

Call for contributions for an edited book entitled

**Stakeholder Engagement in a Sustainable Circular Economy:
Theoretical, methodological and practical perspectives.**

Editors:

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Overview of the book

The purpose of this edited collection is to discuss the role and importance of stakeholder engagement in a sustainable circular economy from multiple theoretical and methodological perspectives. A sustainable circular economy is a pathway to a more environmentally friendly and socially inclusive society. In addition to redesigning products and business models to minimize waste and increase the reuse of materials, the transition towards a sustainable circular economy requires collaboration and co-operation of various stakeholders at different fields of the society.

This edited book provides an in-depth, research-based overview of how stakeholder engagement can catalyze the transition towards a sustainable circular economy and how stakeholder interaction and engagement can foster and support sustainable change. It provides an up-to-date discussion of practical, theoretical and methodological advances on stakeholder engagement in advancing a circular economy. The edited book is part of the Circular Economy Catalysts: From Innovation to Business Ecosystems (CICAT2025) research consortium funded by the Strategic Research Council at the Academy of Finland (cicat2025.fi).

Research background

Developing a circular economy is considered one of the most relevant solutions to major contemporary socio-economic and environmental sustainability challenges, such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and resource depletion (Geissdoerfer et al., 2017; Ghisellini et al., 2016; Lieder & Rashid, 2016). The central objective of the circular economy is to conserve natural resources and use materials efficiently and sustainably, while achieving balance and harmony between the economy, the environment, and society (Ghisellini et al., 2016; Korhonen et al., 2018).

A circular economy can be described as an economic “industrial system that is restorative or regenerative by intention and design” (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2013, p. 8). Geissdoerfer et al. (2017) expanded this definition, describing the model as a “regenerative system in which resource input and waste, emission, and energy leakage are minimized by slowing, closing, and narrowing material and energy loops. This can be achieved through long-lasting design, maintenance, repair, reuse, remanufacturing, refurbishing, and recycling” (ibid., p. 766). A circular economy requires business-model innovations and transformations on the macro, meso, and micro levels (Lüdeke-Freund et al., 2019).

In a sustainable circular economy, economic, social, and ecological consequences for different stakeholders should be evaluated and considered contemporaneously and across generations, while staying within the global environmental limits in the long term. A sustainable circular economy is implemented through the actions of state and city governance, companies and other organizations, and citizens; thus its promotion requires comprehensive collaboration across different societal levels. (CICAT2025, 2020.)

While not sufficiently researched, this need for stakeholder engagement has been recognized in the circular economy literature (Bocken et al., 2018; Mishra et al., 2019; Kujala et al., 2019). We refer to stakeholder theory, which defines stakeholders as any group or individual that can affect or be affected by a focal issue, in this case the transition to a circular economy (Freeman 1984; Roloff, 2008). The focus of the book is on stakeholder engagement (Freeman et al., 2017; Kujala & Sachs, 2019), which refers to a variety of practices and processes that organizations and individuals undertake to collaborate, cooperate, and communicate with each other (Greenwood, 2007).

The previous literature has presented a range of findings on stakeholder roles and interests in a circular economy: for example, Kujala et al. (2019) examined the joint sustainability interests of stakeholders; Geissdoerfer et al. (2017) stated that in a circular economy, governments, firms, and NGOs play key role as agents driving systemic change; and, more specifically, Govindan and Hasanagic (2018) highlighted that, when establishing circularity in supply chains, governments play an important part by promoting circularity through laws and policies sympathetic to the goal. However, in order to implement a circular economy on a large scale and initiate systemic change, the support of all stakeholders is of paramount importance (Lieder & Rashid, 2016).

