Circular Citizenship

How founders, followers and participants of Circle That realize economic lives that constitute a way of living together, in the now and future.

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Master Thesis Cultural Anthropology: Sustainable Citizenship

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Wordcount: 20.479

Abstract

By conducting ethnographic fieldwork in collaboration with the Utrecht-based initiative 'Circle That', this research explores the ways in which citizenship formation among people who are interested in and/or engaged with the circular economy can be understood through their economic lives. By specifically focussing on people who were related to Circle That, this enquiry gives a thorough description of people that are concerned with the circular economy in a linear economy dominated society. Furthermore, by drawing from both Economic Anthropology and the Anthropology of Citizenship, I argue that we can understand the economic lives of my research participants in terms of Circular Citizenship. This approach extends former understandings of citizenship in two ways. First, by looking at the economic acts aimed at making a life worth living (i.e. a neosubstantivists approach to economic life) it becomes clear how this forms citizenship that transcends the now, thereby giving citizenship a broadened temporal dimension. And second, by showing how my respondents define the world they live in, how they experience living in this world, and by arguing that a socio-economic system could be seen as something people seek belongingness to, I argue that circular citizens aim to realize belongingness to a socio-economic system that does not yet exists (i.e. the circular economy/circular society). I therefore conclude that we can understand the economic lives of my research participants as lives of a circular citizen.

Keywords: *Circular Economy, Citizenship, Belongingness, Intergenerational Justice, Economic Life, Neosubstantivism*

Foreword & Acknowledgements

At the start of this academic year, I was rather unsure about what to think of Cultural Anthropology. With a background in Governance and Organizational Sciences, the master Cultural Anthropology: Sustainable citizenship (SCIM) was something completely different. I therefore had to put in a lot of effort to get a grip on how this field of study functions, what its questions are, and how it tries to find answers to these questions. Now, after an intensive year in which I was bound to my apartment due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I am confident enough to say that I now do have a good idea about what Cultural Anthropology entails. For me, it is the field in which I can ask simple, yet important questions. Why do we humans act/live/behave in a specific way, and more importantly, how should we understand these acts, lives and behaviours?

I reckon that these questions could be answered through several disciplines. Think of History, (Social) Psychology, Sociology, or Economics. Still, what I see as a remarkable characteristic of Anthropology, is the space given to the researcher to explore social phenomena from the ground up. Understanding what happens in society, not by looking through prescriptive theories that limit your scope and prescribe what you will observe, but through conducting inductive ethnographic research. Of course, how one perceives phenomena differs between researchers, which gives research an inevitable subjective colour. Nonetheless, it is for these different understandings of the social that we can debate and discuss how to understand society and thus ourselves.

In this thesis, I tried to put my above mentioned understanding of Cultural Anthropology into practice. More specifically, I tried to obtain an understanding of why people are interested in and/or engaged with the circular economy, and how that can be understood in relation to the concept of citizenship. Through the course of six months, I have dived into literature, conducted ethnographic fieldwork and in the end wrote this thesis. When I look back at the past year, I am proud of my development and of the end product of my year as a SCIM-student. This development would not have been possible if it wasn't for the entire SCIM-staff and in particular my thesis supervisor Vinzenz Bäumer Escobar. In addition, I would like to thank my research participants, Circle That, and Jocelyn Ballantyne from the Community Based Research for the Humanities team of Utrecht University for their willingness to let me conduct my fieldwork in collaboration with them.

Julius P. Veenstra   August 11th, 2021

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Introduction

When I opened the book of Minouche Shafik, 'What we Owe each other', published in 2021, the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic seemed to be coming to a halt in the Netherlands. Throughout the past one and a half year, protests about regulations were commonplace, which realized a division between people in society, between 'normal' people and 'gekkies' or 'viruswappies', i.e. people who were against government measures and who sometimes ridiculed the severity of the virus. Shafik writes about the course of the past decades, in which several disasters like the COVID-19 pandemic, yet also the financial crisis of 2008, climate change and a rise of populism results in a quest for a new social contract, opening up the conversation for us to think about how we ought to live together. In line with her argument, Roman Kraznaric (2020), claimed to see the rise of 'time rebels', people that are thinking beyond the daily and mundane but explicitly focus on deep-time, focussing on sustaining life for generations after generations after the generations that come after us.

Next to these recent works of both scholars, Kate Raworth (2017) already argued for the realization of the Doughtnut Economy, an economy that feeds the social needs of all of humanity, while keeping within the ecological boundaries of our planet, in order to realize a life and society which is fair for all who live now, and those that will live in the future. Now, these books got me thinking, because, how ought we live together? Should we all of us become these time rebels? And what kind of economic system would support this social contract? Without giving a clear answer to these question, the aim of this inquiry is to get to an understanding of the people that are interested in and/or engaged with an alternative economy, primarily the circular economy. And by drawing on scientific, anthropological work on Economics and Citizenship, the aim is to give a thorough description of why people are interested in the circular economy; what kind of (economic) actions they undertook in relation to that; and how that relates to the formation of citizenship.

In addition, by taking on an ethnographic approach, my aim is to get a thorough understanding of how people experience living in the world they live in, what they feel and think, how they envision their future, how they act in the present, and lastly, who these people are. Therefore, this enquiry focusses on a small, specific group of people that is connected to Circle That, an Utrecht-based initiative that aims to foster the circular economy in Utrecht by engaging 'Utrechters' in the transition from a linear to a circular economy. Furthermore, the context of Utrecht is especially interesting given the fact that Utrecht is a city in a western democratic state (i.e. The Netherlands), which is economically thriving under neoliberal rule.

As capitalism as a socio-economic system is constitutive of the neoliberal rule, Utrecht is an interesting site to see how people try to rearrange the hegemonic socio-economic system.

Therefore, the research question is:

In which way can citizenship formation among people who are interested in and/or engaged with Circle That be understood through their economic lives?

To answer my research question, several subsidiary questions will need to be answered:

1) *Who are the people that are interested in and/or engaged with the Circular Economy?*
2) *Why are they interested in and/or engaged with the Circular Economy?*
3) *In which ways does this relate to citizenship?*
4) *How do they experience living in the current socio-economic system?*
5) *How do they seek belongingness?*

By drawing on ethnographic data and scientific literature, the answers to these questions and the overall research question will be developed. Therefore, it is important to outline what has previously been researched and discussed within economic anthropology and the anthropology of citizenship.

Economic Anthropology & The Anthropology of Citizenship

Anthropological work on Economies and Economics (i.e. Economic Anthropology) started at the beginning of the 20th century. The discipline concerns itself with the question: How to understand 'economic life', i.e. activities through which people consume, produce and circulate things, in relation to the society and culture in which these activities take place? (Carrier 2005). Moreover, Hann (2017) identified eleven core themes of the study of economics as an anthropologist, claiming that the discipline is mainly interested in consumption, credit and debt, poverty and moral economy.

In his work, the latter named scholar also addresses the epistemological debate that exists within the discipline: how to come to an understanding of the economic lives of people in study? On the one hand, the Formalists, frequently named 'the economists', argue that there are certain economic principles which could be applied to any situation and/or context in order to understand human behaviour (Hann 2017). They advocate for the use of general models which could be used and tested in different contexts (Wilk & Cliggett 2007). An influential understanding is the notion of the *homo oeconomicus*, that is: every human being is, in essence, rational and choses his or her behaviour to realize self-maximalization. On the other hand, this epistemological current is strongly debated as the Substantivists, or 'economic anthropologists', argue that there should be a focus on understanding human economic behaviour (i.e. economic

life) on terms of the culture in which the behaviour takes place. More specifically, influential economic anthropologists such as Karl Polanyi, George Dalton, Marshall Sahlins and Bronislaw Malinowski showed that a formalist approach can not be used in the understanding of the economic life of 'primitive' societies (Polayni 1957; Dalton 1961; Sahlins 1972; Malinowski 1922).

To make an even more clear distinction between the two lines of thought, Polanyi argues that 'economic' has two different meanings, which differ between formalists and substantivists. In a formalist understanding, the economic refers to the study of rational decision-making, whereas in a substantivist understanding, the economic refers to the material acts of making a living (Polayni 1957). The latter understanding has been praised by, for example, Bronislaw Malinowski (1922), who in his work on the Trobriand Island showed how the act of give and take of ''Kula'', objects (necklaces and bracelets) that hold symbolic value, was surrounded by ceremonies and rules and thereby shaped social life. Thereby he reasoned that trade is not merely about ownership of the items but could also be about belonging to a large network of social relationships.

Nevertheless, in 2014 Susan Narotzky and Niko Besnier published their special issue *Crisis, Value, and Hope: Rethinking the Economy*, in which they show a third epistemological current within Economic Anthropology, Neosubstantivism. Building on to the substantivist approach of understanding economic life, these scholars argue that the Economy is not only about the material acts of making a living. Rather, it should be understood in its broadest sense, ''as consisting of all the processes that are involved,…, in making a living…and stressing both the ''effort'' involved and the aim of ''sustaining life''''', and added to that that 'making a living is equally about cooperation and about being part of a collective that gives meaning to life, makes it "worth the trouble." (Narotzky & Besnier 2014, 5-6). In other words, the scholars take on an epistemological stance which stretches the understanding of the Economy and therefore allow themselves to study and come to an understanding of economic life in its broadest sense. The only requirement to economic practices understood from this definition, is that the objective of those practices must be ''sustaining life across generations'' (6).

Now, the latter notion is particularly interesting when seen from a citizenship-perspective. More specifically, as Lazar (2013) points out in her work *The Anthropology of Citizenship*, studying citizenship is about gaining an understanding of how people live together. Moreover, on the contrary to formal, normative understandings of citizenship as only to be understood as a status to be endowed upon those who are seen as citizens by the state (i.e. the sovereign), citizenship in anthropology holds a more broad definition. While Marshall (1950) argued that

''Citizenship is a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with respects to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed" (p. 253), Caglar (2015) showed that citizenship should be looked at as a process. Moreover, this process exists of practices with the goal to become member of a political community which allows you to influence the politics of that community, i.e. participate in the decision making that affects your life (Lazar & Nuijten 2013). In order words, you can obtain an understanding of citizenship by looking at actions people undertake in order to belong to a specific community, whilst these actions simultaneously show how people aim to live together.

Brodkin (2014) attempted to relate these two fields of study (economics and citizenship) in her work *Work, Race and Economic Citizenship*. More specifically, Brodkin argues that people try to become member of civil society by obtaining economic security, which is built upon being able to buy a car, a house, ''and other market-based visible signifiers of hard work and social worth'' (Brodkin 2014, 117). Yet, because of stigmatization and racism, non-white men and woman in general are less able to obtain economic citizenship because of a segmented labour market in which they ''have been historically undervalued, underpaid, and have relatively little employer commitment'' (i.e. ''the recognition of the skill, effort, and responsibility extended on the job'', captured in proper wage, and health and retirement benefits, which conveys the social value of their work). In addition Brodkin argues that specific laws and policies maintain the segregation and therefore limit people in their attempt to become economic citizens.

The above mentioned study shows how looking at economic actions, aimed at making a living, can be used to get an understanding of the formation of or the inability to become a citizen. In other words, it shows how getting an understanding of the economic lives of people allows you to develop an understanding of how citizenship is formed. Nevertheless, Brodkin (2014) limits herself in her definition of 'economic'. Moreover, as she appears to only look at economic transactions through which people aim to make a living, i.e. create economic security, and then try to obtain 'economic citizenship', she forgets to include those actions aimed at making a life worth living, which is vital in obtaining a thorough understanding of the economic lives of people in the first place, as discussed by Narotzky & Besnier (2014). Therefore, I argue that because of her narrow definition of 'economic life' she is not able to give a conclusive understanding of citizenship.

