

# Circularity in Practice: Case of a Zero-Waste Island



By INSEAD Knowledge with Atalay Atasu , INSEAD, and Imran Gill , Polygreen

**Implementing sustainable solutions has everything to do with influencing behaviour, as shown in the Just Go Zero project on the Greek island of Tilos.**

What does it take to transform an idyllic Greek island into the first zero-waste island? Can this circular model be extended to other islands and even other parts of the world? These are questions the INSEAD Sustainable Business Initiative (SBI) seeks to answer in its first research collaboration with Polygreen – a network of companies that offers integrated and innovative circular economy solutions worldwide.

INSEAD Knowledge speaks to Atalay Atasu, Professor of Technology and Management at INSEAD academic director of the INSEAD SBI and Imran Gill, CEO for the Middle East at Polygreen, to learn about the Just Go Zero Tilos initiative. How can Tilos serve as a role model to help organisations take sustainable and circular systems from inspiration to execution?

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As a circular economy service provider, what Polygreen has achieved in Tilos is boundary-stretching on many fronts. From a typical model where companies are paid for the volume of waste handled, Polygreen has removed all public bins from the island and implemented programmes to educate both residents and tourists to sort and recycle their waste.

Under the research collaboration between SBI and Polygreen, SBI researchers will embark on empirical research in Tilos, in collaboration with INSEAD faculty spanning the fields of operation, marketing and consumer behaviour. The initiative in Tilos is living proof that business can be a force for good. For circular economy solutions to deliver the positive environmental impacts they promise, academic-industry collaboration will set a solid foundation for impactful research, which could translate to tangible outcomes in practice.

#### Find article at

<https://knowledge.insead.edu/operations/circularity-practice-case-zero-waste-island>

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#### About the author(s)

**INSEAD Knowledge** is the expert opinion and management insights portal of INSEAD, The Business School for the World.

**Atalay Atasu** is a Professor of Technology and Operations Management, the Bianca and James Pitt Chair in Environmental Sustainability and the academic director of the Sustainable Business Initiative at INSEAD. His research focus is on socially and environmentally responsible operations management, including the circular economy, extended producer responsibility and environmental regulation.

**Imran Gill** is the CEO for the Middle East at Polygreen, a network of companies that offers integrated and innovative circular economy solutions worldwide to improve our quality of life. [View full profile](#)

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#### About the series

##### Sustainable Business

The [INSEAD Sustainable Business Initiative](#) (SBI) was founded to develop novel solutions for business challenges at the interface between social and environmental responsibility. INSEAD faculty in SBI actively collaborate with academic institutions and businesses, as well as support organisational sustainability transformation.

Besides research and teaching, SBI also develop frameworks and tools to help business leaders integrate sustainability into core business functions and innovate business models to create value for companies and society. SBI aspires to be a collaborative platform for sustainability- and circularity-focused organisations to share best practices and ideas, and form partnerships.