

Dear Students, Colleagues and Friends,

It's truly autumn again. Anthocyanin is at work turning our maples and sumacs scarlet as a combination of other pigments display the yellows, oranges, purples and browns that color this beautiful season. Thinking of seasons always brings me thoughts of cycles and the circularity of nature. We easily think of these when we think of times of the year; but I also think of the circularity required to build sustainable products, businesses, neighborhoods and communities in a restorative way.

From a very young age we're programmed to do much of our thinking in a linear fashion:

- Go to school. Graduate. Work. Retire.
- Gather materials. Make a product.
- Build a house in the woods. Grow a neighborhood. Develop a city.

But what if we took more time to think about the world in a cyclical or circular manner as nature does?

- Go to school. Graduate. Work while taking more classes. Test new ideas and/or build new businesses. Retire and go back to school to teach and learn.
- Gather materials. Make a product. Harvest used product parts to feed original material site or make new materials using waste as a resource.
- Build a house in the woods from the materials above. Emulate how and where nature builds neighborhoods and communities. Develop a city that feeds the natural resource base to work with nature as it grows and as older buildings and businesses need updating.

It sounds fantastical and yet; more and more people are now working toward building circular economies based on these very ideas.

<http://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/about> What problems could we solve if we were not always on the hunt for new materials; but could instead harvest from what we already have available? Imagine for a moment, what a bankrupt city like Detroit could do given those parameters. If you have an industrial plant needing updates, consider the cost reductions for capital outlays if you could reformulate materials onsite. (Then think about how you could reinvest those savings back into more sustainable practices to create a better bottom line.) We're not just talking about recycling, which can lead to products of lower value or function. A circular economy creates either biological nutrients which can safely reenter the cycles in nature OR technical nutrients which continue to function at high levels. No waste.

The optimal place we can continue to learn, not only about the possibilities but the pragmatic steps to the fulfillment of these desires, is the natural world around us. I recently wrote an essay

<http://bit.ly/16bj3s5> for Chicago's Center for Humans and Nature  
<http://www.humansandnature.org/> examining the question of gentrification and how we might reimagine and indeed, reinvigorate older neighborhoods by emulating bees, oak trees, bracket fungi and other organisms. All of these organisms have lessons to teach - optimization techniques, community enrichment practices. In fact, all of nature exists as a circular economy. We, like nature, can create an environment circular instead of linear in nature. What can we learn from nature today?

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*Give good people good information and they'll do good things.*