



## Perspective

## Consumption Corridors as a new paradigm of sustainability

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Reaching a Circular Economy (CE) model of production and consumption has gained the attention of policymakers, business and academia over the past 10 years. The implementation of CE models implies the production of goods and services with low level of environmental impact with the objective of improving the eco-effectiveness of processes. When it comes to its implementation, eco-effectiveness aspires to generate cyclical, *cradle-to-cradle* system of materials aiming at maintaining resources over time generating a positive co-existence of ecological and economic systems (Braungart et al., 2007). Nevertheless, the central role of eco-effectiveness proposed by CE models has been strongly questioned due to its scant ability to tackle the Jevons Paradox (also known as rebound effect) that occurs when, increasing the efficiency of resources use, it ends up with a higher rate of consumption of goods and resources. Calling attention to consumers' role, the theoretical precepts of circular economy have depicted a new image of consumer strongly involved and responsible towards community and its resources; in particular, the transition towards a CE system is strictly depending on consumers' effort in reshaping routinized behavior at different stages of everyday life, such as decision-making at purchase and/or end of life management moments (Georgantzis Garcia et al., 2021). However, at the moment in which CE narrative spring into action and individuals have the chance to perform their task as consumers in the market, the level of effort required to be involved in the process and to modify behavior remain minimal, especially in food domain, making the philosophical castle of circular economy a farse (consumers are asked to respond to CE calls buying products derived from circular processes, buying "green" or local products, or in the best case tacking back products or part of it). In other words, the role of consumers in CE has been actualized mainly in the choice to select and 'accept' products and/or new business models. Therefore, current CE implementation is not capable to promote a concrete resolution of overconsumption issue

and, at the same time, have shown inability in encouraging and driving a new consumer-model that is able to change practices of consumption. The strong need of eradicating the logic of overconsumption and the necessity to carry a new class of consumers are, then, highlighted in recent literature (Bocken and Short, 2020). Among others, lifestyles based on *sufficiency* perspective are recently attracting scholars' interest. Sufficiency purpose the implementation of an economic system that goes beyond the economic growth paradigm (Bocken and Short, 2020) answering the "*what is enough*" question; it does it starting from an individualistic point of view but taking into account both political-economic framework and businesses approaches. Sufficiency is predominantly focused on behavioural changes and materializes in the satisfaction of individuals' needs, not conditioned by marketing/advertising campaigns, with the final goal of offering consumption practices that moderate consumption ("*to do more with less*"). Even though some sufficiency model appears in line with CE principles (e.g. repairing, reusing, or refurbishing), the drastic social changes driven by sufficiency perspective materialize with a proposition of new formulas and combination of social practises derived by institutions, economic factors and, especially, by individual values. In this regard, a specific body of literature based on sufficiency precepts, calls for the need to define limits or threshold of goods possessed and wellbeing reached by each individual, in light of the consideration that, only in this way it is possible to reconfigure the consumption patterns of consumers (Fuchs et al., 2021).

### 1. From sufficiency to consumption corridors

Sufficiency perspective involves a new and deep re-examination of individual moral principles such as the personal values system in the time of environmental crisis. To illustrate, it seems to be evidence of an

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urge to follow the guideline of moral and ethical dimensions of consumption, supporting social and wellbeing standards for all individuals taking into account the planetary boundaries. More specifically, it is recommended that, in the future, the transition towards the achievement of sufficiency models should be devoted to the area of complex concepts that bring together upper and lower limits of resources consumption, also named consumption corridors. They aspire to an overall reduction in consumption (Niessen and Bocken, 2021) describing a space where humanity can have a good life and healthy lives, meeting human needs whilst remaining within the Earth's carrying capacity and without an escalated level of consumption that endangers intergenerational sustainability (Brand-Correa et al., 2020). Consumption corridors might be an operational approach for determining minima and maxima consumption levels. The minima boundaries allow every individual to obtain what he/she really needs (not desires) and to have a life he/she appraises, while the maxima boundaries keep individuals from consuming in quantity or in ways that compromise the ability of the others to do the same and to satisfy their needs. In defining minima and maxima limits, corridors are generated in which individuals make their sustainable choices. The concept of Consumption Corridors provides the condition to develop policies based on justice and diversity (the right to ensure a good life for each individual in the society) (Di Giulio and Defila, 2021). Put differently, the concept of justice is intrinsic in the individual desire to of a good life for all, and materializes in the focus of minima and maxima of consumption. The complexity of applying consumption corridors lays on the difficulty for individuals to receive the concept of limits that is not well accepted in liberal societies.

Further dialogues among scholars should take into consideration how consumption corridors could be explored in different thematic areas. Several aspects are missing in the current scientific debate. Firstly, the definition of human need is not simple; besides, human needs are

pleased by "satisfiers" that differ across time, space and cultures. The theoretical application of the sustainable consumption corridor concept will be strongly depended on the definition and measure of sectorial thresholds; for this reason new narratives that articulate modalities to define and quantify specific upper and lower limits are strongly require. Moreover, consumption corridors offer the spark for a systemic changes in consumption that engage individuals as citizens in the implementation of policies based on justice; for this reason individuals' reaction and acceptability to the Consumption corridors should be investigated distinguishing their approval or disapproval in the role of citizens and/or in their role of consumers.

### Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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