

# Reflections on citizen agency in the circular economy of plastics

Unlocking plastics recycling, reuse, business and product development 20.11.2024

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## LIFE21-IPE-FI-PlastLIFE

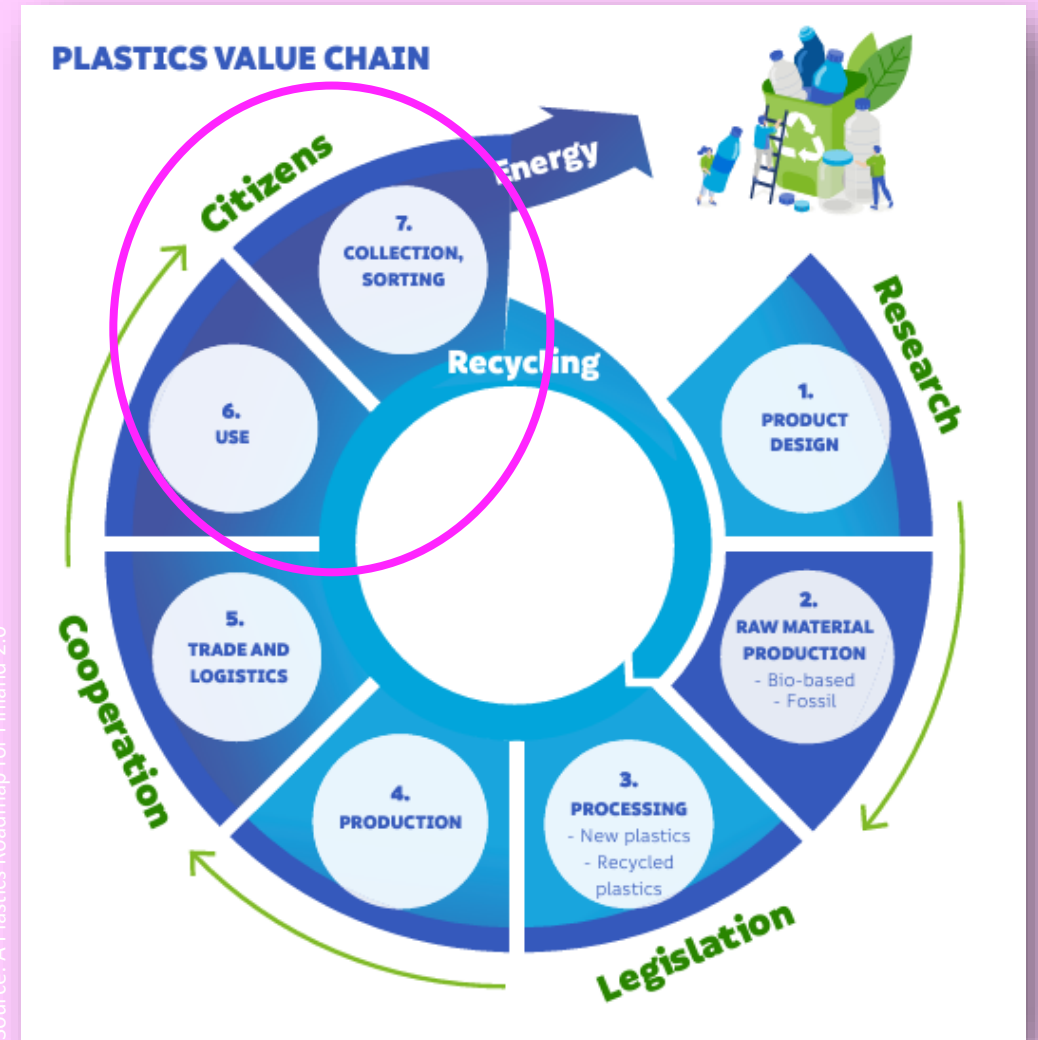
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# Citizen agency in the CE

- Increasing criticism of the narrow and passive roles dedicated for citizens
- Citizens often framed as users and consumers who buy, use and discard material products and packaging
- Effort in CE policies on
  - Improving products: durability, reusability, upgradability, reparability and resource and energy efficiency
  - Sustainable purchase behaviour, incl. products as services & sharing economy
  - Household recycling behaviour



# Citizens important and active in all the phases of product lifecycle

- In what ways do citizens take part in the plastics circularity?
- How to support the citizen agency?
- How to engage citizens in the transition?