Another pertinent perspective has focused on stakeholder engagement in a circular economy. For instance, Buch et al. (2018) determined that stakeholder engagement is the key for a transition toward a circular economy, and Geissdoerfer et al. (2017) perceived collaboration between stakeholders as imperative to achieving circularity. Bocken et al. (2018) state that in a circular economy, “stakeholders collaborate to maximize the value of products and materials, and contribute to minimizing the depletion of natural resources and create positive societal and environmental impact” (ibid., p. 81), while Mishra et al. (2019) revealed that the involvement of multiple stakeholders leads to a stronger circularity in supply chains in the context of developing countries. Moreover, it has been found that, in addition to individual stakeholders acting as change agents, the processes connected with stakeholder engagement can also provide change agency and act as catalysts in sustainability transitions (Gonzalez-Porras et al., 2021).

While these examples offer interesting insights into circular economy research from a stakeholder perspective, there is a need for more theoretically grounded, methodologically sound, and empirically interesting research on the intersection of stakeholder theory and circular economy thinking. Therefore, we invite interested researchers to contribute to this research-based, edited volume to share their work and findings in the field.

Structure of the book

The book comprises an introduction, three sections, and conclusions incorporating future research avenues. We invite contributions connecting with the following themes: Part I: Theorizing stakeholder engagement in catalyzing a sustainable circular economy; Part II: Processes and practices of stakeholder engagement in a circular economy; and Part III: Methodological advances in stakeholder engagement research in a circular economy. Their prospective content and themes of interest are further elaborated below.

The edited volume includes the following sections:

Introduction (to be written by the editors)

Part I:

Theorizing stakeholder engagement in catalyzing a sustainable circular economy

This section includes articles that aim to further conceptual and theoretical understandings of stakeholder engagement in a circular economy. Contributions analyzing different levels – individual, organizational, societal, global, and systemic – are welcome. The topics of this section can include, but are not limited to the following:

- Broadening the understanding of circular economy stakeholders
- Conceptualizing stakeholder relationships and engagement in the context of a circular economy
- Examining nature as a circular economy stakeholder
- Questions of democratic participation in stakeholder engagement
- Stakeholder value creation
- Sustainability of/in a circular economy
- Sustainable circular economy and sustainable development goals (SDGs)
- Understanding accelerators, catalysts, change, and transition
- Understanding challenges, trade-offs and paradoxes in stakeholder engagement
- Roles and perceptions of stakeholders such as governments and NGOs.

Part II:

Methodological advances in research on stakeholder engagement in a circular economy

This section invites articles with an interest in new and even surprising methodologies as well as in advancing and developing extant methodologies used to study stakeholder engagement in sustainable circular economies. The articles in this section can focus on discussing and developing methodologies commonly used to study stakeholder engagement to invite more thorough, multifaceted and methodologically rigorous studies on the topic. In particular, the section invites articles that discuss how new and surprising methods could be applied to the study of stakeholder engagement in advancing circular economies, and how they might advance the field. The topics can cover, but are not limited to the following:

- Arts-based and creative methods
- Complementarities between stakeholder engagement and other theoretical approaches
- Critical management studies-inspired methods, such as feminist, post-colonial, or other postmodernist studies
- Discourse, rhetoric, and other language-focused methods
- Futures research methods
- Interdisciplinary approaches
- Methods sensitive to aesthetic, bodily and/or kinesthetic ways of knowing

Part III:

Processes and practices of stakeholder engagement in a circular economy

This section includes theoretical and empirical articles examining the processes and practices involved in stakeholder engagement. We especially invite case studies and other empirical examinations of various organizations, institutions, and networks from diverse socio-economic contexts and geographical locations. The topics of this section can cover, but are not limited to the following:

- Circular economy business models
- Learning with and from stakeholders
- Motivation and drivers of stakeholder engagement
- Objectives and aims of stakeholder engagement
- Aims and outcomes of stakeholder engagement (e.g., humanistic vs. eco-centric)
- Pitfalls and barriers to stakeholder engagement
- Stakeholder accounting
- Stakeholder communication, collaboration, and dialogue
- Stakeholder engagement practices
- Stakeholder engagement processes
- Trust in stakeholder relationships
- Value creation in a circular economy
- Challenges, trade-offs and paradoxes related to stakeholder engagement

Conclusions and future research avenues (to be written by the editors)

Guidelines for proposal submission

A max. 1,000 words summary of a proposed chapter should be submitted by **March 15, 2021**. The proposals should be emailed to stakeholderengagement@tuni.fi as a Word document. Proposals should:

- Clearly explain the topic, core objectives and expected contribution of the paper.
- Outline relevant theoretical, empirical and/or methodological perspectives.
- Suggest inclusion in one of the book sections (part I–III).
- Include author(s) contact information, affiliation(s), and a short author bio(s).
- Represent new and unpublished work.

