problems, and which social innovations are crucial to transition towards a circular economy. We will look at innovations in policy, business, and civil society. This course aims to inspire and empower students to design their own social innovations for the circular economy.

This course is one of the first to focus on the social side of the circular economy. It draws from experiences in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, and Europe, which are among the frontrunners in the circular economy and where social innovations are part of various circular initiatives. The course integrates novel insights on circular social innovations such as Repair Cafés and green cities.

Learning objectives

At the end of this course, you will have acquired knowledge of theory and methods, and research skills, for the circular economy.

Knowledge of theory and methods

- you will know, understand, and explain social (economic, political, cultural, market, regulatory) barriers and enablers of the circular economy
- you will know, understand, and explain the reasons for the transition towards the circular economy
- you will know, understand, and explain the different strategies as methods to enhance material circularity

Research skills

- you will have research skills to reflect on and design your own social innovation for circularity
- you will have research skills to analyze social innovations for circularity

Assignments and Assessment

Format	% grade	Research Skills	Knowledge of theory/methods
1. Knowledge and understanding quizzes	20		X
2. Project: design your own social innovation	40	X	
3. Portfolio: creative communication about the circular economy	40		X

1. Knowledge and understanding quizzes

At the end of both weeks we will do a knowledge quiz to test knowledge and understanding of barriers, enablers, reasons, and strategies of circularity.

2. Project: design your own social innovation for the circular economy

In design workshops, we will help you design your own social innovation for the circular economy.

At the end of the teaching period, you present your project.

Required resources: reading list, learning activities

Deadline: Friday 19 July 2024

3. Portfolio: creative communication about the circular economy

In creative communication workshops, we will help you to explain selected concepts of circularity to a broader audience via various media (writing, video, social media...). After the teaching period, you have another week to finalize your portfolio at your own pace. You submit your portfolio to the teacher.

Required resources: reading list, learning activities

Deadline: Friday 26 July 2024

Provisional reading list

Ellen MacArthur Foundatio 2024. Circular economy introduction. Online resource:

<https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/topics/circular-economy-introduction/overview>

Cramer, J. (2020) How Network Governance Powers the Circular Economy. Ten Guiding Principles for Building a Circular Economy, Based on Dutch Experiences. ISBN 978-90-90-33928-3.

Kirchherr, J., Piscicelli, L., Bour, R., Kostense-Smit, E., Muller, J., Huibrechtse-Truijens, A., & Hekkert, M. (2018). Barriers to the circular economy: Evidence from the European Union (EU). *Ecological economics*, 150, 264-272.

Konietzko, J., Das, A., & Bocken, N. (2023). Towards regenerative business models: A necessary shift?. *Sustainable Production and Consumption*, 38, 372-388.

Quintelier, K., Van Bommel, K., Van Erkelens, A., & Wempe, J. (2023). People at the heart of circularity: A mixed method study about trade-offs, synergies, and strategies related to circular and social organizing. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 387, 135780.

Spekkink, W., Rödl, M., & Charter, M. (2022). Repair Cafés and Precious Plastic as translocal networks for the circular economy. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 380, 135125.

Course Schedule

The scheme below shows the teaching schedule of this course. **Lectures** take place on the VU campus. During most **lunches** you are free, but two lunches are combined with a lunch seminar on the VU campus. **Workshops and excursions** take place on the VU campus or, in a few cases on another (to be decided) location that can be reached by public transport.

	10:00-11:00	11:00-12:00	12:00-13:00	13:00-14:00	14:00-15:00	15:00-16:00
Monday 8 July						
Tuesday 9 July						
Wednesday 10 July						
Thursday 11 July						
Friday 12 July						
Monday 15 July						
Tuesday 16 July						
Wednesday 17 July						
Thursday 18 July						
Friday 19 July						

The details of the course schedule can still change. Themes that can be covered in this course are:

Theme 1: Why circularity? Environmental, social, economic, political reasons for the circular economy

Theme 2: Circularity concepts. Closing, slowing, narrowing the loop, regeneration, and the 10-R framework.

Theme 3: Measuring circularity: circular accounting, environmental and social life cycle assessment, material flow analysis

Theme 4: Circular business: Circular, sustainable and regenerative business models, enterprises, and ecosystems

Theme 5: Circular cities and communities: orchestrating circular and social bottom-up social innovations, communities, and cities

A possible detailed course schedule for week 1 can look like this:

	Time	Format	Content
Week 1	Mo 8 Jul. 10:00-12:00	Lecture	Introduction. Getting to know each other and the course. Theme 1: Why circularity?
	Mo 8 Jul. 12:00-13:00	Lunch Seminar	Lunch seminar on campus: avoiding food waste
	Mo 8 Jul. 13:00-15:00	Workshop	Workshop: choose your own social innovation Theme 1: Why circularity?
	Tu 9 Jul. 10:00-12:00	Lecture	Material circularity Theme 2: Circularity concepts
	Tu 9 Jul. 13:00-16:00	Workshop & Excursion	Workshop and excursion: Shinrin-yoku or walk in the parc Theme 2: circularity concepts
	We 10 Jul. 10:00-12:00	Lecture	Theme 3: Measuring circularity
	Th 11 Jul. 10:00-12:00	Lecture	Theme 4: Circular business
	Th. 11 Jul. 13:00-16:00	Workshop & excursion	Workshop & on campus excursion: Art-Science & the future of business Theme 4: Circular business
	Fr 12 Jul. 10:00-12:00	Lecture	Theme 5: Circular cities and communities
	Fr 12 Jul. 13:00-16:00	Workshop & Quiz	Knowledge and understanding quiz Workshop: Futuring your own social innovation Theme 5: circular cities and communities

A possible detailed course schedule for week 2 can look like this:

	Time	Format	Content
Week 2	Mo 15 Jul. 10:00-12:00	Lecture	Introduction to the doughnut economy and social outcomes of the circular economy <i>Theme 1: Why circularity?</i>
	Mo 15 Jul. 12:00-16:00	Workshop	Workshop: scope of your own social innovation <i>Theme 1: Why circularity?</i>
	Tu 16 Jul. 10:00-12:00	Lecture	Social circularity <i>Theme 2: Circularity concepts</i>
	Tu 16 Jul. 13:00-16:00	Workshop & Excursion	Workshop & Excursion: circular & social enterprise <i>Theme 2: Circularity concepts</i>
	We 17 Jul. 10:00-12:00	Lecture	Measuring the doughnut <i>Theme 3: Measuring circularity</i>
	Th 18 Jul. 10:00-12:00	Lecture	The triple-layered business model canvas tool <i>Theme 4: Circular business</i>
	Th 18 Jul. 13:00-16:00	Workshop	Applying the triple-layered business model canvas tool <i>Theme 4: Circular business</i>
	Fr. 19 Jul. 10:00-12:00	Lecture	The Amsterdam doughnut <i>Theme 5: Circular cities and communities</i>
	Fr. 19 Jul. 12:00-13:00	Lunch Seminar	Lunch seminar on campus: the Amsterdam doughnut
	Fr. 19 Jul. 13:00-15:00	Workshop & Quiz	Knowledge and understanding quiz Workshop: presentations <i>Theme 5: Circular cities and communities</i>