## Examples of circular behaviours

(Sources: Sinclair et al. 2018, Roos & Hahn 2017, Wastling et al. 2018, Dellaert 2019, Sandes et al. 2019. 9R)



# Citizen agency in PlastLIFE project

## WP2 Littering and consumption of plastics

- Reducing littering: research, activation of citizens through campaigns and citizen science
- Sustainable product and service design, customer-oriented approach to increase consumer acceptance and involve citizens in product design
- Monitoring and researching the attitudes and behaviour of citizens (surveys)
- Research on human-plastic relationships and the role of plastic in everyday life
- Engaging citizens to co-create solutions through a citizen panel

## WP9 Monitoring and indicators

- Research of social impacts and development indicators to measure the social contribution of the transition



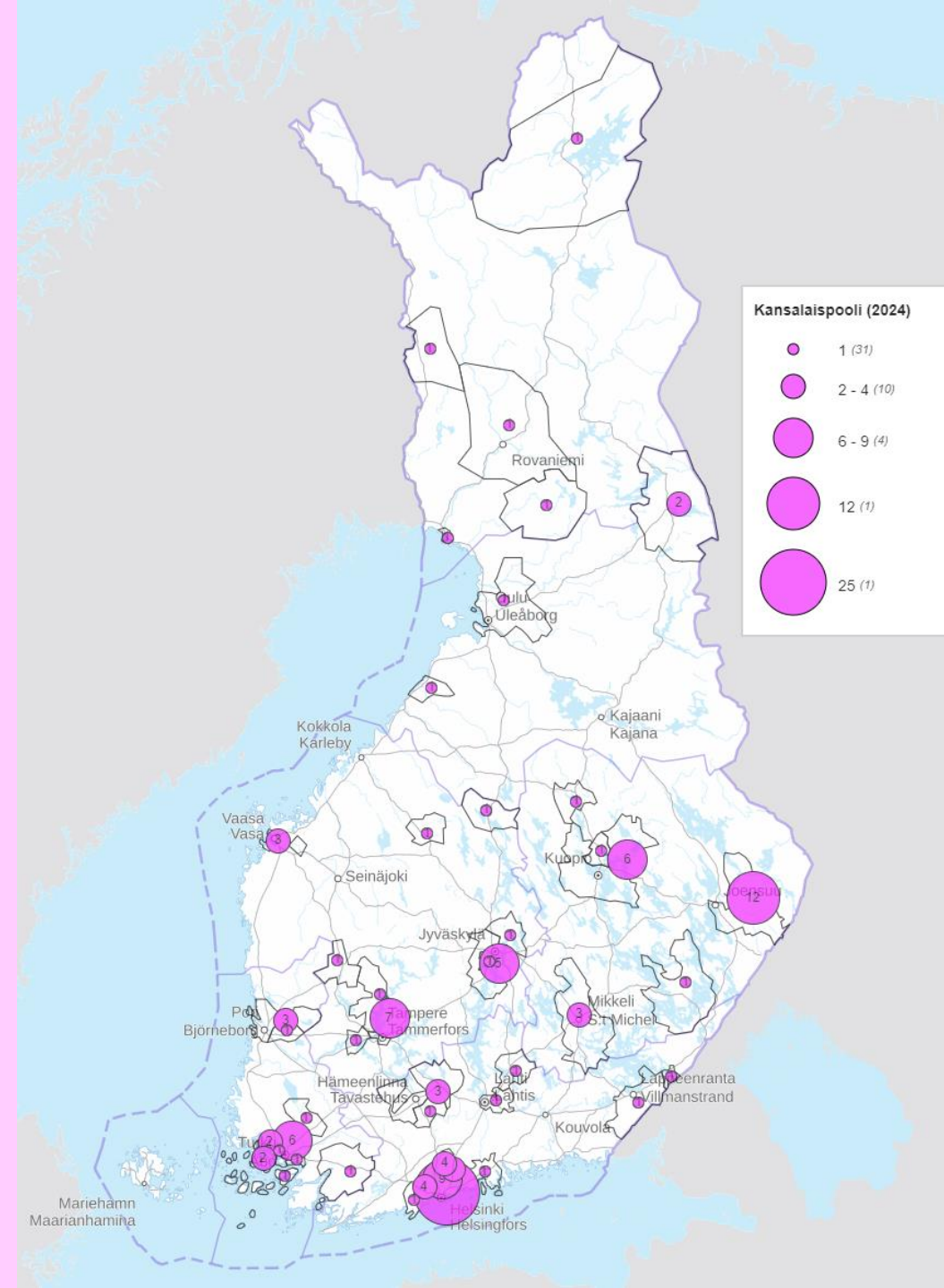
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# Citizen panel

