

Special Issue Editors 3/2025:

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## **Circular Economy: Transitioning to Sustainable Systems Within Planetary Boundaries**

At a time characterized by unprecedented environmental challenges, the concept of a circular economy epitomizes systemic change with real ecological impact. Due to increasing pressure to act, environmental sustainability has witnessed a surge in visibility within both corporate strategy and communication as well as political agenda setting and discourse. Yet, the magnitude of contemporary human activities in crossing planetary boundaries remains unparalleled. A profound gap persists between awareness, intention, and action, both individually and collectively. We invite scholars and practitioners to contribute to a comprehensive exploration of the transformative potential inherent in the circular economy.

Circular economy defines an alternative economic system that harmonizes socio-economic development with planetary boundaries by aligning value creation and value capturing with effective resource usage (Desing et al., 2020; Kirchherr et al., 2017). The primary goal of circular economy is to reduce the throughput of resources in the industrial metabolism, while simultaneously maintaining material value over time, maximizing resource utilization (Bocken et al., 2016; Centobelli et al., 2020) and restoration (Morseletto, 2020). The implementation of the so-called R-strategies (repair, reuse, refuse, recycle, etc.) fundamentally influence the industrial metabolism and various socio-economic factors such as wages and skills, business models and value propositions, as well as customer behavior and the predominant culture model (Frankenberger et al., 2021; Takacs et al., 2022).

While often ignored, the biophysical limits of the planet remain non-negotiable (Collste et al., 2021; Rockström et al., 2009). However, within the framework of the socio-economic system, the implementation of the circular economy hinges on a thorough examination of predominant mental models, narratives, temporal perspectives, and business purpose. In the tradition of the St. Gallen Management Model, this Special Issue aims to develop a holistic understanding of the necessities that must be in place when implementing circular economy in businesses.

Core issues within both academic and practitioners' spheres that we aim to address with this special issue include, yet are not limited to, the following:

- How does the socio-economic system need to be restructured to enable companies to effectively implement circular economy?
- How could economies measure wealth (e.g. beyond pure economic growth) and create the enabling conditions that reward companies' circular practices and protecting nature?
- What does success mean in the context of the circular economy and how can it be measured? How can companies capture value in a circular economy?
- How should companies manage their businesses in the context of circular economy? How should performance of companies be measured? And how does that influence a company's strategy, its business model and its organizational structures?
- How should companies interact with external stakeholders and how does that influence the success of a transition towards the circular economy? How to design the ecosystem to foster the implementation of a circular economy on an industry level.

- How should companies change their business models to make a circular economy work? Where does the influence of business model innovation begin and where does it end?
- How can prevailing mental models and narratives be reconfigured to align with the principles of the circular economy?
- What challenges do companies face when implementing the circular economy within a business context that still follows a linear path?
- What is needed to successfully transform an organization towards a circular business and operating model?
- How should regulatory frameworks be modified to facilitate the implementation of circular solutions, and what influence does this exert on the design and implementation of business models?

In the light of the holistic and interdisciplinary nature of the circular economy, we would like to invite not only circular economy and management scholars but also scholars from relevant neighboring disciplines such as sociology, philosophy, and psychology to contribute to this special issue.

## Literature

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## ***Timeline***

|                                  |                   |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| Submission of contributions      | November 15, 2024 |
| Feedback on initial submission   | December 15, 2024 |
| Submission of revised manuscript | February 15, 2025 |
| Submission of final manuscript   | May 15, 2025      |
| Publication of special issue     | September 2025    |

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