

CASE STUDY

SOPHIE MULLINS A STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

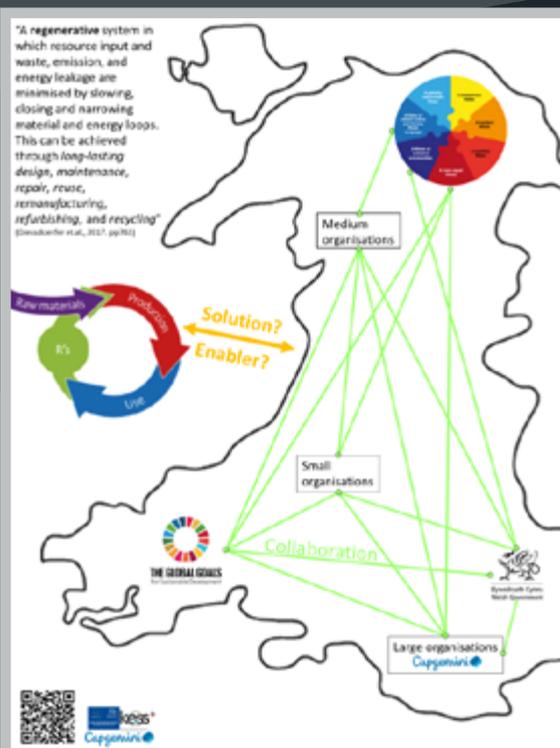


Circular economy moves away from the traditional take-make-waste economy to develop a more sustainable future. The circular economy could provide a new way to live in the future and develop interactions between businesses, government bodies and each other. My project, titled "How digital tools enable collaboration between small, medium, and large business and government in Wales in pursuit of circular economy outcomes" aimed to argue that circular economy implementation wouldn't be possible without collaboration between governments, businesses and consumers. I researched collaboration due to my belief that people are the biggest influence on behaviour change. With my

THE COMPANY PERSPECTIVE

"With the PoV on Circular Economy now sitting with Capgemini's internal team awaiting review and publication, Sophie has been continuing her work supporting internal engagements with the stakeholders she has built relationships with. She has been predominantly working to understand client pain points and learning around the theory of 'design thinking', subsequently taking that forward to apply it to problems and design innovative solutions. Sophie has also been embedding Sustainability into the SAP CoE Innovation approach and developing a Circular Economy PoV on the 'Renewable Enterprise'. In addition to this, Sophie has supported initial conversations with the Invent retail team on a concept of what the circular economy would look like for retailers, including what type of platform would be required to monitor sales and resources, and also supported Simon Mardle (Principal, Invent UK) by researching trends for him ahead of an industry presentation."

Bethan Richmond, Corporate Responsibility & Sustainability Manager at Capgemini



project sponsor Capgemini, a multinational company in the technology and consulting industry, I investigated the potential for digital tools to support collaboration for circular economy implementation. Working from within the industry brought me a different perspective to the traditional academic research approach as well as a valuable opportunity to work alongside others in a real-world scenario.

One of the ways we tackled this research question was through qualitative interviews with experts on the circular economy, including academics, business owners and policy makers. The semi-structured qualitative interviews assessed possible opportunities for digital tools to be introduced in order to enable better collaboration between stakeholders within a circular economy. However, the responses received suggested that implementation of the circular economy through collaboration needs to be further explored before a specific digital tool is selected, especially for the Welsh context. Technology could provide a great opportunity in this area but, because circular economy research is still a developing field of study, deciding the best way to use technology often presents

(Left) Poster of *Circular Economy Collaboration in Wales* produced by Sophie for the KESS 2 Communication Skills Workshop she attended during her research period. You can view the full poster online here: <http://kess2.ac.uk/case-studies/sophie-mullins-swanea/>

a unique challenge. Throughout this MSc research different forms of technology were explored, including collaborative platforms (such as Blackboard and LinkedIn); blockchain (a distributed, decentralised public ledger for storing information associated with monetary transactions); and even industry 4.0 principles. The key challenge presented by all qualitative interview respondents suggested that one blanket technology or digital approach could not be effective. However, the acquisition of high-quality data, particularly consumer data, is crucial to measure the success of implementing circular economy principles.

The 12 interview respondents ranging from policy makers to business owners suggested that Welsh businesses could benefit from the implementation of a circular economy due to the nature of the political landscape and the Welsh policy context. A circular economy structure would fit in with the already functioning model of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, which is actively addressed in many areas of Welsh economy; the Ellen McArthur Foundation Wales paper and other NGOs, whilst also bringing the prospect of creating better jobs closer to home.

I have discovered that collaboration supports circular economy implementation in many forms, passively and actively. Applying circular economy will require a systematic shift throughout our way of living and trading and it won't be possible without finding an effective balance for people involvement through means of collaboration and technology.

SOPHIE'S HIGHLIGHTS:

My main highlight of participating through KESS 2 was meeting incredibly inspiring people in many different ways including being able to interview a participant at St David's in Pembrokeshire, an experience that took me away from the confines of the office and out into the field. This helps me understand the applications of Circular Economy, not just for a city like Swansea or Cardiff but also more rural areas with different logistical options for circular economy implementation.

KESS 2 gives you the opportunity to carry out research you're really passionate about with the support of multiple streams of financial support and developmental opportunities. I was able to participate in a KESS 2 communication skills workshop in Mid Wales where again I got the opportunity to meet inspiring academics who, like me, really want to make a difference through their research. Being able to meet and converse with a cohort of research peers is an invaluable experience, many with subjects I had never heard about. The best part of this course for me was presenting my research and incorporating random images on a slide behind, including Darth Vader and a castle! Through presenting this way I learnt so much about everyone's research and gained much more confidence in my presenting style.

Knowledge Economy Skills Scholarships (KESS 2) is a pan-Wales higher-level skills initiative led by Bangor University on behalf of the HE sector in Wales. It is part-funded by the Welsh Government's European Social Fund (ESF) convergence programme for West Wales and the Valleys. For further information about how your organisation could benefit from participating in KESS 2, please contact the KESS 2 Central team at Bangor at: kess2@bangor.ac.uk

IMPACT

Wales could provide an opportunity for research surrounding circular economy implementation as, according to responses from the qualitative interviews conducted during the research, there is a chance to do things at a Wales level that would be unimaginably hard at an English level. Wales could provide a test environment for circular economy which could then be replicated in other regions within the UK and perhaps further afield.



As noted in the survey responses, in Wales we are just about the right size for everyone to be able to talk to each other properly, which in turn supports good networking. This concluded that stakeholders in Wales could achieve collaboration through a multitude of ways including, but not exclusive to, the use of digital and technological tools to enable circular economy implementation. However, the role of each stakeholder does require context for each collaboration effort, and more active support from the Welsh Government could greatly increase the successes of circular economy implementation.



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