- "PlastLIFE kansalaispooli" – a group of citizens interested in helping to find solutions to the plastic challenge
- Panel used to bring citizen perspective, reflect findings, test solutions, brainstorm etc.
- Tasks from consortium partners, stakeholders and other collaborators
- Call for participants in March 2024 → 138 volunteers all over the country
- More information: <https://plastlife.fi/kansalaispooli>



# How to reduce the consumption of plastic carrier-bags?

- Task developed with "Muovikassi Green Deal" (Ministry of Environment & Federation of Finnish Commerce) & Alma Onali, Tampere University
- EU: 40 plastic bags/capita/year by 2025
- Survey and workshop in Helsinki
- Identification of when and why people buy a plastic bag
- Iterating solutions and recommendations
- Focus on attitudes, emotions and everyday life encounters with plastic bags



# Solutions and recommendations

**1) Hectic everyday life:** forgetting to bring a reusable bag, underestimating the need for bags, unplanned shopping

→ Mobile apps and calculators to help with everyday planning, reusable bags available at workplaces

**2) Plastic bags are needed for other purposes:** e.g. for rubbish or sweaty sneakers

→ Reusing plastic bags discarded at carbage bins near reverse vending machines (pullonpalautus), same plastic bag always for same purpose

**3) Easy access of plastic bags:** too easy and cheap to buy a plastic bag

→ Refundable bags, discount for using own bag, higher prices, faster cash-desk that do not sell bags



# Plastic stories

- How plastic objects penetrate people's everyday lives? How we have come to depend on plastic products and single-use plastics? How to overcome such dependencies?
- Sustainable product relationships, attachment & product care (e.g. Ackermann et al. 2018; Mugge et al. 2005)
- "Product stories" method - collecting narratives of people's lives and practices with plastic products (Peltola, Pitkänen et al.)
- Different groups of people (age, gender, socio-economic background)
- Data collection started with schools → materials for teachers on plastics and instructions of writing a plastic story and sending it to researchers
- More information:  
[www.plastlife.fi/materiaalit\\_kouluille](http://www.plastlife.fi/materiaalit_kouluille)

## Kirjoita sitten tarina muovitavarasta ja lähetä se tutkijoille!

Tarinasi aiheena voi olla:

- rakkain muoviesine,
- turhin muoviesine,
- vanhin muoviesine,
- yllättävin esine, jossa oli muovia.

Materiaalit kouluille opastavat kirjoittamiseen. Skannaa koodi!



