

Is There Any Such Thing as a Toxic-free Circular Economy for Plastics?

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Abstract

As the world considers how to address the growing impacts of the triple planetary crises of pollution, climate change, and biodiversity loss, a circular economy is increasingly touted as the solution. The term ‘circular economy’ is increasingly used in the same breath as ‘life cycle of plastics’ when discussing solutions to the global plastic pollution crisis. However, conflicting definitions of ‘circular economy’ and confusion about what should be captured within the scope of the ‘life cycle of plastics’ persist. The gap between notions of what a circular economy looks like and practical applications for plastics within a circular economy is widening. This gap is threatening the prevention of rapidly accumulating volumes of global plastic pollution. While there is no place for plastics in a truly circular economy as it is currently produced and used, a safe (r) circular economy for plastics is possible. However, such an economy can only be realized given sufficient political will and global cooperation.

Biography

Associate Professor Trisia Farrelly’s work encourages national, regional, and international governance to design toxic and fossil fuel-based plastics out of production and to support effective product stewardship schemes. Trisia was nominated to UNEP’s Scientific Advisory Committee and Ad Hoc Expert Group (Marine Litter and Microplastics) and sits on the BFFP Asia Pacific Advisory Committee.



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Last year, her book *Plastic Legacies: Pollution, Persistence, and Politics* was published, she was named finalist in the NZ Women of Influence Awards, and she received a university medal for ‘exceptional research citizenship’. Trisia co-founded the NZ Product Stewardship Council and the Aotearoa Plastic Pollution Alliance.