This touches upon the ideas of Circle That considering their understanding of the circular economy and the realization of this socio-economic system. More specifically, Circle That appears to look at the circular economy as an economic system that goes beyond the

''technological''. They claim that the realization of the circular economy entails ''mindset shifts'', which make the transition from the current economic system, labelled as the ''linear economy'', a social transition. Furthermore, they state that in order for this particular system to be realized, it is important for people to behave in specific ways in all kinds of situations. Thereby they go beyond a mere alternation of consumption habits, but focus on all kinds of behaviours, for example considering career choices, realizing communities, or planting greenery. In short, ''the sustainable future we, Circle That, envision will deliver connectedness, community, tranquillity, and meaningful ways of living''. Therefore, I argue that the neo-substantivist approach is of great importance to this enquiry. That is, as this approach allows us to fully grasp the wide range of actions my interlocutors undertook, we are able to get a thorough understanding of their economic lives, and we will therefore be able to elaborately discuss how these lives play a role in the formation of citizenship.

Research Population and Location

The Dutch national government aims to realize a Circular Economy before 2050, as it is claimed that there is a global rise in the demand of raw materials and as we live in a closed system, at some point there will be no raw materials left to use if we are to consume the way we do now. Therefore, in 2016 the national government developed the 'The Netherlands Circular in 2050'-programme in which they outlined the ways in which they aim to realize their stated goal. By using several interventions, such as changing existing rules and regulations, implementing economic incentives and stimulating the development of knowledge and innovation, The Netherlands wants to create an economy that is 'future-proof and sustainable for both contemporary as well as future generations' (Rijksoverheid 2016). In the following years, the national government has signed a 'Raw Materials Agreement', with partners that ranged from non-governmental organizations (NGO's) to governmental organizations to private organizations, in which they collectively stated to put their efforts in the realization of a circular economy. Furthermore, they realized a 'Transition agenda', in which they further developed the steps that need to be taken in five specific sectors. This agenda was later on translated into a 'Performance Programme' to identify the concrete actions to be taken (Rijksoverheid 2021).

Now, as The Netherlands is a decentralized unitary state, provinces and municipalities play an important role in realizing this stated goal as well. The Municipality of Utrecht also states that they aim to realize a circular city by 2050. This should not be surprising given the political colour of the municipality, in which the left-wing party GroenLinks is the biggest party having

12 of 45 seats in the local parliament. More specifically, GroenLinks has been aiming to act upon the perils of climate change since the political party was founded and cooperates with D66 (Democrats '66) and Cristenunie in the local council, both 'green' political parties who have climate change high on their priority lists.

While this gives some insight into the political field in Utrecht and the emphasis they put on fighting climate change and realizing a circular economy, the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL) concluded that there are several limitations that slow down the realisation of the circular economy. First, due to the low price of raw materials and products, it is hard for initiatives that aim to realize a circular economy to compete, prise wise, to other market forces. Low pricing is, according to the PBL, caused by the lack of calculation of detrimental effects of production and consumption on the planet that certain goods have (PBL 2019, 9). Second, they argue that because of (non-)existing rules and regulation, materials such as biomass are still not commonly used in construction. Third, the bad image of second hand goods causes consumers and business to have a preference for newly fabricated products. Fourth, the PBL states that as people are used to throwing away something they do not need any longer or that is broken, and it is a challenge to change these habits. Lastly, investors are still not that eager to invest in circular initiatives due to a lack of knowledge and the prospect of a low return on investment (PBL 2019).

It is this bad image of second hand products and the habits people have incorporated over the last decades, concerning throwing away items that could still be used or at least repaired that attracted the attention of the five initiators of Circle That (CT). They emphasize that the transition to a circular economy is not merely a technological transition, consisting of re-using and recycling materials and thereby lowering the use of raw materials and CO2-emissions (simply said), but also a social one. To this end, they want to ''involve the citizens of Utrecht in the transition towards a circular economy'' (Circle That, 2021). According to the initiators, citizens play a vital role in making circularity reality. Therefore, their mission is: ''to build a knowledge platform – of a growing community of Utrechters (those who live in Utrecht) and businesses – to inspire and implement the move from throw-away living to circular living'' (Circle That, 2021b). To reach their goals, the initiative aims to ''establishing a year round programme and campaigns to educate and spark action around different focus areas of the circular economy.'' (Circle That, 2021).

According to Circle That, ''One of the biggest challenges we have in redesigning the future is to actually have the capacity to imagine it''. Therefore, by inspiring, educating and sparking action, the initiative aims to realize mindset shifts in which people 1) are more connected to nature, 2) see waste as a resource, and 3) are a significant link in the realization of the circular economy. During the time I conducted fieldwork, Circle That organized one online challenge, the Circular Citizen Challenge, in which people were presented with four challenges that each concerned an aspect of the circular economy. In addition, they frequently shared information on environmental issues such as the decline in the amount of bee species via Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn.

Circle That's office as seen from Domplein, Utrecht. © Julius Veenstra

To get an understanding of why people are interested in or engaged with the circular economy, and see how their economic lives connected to the formation of citizenship, I decided to become a part of the Cirlce That team and simultaneously become one of their followers/participants. Although it was my intention to become part of the Circle That Community, I refrain myself from saying that I became part of that, as that would not have been appropriate. More specifically, I did end up being added to a WhatsApp group, which bore the name 'Circle That Community', and was able to built rapport during a pandemic. Yet, although Circle That clearly aims to realize a community, and overtly has the ability to grow a lively one (based on stories that were shared with me), I rather argue that the group I studied could be called a 'Sleeping Community'. Moreover, although only some of my interlocutors who were not part of the CT-team appeared to know each other, the research participants were pretty much all constantly keen to hear what others had told me and they enjoyed attending

group discussions in which they got to meet others. Nevertheless, partly due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its related governmental measurements, most of my research participants (including me) were rather isolated from one another.

Therefore, as a 'Community' can be seen as a group of people who hold common interests and ideas, calling the group I studied a sleeping-community is more in place, given the fact that there appeared to be a lack of interactions that could foster the active sharing of those common interests[1]. In short, instead of claiming that I became part of a community, I do state that I became part of the sleeping community which was present at the time of my fieldwork. Taking this into account implies that I will not refer to 'community members' throughout this enquiry. Rather, I choose to use the terms 'follower', which refers to someone who follows the initiative online, and 'participant', which refers to someone who is or has been actively involved in the activities of Circle That. Those who were part of Circle That as an organization will be referred to as 'founders'. The relation between these three different types of actors was characterized by the founders to some extend trying to engage followers and participants through online interactions via WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn. This search for engagement displayed a one-sided relation, i.e. the founders looked for contact with followers and participants, and not primarily vice versa (exceptions there).

Furthermore, these followers, participants and founders were both native Dutch as well as internationals, coming from Uzbekistan, Lebanon, Germany, Austria, Finland and Brasil. They were aged between 18 and 35, were predominantly female (18 out of 23), and almost all were or are becoming highly educated (i.e. obtained/in the process of obtaining a degree at a university and/or at a university of applied sciences). These educations ranged from Applied Ethics, to Environmental Engineering, to Environmental Studies, to Sustainable Development, to Biology, to Creative Business, and Human-Computer Interactions. These characteristics had an influence on the way in which I was able to build rapport, as I was of a same age, have a Dutch nationality and was doing a Masters in Cultural Anthropology: Sustainable Citizenship. In other words, in terms of these characteristics I was quite alike my research participants, which made it easy to make a connection.

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[1] This has influenced my ability to address interactions between research participants. It means that throughout this enquiry, respondents will be primarily discussed in isolation from one another.

In order to get a thorough understanding of why members of the Circle That team, as well as participants and followers of the initiative were interested in or engaged with the circular economy and how that is related to the formation of citizenship, several methodologies were used. As anthropological work builds on the use of ethnographic research methods, I conducted three months of fieldwork in collaboration with Circle That and became an active participant and follower of the initiative. Nevertheless, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I was urged to use different methods, or at least use methods in different ways than is commonly done in ethnographic work during non-pandemic times. More specifically, getting in contact with interlocutors, mainly those who were not part of Circle That (i.e. other active participants and/or followers), was done online by sending messages on either Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp. Next to that, as there were no daily or even weekly events which I could attend to and interact with research participants I constructed a clear outline of the methods that I aimed to use during my fieldwork. In this way, I realized periodical contact with interlocutors, which gave me the ability to built proper rapport. Yet, this mode of conducting ethnographic work of course had its limitations, which will be discussed below.

First of all, I had 23 open interviews, in which I kept an collaborative and exploring mindset towards my interlocutors, which is in line with O'Reilly's writings on conducting ethnographic interviews (2012, 118). This method helped me in gaining insights in the reasoning why people are interested in and are engaged in the circular economy. In addition, I conducted multiple participant observations[2]. These participant observations were during online and offline meetings of the Circle That team, which consisted of the five founders of the initiative; during online group discussions to which followers/participants of Circle That attended, which were organized by me; and over the entire length of the fieldwork period, I followed several interlocutors on either or both Facebook and Instagram thereby tracing their digital lives as well. By conducting participant observations, I was able to learn 'the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and their culture' (DeWalt & DeWalt 2011, 12).

In addition, I asked my respondents for Person Descriptions. These descriptions consisted of one or multiple short story/stories about a specific respondent, which were written by people that stand in close relation to the specific respondent (i.e. a father, friend, roommate etc.). To give those who were asked by my respondents to write a person description some sort of

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[2] It is important to address that although participant observations are focussed on 'being there', not on specific dates, times and places, I was not able to conduct participant observations 'as usual'. More specifically, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, each interaction with my research participant had to be carefully planned.

direction about what to write, I shared a document in which they were formally asked to write the description and outlined what was expected. (See Appendix I). In the end, I received 32 person description of varying lengths, concerning 15 respondents. These person descriptions helped me in getting a better understanding of who the people that are interested in and/or are engaged in the circular economy are. Although this research method is more commonly used in criminal investigations and Psychology (Meissner, Sporer & Schooler 2007; Sporer 1992), I argue that it can be used in Anthropological enquiries as well as it enables the ethnographer to get a deeper understanding of who one is, due to the fact that who one is dependent on how one sees him/herself, yet also how he/she is perceived by and interacts with others.

Furthermore, I used a Diary research, in which research participants were asked to keep a diary for a period of one to two weeks. In this diary, they had full freedom to write whatever they wanted (see Appendix II). The value of this method is clearly summarized by Nezlek (2012), who states that the advantage of using a diary 'include the realism of the settings and contexts within which phenomena are studied and the inclusion of the mundane and *apparently* unimportant aspects of life'. In other words, in this way I was able to collect data ''in vivo'' during a pandemic, showing me the daily lives of my interlocutors whilst not being physically there. Eventually, I received 9 diaries of an equal amount of respondents.

Beside these methods, I gave this research an autoethnographic character, which entails the ''approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyse personal experience in order to understand cultural experience'' (Ellis et al. 2011, 273). By doing so, I was able to get a better understanding of how it is to be a part of Circle That and being someone who follows the initiative and is engaged with the circular economy. More specifically: I kept a diary on my own experiences and thoughts; joined the 'Circular Citizen Challenge', which was set-up by Circle That; started to have a side-job at a circular start-up; read a book that one of my participants also read, and analysed the experiences, feelings and thoughts I had in doing so. Finally, by the end of my fieldwork period, I organized several ''Walk & Talks'', in which I had (socially distant) walks with a total of five participants at a place of their preference. During one of those sessions, I ended up sitting at a bar. Physically seeing my interlocutors was of great value, as it realized a stronger emotional connection between me and my research participants which allowed me to get a better understanding of who they are.

As O'Reilly points out in her book *Ethnographic Methods*, "We cannot undertake ethnography without acknowledging the role of our own embodied, sensual, thinking, critical and positioned self" (O'Reilly 2012, 100). Therefore, this paragraph will entail an elaboration on my own background and positionality, and how this has influenced my research.

First of all, it is important to note that I conducted my research both as a master student Cultural Anthropology, and as a member of the Community-Based Research for the Humanities team. This project of Utrecht University aims to ''enhance students' civic engagement and enrich their understanding of the social relevance of their education'' (Utrecht University 2021). Furthermore, participation in the project entails a translation of your research findings into something valuable for the organization and/or community members that take part in your study. The reason why I opted to be part of this project team is twofold. On the one hand, due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, getting access to a certain field to study is more complicated as communication exists almost entirely online. Going to a group of people in real life was impossible, and therefore I chose to make use of the existing partnership between Circle That and Utrecht University. On the other hand, as a former Public Governance and Organizational Science bachelor student, I was already interested in how we, as humans, can create a better society. With the latter, I refer to a more socially equal society withing a thriving ecology and an economy that supports both of these aspects. More specifically, as I am convinced that we should rethink our economic system and look at ways in which we can alter our current Western, linear economy into a more sustainable format, I am motivated to contribute to the development of an organization that aims to engender the realization of an alternative economy.