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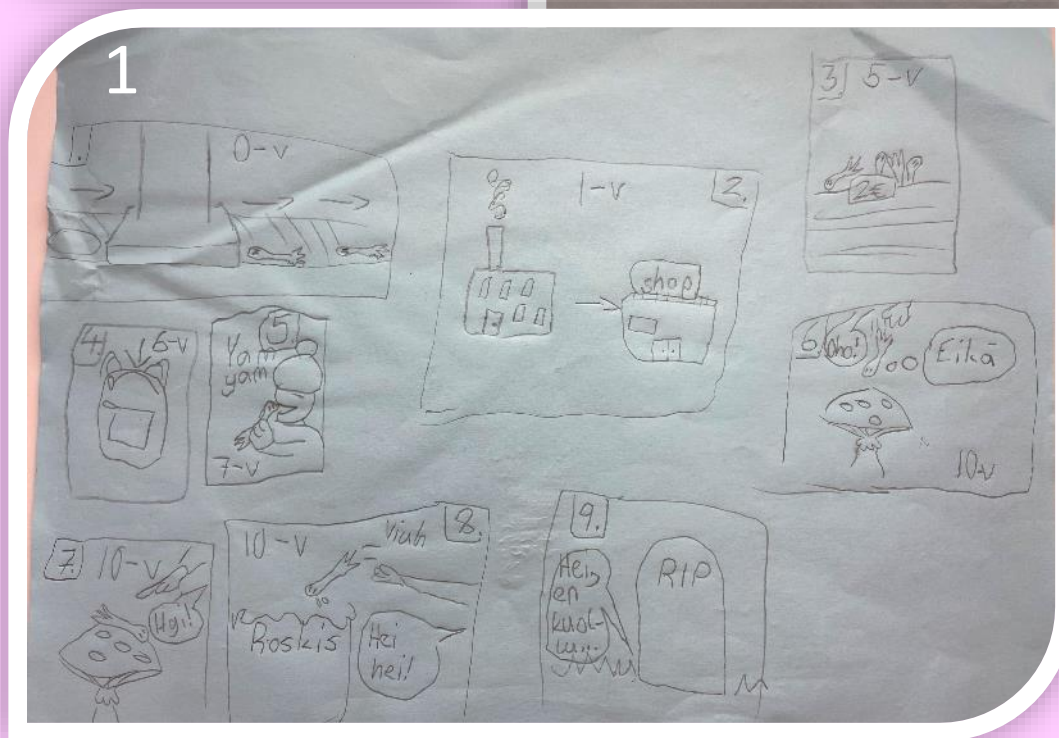
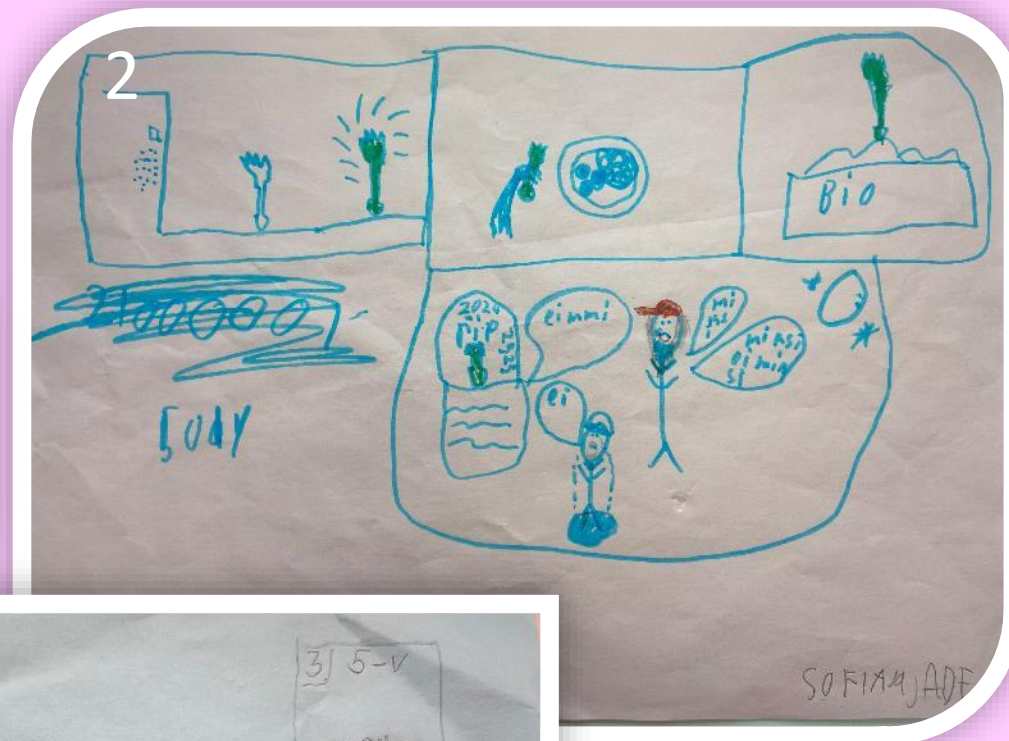


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# Wonderful life of a spork

- Collaboration with South Karelia Scouts, 24 participants, 9-15 years
- Task: draw the lifestory of a spork
- Imaginative stories and wild adventures
- The stories reveal insights of circularity and sustainability
  - Alternative origins, bio-based materials
  - Long lifetime, no single use
  - No littering
  - Plastics do not decompose



# Thank you!

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