

Contemporary public health and environmental issues have been largely focused on different contributors to the climate crisis and ways how to halt them. Hereby, Single-use Plastics (SUPs) (e.g. cups, plates, bowls, cutlery) are considered as having the strongest impact on the natural environment and public health. Accordingly, the EU Commission decided to ban several SUP items from the market by 2021. However, at the time of the global COVID-19 pandemic, due to health safety reasons, people perceive SUP differently, requesting even more items than previously, so that its generation is still growing. Plastic governance requires a re-assessment.

Here, we propose to investigate the COVID-19 pandemic effect on perception of climate change emergency and attitudes towards SUP items among various stakeholders of the SUP circular economy (CE) and the general public. Considering the circular economy paradigm as social phenomenon, we see a major opportunity for academia, citizen science practitioners and various groups of stakeholders (i.e. producers, distributors, municipal waste management officials, owners of establishments using plastic items, municipality representatives, non-governmental organizations) to collaboratively create evidence-based knowledge and motivate action to engage the broad public.

To this purpose, using various social sciences tools (media narratives and social media analysis, surveys, in-depth-interviews, Omni Calculator and gamification) we intend to answer: 1) What is the social and institutional context of behavioural changes during the COVID-19 pandemic? 2) What is the perception of SUP hazards among stakeholders within a SUPs Circular Economy and the general public? 3) How has the COVID-19 public health crisis affected perceptions of and responses to SUP's threat among stakeholders within a Circular Economy of SUPs and the general public? 4) Does integration of collaborative citizen science and collaborative knowledge brokering as a means of SUPs-science communication facilitate the commitment to reducing plastic pollution among the general public and stakeholders within SUPs circular economy?

Environmental crisis (climate and plastic threat included) cannot be solved by individuals, here we suggest, that academia should stand ready to address the collective dimension of such action.