Based on the above, one could argue that my convictions could have resulted in being too focused on creating insights that are valuable for the further development of Circle That. Yet, my awareness of this positionality gave me the ability to be reflexive on the ways in which I conducted my research. For example, in collecting and storing data, I made clear where something was said by either an interlocutor, or by me. In addition, I placed great emphasis on formulating open-ended questions to give my research participants space to answer these questions without having a feeling to be guided in a specific direction. Therefore, neither would I say that I have done activist research, affirming my alignment with the ideas and causes of my interlocutors, as defined by Hale (2006), nor did I act as a militant anthropologist, who is politically involved in putting certain issues under attention in order to better the lives of its interlocutors (Scheper-Hughes, 1995). Rather, due to my systematic approach of data-collection

I was able to obtain and maintain a critical distance to my interlocutors during my fieldwork. This mode of working is in line with the work of Kadir (2016) on the left-activist squatter movement in Amsterdam. In this work, Kadir claims that her ''…writing does not seek to promote the squatters movement in Amsterdam but to analyze it *by systematically measuring the practices of the participants* by the movement's dominant internal discourses and ideologies.'' (emphasis mine) (40).

In addition, my role in relation to Circle That was that I gathered information which I translated to something that is of value for them. In concrete terms this concerns a thorough understanding of the people who are connected to the initiative. To have this knowledge, and being in the process of gathering these insights gave me some sort of power during the fieldwork period. It has, for example, occurred that one of the founders of Circle That asked me what kind of people I spoke to, and why they were interested in and/or attended to events of the initiative. Yet, as I deem honesty as very important in doing research, I always gave an answer to their questions and added that I was still in the process of collecting data and therefore wasn't sure about the correctness of my answers.

Second, next to the relation I had with the Circle That team, I stood in relation with eighteen other research participants, of whom I had more frequent contact with fourteen of them. Especially for the group discussion I organized, it is important to address the role I played in awakening the 'sleeping community', which I addressed before. More specifically, though organizing the group discussion, I created a space in which people who are connected to Circle That to get together, meet each other and share thoughts and ideas. Therefore, I see that I did play a role in realizing a community. Yet, to the best of my knowledge, no further connections between people who attended the sessions were made, thereby showing the limited extend to which a community was realized through my research.

Lastly, given the remote nature of my project as fieldwork was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, the relation I had with my interlocutors was rather unilateral. By this, I refer to the fact that in my relation with research participants, the flow of information was mainly from the participant to me as the researcher. Having large amounts of information about the participants, without them having an equal amount of, or at least more, information about me as a person doing research, people expressed to feel quite vulnerable at some points and felt it was a bit weird. More specifically, several respondents explained to feel partly uncomfortable in keeping a diary for a period of time and share daily events, thoughts and ideas, as these could entail things that could not to be called 'happy feelings'. In order to deal with those notions, I expressed the voluntary character of participation in my study, and the fact that they were free

to not do the diary if they would feel uncomfortable. In addition, I emphasized to not use any information of which they state that it could not be used and that all data would be anonymized. Therefore, pseudonyms will be used throughout the rest of this enquiry.

The Thesis' Structure

In the next chapter, I will thoroughly discuss my research participants in terms of who they were, why they were interested in/engaged with the circular economy, what they do in their daily lives in relation to the circular economy and how that can be understood. More specifically, be focussing on the economic lives of my respondents, I aim to explain that they can not be seen as a manifestation of the homo oeconomicus, therefore underlining the (neo)substantivist's critique of this notion. In addition, I will explore how their economic lives can be understood in terms of citizenship.

In the subsequent chapter, I will continue with an elaboration on the socio-economic world in which my respondents claim to live, and how they experience living in that particular environment. Furthermore, the relation between their experiences, citizenship and belonging will be discussed in more detail. Here, I will argue that those who are interested in and/or engaged with the circular economy aim to realize belongingness by stimulating the realization of an alternative system (i.e. the circular economy) to which they want to belong. Finally, I will draw conclusions based on the above. More specifically, I will give a clear answer to the posed research question and the subsidiary questions and reflect on the implications of the outcomes of my study.

Chapter 1

The Homo Circularis & Circular Citizenship

Who are the people that are interested in and/or engage with the Circular Economy? That was the first question I asked myself when I started my fieldwork period in the beginning of February 2021. After getting in contact with Circle That, I starting sending messages to people who appeared to be following the initiative on Facebook and/or Instagram and I quickly got several replies. One of the first who replied was Julia, a 22 year old woman living in Utrecht who works in communication, specifically in campaigns that concern sustainability and/or circularity. The first time we met was during an online interview on Microsoft Teams. From the beginning onward it was clear that Julia was very interested in sustainability and circularity, although that has not always been the case. '*Before, I didn't know that buying clothes had such an impact on the world, and I had steak at a restaurant once every other week. I don't do those kind of things anymore'*. Insinuating that those types of behaviour are not sustainable, Julia continued to explain how she got more and more interested in the topic and what she does in her daily life to be sustainable. The small steps we discussed were shifting your bank-account to a bank that is more concerned with nature or not buying clothes at Zara or H&M which are known for having poor employee-standards in their factories.

After having an interview for which we had too little time to discuss all that we wanted to talk about, we met at 'Landhuis in de Stad', a café/restaurant near her place to get a coffee and go for a walk. It was very windy that day, and as we crossed the bridge over the Amsterdam-Rijnkanaal, we could barely hear each other speak. Yet, through the wind I could here her say:

J: It's not logical what we are doing at the moment.

ME: What do you mean? To have a walk in this weather?

J: Haha, No. I mean, I don't know, I think it is just strange that we, for example with Christmas cut a tree down, put it in our homes and then burn it. Why would we do that?

ME: Haha, never thought of that. But why is that strange?

J: Well, we cut down a tree, which used to provide oxygen, then put it in our homes and want to create this ''perfect'' Christmas tree (which is impossible because how on earth can something out of nature be ''perfect''?!). And then in January, we all burn the trees which fosters the rise of carbon dioxide in the air. That is not the way to go, I think.

ME: Aha, I see. And what do you think about people who do that?

J: Hmm, that's difficult. I mean, I do not want to point fingers and decide for others what is

good or bad, but still I think we shouldn't do those kind of things. Besides, I don't think that it's useful to point fingers and call out names in trying to realize a more sustainable society, that would just be counterproductive. We have to get on this transition together. So, it annoys me when people with whom I talk about sustainability or circularity for example make remarks on my clothes, stating that those are not sustainable, for example. Then I'm just like: 'pff, you don't even know me and know what I do in the light of sustainability'. I think that these assumptions about people stop the conversation before it even takes place, and that's a shame.

ME: Hmm, I could understand that that's annoying sometimes. Still, what I wonder is where this interest in circularity and sustainability came from in the first place? As you appear to be very engaged with it in your daily life.

J: Yeah, good question… Maybe because I really believe in it. I think it is the right thing to do and doing the right thing yields satisfaction. And it is also for the sake of future generations, although it must be said that I do everything for myself, not because others tell me to. So it is this strong inner feeling. I sometimes even think it's similar to something religious, haha.

…

Over the course of three months, I was able to have multiple conversations as these. Through them, yet also through the other methods as described in the introduction of this thesis, I got to get a thorough understanding of who the people that are interested in and/or engaged with the circular economy are. The conversation I had with Julia, as depicted above, is a good example of various talks, discussions and interactions I had with my research participants. It shows the astonishment about the world as it is; it lays bare the way in which they believe behavioural change can be realized; and ultimately, it touches upon why people are interested and/or engaged with the circular economy in the first place.

Below, the latter will be discussed in more detail and I will explain their economic lives as neither rational, nor irrational. More specifically, by addressing who my interlocuters were, where their interest in/engagement with the circular economy comes from, and subsequently, why they are interested in/ engaged with this concept, I argue for an understanding of my interlocutors not as *Homo Euconomicus*, which is in line with (neo-) substantivists like Malinowski, Salin and Narotzky & Besnier. Rather, I state they could better be seen as *Homo Circularis*. Building on this notion, I furthermore argue that the economic life of these people has an influence on how they (aim to) live together with others in the now *and* future, thereby calling for an understanding of my respondents as Circular Citizens.

1.1 Meeting Chantal

The first time I set foot in the office of Circle That, located right in the city centre of Utrecht on the Domplein, Chantal stared at me. While this could have been one of the team members, it was a female mannequin painted in dark blue. I took a closer look at Chantal, and saw she wore the nametag 'Homo Circularis' (see figure 1). As it was hard to talk with Chantal, I started having conversations with founders, followers and participants of Circle That. Soon, it became clear that they were all very much concerned with societal issues. For example, a friend of Eva,

one of my research participants who volunteered at Circle That, told me in her person description that she was a *''busy bee, who is very socially engaged.''*, which she concluded as Eva appeared to be having a broad range of interests, varying from social justice, to climate change, to politics and the sustainable development goals, to name a few. Next to that, in my conversations with both Sophie and Noa, both (online) followers and/or participants of the initiative, we discussed the upcoming Dutch elections, in which Noa told me she watched the 'green debate', which was about climate change and the environment.
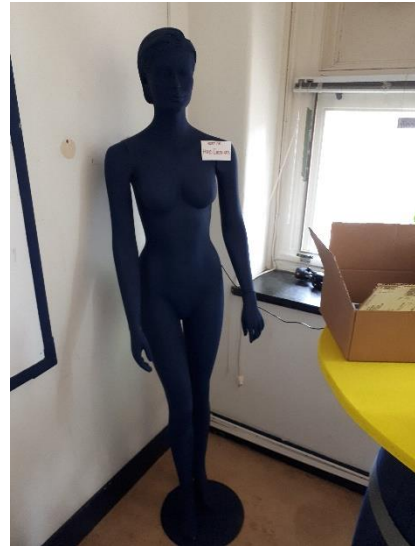

Figure 1 "Chantal" © Julius Veenstra

In addition to the social engagement of my interlocutors, social life plays an important role as well. In the diary study that was used, it became apparent that those who kept a diary spent a lot of their time with either family or friends. For example, Rachel showed to meet with friends eleven out of the fourteen days on which she kept a diary. Moreover, these interactions with friends were not merely superficial, having a drink and hang out. What could be drawn from the person descriptions, is that being in the presence of my interlocutors was experienced as warm and safe. Talks could be about the mundane, yet also having 'deep conversations' and share happiness and sadness was frequently mentioned. Topics such as climate change, consumerism, how the world functions and values like equality, justice and respect for others and nature were also frequently addressed. For example James (a research intern, follower and participant of Circle That) his sister stated that: ''*We are great friends to one another…and there have been many times spent distracting each other from daily tasks in having long chats about global issues, family issues, personal issues…we just start talking and it can end up being a conversation that lasts for hours and hours. I feel I can talk to James about everything''*. Moreover, I also experienced the sociability of my respondents during the interactions I had

with them, as they frequently asked me questions like how I came up with this topic of research and what I thought of it?

Next to being socially engaged and sociable, it can be stated that they were highly self-reflective. More specifically, my research participants were very much concerned what they could do themselves, in their daily lives, to 'make the world a better place'. For example, as Bob explained during an interview we had, that becoming aware about the consequences of his actions made him think about the costs and benefits and made him alter his behaviour. The next section will discuss this in more detail.

1.1.1 Feelings of Responsibility

So why are these socially engaged, sociable, and self-reflective people interested in or engaged with the circular economy? What is important to address first, is how my respondents understood the circular economy. First of all, it became apparent that there is a clear distinction between 'sustainability' and 'circularity' (i.e. the idea upon which the circular economy rests). As Amber, one of the co-founders of Circle That and an important source of data for my research (as she was the supervisor of my research internship), explained to me: ''*Sustainability is like: ''let's do less bad and let's be a bit nicer and let's safe our planet'', that doesn't really get us anywhere. It is just this nice fluff, and circularity also has this fluffy aspect, but in essence it is very clear and consists of clear action steps that need to be taken''.* In addition, Kelly, an follower of the initiative who works at the Dutch Railways (Nederlandse Spoorwegen: NS) where she works on realizing circularity within NS, explained that in order for us to realize a 'sustainable society', the circular economy is a system which could be used. Thereby insinuating that the circular economy is a system within the realms of sustainability. Lastly, compared to sustainability, circularity is mainly seen as a focus on the alternation of production and consumption, by reducing, re-using, and recycling. The latter is in line with the findings of Kircherr et al. (2017), who in their meta-analysis showed that the most frequent understanding of the circular economy is as a combination of reduce, re-use and recycle activities.

