

ICEDE Research Group Report

The work done so far indicates that focal companies, as well as different stakeholders along their value chains, are already well aware of the need for changing towards a model that maximizes the value of resources for the longest time possible while minimizing waste. Companies are doing remarkable innovation effort; there is an economic opportunity but there is also a need to satisfy aspirations and demands of consumers in more sustainable societies.

Fashion is the second most polluting industry globally. Fortunately, a number of organizations and partnerships are implementing actions that will have a great impact in terms of circularity. Starting by materials, leading and new highly innovative brands are already selling garments made out of a high percentage of renewable fibres, recycled fibres obtained from discarded clothes as well as using fabrics leftovers. But recycling and remanufacturing are not the only ways the industry can contribute to sustainability: business models will probably change a lot from now on. Based on more disruptive value propositions, an increasing number of people will just pay a certain monthly rate so they will change the whole closet every now and then, instead of owning lots of underused clothes.

Concerning electronics, continuous and fast technological developments, planned obsolescence and consumers' preferences are driving a huge e-waste production, besides resource depletion and social conflicts around valuable earth metals. However, stricter regulation on e-waste and increased awareness from the business world are paving the way for a more circular model, including products design, use models and resource recovery. That is the case of many computers and smartphones that are in good condition after they are used by different kinds of consumers and extend their lifetime through reconditioning. Multiple organizations (including NGOs) and individuals that do not require the most updated equipment, are able to reuse them for a very fair price.

Furthermore, ICEDE is also exploring the world of Circular Cities, a very interesting and complex topic that might change our lives soon. Not only that, all the insights gained from the research field are transferred by ICEDE members to the new generations of Economics and Business students, through the Master in Economic Development and Innovation and through specialized seminars. In this sense, a colloquium and a workshop with e-waste experts will take place in the coming weeks.

ICEDE Research Group (USC)