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ASSOCIATION
OF CITIES
AND REGIONS
FOR RECYCLING
AND SUSTAINABLE
RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT

ACR+ 20th anniversary

ACR+ NEW VISION

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ACR+ New vision

1. THE “MULTI-R” APPROACH AND THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY CONCEPT

As mentioned above, since its creation, ACR+ has expressed its willingness to implement a waste management hierarchy and seeks first to prevent waste generation then to promote reuse and recycling prior to energy recovery.

By changing its name, in the early 2000s, to Association of Cities and Regions for Recycling and Sustainable Resource Management, with the abbreviation ACR+, the association further emphasised the need for action at all levels of the waste hierarchy. This holistic approach can be broken down to several levels and can be illustrated with the different “R” concepts.

At European level, beside the promotion of a recycling society with its waste hierarchy and a roadmap for resource efficiency, the concept of circular economy is increasingly becoming a major potential source of solutions to the current systemic crisis.

In our opinion, circular economy is a good concept that is defined as follows:

Economy in opposition to the linear economy (which follows the pattern: “exploit resources-produce-consume-discard”)

Economy inspired by the functioning of the natural ecosystem, in which nothing is lost, and everything is transformed

Economy integrating “life cycle thinking” at every stage of the “resource-product-waste” cycle, and aiming to limit resource depletion and minimise pollution

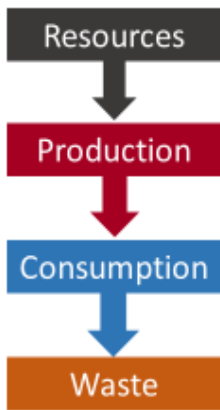
Economy based on loop management of “stocks” likely to contribute to local employment

Economy respecting the “Reduce, Reuse, Recycle” hierarchy

This “multi-R” approach helps structure the circular economy as illustrated in the following diagrams:

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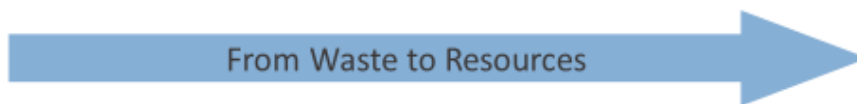
Linear economy



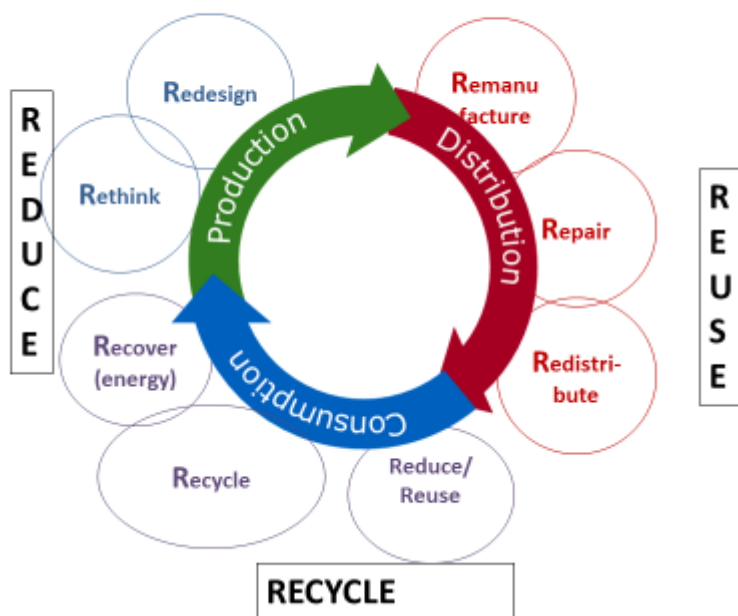
Chain economy



Circular economy



multi-R approach



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“Waste prevention” and its corollary “sustainable consumption” have been, and remain, the priority, and are the first step in the waste hierarchy:



2. THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY SHOULD INTEGRATE A TERRITORIAL HIERARCHY

The circular economy must be combined with the development of territorial economies. Indeed, it should be noted that if territoriality encompasses many levels, it must first result in short circuit actions: the circular economy will only grow properly if it starts in a district then spreads to the municipality, then the city or metropolis and regional level, before extending to the national and international level.

This does not mean that we advocate fully autonomous local and regional entities, but Cities and Regions taking responsibility for the rational and efficient use of their own resources while coordinating between each other.



3. CONSUMPTION HAS TO INFLUENCE PRODUCTION, NEW BUSINESS MODELS HAVE TO BE CREATED

The concept of circular economy can be viewed from a production or consumption perspective. Both of these perspectives – with all the related economic corollaries – have to be rethought to integrate the logic of alternative business models.

From our standpoint, if we aim for a real and lasting solution to the current systemic crises (environmental, socio-economic, financial, etc.), it is obvious that the circular economy should be imbued with a collaborative economy and boosted by innovative business models as illustrated below.



4. PUBLIC AUTHORITIES HAVE A KEY ROLE TO PLAY

The proper role of government is precisely to ensure that lifestyle and consumption changes determine production.

Consequently, it is the governments' responsibility to set and therefore review and correct the framework within which the circular economy will flourish. It is especially up to regional authorities to plan towards a circular economy: indeed, it is at this level that a large number of natural resources can be subject to controlled and looped management.

Even if we are certain that the main drivers are LRAs, we firmly believe in the major importance of the inter- and supra-regional level.

5. CIRCULAR ECONOMY IMPLIES SHARED GOVERNANCE

Proper development, including planning or implementation, of a circular economy strategy requires the involvement of many stakeholders throughout the product life cycle.

The key is to organise the participation of mine operators as well as product developers, manufacturers, distributors, consumers, end of life product managers and of course those involved in reuse and recycling activities and all the relevant non-governmental organisations.

The process of developing a circular economy must therefore largely be "bottom-up" as well as "top-down".

6. ALL POLICY INSTRUMENTS SHOULD BE DEVELOPED IN FAVOUR OF A CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Any circular economy strategy should include the involvement of all available policy instruments and lead to the creation of new ones. However, it goes without saying that the possibilities of using these instruments varies depending on the level of government and across countries.

As ACR+ members are mainly active at local or regional level, the main instruments are participating in international networks focused on regional and/or local circular economy planning, reassessing current regulations, reviewing existing legal and economic instruments (taxes, subsidies, public procurement, etc.) and existing regional plans for circular economy development, evolving from waste planning towards “material” planning.