Nevertheless, although my respondents showed to make a clear distinction between circularity and sustainability, they still understood the circular economy and circularity in a very broad sense. More specifically, next to frequently stating that the realization of a circular economy is mainly about the alternation of our modes of consumption and production which was seen as a more technical approach, during one of the first meetings I had with the Circle That team, it became apparent that they see the transition towards the circular economy as a social transition, rather than merely a technical one. Moreover, they argued that for the circular

economy to thrive, mindset shifts are needed. Besides, it is not only the transition that has a strong social component, it is also the circular economy in itself that has a social component, as it reconfigures the ways in which we behave and think about things, as Nina stated during our interview.

Now, for most of my respondents the interest in the circular economy, as a system that falls into the realms of sustainability and consists of both a technical and a social aspect, came from reading books and articles, watching documentaries, seeing commercials, getting information via social media or studies that were all concerned with the negative effects of the way the world, primarily the Western world, functions at this moment in time. Interestingly, this awareness and the fact that they appear to be informed in the topic fostered feelings of responsibility to act upon the knowledge they have. More specifically, Felix, a follower and participant of the initiative, told me: ''*So it's kind of like that these external impressions* [referring to adds, documentaries and movies] *that are coming on to you and that kind of translates in me in some sort of responsibility to like, make sure that you actually do something about it…I think that that is also the reason why I chose Environmental Engineering as a studies, like ''I can do something about it* [referring to climate change], *also professionally and not only in my personal life*.''. This was underlined by another follower and participant, Bob, who stated: ''*So, there is a lot of information out there and for me, when I hear that information and perceive it as true,…, then the next question is: OK, what can I do about it?*''.

1.1.2 Taking Action as Common Sense

What was frequently mentioned in the talks I had, concerning how people translated the above mentioned feelings of responsibility into specific actions, was the diet people followed. More specifically, people explained to eat no meat or no animal products at all. Second, they appeared to have altered other consumer behaviours, by for example doing groceries at the market instead of in the supermarket to avoid buying vegetables that are wrapped in plastic, or not buying ''fast fashion'', thereby referring to clothes made in poor labour condition (i.e. sweatshops) but instead buy organic cotton or second hand. Beside these more consumerist type of actions, respondents also take action on the level of setting up an initiative as Circle That and aim to influence not only themselves, yet also other people in order to foster the realization of a circular economy.

Nevertheless, claiming that these behaviours should just be seen as actions, as an act or a set of acts with a certain goal in mind, is not in place. More specifically, comparing the diary entries with the interviews I had showed that in their daily lives (as presented in the diaries),

circularity and behaviours that were in accordance with the idea of circularity and sustainability were almost non-existent, whereas in the interviews, walk & talks, and person descriptions, it was clear that they did show behaviours of which they, their friends or their relatives thought to be in line with circularity or as being 'sustainable'. This not only shows the value of using these different methods, more importantly, it shows how behaviours that fall within the idea of circularity or sustainability are not that remarkable for themselves.. On the contrary, as Rachel, a follower, noted in her diary: ''*I had dinner with a friend, and he told me that he likes how passionate I am about sustainability – after I kept a leftover bread in a box for the next day! I was surprised because to me, this isn't even about sustainability, it's just stupid to throw away perfectly fine food…to me, it's common sense''*. This notion captures a feeling a common sense, meaning that it is 'just logic' to show specific behaviours.

In line with the mundanity of these behaviours, my interlocutors often stated the were not and should not to be seen as an activists, exceptions there. More specifically, Julia explained that some of her colleagues were activists, as they clearly exposed their veganism. Yet, *''I do have an opinion, but I do not go to demonstrations and wear signs et cetera… I wouldn't call myself an activist''*. In addition, during a talk with Amber, I asked why she got interested in circularity. She explained: ''*I am not necessarily this person out on the streets protesting,…. But I was more looking for an alternative system of doing things type of tunnel* [referring to the circular economy]. *Because I was just looking at how I can basically use my skills of what I am doing and apply it to this whole transition*''. Nevertheless, they do behave in a certain way and have a feeling of responsibility to do something about how the world functions, and the will to behave and act in a certain way is rather strong. For example, all of the founders of Circle That had a paid job next to their work for Circle That, not only to sustain themselves, but also to sustain the initiative, which sometimes caused the presence of tired faces when I was at the office. Another example comes from James' sister, who explained in the person description: *''Despite suffering from an illness…he continued to be staunch in committing to his values, choosing to continue to eat a vegan diet,…, when re-introducing animal products would have been far less painful for him….and yet he always seems to feel like there is more he could do/should be doing''*.

The above shows how strong these feelings of responsibility can be. And interestingly, not behaving in accordance with that feeling of responsibility sometimes results in internal conflicts with my respondents themselves. To be more specific, Lisa pointed out in her diary that as she went to her cousin by car, who lives 45km from her place, she asked herself why she did not go by train, as she was researching sustainable initiatives at that time: ''*Definitely a current*

personal dilemma''. Moreover, as I discussed with Sophie during our talk, *''I prefer setting a step forward than backward, like, at some point I would like to eat completely vegan, and not go back to being a flexitarian…I cannot live with myself when I act indifferent to the things I know.''*. This insinuates that when they do not act in line with their thoughts and values, they feel bad about themselves. On the contrary, when they do act in line with what they deem as important, the result is the opposite. More specifically, actions like becoming vegan, not buying plastic wrapped vegetables, buying sustainable clothes, studying sustainable development, attending workgroups of a green political party, fosters a sense of happiness in my respondents. *''There is just so much to do, so much to learn, and there are so many ways in which I can contribute to the transition towards a circular society, and it gives so much energy to constructively being engaged with that'',* as Kelly stated in her diary. In addition, when I asked Bob about how he felt about behaving according to his knowledge on the impact of his consumption habits he stated with a big smile on his face: *''Haha, how do I feel about it? I feel good. Maybe even a little proud…''*.

1.2 Where Formalism Stops

What we can conclude up until now is that those who participated in my research, being either a founder, follower or participant of Circle That, are socially engaged, sociable, self-reflective and primarily highly educated people between the age of 18 to 35. In addition, it appears that they have a strong feeling of responsibility to do something about the effects of our (Western) way of living, and therefore aim to be engaged with an alternative system, being the circular economy. This feeling of responsibility is furthermore translated into actions and behaviours, which appear to be 'common sense'. Nevertheless, deviating from these actions and behaviours results in conflicts with themselves, whereas acting in line with them energizes and fosters feelings of happiness. What does this tell about the economic lives of my research participants?

From a formalist understanding of economic life, as discussed in the introduction of this enquiry, one could argue that as the behaviours of my interlocutors can both make them feel bad or good, it is not more than a rational calculation to decide which behaviour they want to show. More specifically, as being 'rational' is the act of weighing the costs and benefits of certain behaviours in order to realize self-maximalization, you could say that my respondents are actually acting in accordance with postulations about rational behaviour based on the notion of the homo oeconomicus. When I apply this reasoning on my interlocutors, I could argue the

following: with the notion of James in mind, it could even be that the mental benefits of behaving in a certain way outweigh the physical pain he suffers because of these behaviours. Therefore, in some way, James can be seen as the embodiment of a rational calculus, as the mental benefits apparently outweigh the physical costs, therefore he realizes self-maximalization.

Yet, should we understand this internal calculus between experiencing physical pain and feeling bad in mind simply as rational? Drawing such a conclusion at this point would not be satisfactory as stopping here and labelling the economic lives of my respondents as merely rational would actually be impossible, given the fact that it is still unclear what the explicit and implicit underlying reasons for their behaviours, and for their interest and/or engagement with the circular economy are.

1.2.1 Care, Right & Good and Purpose

''Because I Care''

For my research participants, interest in and/or engagement with the circular economy mainly started from the point of care for both the human and non-human world. This care developed over time, as Nina explained that she already cared for animals when she was young, and through reading about species being threatened by extinction ''*…it started growing in more ''how do we protect the entire non-human world…?'', because when you don't protect one, everything else will fall apart. So I started forming this big picture of how things are all interconnected and make sure it should be protected and how we are part of nature''*. In addition, friends and relatives of James, Julia, Lisa and Anke (one of the founders of Circle That) explained in their person descriptions that it was because of a care 'about others and the world' that they were concerned with sustainability and circularity.

What realized this care for others and nature was primarily the cause of how my respondents interpreted climate change and its effects. More specifically, according to them, climate change is an innate effect of our way of living, characterized by mass production, consumption and pollution, i.e. the linear economy of take, make and waste. And it is for this modus operandi that Amber concluded: ''*The way we, as humans, have been working on the planet is just simply not sustainable in the way that if we do not change, climate change will just accelerate. The planet will survive but we won't. So it's for our own sake, I guess''*. Next to that, they see climate change as just one of the problems we face on this moment in time, as they argued that climate change laid bare the malfunctioning of society and how we disrupted ourselves from nature and other human beings. Therefore, Sophie explained during a group discussion with

Noa and Eva that she was fed-up with the ''*arrogant, superior attitude of the West in relation to the non-human or non-Western world*'', claiming that this was unfair and not just. This shows that thoughts on justice and equality appear to underly the behaviours of my respondents, just as feelings of happiness do. Moreover, these feelings about injustice and inequality were not only about the relation between people in the here and now, but also about the relation with future generations. For example, Julia stated that: ''*I would like my children and grandchildren, at least I hope so, to enjoy nature as we do now. And who knows if that will still be possible in the future*''.

''*Because it is right*''

Nevertheless, although the answer could be quite obvious, one could still question why it is important to 'survive' as mankind, and why injustice and inequality are bad things that should be delt with. And interestingly, in a lot of my interactions with my interlocutors, they had difficulties in finding an answer. Yet after a short silence, they frequently argued that it is the right thing to concern yourself with the potential end of the existence of mankind, as it would be ''*irresponsible and selfish not to think about it*'', Nina explained during our group talk with Bob. Fighting injustice and inequality was backed by the same argument. This also came to the fore in the person description, in which friends and relatives explained that my research participants want to 'do good' or do 'the right thing'.

When I went to James' place to hang out and have a talk, he explained that he had some difficulties with this argument. As a student in Applied Ethics, he thought it was difficult to claim what is 'right' and what is 'wrong', as that could be different in other cultures. More specifically, he stated that ''*What is ethical in one context, can be not ethical in another. So it's difficult to talk about right and wrong. We should rather talk about 'good' and 'bad'*'''. This insinuated the idea that 'good' and 'bad' are fixed, meaning that what is good and what is bad transcends cultural differences. Nonetheless, he was again not convinced by his own argument, which made him stare out the window and lean back in his comfortable chair. ''*There are other, better ethicists, haha*'', he concluded.

