

RECYCLING YES, BUT IT'S NOT ENOUGH

Posted on 19/10/2019 by Naider



RECICLAJE SÍ, PERO NO ES SUFICIENTE

Nuestros esfuerzos para reducir el consumo y producción de plásticos se basa en la solución más sencilla que nos permita seguir con nuestro modo de vida insostenible: el reciclaje.

naider

[Some images speak for themselves](#). Every day **the equivalent of a stack of plastic bottles half the size of the Eiffel Tower** is sold around the world: drinks, yoghurts, cutlery, sauces, fruit trays, shampoo bottles... . Plastic does not leave everyday parcels untouched, and the problem is that even recycling does not seem like a solution.

In a world of finite resources crying out for better management, [Europe generates more than 2,500 million tons of waste per year](#). [How shows Greenpeace](#), almost 80% of waste ends up in landfills or the environment, and each year between 5 and 13 million tons of plastic end up in the oceans (80% of marine litter). In fact, [only 25% of what we consume is recovered](#).

Recycling is an essential process within what is known as [circular economy](#): an efficient system in the use of resources and low carbon. **However, less emphasis is placed on the need to reduce the production and consumption of plastics than on the benefits of recycling.** What is this about?

The background to the issue is one: **it is easier to invest in and advocate for recycling at a political and social level than for reducing plastic consumption and production.**

Asking the population to recycle is more comfortable than asking them to stop consuming plastic products, or to transform the industrial production system into one that is not based on [complex hydrocarbon compounds](#). In the first case, plastic is so integrated into our daily lives that it will take time to change the consumption habits of the population. Therefore, asking the population to reduce their consumption is a “bad press” measure. In the second case, it will be difficult to find substitutes for plastic that are equally economical, manageable, easy to transport and efficient.

The result: we base our efforts, and we focus almost all our attention, on the simplest solution that allows us to continue with our current way of life, recycling. But recycling alone will not achieve the established environmental goals.

As with the other social and environmental challenges we face (climate change, poverty, loss of natural resources, inequality...), plastic is a problem with deep social roots. In this regard, perhaps the question does not reside so much in whether the transformation towards a more sustainable society implies a decrease in our quality of life, but in **questioning what we understand by quality of life.**

In reality, the problem of overconsumption (of plastic) does not originate in materialism itself, but in the **confusion of priorities and imbalance in life.** Bad and excessive purchase decisions originate from deep erroneous beliefs that are later expressed in the material. **Materialism is neutral**, it is not something “bad” or “good”, it is simply a concept created to refer to the ownership of objects, something that has been carried out throughout the entire story. **The problem lies in the lack of a responsible system of values and beliefs. Its absence is what leads us to overconsumption. Having the correct and ordered convictions means expressing them through a sustainable and responsible use of products.**

It is true that we need the commitment of companies and governments to develop better management systems to extend the life of plastics and thus ensure that their first use does not mean the end of their life cycle. But it is no less true that, without a change in the social paradigm (individual and collective) regarding our consumption priorities and environmental awareness, any economic or industrial solution that is carried out will be less consistent and lasting than one in which we really we create and have it integrated into our system of values.

Julen González Redín
PhD in Sustainable Development
NAIDER

There are no comments yet.