



Special Session Proposal

Circular economy and regional science: which perspectives?

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Abstract

There is a growing interest in the society to the concept of circular economy. It advocates a loop-shaped economic system. The circular economy is facing the new challenge of producing products and goods. Indeed, it responds to the problem of the continuous decline in natural resources over the past 50 years or so as consumption and the world population have continued to increase. The circular economy is an economic system of trade and production that, at all stages of the product life cycle (goods and services), aims to increase the efficiency of resource use and reduce the impact on the environment while developing the well-being of individuals.

The circular economy can be an opportunity to move towards a new societal model, ecologically more virtuous and socially less unequal, but the road is long and complex. We can therefore wonder how these initiatives reconfigure (or not) the mechanisms and dynamics of local anchoring, inter-territoriality and spatial distribution of activities, but also the governance and the coordination between actors.

Today, local authorities, companies, associations and citizens are developing initiatives based on this new economic model. This is not surprising since the circular economy aims to preserve the natural resources of the environment while limiting waste production and energy consumption, while at the same time contributing to the emergence of activities that cannot be relocated and create jobs.

The circular economy is thus part of a green perspective and responds to environmental, economic and social challenges while drawing inspiration from the functioning of natural ecosystems. However, while the significance of this concept is

increasing, it received very little attention from regional scientists to date. This is unfortunate, because there is a real need for research, both conceptually (the definition of the circular economy is not stabilised and does not have a territorial/regional dimension) and empirically. If anything, the circular economy will have a direct impact on territories since closing the loops explicitly entails physical locations.

In this context, we have identified a need for papers that address the following themes:

- 1) Spatial components of the Circular Economy from a theoretical and analytical perspective.
- (2) Papers that focus on international comparisons between different concepts of circular economy.
- (3) Papers that consider the methods, data and approaches that support research on circular economy would be highly valued as a means to contribute to building common approaches and developing a research community in Regional Studies.
- (4) Papers that address policy issues. Policy-makers are continually searching for instruments that can be implemented to stimulate circular economy activities. How does policy specifically influence elements of circular economy projects and conversely how do elements of circular economy projects influence policy?
- (5) Papers that investigate the territorial governance of these projects: how the different stakeholders of a circular economy project interact and how these interactions develop over time? What kind of proximities are mobilized?
- (6) Papers that examine the temporal dynamics of circular economy projects. How do they develop over time? What are the processes by which these projects develop and change over time? Why do some emerging circular economy projects fail to develop?
- (7) Papers that critique the concept of circular economy and/or propose theoretical and conceptual framework.