

Course title/Course Neptun ID: The spatial and social research of the circular transition	Credit value: 6
Professor in charge (name, position, academic degree): Dr. habil. Viktor Varjú (PhD), associate professor	
Professor(s) involved in teaching, if any (name, position, academic degree): -	
Course category: elective	
Course type: lecture /seminar/practical course/consultation, and total number of course sessions in the given semester: 21 course sessions	
Methods, (<i>specific</i>) tools, and characteristics applied to convey knowledge: e.g.: case reports, case study analyses, project work, other... In addition to traditional lectures, group assignments and project work	
Method of assessing knowledge (exam / practical course grade / other): practical course grade	
Grading method(s) applied for assessing knowledge: Oral presentation about a research idea	
The course's placement in the curriculum (in which semester the course is taken): spring / autumn semester	
Compulsory studies prior to the course (if any): No	
Course description: a brief yet informative description of the course's objectives and the material to be covered	
Sustainability transition (Geels, 2011) requires broader engagement, empowerment and breakthrough strategies. The optimised management of transition (that is often cited as 'transition management' in the literature) brings together frontrunners from policy, science, business, and society (Wittmayer and Loorbach, 2016). As Ghisellini et al., (2016) pointed out, a key aspect of the transition towards CE comes from the involvement of all actors of society and their capacity for creating collaboration and knowledge exchange that was experienced by Dąbrowski, Varjú and Amenta (2019) as well. The transition to a circular economy (CE) is a multifaceted process that involves significant changes in how resources are managed, products are designed, and waste is handled (Lehtimäki et al., 2023). The concept is often understood as an effort to increase recycling, reuse, and repair rates. In some regional and local contexts, there is also an ambition to close material flow loops, aiming for 'zero waste,' fostering new business models (c.f. Fogarassy and Finger, 2020), and fundamentally transforming society's approach to consumption and waste management. Those ambitions, however, tend to be moderated when confronted with multiple governance, legal, socio-spatial, socio-cultural, sociological and behavioural barriers (Dąbrowski et al., 2019). While studies on the circular economy (CE) primarily focus on material flows, the individual motivations underlying "resource-sensitive" behaviour have received significantly less scholarly attention. This course focuses primarily on these social factors—whether they act as barriers or enablers—and on the possibilities for measuring and researching them, with particular attention to trust, the NIMBY phenomenon, and	

the social acceptance of innovations. In addition to presenting previous research, the course aims to generate new research ideas.

In addition to examining social factors, the course also explores the issue of territoriality. Alongside urban-rural and urbanisation issues, it examines the transition difficulties arising from regional and cultural differences.

Course topics/semester syllabus:

1. Social Issues of the Sustainability Transition
2. Social and Societal Differences in the Circular Transition
3. Social Acceptance
4. The Circular Transition in Space—Rural vs. Urban
5. Dimensions of the Circular Economy in Urban Spaces
6. Regional and Cultural Barriers to Circular Knowledge Transfer
7. The Role of Governance in the Circular Transition
8. The Role of Environmental Sociology in Interpreting the Circular Transition
9. Expectations and Experience—Circular Gap Analysis
10. The Attitude-Behavior Gap

A list of the 2-5 most relevant *compulsory* literature (notes, textbooks) with bibliographic information (author, title, publication details, page numbers, ISBN):

Ghisellini, P., Cialani, C., & Ulgiati, S. (2016). A review on circular economy: The expected transition to a balanced interplay of environmental and economic systems. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 114, 11–32. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2015.09.007>

Wittmayer, J. M., & Loorbach, D. (2016). Governing Transitions in Cities: Fostering Alternative Ideas, Practices, and Social Relations Through Transition Management. In D. Loorbach, J. M. Wittmayer, H. Shiroyama, J. Fujino, & S. Mizuguchi (Eds.), *Governance of Urban Sustainability Transitions: European and Asian Experiences* (pp. 13–32). Springer Japan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-4-431-55426-4_2

Gatersleben, B., Murtagh, N., & Abrahamse, W. (2014). Values, identity and pro-environmental behaviour. *Contemporary Social Science*, 9(4), 374–392. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21582041.2012.682086>

Dąbrowski, M., Varjú, V., & Amenta, L. (2019). Transferring Circular Economy Solutions across Differentiated Territories: Understanding and Overcoming the Barriers for Knowledge Transfer. *Urban Planning*, 4(3), Article 3. <https://doi.org/10.17645/up.v4i3.2162>

A list of the 2-5 most relevant *recommended* literature (notes, textbooks) with bibliographic information (author, title, publication details, page numbers, ISBN):

Essoussi, W., Nagyné Pércsi, K. & Varjú, V. Digital and Circular Transition Pathways in European Manufacturing: A PRISMA-based Review. *Circ.Econ.Sust.* **6**, 242 (2026). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43615-026-00958-4>

Varjú, V., & Óvári, Á. (2026). Challenges of applying circular economy principles in urban planning practice in Pécs (Hungary). *Planning Practice & Research*, 41(2), 303–316. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02697459.2024.2349465>

Wifek Essoussi, Kinga Nagyné Pércsi, Apolka Ujj, Paulina Jancsovszka, Viktor Varjú, Drivers of sustainable consumption: An empirical analysis of consumer attitudes, knowledge, and social pressures, *Sustainable Futures*, Volume 10, 2025, 101509, ISSN 2666-1888, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sftr.2025.101509>.

Varjú, V. From fork to farm, locally: social acceptance pathways for human excreta-derived fertilisers across three European regions. *Socio Ecol Pract Res* 7, 419–437 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42532-025-00236-x>

Professional competencies, elements of competence, and skills to which the course typically and substantially contributes (knowledge, ability, attitude, autonomy, and responsibility):

Possesses research-level knowledge of the fields, interdisciplinary areas, established and contested relationships, conceptual frameworks, and terminology of regional science and socially oriented environmental science.

Is capable of planning and implementing small-scale projects, conducting independent research, and developing new techniques and approaches.

Possesses the curiosity and learning ability that enable them to identify and solve research problems in regional science and socially oriented environmental science more broadly.

With creative and independent initiative, they develop and pioneer new fields of knowledge and propose new practical solutions.