Conceptualizing the Circular Economy: An Analysis of 114 Definitions

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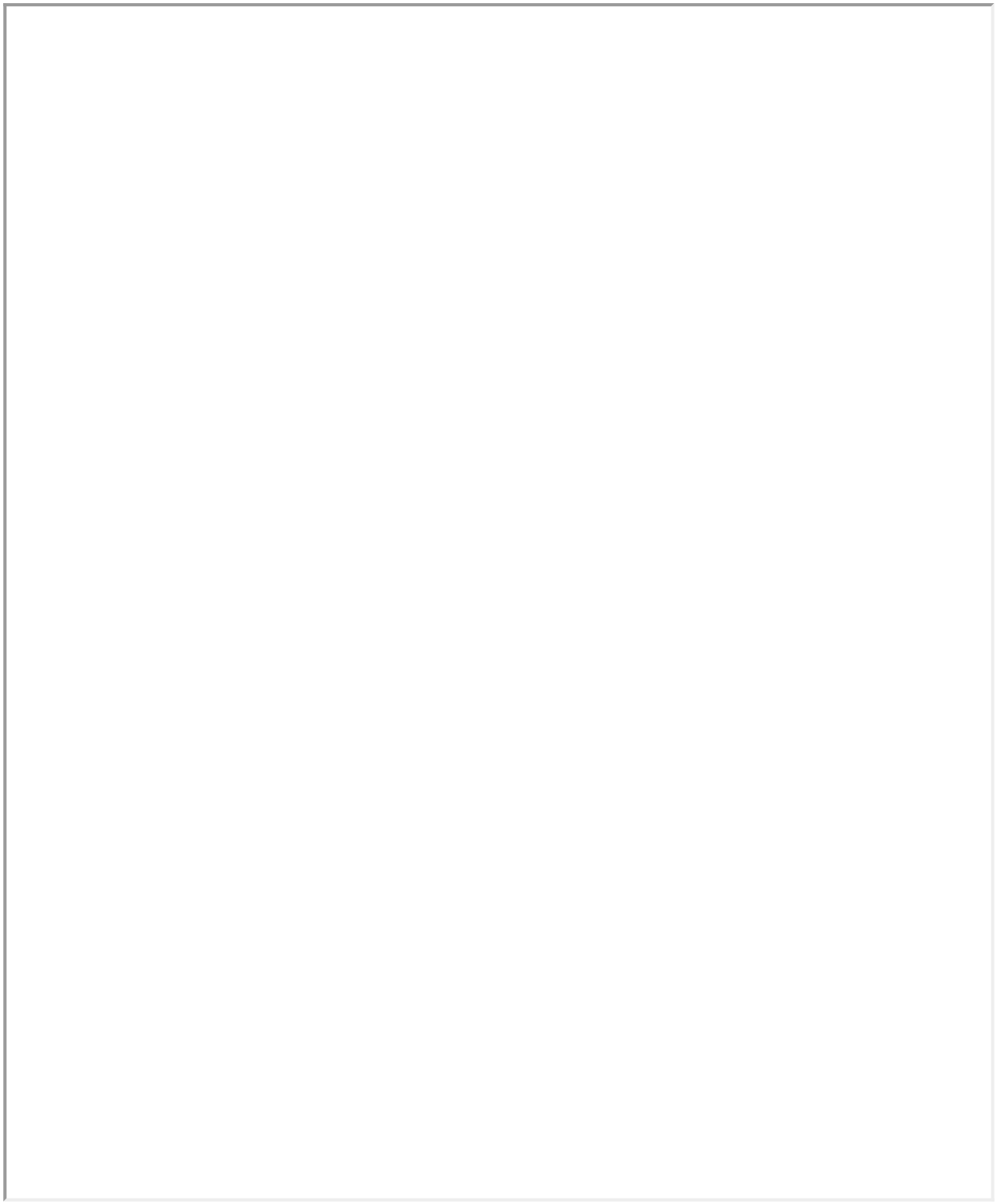
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Why did we select this research?

The circular economy is most frequently depicted as a combination of reduce, reuse and recycle activities, whereas it is oftentimes not highlighted that circular economy necessitates a systemic shift. We further find that the definitions show few explicit linkages of the circular economy concept to sustainable development.

Key findings:

- The circular economy replaces the 'end-of-life ' concept with reducing, alternatively reusing, recycling and recovering materials in production/distribution and consumption processes. It operates at three different levels (micro level: products, companies, consumers; meso level: eco-industrial parks; and macro level: city, region, nation and beyond). The aim to accomplish sustainable development, thus simultaneously creating environmental quality, economic prosperity and social equity, to the bene fit of current and future generations.
- The circular economy must be understood as a fundamental systemic change instead of a bit of twisting of the status quo to ensure its impact.
- More research on the consumer perspective could help to highlight pathways to enhance their contribution to circular economy.



Reference:

Kirchherr, J., Reike, D., & Hekkert, M. (2017). Conceptualizing the circular economy:

An analysis of 114 definitions. *Resources, Conservation and Recycling*, *127*, 221-232.