

TRANSITION SYSTEM PERSPECTIVES ON A CIRCULAR TOURISM ECONOMY

JESPER MANNICHE

CENTRE FOR REGIONAL AND TOURISM RESEARCH/DENMARK

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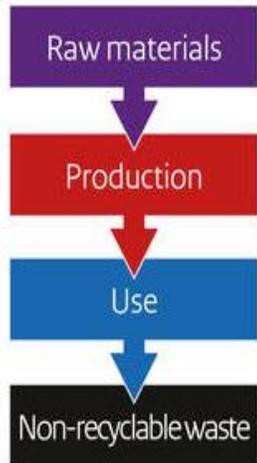
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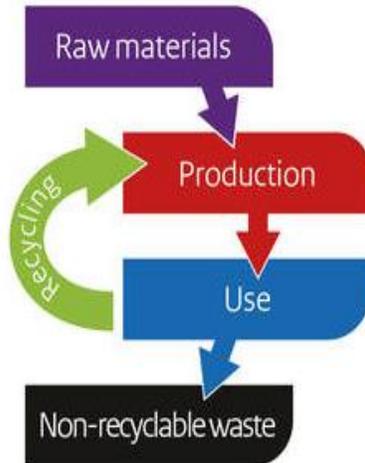
What is the Circular Economy?

From the linear via the sustainable to the circular economy

Linear economy



Reuse economy



Circular economy



Definition of Circular Economy

(Kirchherr et al. (2017):

"A circular economy describes

- an **economic system**
- based on business models which replace the end-of-life concept with *reducing, alternatively reusing, recycling and recovering* materials
- in *production/distribution and consumption*
- thus operating at the *micro-level* (products, companies, consumers), *meso-level* (eco-industrial parks, supply chains), and *macro-level* (city, region, nation and beyond)
- with the aim to accomplish *sustainable development*, which implies creating **environmental quality, economic prosperity and social equity** to the benefit of current and future generations."

THE EMERGING CIRCULAR ECONOMY: A TRANSITION SYSTEM PERSPECTIVE

The circular economy is (maybe) emerging through change processes at multiple levels: **niches**, **regime**, **landscape** (Geels & Schot, 2007).

Currently, the linear economy forms a dominant **socio-technical regime**, sustained by laws, regulation, infrastructures, markets, knowledge, cultural norms etc. ("dynamically stable").

Innovations of circular technologies/solutions are realized in smaller **niches** by networks of actors (social, practice-based learning). Gradually, technological elements become aligned and integrated.

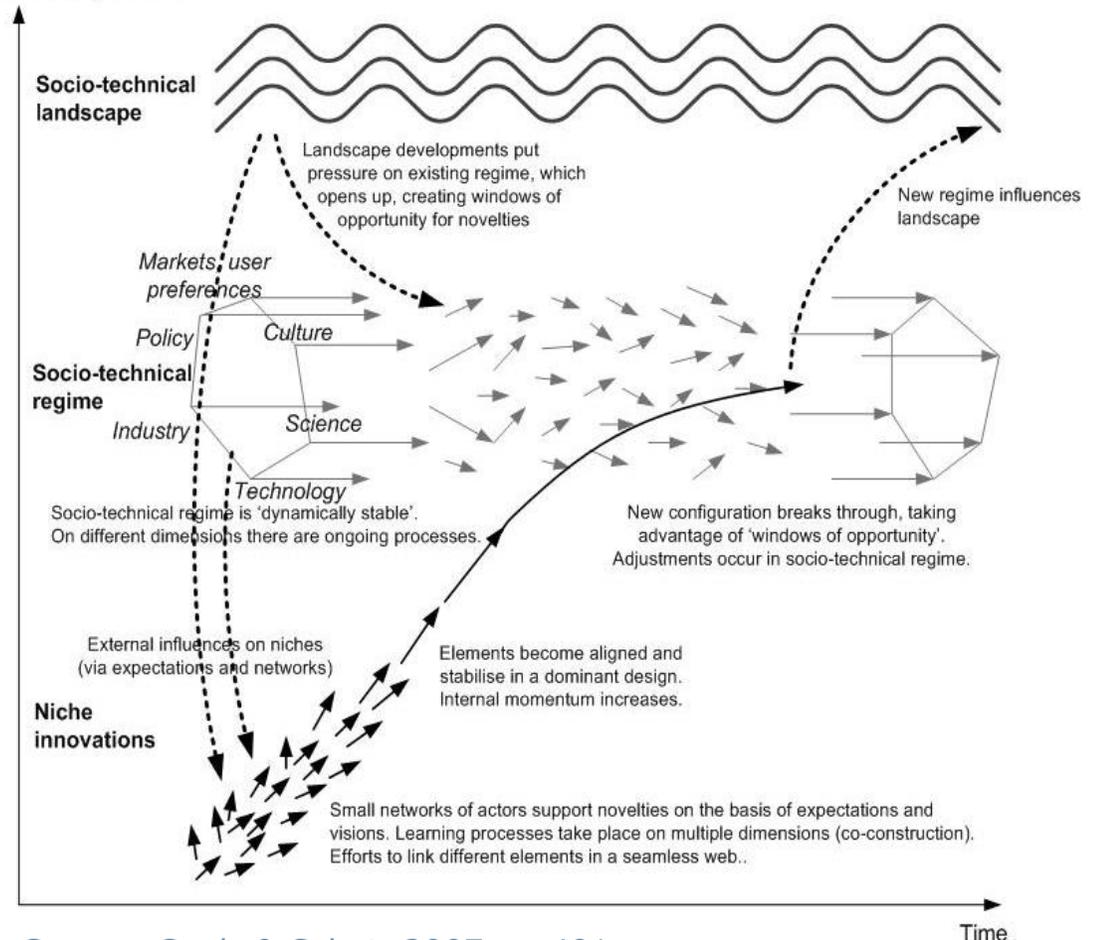
At overall **landscape** level, economic, political, social, environmental developments (e.g. climate change, rising prices of resources, the Paris agreement, globalization, new medias, new consumption patterns) put pressure on the linear regime ("windows of opportunities") and encourage niche-level innovations.