Authors will be notified by April 15, 2021 about the proposal acceptance, including author guidelines for full chapter submission and a detailed timeline for the book publication process. Full chapters are expected to be 8,000 words (including references) and to be submitted by **August 31, 2021**. All submitted chapter will be reviewed on a double-blind review basis and the contributors may be requested to serve as reviewers for this project. The book will be published in 2022.

A conference track will be organized on the same topic at the Nordic Academy of Management August, 25–27, 2021 in Örebro, to enable the book chapter authors to get additional feedback and share thoughts on the topic:

<https://journals.oru.se/NFF2021/article/view/574>.

The deadline for conference abstract is January 30, 2021. More information on the conference: <https://journals.oru.se/NFF2021/issue/view/70>. The review process for the conference is separate from the book publication process, and thus, acceptance to the conference does not guarantee the acceptance of the contribution to the book. While authors are encouraged to use the feedback opportunity at the conference, it is not a requirement for the full paper submission.

The editors of the book are:

Dr. Johanna Kujala is a Professor of Management and Organizations and Vice Dean for Research at the Tampere University, Faculty of Management and Business. She has a Title of Docent in Business Administration (Stakeholder Management and Business Ethics), and she is the director of the RESPMAN Responsible Management Research Group at the Tampere University. Johanna has directed several cross-disciplinary research projects, and currently, she is the PI of the Academy of Finland research project titled B2N Business to Nature: Stakeholder Driven Value Creation in Ecosystem Services, as well as a WP leader in the CICAT2025 Circular Economy Catalysts: From Innovation to Business Ecosystems research project funded by the Strategic Research Council of the Academy of Finland. She has acted as a visiting scholar at the Darden School of Business, University of Virginia in 2013, 2014, 2016, 2018 and 2019, and at the University of Chieti and Pescara, Italy, in 2015 and 2017. Johanna has published 59 scholarly articles in international peer-reviewed journals and volumes, and 14 monographs and edited books. Her current research interests focus on stakeholder engagement and value creation, circular economy and strong sustainability, as well as on case studies on corporate responsibility and sustainability. Her current research interests focus on stakeholder theory and engagement, circular economy and sustainable value-creation, and corporate responsibility and business ethics.

Dr. Anna Heikkinen, Adjunct professor, Senior Lecturer of Management and Organizations, Academic Director of Responsible Business Master's Degree Programme at the Faculty of Management and Business, Tampere University, Finland. She is an internationally well-connected scholar, whose research is primarily in the areas of stakeholder theory and corporate responsibility and sustainability, examining the relationships between business organisations, nature and society. Currently, she conducts research on stakeholder engagement and circular economy in the CICAT2025 research project.

Dr. Annika Blomberg, Post-doctoral Researcher at the Faculty of Management and Business, Tampere University, Finland. She does research on stakeholder engagement in the circular economy in the CICAT2025 Circular Economy Catalysts: From Innovation to Business Ecosystems consortium, funded by the Strategic Research Council at the Academy of Finland. She received her PhD in Management and Organization in 2016 from Turku School of Economics, University of Turku, Pori Unit. She has published in several international journals, such as Journal of Organizational Change Management, Scandinavian Journal of Management and Qualitative Research in Accounting and Management. Her research topics include stakeholder engagement, collaboration, and ethics and she is interested in critical approaches as well as aesthetically sensitive and language-focused methods.

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