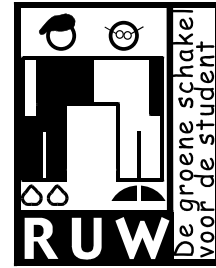


Cradle to cradle – Workshop Evening

February 14th - another event of Cradle to Cradle series, this time being a workshop on product analysis organized thanks to joined efforts of RUraal Wageningen (RUW) and Wageningen Environmental Platform (WEP).



As was the case with previous C2C evenings a numerous audience participated in the activity. Organizers were once again successful in attiring attention of not only students but also representatives of companies and researchers from different parts of the Netherlands.

At the beginning Ruben Borge, coordinator of RUW, reminded everyone main points of C2C concept:

- making closed loops of material so that they can be re-used without loosing quality (in opposition to linear Cradle to Grave path applied nowadays),
- separating biological nutrients from technical ones – the idea behind being that “not harmful is not enough” – we should try to add something new to biological or technological environment – up to creation of new life in the long run.
- C2C designed products ought to be easy to dismantle and not toxic; those categorized as biological nutrients should additionally be biodegradable, natural and supporting life and ecosystems,
- C2C means switching from Eco-Efficiency i.e. decreasing harmfulness and polluting less (but still polluting because you have started with wrong design and materials) to Eco-Effectiveness i.e. starting with a brand new concept, design, quality and materials.

Main part of the evening was a workshop on product analysis. Four group were formed, assigned a facilitator from either RUW or WEP and given a certain product to be looked at from C2C perspective. The task was to check possibilities for upgrading a product and making them more C2C. Addressed issues included identifying functions of a product, components and materials it is made of and thinking of what happens after it has been used.

Brainstorming in groups was followed by a plenary sessions where teams presented outcomes of their work to the rest. Four posters were made showing four analyzed and newly-designed products:

- I. A writing device - to replace the pen. It is the function it provides – writing – that we want and not necessarily the pen. Well, the team identified the second function important to many people – you should still be able to bite it when you are stressed.
- II. Salt packaging. Here the team also focused on the function plus materials the packaging is made from. They decided to design a biodegradable packaging e.g. made of plastic from soya or another C2C certified material and use only one type of material so that its reintroduction into biological cycles is easy.
- III. A bag – one that is produced without toxic paints and is easy to disassemble so that different materials it is made of can still be reintroduced into matter cycles (either technological or biological).

Materials used should be labeled so that it is clear what is what and there are no doubts where to direct different parts of the bag for further use. And off course the aesthetic function was not forgotten – the bag needs to be fashionable.

- IV. A diaper. The team decided to redesign already existing diapers instead of creating a new product. The focus was on the functions (catch pee and poo, keep a baby dry and comfortable, be easy in use) and components (absorbent, impermeable layer, something to keep the diaper in fixed place when a baby is wearing it). The outcome was two alternatives of a new diaper – a completely biodegradable one and a reusable one with exchangeable absorbing part).

The evening ended with a presentation prepared by WEP on the issue of C2C certification systems. Ideas presented included labeling products with different color – depending on in what percentage a product in C2C. Issues addressed while certifying should include both environment and social responsibility. The outcomes of analyses need to be made known to consumers making them aware of what is the real impact of goods they buy.

In the summary it was stated that Cradle to Cradle design and certification still require much data to be collected and analyzed. It appears to be a big challenge but looking at enthusiastic and what important critical people showing up at C2C evenings organized by RUW gives a feeling that we are on a good way. And this is not yet the end of C2C undertaking in Wageningen this year!

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