''*Because it's the most purposeful thing I can do*''

Now, it is not my place to judge whether there are indeed better ethicists than James. Yet, what can be concluded from what is discussed above, is that my interlocutors actually do appear to know where their interest and/or engagement comes from, even though they might not be convinced by their own arguments. Near the end of the interview I had with Amber, she was clear in her answer: ''*Because it's the most purposeful thing we could do. To leave this world a better place than we found it…if you can contribute to a system* [i.e. the circular economy]

that maybe makes a bit more sense for a bit more people, and that is now obviously social inequality and what not included,...for me, that's purpose''. Moreover, Felix explained: *''...sometimes I see it as something religious, like you kind of do good things on earth to make sure that when you die you get into heaven. But it's not like getting into heaven because I don't really believe in it, but you kind of hope that when you're gone, you still left some thoughts and some ideas that people share, and will go on when you're gone.''.*

1.2.2 Rational Irrationality

In short, feelings of responsibility, showing specific actions and behaviours, and the connected feeling of happiness, which are the building blocks of the economic lives, appear to be underlined by an idea of what is right, or good, in relation to the non-human and human world in the now *and* in the future. This notion touches upon the work of Browne (2009). In *Economics and Morality: Anthropological Approaches*, she points out to the fact that morality plays a role in every economic system, whether this is a system based on either exchange, reciprocity or redistribution (i.e. the three types of economic systems as defined by the well known substantivist economic anthropologist Karl Polanyi). According to Browne, combining morality with economics allows us to consider how the everyday matter of living ''gets infused with our deepest beliefs of what we live for and how we live well'' (p.2). Therefore, we are able to get an understanding of the economic lives of people, that goes beyond the rational, material act of making a living based on self-interest and personal gain (i.e. the formalist approach to understanding economic life). In other words, we can state that the reason why my research participant are interested in and/or engaged with the circular economy, and why they live their economic lives the way they appear to do, has to do with both feelings of happiness and their ideas on morality. Therefore, both a rational logic as well as an irrational idea concerning what is good or bad appear to be the reason for my respondents to act in a specific way. This makes them not a mere homo oeconomicus but rather a homo circularis, characterized by rational irrationality.

These findings are in line with the work of Chibnik (2011). In the introduction of his book *Anthropology, Economics, and Choice*, he argues that understanding decision making through exploring rational economic calculus comes up short in getting a thorough understanding of why people make certain decisions and thus behave in specific ways? Moreover, Chibnik claims that historical changes, cultural norms, and socioeconomic institutions play an essential role in decision-making processes, next to rational calculus. Therefore, he argues that all of these factors should be taken into consideration when studying decision making. To continue on

Chibniks' notion on the role of cultural norms in decision making, Sayer (2005) argues that these norms, yet also values and commitments regarding what is just and good behaviour in relation to others, are formed by 'the moral'. Moreover, Beckman (2001) argues that behaviour can be understood from a want to ''be virtuous'', i.e. doing the right thing and thus act morally sound. What could be drawn from these insights is that human behaviour can be understood through getting an understanding of what is moral, as the moral underlines human behaviour. In this enquiry, the moral appears to be the realization of international and intergenerational justice, and it underlines the economic lives of my research participants. In addition, this moral shows how these economic lives are strongly connected to others. In the next paragraph, the latter will be discussed in more detail.

1.3 From Economic Acts to Citizenship

Following on what is addressed in the previous paragraph, Dobson (2007) argues that people who behave on both rational calculus and on ideas about doing the right thing should be understood as ''environmental citizens''. According to him, these citizens are first of all aware of the fact that 'self-interested behaviour will not always protect or sustain the public good such as the environment'(p.280). Second, they have a feeling for the creation of justice and see that they have a responsibility to work towards a sustainable society. This responsibility holds both an international and intergenerational aspect, meaning that these citizens state to have the responsibility to make sure their ecological footprint (i.e. the environmental impact our daily lives have) is equal to that of others in other places and times. Lastly, environmental citizens have what Dobson calls 'traditional elements' of citizenship, which refer to acts of citizenship in public spaces such as protesting and debating. Yet they are also aware of the implications of their private actions, such as consumer behaviours. In this way, Dobson concludes that environmental citizens are aware of the effect of their lives on others and aim to live sustainable, ''so that others may live well'' (p.282).

In line with Dobson's ideas on citizenship, Micheletti & Stolle (2012) argued that the understanding of citizenship is expanding in three ways: by addressing concerns about past and current injustices and their effects on the future (i.e. a broadened temporal dimension); by addressing responsibility worldwide (broadened special dimension); and by adding a material dimension that emphasizes responsibility to nature and animals. Therefore, they call for 'Sustainable Citizenship'. This citizenship-type holds ''the central claim that people should do all they possibly can to help improve social justice and safeguard nature to make the world a

better place in which to live'' (p. 89). Moreover, as sustainable citizenship broadens several dimensions, the scholars argue that it extends the understanding of citizenship beyond the common relation to the state in which citizens ought to vote, obey laws, serve and control the government. Rather it includes global well-being, biodiversity, nature, ''thus extending citizenship responsibilities beyond one's own community to include an expanded notion of equity and caretaking'' (p. 91). Lastly, Micheletti & Stolle claim that sustainable citizenship should be enacted in order to realize sustainable development and entails actions to be taken on a daily basis, in for example consumer choices.

These insight of Dobson (2007) and Micheletti & Stolle (2012) show various interesting insights which to some extent allow us to understand how the economic lives of my research participants can be understood in terms of citizenship. As addressed before, my respondents appear to feel a sense of responsibility; want to create justice for other living beings all over the world, in the now and future; and are reflective on their own daily actions and its implications. Therefore, could we argue that we should understand my research participants as environmental, or sustainable citizens? Although it seems to be convenient to do so, in the following section I argue that we should not.

1.3.1 The limitations of Environmental - and Sustainable Citizenship

Now, although the works of Dobson (2007) and Micheletti & Stolle (2012) touch upon what I previously described about my respondents and there is an interesting connection between morality, individual behaviour and citizenship, it must be said that this understanding of citizenship is not satisfactory for this enquiry. More specifically, the work of Dobson was written form the question to what kind of policy would be most effective in realizing behavioural change to realize sustainable development. He concludes by advocating for the stimulation of attitudes that underlie environmental citizenship, thereby making the concept prescriptive. In addition, the work of Micheletti & Stolle is rather prescriptive in their understanding of citizenship as well. Moreover, although it combats the notion of citizenship as merely a static relation to the state by claiming that sustainable citizenship has a larger temporal, spatial and material dimension to it, these dimensions are still static and prescriptive.

This prescriptiveness limits the extend to which we can understand citizenship as embedded into a specific local context. Therefore, and not surprisingly, anthropological work on citizenship refrains itself from using prescriptive theories as a starting point. More specifically, the anthropology of citizenship is mainly concerned with understanding the practices people undertake in order to become a political member of a community to which they aim to belong

(Lazar & Nuijten 2013). Therefore, citizenship should be understood as a process (Caglar 2015). In line with these notions, Isin (2009) points out that understanding citizenship is not about 'who is the citizen?', but should rather be focussed on asking 'what makes the citizen?'. More specifically, he argues that acts such as voting, protesting or organizing, through which people claim rights, constitute citizenship. These acts are aimed at disrupting defined orders, routines, understandings and practices that are present in a given body politic. In addition, he shows how these acts can take place on varying *sites* (i.e. places at which acts are performed, such as courts or borders) and *scales* (i.e. the scale that the claims are concerned with, such as the city, region, nation or world). Lastly, by building onto these notions and on the ethnographic work of Balibar (2004) on the *sans papiers* (undocumented refugees who came to France in the 1990s), Isin advocates for understanding these refugees as 'Activist Citizens', as claimants to the right of justice. By doing so, he shows the value of researching citizenship through the acts people undertake in order to reconfigure their relation with the body politic.

This focus on acts of citizenship can be found in the work of various anthropologists. For example, by drawing on his ethnographic work in São Paolo, Brazil, Holston (2009) shows how residents of the city peripheries claimed their right to belong to the city through the illegal construction of houses, which he calls 'Insurgent Citizenship'. In addition, Sternsdorff-Cisterna (2015) showed how people realized 'Scientific Citizenship'. More specifically, as groups of Japanese people showed distrust in governmental standards considering food safety after the Fukushima nuclear meltdown, they indulged themselves in scientific knowledge on radiation and formulated their own standard. In this way, they tried to diminish the exposure to dangerous levels of radiation in order to ''protect the life of current and future generations'' (2015, 455). And as already discussed in the introduction, Brodkin (2014) attempted to look at economic acts people undertake in order to become 'Economic Citizens'. Now the question remains, how could we understand my research participants in terms of citizenship?

1.3.2 Circular Citizenship

Looking at the acts my research participants appeared to show: altering their own consumption habits, yet also setting up an initiative such as Circle That and/or talking with friends about issues that are present in the world and building strong relationships, we can conclude that they have a rather specific way of making a life worth living. In other words, while they are concerned with their own individual behaviour and acts in relation to sustainability and/or circularity, having close relations with others is equally important. Interestingly, these relations with others do not only concern people they already know. More

specifically, my interlocutors told me that they are concerned with/cared for people living in other places and times. Being concerned with the transnational and transgenerational in order to create justice is the 'most purposeful thing to do', as they explained.

This care about others shows how their economic life is not merely concerned with their own 'making a living'. Rather, it tells us that they are aware of the effects of their own lives on others in the now and future and by this awareness show to have ideas about how they ought to live together with other people all over the world today *and* tomorrow. Therefore, as Lazar (2013) explained that studying citizenship is about gaining an understanding of how people live together, we can conclude that we can understand the economic lives of my respondents as constitutive to a specific form of citizenship. I argue (in line with Circle That) that this specific form of citizenship is to be called Circular Citizenship, which is characterized by a specific focus on economic actions in the here and now, aimed at claiming transnational and transgenerational justice. This combats the understanding of citizenship merely as how people live together in the contemporary, as it broadens the temporal dimension through which citizenship can be understood.

One could argue that Micheletti & Stolle (2012) already explained this broadened special and temporal dimension, and thus claim that there is nothing new under the sun. Yet, in addition to what is previously explained as a limitation of their work, Micheletti & Stolle (2012) forget to include empirical data to strengthen their argument and do not explain what kind of acts constitute 'sustainable citizenship'. The same argument applies for the work of Dobson (2007) in which he addressed feelings of responsibility and justice. Furthermore, my understanding of 'economic life' makes circular citizenship different from economic citizenship as discussed by Brodkin (2014), as I defined 'economic life' in line with Narotzky & Besnier (2014).

Nevertheless, as I addressed before, the works of Lazar & Nuijten (2013), Isin (2009), Holston (2009), Sternsdorff-Cisterna (2015) and Brodkin (2014) show that citizenship is not only about how people live together. It is also about a relation between these people and the body politic to which they (aim to) belong. Therefore, what remains unclear is how we should understand the relation between my research participants with the body politic in which they live (i.e. belonging), which is an essential part if we want to obtain a thorough understanding of what Circular Citizenship actually entails. Therefore, in the next chapter, I will discuss how my respondents define the world they live in; how they experience living in this particular system; and how they realize belongingness. In that way, we will be able to conclude whether and in which way circular citizenship is formed.

Chapter 2

<u>Trapped in the Illogical System</u>

When I entered the office of Circle That at the end of April, the team members were sitting at the yellow table which took a central place in the room. Laptops were scattered across the table, and pens rested on top of notebooks. The comfortable chairs were put into one of the corners of the rectangular shaped room. It was a nice, warm day in spring, and through the large windows at one side of the office I could see a lot of people walking on the Domplein to take a picture of the Dom and enjoy the sun. I arranged this meeting as I was eager to have a talk with the entire team, although unfortunately, David was not able to attend. After we opened up a beer, we sat down at the table. We started talking on how they came up with Circle That and why they started the initiative, and we discussed how they experience being engaged with the circular economy.

Anke: *There are of course small thing you do, in your daily life.*

Maxime: Yeah, like, although you are bound to a system in which you live, you can do small things.

Amber: hmmm, yet I also think that that is difficult sometimes, as when you get interested in this topic of circularity and sustainability, you see it everywhere. So that kind of also make you feel a bit bad sometimes because you see so many things that are not circular or sustainable while they could be. And sometimes you also know you could do things better yourself, but sometimes it's hard.

Maxime: Yeah, but I also think that you shouldn't be to hard on yourself as there is just so much you can do. Sometimes I feel like I am building 'sustainable credits'.

ME: What do you mean by that?

Maxime: That you often do something that is circular or sustainable, like buy circular products. And because you do that, it's okay if you don't buy a sustainable product at another moment. You're not perfect, but you do your best.

Anke: But still I get angry about that sometimes. Like these shoes I'm wearing, they're vegan but way more expensive than 'regular' shoes…

Shanice: Pff, exactly, like I have this compostable phone case, but that's so fucking expensive compared to others

ME: hmm, I see. But what then do you think about living in this society?

