

Summary

The world faces an alarming plastic waste problem. Over last decades its' amount has been growing rapidly and constantly, mainly due to single-use plastic products, whereas its' recycling and utilization still leave much to be desired. Despite the undisputable negative effects of plastic on the entire natural environment (both flora and fauna) and public health, the COVID-19 outbreak shifted the public attention away from environmental issues, giving space for extended lobbyism by interest groups and industry to delay or even prevent legislation to combat plastic pollution.

A clear trend reversal towards an informed knowledge co-creation and brokerage across the circular economy model of single-use plastics is ultimately essential in order to develop sustainable solutions to reject the throwaway culture, to stop the waste of natural resources and to reduce the consumption of oil or gas for plastic production.

To this aim, I reconceptualized the circular economy framework in the spirit of communicative constructivism to elaborate further on emerging relational spaces between related stakeholders, the general public and scientists. This dissertation strives to better understand related mechanisms and identify promising communicative constructions supporting societal transitions to reduce plastic consumption. It embraces four publications, each focusing on a distinct communicative construction, namely (1) citizen science, (2) stakeholder interviews, (3) stakeholder focus groups, and (4) scientists survey and focus group. Here, various settings are elaborated, including pre-/post-scenarios to estimate the potential effect of the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, or, similarities and differences in agenda setting behavior.

Investigated communicative constructions thus include scientists, the public, and various stakeholder groups related to the CE flow of SUP. This creates a highly dynamic field of knowledge brokerage and communication in which different interest groups pursue diverse goals. The concept of relational space enables a systemic perspective on involved communicative constructions.