In combination, landscape-level developments and niche-level innovations challenge the linear regime and provoke systemic re-configuration.

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Increasing structuration of activities in local practices



Source: Geels & Schot, 2007, p. 401

THE IMPLICATIONS OF CIRCULAR ECONOMY IN TOURISM

Tourism is a sector with a **bad sustainability reputation** (big CO² footprint due to the traveling element; vast use of energy, water and natural resources; destructive impact on local cultures and communities).

However, tourism has potentials in terms of encouraging transition to a circular, more sustainable economy – at production as well as consumption side

Production side opportunities: saving costs and reducing use of resources:

Tourism businesses such as hotels and restaurants use a lot of natural resources (building materials, energy, water, food, furniture, electric equipment, etc.) and thereby have opportunities of saving costs and reducing use of resources by implementing circular principles (reduce, reuse, recycle) in their operation and supply chains. For examples:

- Energy efficient buildings and electrical equipment
- Water-saving laundry technologies
- Extending the life of furniture, fixtures and equipment through repairing/remanufacturing
- Reducing food waste through new practices (produce on demand, smaller buffet plates, staff awareness, etc.)

THE IMPLICATIONS OF CE IN TOURISM (II)

Production side opportunities: new products/revenue sources:

- Sale/redistribution of food “waste”
- Sale/redistribution of used furniture, mattresses, building materials, fixtures and “bi-products” (remanufacturing and up-cycling)
- Rental of electrical cars and other sustainable means of transportation
- Etc.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF CE IN TOURISM (III)

Compared to other sectors, tourism has special opportunities of encouraging transition towards more **sustainable consumption**, i.e. "**Transformative Tourism**" (UNWTO, 2016).

Tourism is "**Experience Economy**" (Pine & Gilmore, 2007), i.e. co-creation of producers and consumers of intrinsic, memorable experiences.

Tourism relies on an interpersonal **host/guest relationship**, which gives opportunities for 'deep', value-based interaction and for influencing the way guests think and behave not just during but also after their holiday.

The Sharing Economy:

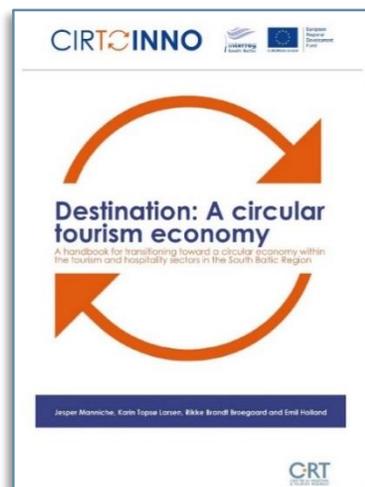
As tourists, we carry very little with us, let ourselves immerse in new surroundings and socio-technical setups, and use the properties of other people, e.g. a room and a bed to sleep in. This means that tourism has the capacity to experiment with the way daily life is organized. It presents an opportunity for tourists to enter into "**Living Labs**", in which they can experience, play with and radically re-think the organization of daily life. This is not only interesting from a societal perspective, but represents a market opportunity for tourism businesses and tourism destination organizations.

SUMMING UP:

A **multi-level transition system perspective** is needed in order to understand the open-ended social dynamics through which a new Circular Economy regime (maybe) emerges. Overall “landscape” developments and technological innovations in “niches” put pressure on the prevailing linear “regime” and provoke systemic re-configuration.

Tourism has potentials for encouraging transition to a circular economy, especially regarding the consumption side. The term **“Transformative Tourism”** (UNWTO, 2016) refers to the opportunities of exploiting the host/guest relationship for creating **“Living Labs”** in which tourists experience, play with and radically re-think the organization of their daily life.

Thank you for your attention!



Jesper Manniche
Senior Researcher
manniche@crt.dk
www.crt.dk

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