



Open Letter

Turn ocean plastic waste into an economic opportunity. Will Taiwan lead the way?

Taiwan has made strong policy commitments on Sustainable Development and the Circular Economy. The Taiwan 2018 Circular Economy Promotion Plan puts forward interdisciplinary strategies on circular industrialization, which includes R&D assistance for innovative materials in leading industrial sectors such as petrochemicals, as well as innovation in green consumption, energy and resource integration. These strategies will also support Taiwan's ambitions to reach net zero carbon emissions over the coming decades.

The ocean plastic waste dilemma lies at the heart of circular economy, circular industry, innovation for circularity and net zero carbon emissions.

Plastic waste is indeed one of the biggest threats of our time. It is not only unsightly and unhealthy as it floats, breaks down into the ocean and washes up continuously onto our shores. It also harms marine life and destroys the ocean ecosystems. Micro plastics bioaccumulate up the food chain ending up in our biological systems, increasing health risks such as metabolic disturbances, neurotoxicity and cancer.

The National Museum of Marine Science and Technology in Keelung is currently hosting ***Midway Collide O Scope***, merging art and science to raise awareness of plastic pollution in the ocean. La Benida Hui, the curator, began her search for evidence in 2014, undertaking an international scientific expedition that sailed from Bermuda to Iceland. The exhibition creatively communicates with visitors the complexity of the ocean plastics dilemma and prompts citizen participation to address it.

The Red Room Taipei would like to use the momentum of *Midway Collide O Scope* and Taiwan's circular economy policies to invite for further reflection, debate and action on reducing ocean plastic waste:

- We must address plastic waste not just end-of-pipe-line, but at source.
- Approximately 20 percent of plastic waste appears to originate from marine industries such as fishing and shipping. We need better dialogue with stakeholders in these sectors.
- We must not just look for alternatives for single use plastics, but also look at strategies to gradually, over time, reduce their use.
- We must innovate so that the plastics we use are designed for circularity.
- We must practice circularity to ensure that plastic wastes do not end up on land or sea.

Many Taiwanese institutions, businesses, networks and NGOs are already working to reduce plastic waste. Many others are innovating to recycle and reuse plastic waste in higher value products. We can expect more innovation in the years to come. More impetus is needed, especially considering the prevailing COVID 19 global pandemic. While plastic items have been massively beneficial in the global fight against the pandemic, academic research indicates that global plastic waste generated since the outbreak is approximately 1.6 million tonnes per day. Such volumes which include biomedical wastes, threaten to overturn the work of all stakeholders globally, who have worked so hard and for so many years to stem the tide of plastic wastes.

The Red Room Taipei invites all stakeholders in Taiwan to join us to discuss, debate and seek solutions to this challenge. We are a not-for-profit association focusing on intercultural and interdisciplinary exchanges on art, culture and education. We provide a platform for sharing expertise, experiences and transforming lives through the culture of listening. We also facilitate events on sustainable development.

We are not experts in the value chains that generate plastic waste, nor are we experts in the circular economy. But we want to collaborate with stakeholders that are and see this dilemma through different lenses.

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social links links:

- Museum website: <https://www.nmmst.gov.tw/chhtml/newsdetail/221/5966/0>
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