

Creation of a circular economy will require extreme action

Radical thinking is needed in how we buy and discard goods

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Land full: the world will produce 3.4bn tonnes of waste by 2050 © AFP

The trash bin of an average house has changed: it now holds more delivery boxes and much more plastic. But the biggest trend in our trash? We are producing so much more of it than ever before. Right now, the world creates 2 billion tons of trash a year and this is expected to rise to 3.4 billion tons by 2050.

Another real problem is that about 70% of the trash that does make it to landfills is still usable. A new group of entrepreneurs is looking to get rid of that waste altogether. Stuffstr is a company in London with a solution. The company will pay you to pick up your unwanted things, then those things will be resold or recycled. Stores will also pay the company to do this service for their shoppers. For example, if you buy a shirt from a store, but a few years later decide to get rid of it, you can resell it to Stuffstr. Wasteful shopping has created a huge amount of trash in the world. This can change if shoppers buy things meant to last longer and then resell them when they are done using them.

This is also one way to reach a “circular economy”. “Circular” means to shape into a circle, and “economy” involves the movement of things and money. In this system things move in a circle because people reuse them instead of throwing them away. The European Union is working toward this kind of system and has a goal of 65% recycling and reuse by 2035.

Reusing and recycling also helps with climate change. The way that things are produced make up 45% of greenhouse gas release. Greenhouse gases add to the warming of the Earth because they trap energy from the Sun. A recent study shows that greenhouse gas release could be cut by 40% just by reusing and recycling more goods.

By 2050 buying and throwing away could be completely different from today. Imagine buying clothes that last for years, shopping for food using reusable jars, or buying a home made with reused material. Today’s world may be starting toward that change.