After I posed that question, all of them set back in their chairs, and sighed heavily. I saw arms going up in the air with despair; heard the words ''*Well, we're fucked''*; and saw Shanice depicting as if to hang herself, stating she felt ''*Shit*'' about it. ''*We do so many things wrong and that paralyses me sometimes. Like in my work at De Clique* [a Utrecht-based star-up that sees waste as a resource and collects resources, therefore calls itself a resource collector] *I see how much food is thrown away, and that paralyses me. Because than you need to create the alternative and that's heavy''. ''That's why we're sitting at this table, we feel the responsibility''*, Amber concluded.

…

That afternoon I realized how the lives of my research participants and the extent to which they are able to live their life in a way that they want to (i.e. as a circular citizen), is strongly interconnected with the socio-economic system in which they live. This touches upon anthropological work on citizenship, in the way that this scientific perspective is mainly focussed on the actions and processes of people that aim to become a political member of a specific community, in order to influence decision-making that concerns their lives. Moreover, Lazar & Nuijten (2013) argue that the extent to which people are able to realize their belongingness is dependent on both the structural conditions for the realization of ''full membership'' and the self-creation of citizens as full, or good, or active citizens. This notion touches upon the work of Aihwa Ong (1996) on Cultural Citizenship, in which she shows how citizenship and becoming member of a specific community is both a process of self-making and being made. Yet is it the socio-economic system that is common in the society in which my respondents live the community to which they want to belong? Or do they aim to find belonging to something else?

Therefore, in this chapter I will address the experiences of living in the socio-economic system in which my research participants live. In addition, I will address their experiences with this socio-economic system and elaborate on how this limits their ability to become full circular citizens. Besides, I will elaborate on the value of the 'sleeping community', that appeared to be of importance to realize circular citizenship. Subsequently, based on anthropological insights on citizenship, to which 'belonging' is an essential part (see Introduction), I will explore how my research participants aim to realize belongingness and explain how belongingness is connected to their aim to realize an alternative economic system.

2.1 The world in which we live

What became apparent through the conversations I had with Kelly, Felix, Julia and others, was that they view the world in which they lived as rather unequal. To be more specific, and in line with their ideas on injustice as discussed in Chapter 1, they argued that the current economic system puts the wealth in the hands of a few (mainly the Global North), whilst it simultaneously displaces the negative effects of the accumulation of wealth of a few to other parts of the world (i.e. Global South). In this paragraph, this will be discussed in more detail. Furthermore, I explore how my research participants experience living in this particular world.

2.1.1 ''*Capitalism is destroying the world*''

After one of my first interactions with the Circle That team, a presentation about the organization was sent to me, which I could read to get a good understanding of the initiatives' purpose. One of the most striking points concerned Circle That's aim to step away from seeing people merely as a homo oeconomicus, but rather as circular citizens (see Chapter 1). What this notion shows is that they see that the world they live in, more specifically, the economic world they live in (which I see as the overall place in which all kinds of actors (individuals, businesses, governments) act in order to make a live worth living), looks at humans merely as consumers. Moreover, they argued that it is due to the existence of capitalism that the latter understanding is prevalent in the society in which they live, which is a rich and wealthy western country.

Furthermore, capitalism is built on the idea of linearity, as Amber explained during the talk we had at the Circle That office. And it is this specific system that does not seem to make sense to her, as she explained: ''*it's just the way how we consume resources and than dump them into landfills, that doesn't make any sense…if we keep this way of living, of working, and just take, make and waste,…climate change will just accelerate*''. In other words, for her, the linear, capitalistic system fosters climate change and is therefore a system that could be seen as a double edged sword. To be more specific, Fiona, a follower of the initiative, stated that ''*if there's climate change, the first people who will be affected are the less privileged people in poorer countries''*. Similarly, Julia explained how buying fast fashion at Zara has a negative impact on other people on other parts of the world, in the sense that those who produce the clothes that are sold at Zara work in poor labour conditions and are paid too little. This was confirmed by Bob, who during our talk addressed that the same would be the case if you would buy clothes at H&M. So, the double edge of the capitalist sword might be that it causes injustice in two ways. First, by creating poor labour conditions for workers in other countries in order to

make cheap consumption possible. And second, by fostering climate change and the fact that poor countries will be less able to, compared to wealthy countries, defend themselves to the effects of climate change, these countries are double affected.

This view on capitalism can be understood from the work of Patel & Moore (2018). In the introduction of their book *A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things*, they argue that on the contrary to the common understanding of our current time period as the Anthropocene (the geological epoch in which mankind has a great influence on the climate and atmosphere), we should rather understand our time as the 'Capitalocene'. Thereby, they do not place humans central stage in arguing what caused climate change. Instead, they put Capitalism, not only as an economic system but also 'as a way of organizing the relations between humans and the rest of nature', i.e. the 'web of life' (p.3) at the forefront. Patel & Moore (2018) furthermore argue that capitalisms focus is to reap as much benefits as possible, while investing as little as possible in order to make profit.

Central to this modus operandi is 'Cheapening', which entails ''a strategy, a practice, a violence that mobilizes all kinds of work - human and animal, botanical and geological - with as little compensation as possible'' (Patel & Moore 2018, p.20). Moreover, Patel & Moore show that this quest for profit starts from the created disconnection between society and nature, to which other humans which were not seen as part of society, like slaves and indigenous people, are part of. In other words, this disconnection allows the cheapening of nature, reducing it/them to nothing more than a numerical value that could be calculated, commodified, what could ultimately result in making profit. The latter clarifies the earlier mentioned notion of Amber, claiming that capitalism is built on linearity. To be more specific, as nature is cheapened, we are able to exploit it, use the products we make, and then discard these products back into nature, not thinking about the consequences or the limits of a closed system which is the earth.

In addition, my respondents frequently mentioned the fact that capitalism, and the circular economy, should not be looked at as merely technological economic systems. This touches upon the work of Harvey (2007). Harvey describes, in the fourth chapter of his book *A brief history of Neoliberalism*, how capitalism fosters inequality between different states. This shows how an economic system holds social implications concerning how a given society is structured. Therefore, we can conclude that capitalism or the circular economy should not be looked from a pure technological perspective. Instead, given the nature of what an economic system is, we should talk about a socio-economic system. This understanding of capitalism and the circular economy will be prevalent in the rest of this enquiry. Yet, what remains unclear is how my respondents experience living in this socio-economic system that ''doesn't make sense''?

2.1.2 Experiencing the Socio-Economic system

The ways in which my interlocutors appeared to experience living in their socio-economic world, can be divided into four main categories: experiencing disappointment, feeling paralysed, living with others, and being confronted with structural features. Each will be discussed in more detail below.

Experiencing disappointment

First of all, the effects of capitalism on climate change appear to be worrying and frustrating my respondents. For example, Kelly wrote in her diary that: ''*The complete, capitalistic, easy way of thinking that is paired with the feeling that we are too slow in tackling climate change sounds like madness to me*''. Moreover, as I walked through Amelisweerd, a forest near Utrecht, together with Noa, she explained how she was fed up with people in high rank positions not paying attention to climate change and being merely focussed on growing profits or realizing a rise in Gross Domestic Product (GDP). ''*It is more than annoying, it is disappointing*'', she concluded with a smile of despair on her face. She could know: crops of her kitchen garden had not been growing well this year due to unstable weather patterns, caused by climate change, as she explained. Second, as my research participants explained to have a want to turn capitalism into a socio-economic system which is more sustainable, i.e. the circular economy, they stated to feel overwhelmed at times. More specifically, they argued that they are only small individuals going against a system that is seeped into every part of society. Amber explained that: ''*...like, wait, even if I separate my waste how the fuck is that even going to change what is happening and is it going to have any effect on how it* [waste] *is being collected?*''.

Feeling paralysed

These feelings of being overwhelmed often transformed into feeling paralyzed. This was due to the fact that my respondents argued to see a vast amount of problems and crises occurring in the world, with complex interrelationships. Moreover, as a close friend of Nina explained in her person description that she and Nina 'struggle with the weight of the crisis'. After I emailed her to ask her what she meant by that, she explained: ''*...by this crisis, I predominantly mean the ecological/environmental/climate crisis & how it is situated and part of our world of entangled crisis (from corona, to racism...). Maybe I shouldn't have used the word 'struggle', as it carries a lot of weight. Instead I would say: feel lost and unsure of how to be, how to respond, how to engage with such weighted, wicked and important issues.*''. This feeling of being unsure and lost was underlined during my talk with the Circle That team, as Shanice explained to feel paralysed by the fact that '''*we do so many things wrong*'' (see the introduction to this chapter). In line with these experiences of my respondents, I experienced similar feelings,

as I wrote down in my diary: ''*...a couple of weeks ago, when I had this argument with my girlfriend on how we should live our lives, I just felt a bit depressed about the world and that there are so many things in daily life that go wrong or that annoyed me. Like for example using adds as a way to get people to consume, that's disgusting...*'', and I remember staring at my girlfriend when I made the argument that we should live our lives in the most sustainable way possible, whilst simultaneously I had the feeling that that would be impossible, leaving me feeling unsure about what to do.

Living with others

The afore mentioned insecurity, and the connected feeling of paralysation seems to be connected to the way in which my research participant appeared to be related to others. Moreover, in regard of actions other people show or how they behaved, my respondents explained not to judge others. Although Fiona explained to feel angry when companies do not take any action to fight climate change, when it comes down to individuals all of my respondents did not point fingers. More specifically, making others feel bad about how they behave would not help realizing the transition towards the circular economy, as Kelly explained during the interview we had. This argument was backed by various respondents, both founders, and followers and participants. Anke concluded that she could not blame others ''*...as I used to do the same. And you just need some time to change behaviour...So I don't blame them, because apparently they aren't aware of the impact of their behaviour yet...*''. Furthermore, it was not the case that only my interlocutors told me they did not point fingers at others, as several person descriptions confirmed. For example, James' sister explained: *''He has a willingness to hear people out and to have insightful discussions, and he has a keenness to learn from other people, I feel. He is inviting and open to hearing a broad spectrum of perspectives and ideas, even if they don't align with his values and believes.''*. In addition, a friend of Sophie stated: *''She has a lot of ideas on how things ought to be, and she follows her own intuition and ideology, but she would never impose her ideas on others.''*.

On the contrary to the acceptance of the ideas and behaviours of others, Rachel, Nina, Lisa, Julia and Eva addressed that they were sometimes made fun of, when they showed that they ate no meat, or completely vegan, for example. According to Eva, these jokes could be like 'Oh, we shouldn't make Eva angry' or 'Can we do that according to Eva?', and although she stated not to feel bad about these jests, she did experience feelings of being not understood, or respected even. In addition, Lisa noted: *''When I became vegan,...I had to constantly defend myself...You get like attacked quite a lot, like bullied slightly. I don't know. When you eat something, people almost always want to start talking about veganism but not always about*

being interested, but more defensive about what they eat, even though you didn't start a conversation about that. So sometimes you have to explain why you are eating that food and it almost feels like you are defending it, even though you are just sitting there minding your own business... It would be exhausting if all others would constantly be like ''oh, that's so weird''''. What this shows is how, in this case being a vegetarian or eating vegan is not what people are used to and therefore both make fun of those who are vegetarian or eat vegan, whilst they simultaneously try to defend their own eating habits.

Being confronted with structural features

An other experience of living within a capitalistic system was explained by Fiona. In the interview we had, she stated that when she started living zero waste, she had the time to do so because she had no job. More specifically, as she had the time to visit different shops to do her groceries without buying any packaged products, she was able to realize only a little amount of waste. Yet, as she started her studies in September 2019, she had less time to visit all the different shops and was therefore in a way forced to buy products at the regular supermarket, which were wrapped in packaging. In addition, Eva noted in her diary that she went to several stores to buy a cauliflower that was not wrapped in plastic. It was her '*Irritation of the day*'. These notions of Fiona and Eva lay bare the effort my research participants had to put into having an economic life, in these examples specifically concerning consumption, they envisioned to live and how that is limited by the structural features of the socio-economic system.

In conclusion, the four forms of experiences as described above show how my research participants are confronted with the inability to become full circular citizens on a daily basis. More specifically, the above mentioned displays how the socio-economic system of capitalism, which has both structural as well as social features, (tries to) hold back my respondents in their economic lives. For example, the fact that my interlocutors stated to be to some extent made fun of, shows the apparent abnormality of their behaviours. Furthermore, feeling unsure about how to act in relation to large scale (interrelated) problems capitalism has caused, such as climate change, racism and inequality has a paralysing effect on my respondents, which on some occasions leaves them doing nothing. Therefore, the question that comes to the fore is how my research participants still succeeded in being a circular citizen? Apparently, the answer lies in the connection with others.

