

[CHALLENGE] Open Source Business Model for (a) Circular Washing Machine(s)

business-models

Lars2i 

Dec '15 

I was at a conference in Salzburg about Circular Design. Conny Bakker who is doing great work in the field of circular economy and also sent [a video message to the OSCEdays community](#) gave a talk there via video-stream about **4 business models for circular washing machines**. And I thought, there was missing one – the Open Source model I wrote her an email with it – and I paste you the text below.

1 / 6

Dec 2015



May 2016



The business models she was mentioning were (if I remember correctly):

- (1) **Longevity**: a longlasting product is the better one and will attract more customers.
- (2) **Leasing**: You don't buy but lease the machine from the manufacturer for some time. So he has an interest in building a high quality and longlasting product.
- (3) **Sell washes** not the machine: A manufacturer places a machine in your house and you buy 10 000 washes from him for example. If the machine has a defect, he comes and repairs it. A longlasting machine is in his interest.
- (4) **Sell clean clothes** not the machine: A company comes by and picks your dirty laundry and delivers clean ones. They have an interest in longlasting, repairable machines.

You may notice, that 3 of this business models have a problem with or change the concept of "ownership".

Update: [Here is a Video recording of her talk.](#)

Here is my Email to Conny Bakker:

The 5th Circular Economy Business Model for A Washing Machine

"Hello Conny Bakker,

(. . .)

I was in Salzburg giving a lecture on Saturday right before yours was sent. I really enjoyed your video, especially the part about the 4 business models. But I found there is one missing. The one that excites me the most.



The Open Source Model

Of course it is in a more hypothetical stadium. But have a look. Do you know this project by a student:

<http://www.jamesdysonaward.org/en-GB/projects/increvable/>

It does not particularly speak about open source. But the general idea here is to have a washing machine delivered to customers for self assembly – DIY – like IKEA delivers their products for self assembly. When the customers have assembled the washing machines themselves they will be able to repair it. And others too. This helps to prolong the life.

The Openness will allow the washing machine to become an open platform. Innovative minds and companies can contribute new ideas and features constantly. And can even come up with ideas, how to reuse or (re)manufacture the parts. It is not just done by one company. **The circularity is decentralized.**

That is the idea of many open source products – being platforms. Because they allow and facilitate ongoing open innovation through communication and delivery of parts, their products grow features and possibilities over time more creatively. The products grow in value. Think of an Arduino. Every week there are more projects you can do with it shared in the Arduino forums.

Or imagine you buy an open structures table <http://openstructures.net> . The things you can do with the parts will become more every year. It is not just one company spending time and brainpower to evolve the product. It is many. Including yourself as a customer, if you like.

For customers it is the better washing machine.

And it does not mean that they have to assemble the machine themselves. Third party companies can do it for them. As a service. As partners in the platform.

With a strong brand there is a strong business here for the company providing parts, communication and services around or – similar to one of your other examples – with the machine.

There are a lot of Arduino clones in the market. But Arduino is a stable and profitable company nowadays.

So in short: This business model is about being open and the circularity works decentralized.

And, this is also important I think, the washing machine will be owned by the customer! No new ownership model needed.

Thank you for your work and I hope this inspires you a bit.

Lars Zimmermann"

A Challenge?

How is this a challenge? The challenge is to make it happen now :-). And to challenge this challenge. What comes to your mind? Can this work? And if not, why?

Images:

1 - [Bundesarchiv Bild 183-15161-0001, Berlin, Bau Karl-Marx-Allee, Block 15, Waschmaschinen \(CC-BY-SA\)](#)

2 - [IFA 2010 Internationale Funkausstellung Berlin 111.JPG \(CC-BY-SA\)](#)

3 - [original-2_1_7-300x225 – by Lukas Wegwerth – \(CC-BY-SA\)](#)

transitionmaike 

Dec '15

What comes to my mind first is: use the OS basic design principles!

1. modularity= repair, refurbish and upgrade:

The parts of a washing machine are very different in durability, so usually the hull and drum are still almost new when the electronics are already outdated, the springs loose and the hose dripping.

As a business model this means: people will buy your machine because they know that one broken part doesn't mean a new investment, and it will be adaptable to new development later on. Buying your machine is a lifetime investment, you can grow old with what you're used to and don't have to relearn all the time.

2. standardization & open documentation:

if the parts were more compatible and openly documented, more companies could try to build spare parts. You might even be able to print them yourself or get them from a discarded machine. This would allow for shorter transport routes and encourage local business and reuse.

As a business model this means: cooperation with local businesses: people will buy your machine when they know that there is a local repairman who can come round any time, and spare parts will be available indefinitely.

3. flexibility

if you only lease the machine and it can be refurbished any time, you don't have to move house with this ultra heavy thing. The machine can become part of the standard equipment of the house, just like the stove is today.

if the machine is adaptable its programmes and drum can 'grow' and 'shrink' with the needs of your family, or you just lease a smaller one once the baby stops puking all over you every day.

and of course: create nodes with other industries: can the washing cycle be linked with the circular sanitation challenge?

[🔗 \[TASK 2016\] Blog Planning up to June](#)

unteem 

Dec '15

There is a very interesting project in France, called **L'increvable** which means: something that cannot die, broke. I posted about it on the facebook group last week. They are developing a washing machine which is supposed to last 50 years. They have modular pieces, up-gradable software etc. I did not have the time to contact them yet but that's my plan for this week. I'll let you know how it goes.

