



Title of the session

Report by Session host: *Nele Kelchtermans, Wim Van Opstal - VITO*

Further actively involved people/ organisations:

Number of Participants: 12

Short introduction:

What was the topic of the session?

Researchers from VITO presented a seminar within the Circular Cities and Regions Initiative on awareness and capacity barriers in circular initiatives. Using the cases of Roubaix and Hasselt, the seminar highlighted the role of internal and external drivers. In Roubaix, the municipality drove the redevelopment of the Tissel through strategy, resources and networks. In Hasselt, the Recor site redevelopment started as a private initiative but faced limited institutional support. The discussion emphasised that aligning internal and external drivers is essential for a just circular transition that ensures participation, trust and shared benefits.

Participants:

Information about stakeholder groups and countries.

Participants represented a diverse mix of research institutes, public authorities, NGOs and foundations from several countries. Organisations included academic institutions, national and municipal administrations, civil society initiatives and innovation networks. Contexts ranged from local government and policy to research, community initiatives and environmental advocacy across Belgium, Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic, Japan and Nigeria.

Summary:

Agenda and content of the event? Who gave an input? Content of group work?

You can also add pictures, slides, data, etc. here

The session brought together researchers, public authorities, NGOs and practitioners working on circular economy and circular society initiatives. Participants came from a range of organisational contexts including research institutes, municipalities, civil society organisations and environmental initiatives across several countries. The aim of the session was to reflect on awareness barriers in communities and capacity gaps within organisations that affect the implementation of circular economy initiatives, and to discuss how these barriers influence social outcomes.



context in which circular initiatives are implemented, recognising the diversity of actors involved, and developing a shared language that can bridge bottom-up initiatives and top-down policy frameworks.

Specifics from the Session:

e. g. cooperation opportunities, interesting ideas, synergies between participants, projects, organisations?

The seminar created opportunities for exchange between participants working in research, policy, local government and civil society. Several synergies emerged around community engagement, governance of circular hubs and the social dimensions of the circular economy. Participants identified potential cooperation on research into social impacts of circular initiatives, peer learning between cities, and collaboration between academic institutions and community-based organisations to better integrate local knowledge into circular economy projects. The diversity of organisational contexts also opened possibilities for future exchanges on policy design, stakeholder engagement and monitoring social outcomes in circular initiatives.

Key insights of the session:

What are the learnings or key insights of the session?

Key insights from the seminar highlighted the importance of aligning internal and external drivers in circular economy initiatives. Municipal strategies, resources and institutional capacity can act as internal drivers that enable initiatives to scale, while businesses, citizens or developers often act as external drivers that trigger experimentation. When these drivers are disconnected, projects may struggle to build trust, legitimacy or long-term viability. Participants also emphasised that circular initiatives must consider the principles of a just transition, ensuring fair distribution of benefits, meaningful participation in decision-making and recognition of diverse knowledge and practices. Understanding the specific institutional and social context of each initiative is therefore essential for overcoming awareness and capacity barriers.

Links to further information:

Links to websites, presentations, videos, social media of projects, organizations, people or other events

<https://circular-cities-and-regions.ec.europa.eu/>

[https://www.linkedin.com/search/results/all/?keywords=ccri&origin=GLOBAL SEARCH HEADER](https://www.linkedin.com/search/results/all/?keywords=ccri&origin=GLOBAL_SEARCH_HEADER)