<u>2.1.3 The value of a Sleeping Community</u>

Although the above mentioned rather negative experiences of the global socio-economic system in which my research participants claim to live, I do not intend to argue that they feel completely lost. Rather, I see that what 'helped' them in living in this world was being surrounded by like-minded people who encouraged them to continue with the behaviours and actions they were undertaking. More specifically, during a talk I had with Fiona, Kelly, Lisa and Rachel, in which we discussed who they were, what their connection to Circle That was, and why they were interested in circularity, Rachel concluded '*It is a very friendly community, it's encouraging…, and it's also hopeful, because of the large scale of problems*'. The others nodded to confirm Rachel's notion. The desire to be connected with others who hold similar ideas and values also became apparent through the person descriptions. For example, Bob's housemate explained that Bob got connected with Circle That due to the fact that it gives *''a sense of empowerment in knowing that there are more people that stand for the same things as you''*. In addition, Lisa's sister stated that Lisa's connection with Circle That came from a want to ''*become part of a greater community to drive this change* [the re-design of social practices, social structures and consumptions patterns] *forward together''*.

Next to the encouraging aspects of being connected to like-minded people, it appeared that my respondents valued their (possible) connection with others who were related to Circle That because of the possibility to learn from one another. For example, on the backdrop of a brainstorm session organized by Circle That before my research period, Felix stated that he liked to share thoughts and ideas with others on how to live more sustainable. In this way ''*you can improve what you are already doing, or improve your lifestyle and think about it a bit more*'', he argued. In addition, Bob explained that he liked to be connected to the initiative because of the possibility to share knowledge and inspirations, which constituted the Circle That community. According to Fiona, exchanging thoughts was very pleasant, as she remembered the first time she went to the Circle That office. *''I am always uncomfortable when I come along to a place where I don't know anybody. But then there I was instantly talking to them* [participants, founders] *and we were already discussing things, which was nice. It was very open and of course it made me want to come back because it didn't feel awkward''*.

In line with the notion of Fiona, I experienced similar open and enthusiastic encounters during group discussions. Moreover, during these sessions, attendants were eager to learn about and from one another, as questions flew over the digital table (the sessions were online) almost constantly. And at the end of my talk with Bob and Nina, Bob stated with a big smile on his face: '*Wow, this was really nice! I didn't feel like it being part of a research, haha.*'. After my

talk with Sophie, Noa, and Eva, a similar conclusion was drawn. This enthusiasm appeared to be more common then what I could see during my field work, as Amber explained in reference to activities Circle That had organized before the lockdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic: ''*with our activities, it happened almost accidentally, as we never said ''let's create a community for the sake of circularity''. It was just like: people want to connect. Okay, here you have a WhatsApp group. And then people wanted to bring ideas, so we organized 'Brainstorm Borrels'* (i.e. Brainstorm sessions while having a drink) *...So interesting, it was never really our intention, it...happened, kind of.''*.

Nevertheless, during the time I conducted my fieldwork, there were no activities in real life to which people could attend to. Therefore, Bob concluded in the interview we had that ''*...the community aspect is difficult in these times, I think because there are no physical events*''. Thereby, he insinuated that the community could be characterized as being *physically* surrounded by like-minded people, encouraging others to continue and improve their economic lives, and learning from the thoughts and ideas of other community members. This is in line with the work of Gudeman (2008), who argues that although a community could have various forms and sizes, for a community to be a community there must be a shared common interest[3]. Yet, as I have already mentioned before, a community was not physically observable during the time in which I conducted my fieldwork. Therefore, what is interesting to see is that my research participants (mainly followers and participants) still had the idea that there were others who were connected to Circle That, which was primarily based on past experiences. This shows that they still had the idea that there was some sort of community around the initiative. I therefore argue that the group of people which was constitutive to this thesis should be called a sleeping community, which has been awake and can wake up again.

In conclusion, this section has shown how belonging to the sleeping community positively contributes to the realization of circular citizenship. More specifically, the community encourages specific economic lives and could, according to the work of Narotzky & Besnier (2014) (who claim that people also make a life worth living by being surrounded by a collective that gives meaning to life), simultaneously be understood as an element of the economic lives of my respondents. Nevertheless, what still remains unclear is how this sleeping community stands in relation to the socio-economic system in which it lives, and what the implications of this relation are for the formation of circular citizenship.

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[3] Thereby, Gudeman (2008) builds onto the work of Anderson (2016) on *Imagined Communities*. Nevertheless, due to the scope of this thesis, I opted to leave a thorough discussion on how we should understand a community out of this enquiry.

2.2 Looking for Belongingness

Several scholars have shown how belongingness is an essential part of citizenship. For example, Isin (2009) explained how active citizenship entails those actions aimed at claiming the right to belong to the body politic to which these *actors* (claim to) belong. Furthermore, by building on Nietsche, he argues that rights are relations, and in the case of citizenship, it is thus about the relation between people who are 'a subject of politics and the polity to which these subjects belong (Isin & Nyers 2014, p. 1). By using the term 'polity', these scholars allow us to not only look at legal states as the body politic. Rather, it broadens our scope and allows us to look at other forms to which people are subjected to. Nevertheless, before I elaborate on the latter notion, it is important to point out how claiming the right to belong to a state looks like in the first place.

In his work *Pressure. The PoliTechnics of water supply in Mumbai*, Anand (2011) showed how slump dwellers in Mumbai claim their belonging to the city through making social and material claims to water infrastructure, which Anand identified as 'Hydraulic Citizenship'. More specifically, Anand explains how realizing both physical and social *pressure* on realizing water infrastructures in the city's slumps allow people to ''settle the city'' (Anand 2011, 543). Whereas physical pressure is concerned with realizing the flow of water through pipelines, social pressure concerns building social relations with local politicians and engineers who are able to realize the physical flow of water. In addition, in the final part of his work, he discusses the Premnagar settlement, in which residents are unable to realize hydraulic citizenship. Moreover, due to the fact that the Premnagar settlement is a Muslim dominated area which is spoken of as belonging to other states and residents are seen as ''outsiders'' and ''their people'' (555), they are ''unable to constitute themselves as a deserving political society'' (546).

The latter notion is interesting in two ways. First, by claiming that residents of Premnagar are unable to constitute themselves as a deserving political society, Anand (2011) confirms the work of Lazar & Nuijten (2013) who argued that belongingness concerns becoming a political member of a political community (i.e. a body politic (Isin & Nyers 2014)) in order to influence political decision-making. Second, the way in which Premnagar residents are seen as outsiders shows how belongingness is dependent on the ability of the body politic to claim who belong to its society and thus is able to make claims as a citizen. Therefore, added to what is discussed in chapter 1 concerning the enactment of citizenship through claiming the right of intergenerational justice, the extent to which people are able to be(come) a citizen appears to depend on structural conditions such as how these people are identified by the body politic.

This draws back to already mentioned work of Lazar & Nuijten (2013) as shown in the introduction of this chapter. They argue that the extent to which people are able to realize belongingness (i.e. become a citizen) is dependent on both structural conditions as well as the effort put in the self-creation of citizenship. Now, as the latter aspect is already discussed in Chapter 1, it is important to get a better understanding of how belongingness is dependent on structural conditions, and what these conditions are in this research.

2.2.1 The system is the Sovereign

In her work on Asian immigrants in the United States of America (USA), Ong (1996) discussed the concept of 'Cultural citizenship'. According to Ong, citizenship should be understood as the cultural process of *subjectification*. Thereby, she builds on the notion of Foucault, who claimed that subjectification entails the process of ''self-making and being made by power relations that produce consent through schemes of surveillance, discipline, control, and administration'' (Foucault 1989, 1991; in Ong 1996). In addition, Ong sees cultural citizenship as cultural practices and beliefs, which are the outcome of interactions between citizens and the state. More specifically, these interactions reconfigure the relation between citizens and ''the state and its hegemonic forms that establish the criteria of belonging within a national population and territory'' (738). This understanding of cultural citizenship insinuates that citizenship is the product of negotiating on the criteria of belonging, which exist withing a state and its hegemonic forms/ideas. In short, if one is to be seen as a citizen, one must belong, and the criteria for belongingness are defined through negotiations between the state and its hegemonic ideas, and (groups of) individuals.

In the course of Ong's (1996) work, she explains how neoliberalism[4] (i.e. the hegemonic idea) both decides who deserves to belong to the American state and prescribes what good citizenship is. More specifically, as neoliberalism fostered the idea that human behaviour related to citizenship should be understood in economic terms, she follows Gordon (1991) who claims that citizenship is increasingly ''defined as the civic duty of individuals to reduce their burden on society and build up their own human capital-to be "entrepreneurs" of themselves''

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[4] *''Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices''* (Harvey 2007, 2)

(Ong 1996, 739). By explaining how this economic capital centred (liberal) understanding of citizenship, consisting of human capital and consumer power, is strongly related to the racial black and white dichotomy existent in the US, Ong (1996) shows how belongingness of Asian immigrants to the US is dependent on their productivity and consumption (i.e. their ''whiteness''). This leaves Ong to conclude that Neoliberalism ''with its celebration of freedom, progress, and individualism, has become a pervasive ideology that influences many domains of social life '' (739).

As Ong (1996) describes how a socio-political ideology influences the criteria upon which is decided who belongs to a nation-state, she touches upon the concept of 'Biopolitics'. Moreover, Agamben (1998; 2005) explains how sovereign entities hold the ability to decide who is 'stripped to their bare life' and who is not. More specifically, by building on Foucault, Agamben argues that people hold two bodies: Bios and Zoe. Whereas the latter refers to the biophysical body (i.e. bare life), Bios refers to the political body that exists within a person. Therefore, as a sovereign entity is able to decide who is stripped from their Bios, it decides who is seen as a political entity and who is not. In other words, Following Lazar & Nuijten (2013), who claim that belongingness concerns becoming a political member of a political community, we can therefore conclude that the work of Ong (1996) shows how a sovereign entity is able to decide on who is seen as a citizen.

Furthermore, building on Ong (1996) and Agamben (2005), Hansen & Stepputat (2006) argue that sovereign entities are not merely nation states. Rather, as they claim that sovereign power is not simply bestowed upon a given entity according to the law (i.e. *de jure* sovereignty), sovereignty is something that can be practiced by any entity who claims sovereign power (i.e. *de facto* sovereignty). They therefore conclude that ''sovereignties are found in multiple and layered forms around the world'' (309). Moreover, Hansen & Stepputat (2006) argue that the multiplicity of sovereignties is to some extent caused by neoliberal policies that stimulated the privatization of government affairs, such as infrastructural services and security operations. This is in line with Sassen (1996), who argues that due to economic globalization sovereignty is displaced from the nation-state to multiple international institutions such as the European Union, or the international code for human rights. Therefore she insinuates that sovereignty is displaced from the state to other (global) entities. This leaves Hansen & Stepputat (2006) to conclude that '''''the market'', is an evermore powerful sovereign force'' (309).

In conclusion, following Hansen & Stepputat (2006), Ong (1996) and Sassen (1996), who show how neoliberalism and 'the market' (i.e. consumer capitalism) developed itself as a sovereign entity; Agamben (1998;2005) who argued that the sovereign power is able to decide

on who is stripped to their 'bare life' and who is not; Lazar & Nuijten (2013) and Isin & Neyers (2014), who state that belongingness concerns becoming a political member of a political community (i.e. a body politic) in order to influence political decision-making; and finally, Isin (2009) who argued that belongingness is an essential part of citizenship, I claim that the socio-economic system in which people live influences the extent to which people are able to realize full circular citizenship. In other words, the socio-economic system is a structural condition which influences the extent to which people can realize belongingness. In the final section, I will therefore discuss how capitalism influences the realization of circular citizenship and how my respondents seek belongingness.

