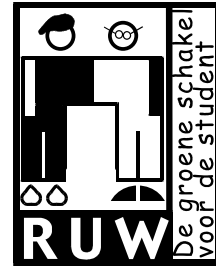


Cradle to Cradle – Discussion evening

Evening of February 13th brought about the second event of Cradle to Cradle cycle organized by RUW. It attracted a wide array of public from different part of the Netherlands – students, university teachers, researchers and representatives of companies.



The evening started with a short cartoon film entitled “Story of Stuff”. The picture took the audience on a journey through all processes “stuff” undergoes before, during and after we buy and use products. People almost never take this globally. All an average consumer sees is shopping and consumption. But what about extraction, production, distribution, disposal? What about the influence on cultures, economies and societies? Environment?

Very often we don’t think about it but it’s us – consumers who are driving force of that huge machine. We decide if to buy a product, which one and in what quantity. Unfortunately nowadays many products are created “to be dumped” – with a short life span encouraging consumers to buy more and more. What follows, more and more waste is produced during whole product life (from extraction of resources to final disposal in a landfill). And because many costs – related to environment, health, society – are externalized, consumer doesn’t think about problems consumerism causes. What we see is what we do – shopping, using and throwing away. And this is only the top of the iceberg.

Watching the film was followed by discussion and comments on what had been seen. Kris van Koppen, Environmental Policy Group, WUR: “It was a really nice movie pointing out consumption. Type and mechanisms of consumption we experience today is definitely not sustainable, not even with best eco-designs. We will get nowhere trying to implement C2C design of products without changing attitudes and behaviors of consumers. It will be a challenge. And we should start looking for support from local groups, communities and NGO’s – they may be the strong point.”.

Next point in the program was a brainstorm- type discussion in smaller groups. This part of the evening was summarized by a poster session allowing each of the groups to present their ideas to others. Some of the concepts pointed towards necessity of moving from products to services those products provide. For example, do we really need to own a washing machine? It is the service - washing that we need, not the machine itself.

Some doubts were expressed as well – is it really possible to have no wastes in product lifecycle? This should involve redefining the concept of wastes. If you can use something it’s no more waste. Products should be created bearing in mind their “afterlife”. And this should involve upcycling - reusing material without loss of its quality (in contrast to downcycling where quality of materials goes down with time and use).

Another important remark was that C2C is a “western” concept, meaning it is currently thought of in Western EU and the US. What about developing countries? Would it be possible to live C2C in Asia, South America as well? This points at the necessity of thinking in terms of local situations and acting locally. And what about

the economy? There are many voices saying that if C2C is to work it has to earn its way itself.

Summing up, concept of Cradle to Cradle seems to gain great framework but faces real obstacles. To overcome those creative minds are needed equipped with potential – not only intellectual – to bring societies to new values, make them look at things from a new perspective. We may already be glad that so many questions are asked. Remember, right questions addressed to right people lead to right answers.

More info:

Stichting Ruraal Wageningen (RUW)

BEZOEKADRES:

Lawickse Allee 13

6701 AN Wageningen

POSTADRES:

Postbus 269

6700 AG Wageningen

T: 0317-484166

F: 0317-418524

E: ruw@wur.nl

I: www.stichtingruw.nl