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## TAMÁS FLEISCHER: QUESTION-MARKS AND ILLUSIONS RELATING THE ROLE OF THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY

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Ensuring sustainability requires that our social and economic activities respect the environmental barriers. Sustainability disposes with external conditions (ensuring the survival of the environmental system) and internal conditions (ensuring the adaptation of the human operated systems to the former). It can be an important role for the circular economy to make perceptible and measurable the external conditions of sustainability – that is the limitedness of the material (and energy) streams – for the operators of the socio-economic systems. Expectations that attribute much more than that to the idea of the circular economy are chasing illusions. The circular economy is able to function alongside the linear economy – at its expense but together with –, but a functioning system that does not have any environmental input and output at all is unimaginable. At the same time, the objectives of the circular economy need further clarification, determining its relationship to such sustainability concepts, as i.e. the non-growth theory. The most important indicators of the circular economy must provide a complete description of the flow of materials, thereby ensuring the measurability of a direct aim of the circular economy namely the reduction of material streams crossing the border of the human systems and the natural environment. It is not sufficient to reduce the specific flow of material streams (as compared to economic performance), but the balance of material volumes (including critical substances, water, etc.) is to be measured and decreased. Considering the details, the current EASAC indicator recommendations also show distortions to overcome, such as taking account of new jobs only as the impact of the circular economy on the employment, and with ceasing activities only when calculating the effect on the emissions. A similar torsion is over-emphasizing the significance of the material flows crossing the EU-boundary – as this flow is linked but very indirectly to the inputs and outputs of the human activity at the border of the environment.

*KEYWORDS: circular economy, sustainability, material flow, indicators*

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