2.2.2 Belonging to the Imagined Prospective

As the experiences and thoughts on capitalism show (see paragraph 2.1), my research participants are not enthusiastic about this particular system. In addition, it is partly due to the sleeping community that they are able to deal with capitalism and its social and structural implications. Nevertheless, it can be stated that they do belong to that specific socio-economic system. More specifically, as we have seen in the previous section, capitalism can be seen as a body politic to which people (aim to) belong. Following Ong (1996), who argued that neoliberalism prescribed a capital centred, liberal understanding of citizenship in which people are seen as (good) citizens based on their productivity and consumption, I argue that political members of capitalism[5] (i.e. the body politic) are those who hold the ability to be productive and consume. Now, during several interviews I had, interlocutors explained that the way you consume influences how the system works. For example, during a walk I had with Julia, she explained how she transferred her bank account from a bank which was seen as less sustainable to a sustainable bank, as ''you can vote with your money''. The latter notion insinuates that my research participants see that they hold political power with which they can influence the functioning of capitalism. Therefore, it can be concluded that my interlocutors (know that they) are political members of the body politic called capitalism.

Nevertheless, although my respondents could be seen as political members of capitalism and therefore as full citizens within that system, there is one major problem with that claim. More specifically, as we have seen throughout this enquiry, citizenship entails both the becoming a political member of a given body politic (i.e. belongingness) and the enactment of certain acts aimed at realizing the self creation of citizenship[6]. As chapter 1 has shown, the

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[5] Which I see as the socio-economic system that is the outcome of neoliberal ideology. See Harvey (2007)
[6] Building on Ong (1996); Lazar & Nuijten (2013)

enactment of certain acts (i.e. the economic lives) of my research participants are aimed at the realization of circular citizenship through claiming the right of intergenerational justice. Therefore, they do not aim to act like a typical consumer (i.e. the homo oeconomicus) which is central to citizenship in a capitalist system (see paragraph 1.2). In other words, although my research participants can be seen as political members of capitalism, there is a discrepancy between how capitalism would like people to make a life worth living and how my respondents form their economic lives. Therefore, I argue that they should not be seen as full citizens within the realms of capitalism.

The remaining question is: if founders, followers and participants of Circle That should be observed as Circular Citizens, to what socio-economic system do they want to belong to in order for them to be *full* Circular Citizens? As discussed throughout this enquiry, my research participants aim to contribute to the realization of the circular economy, a socio-economic system that realizes both international as well as intergenerational justice. This drive towards a reconfiguring of their relation with the current hegemonic system is shown not in their acts *against* capitalism, but in their acts *for* circularity. As Amber puts it: ''*…you can built this parallel system and show that it can be done differently. And that just resonates more with me…You can just built something better yourself*''. This notion illustrates that my respondents, in reconfiguring their relation with the body politic (i.e. capitalism), do not aim to seek belongingness to capitalism. Rather, they reconfigure their relation with capitalism by seeking belonging to an alternative socio-economic system. Nevertheless, as the circular economy is still under construction, I would rather argue that thus seek belonging to a system that does not yet exist. They seek belonging to an imagined prospective. In addition, as belonging entails the becoming of a political member of a body politic, and the body politic is in this case the socio-economic system that functions on the idea of circularity (i.e. a ''circular society'', as the founders of Circle That frequently claimed), I argue that my research participants are a political member of this body politic. More specifically, as the circular society is still in the making and my respondents are (at least to some extent) engaged with the realization of the circular economy, they shape the imagined system. Therefore, they have political influence and should thus be understood as political members of the circular society.

Conclusion

How Citizenship is formed

Throughout this enquiry, my aim was to explore the ways in which citizenship formation takes place among people who are interested in and/or engaged with the circular economy. Building on to existing scientific literature within the fields of Economic Anthropology and the Anthropology of Citizenship, and by using a multitude of ethnographic research methods, it can be concluded that the founders, followers and participants of Circle That appear to develop Circular Citizenship. This form of citizenship can be understood through the economic lives they (intend to) live. These lives concern having a sense of responsibility for taking care of the world around them. Circular citizens claim that that is the right thing to do. In fact, it is the most purposeful thing to do. In this way, they built a life worth living together with others in the now and future. Circular citizenship thereby extends our understanding of citizenship as it broadens the temporal dimension through which we can look at this concept. In addition, by looking at the economic lives of my respondents from the perspective of a neosubstantivist, we were able to get a clear view of all the acts people undertake beyond consumer related activities. For example, it allowed us to observe the existence of the sleeping community and it showed how important it was for my research participants to have close relationships with like-minded others.

Furthermore, as the works of Lazar & Nuijten (2013), Isin (2009), Holston (2009), Sternsdorff-Cisterna (2015), Brodkin (2014), Anand (2011), and Ong (1996) show, we should understand citizenship as a process of self-making and being made. In other words, if we want to understand the formation of citizenship, we should also look at how and to what people aim to realize belongingness. Therefore, in chapter 2 I discussed how the founders, followers and participants are being made by the hegemonic socio-economic system in which they live. More specifically, their experiences with the social and structural features of capitalism show how they are limited in their attempt to become full circular citizens. Therefore, in combination with scientific literature on sovereignty, I showed how a socio-economic system functions as a sovereign entity (i.e. body politic) which decides the extent to which people can realize full citizenship. In other words, I outlined how a socio-economic system influences belongingness, whilst it is simultaneously something that people want to belong to. Therefore, I argued that my research participants aim to realize belongingness to an imagined prospective, which is the circular economy. And interestingly, they do not try to reconfigure their relation with the

hegemonic socio-economic system by acting against capitalism, but by acting in favour of circularity.

Nevertheless, making the claim that they seek belongingness to an imagined prospective automatically implies that I see the circular society/economy as the sovereign entity which holds the ability to decide on who is seen as a citizen and who is not. Yet, as the system is still in the making, you could question whether it already holds a decisive power. To experience whether the system already has such power might have been more easily studied during a time in which the researcher would have been able to see interactions between research participants in real life. Then, it would have been possible to experience the 'ethnosphere'. The latter is a concept developed by the anthropologist Wade Davis, and according to public philosopher Roman Kraznaric, it refers to ''the cultural air in which we breathe. It contains the swirl of ideas, beliefs, myths, and attitudes that are prevalent in society, and that constitute the worldviews shaping how we think and act'' (Kraznaric 2020, 219). Therefore, I argue that obtaining an understanding of this ehtnosphere within a group of people who are concerned with the circular economy will allow a researcher to see how strong the ideas of circularity are in that group. More specifically, the researcher will in that case be able to see to what extent the socio-economic system called 'circularity' decides how people think and act, and who is therefore seen as a full circular citizen or not. This could be an interesting challenge for future research. In addition, further research could more thoroughly focus on the ways in which capitalism and its social and structural implications limit the extent to which people are able to realize full circular citizenship.

So, how ought we live together? It is the question with which I started this research in February 2021. Now, I see that circular citizens have their ideas about an answer. It appears that their 'Telos', i.e. the ultimate goals that they live for and gives their life meaning, is to realize a circular society. In this socio-economic system, nature, to which humans are part of, thrives. More specifically, this society must be fair and just towards all beings that live now, and to those yet to be born. How you make a life worth living plays an essential part in the realization of this civilization. Nevertheless, hegemonic ideas, common practices, and a socio-economic system frustrate this quest and therefore limits the extent to which people are able to realize full circular citizenship. Only time will tell if, and how circular citizens will succeed in their attempt to alter the society in which they live and thereby change the course of history.

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APPENDIX I – Person Description Letter

Dear Sir/Madam,

You received this letter as a result of your relative's/friend's/roommate's participation in the research 'Economics & Identity', conducted by me, Julius Veenstra. As a master-student Cultural Anthropology: Sustainable Citizenship, in co-operation with the Community Based Research for the Humanities – team of Utrecht University and the initiative 'Circle That', I am curious to find out why people are interested and/or participate in offline and online activities of Circle That (see: www.circlethat.org). In addition, I am interested to learn more about who these interested and/or participating people are. Therefore, I would like to ask you to tell me something about your relative/friend/roommate below. Topics you could think of are:

- *How would you describe him/her? What are the first things that come to mind?*
- *What are the things you do together? How do you experience being with him/her?*
- *What do you think he or she thinks is important in life? And why?*
- *What would you say is/are a typical characteristic(s) of him/her?*
- *What do you think about his/her interest in sustainability? Has he/she always been interested in that topic? Why is he/she interested in this concept?*
- *Why do you think he/she is interested in events of Circle That?*
- *…*

These are just some examples, as you have the freedom to write whatever you want! Also, you are free to write as much as you want, so it could be two pages but two paragraphs is also great. Please note that all gathered data will be anonymized, and that participation is fully voluntary. This means that your name will not be made public and that you can always chose to not to write this letter. This research has been approved by the Ethics Review Board of Utrecht University. For further information about my research, I would like to refer to the information letter that is accompanied to this letter. Lastly, there is no right or wrong in writing a description of your relative/friend/roommate, I am only keen to know more about your experience/feelings/thoughts about the concerned person.

If you have any questions about my research and/or want to hand in your description, please send that to j.p.veenstra@students.uu.nl. In handing in the letters (Word Document is preferred), please put your relative's/friend's/roommate's name, and your connection with him/her in the title of the document. For example: *Peter (my nephew)* or *Sophie (my roommate)*.

NOTE: you can write the letter in both Dutch or English.

Thank you in advance!

Kind regards,

Julius Veenstra

APPENDIX II – Diary Letter

Dear all,

Now that we have had a one-on-one chat, a group meet-up, and (possibly) you participated in the person description, I would like to invite you to the last aspect of my project. Yet, before that, I would like to repeat myself and thank you once again for your willingness to help me, your enthusiasm, and the interesting insights you've already provided! Now, in the coming month (April), I would like to ask you to keep a diary for a period of two weeks (April 12th – 25th) after which we will meet for a walk & talk (if possible) at a place where you like to go.

I could imagine that keeping a diary sounds like a rather time-consuming activity, therefore I would like to clarify my expectations which gives you the possibility to see if it fits in your agenda. First of all, you are in the lead on what you put in the diary. This means that there is no right or wrong in what you record: you can tell about things you did, things that happened, feelings you had, thoughts that crossed your mind, interactions that took place, talks you had or a combination of all. So it could be about a friend having a bicycle accident; the cashier that was very polite at the Albert Heijn and how that made you feel; or a discussion with your mom about what a windy day it was, which caused a lot of litter to fly around. You name it! Second, the way in which you want to keep a diary can vary. This entails that you could chose to keep a written diary, either on paper or on any digital device. But, you can also chose to keep a so-called 'audio-diary', which means that instead of writing, you can use a voice recorder (on your phone/computer) to record the things you want to talk about. This brings me to the third point: frequency and length. The frequency in which you keep the diary is for you to decide as well and can vary. Maybe on one day, you feel like writing/voice recording multiple times, while on another you don't feel like writing/recording at all. Yet, the more you write/record, the better I can get insight in your 'daily life' and thus get a better understanding of who you are and what you do. In addition, there is no fixed rule about the length of your writings/recordings.

I hope this elaboration on what to record, how to record, and how much to record and the accompanied flexibility and autonomy you have, gives a clear overview of what is expected. What is left to point out are some practicalities:

- Please clarify for each recording, both in keeping a written or an audio-diary, the date and time (if applicable) on which you record. This helps keeping a clear overview of your recordings.
- For a <u>written diary</u>, please send your recordings in one Word-document to j.p.veenstra@students.uu.nl after you have finished the period as discussed above.
- For an <u>audio-diary</u>, because of email restrictions that only allow you to send files with a maximum size of 25MB, I would like to ask you to send me (j.p.veenstra@students.uu.nl) the audio recordings each time you touch the 25MB maximum. This might seem a bit inconvenient, yet as I want to make sure that your recordings are safely transferred from your hands to mine I do not want to make use of Dropbox, Google Drive or WhatsApp.

In conclusion, it would be great if you would be willing to do this, and note that you are in control about how much time and effort you put in it! Please let me know if you want to participate, and what kind of diary (written/audio) you aim to use. Again, participation in my project is fully anonymous and voluntarily, so if you do not want to keep a diary, that is totally fine. In addition, if there are any recordings that you make, but later on don't want them to be used in my research, please tell. That would of course be no problem at all.

If you have any questions, please contact me, and I hope to see you soon after the diary-period! Cheers,