



## Recycling & Upcycling

Recycling is the reuse, remanufacturing, or reprocessing of a material or product with the aim of reducing waste. There is a huge amount of textiles which end up in landfill every year in the UK and recycling is one of the most easily understood and effective ways to address this.

In terms of textiles, recycling can cover many different areas. Firstly, there is the recycling of clothing as whole garments. This could be through charity shops or via the vintage clothes market or through the reuse of clothing items which have been reworked, printed over or re-cut, to be resold.

Secondly, there is the recycling of materials in a more industrial context. This could include the production of recycled yarn where textiles are unravelled and re-spun into new fibres. Or it could include the reuse of waste textiles as fillings for upholstery or as cleaning wipes for industrial purposes.

Along side this, is the sort of reuse that mainly occurs in a domestic setting. The 'make-do and mend' approach is either extending the useful life of an item or product, for example by darning some old wool socks, or reusing a material or product and giving it another function, such as turning old curtains into a garment. By up-cycling textiles in this way, we can offer garments a second life and prevent them from ending up in landfill.

Upcycling refers to reuse of a garment where its quality remains the same or is increased by the process, attempting to counter the common problem of recycling practices reducing the quality of the original materials, as occurs when glass is recycled.

(adapted from a workshop text for 'Ever & Again, Rethinking Recycled Textiles: Introduction and Context setting for textile recycling', Oct 2005)

## Facts

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- Over one million tonnes of textiles are discarded annually, mostly from domestic sources, of which 25% are recycled (Cupit 1996). This breaks down in the following way:

- 70% second hand clothes and shoes
- 8% fibre reclamation
- 9% filling materials
- 7% industrial wiping cloths, 6% waste (bags, zips etc)

It is estimated that up to 95% of the textiles that are land filled each year could be recycled.

(<http://www.wasteonline.org.uk>)

- Over 70% of the world's population use second hand clothes. There are about 3,000 textile banks nationwide, but clothes banks are only operating at about 25% capacity. The average lifetime of a garment is about three years. (<http://www.wasteonline.org.uk>)

- Consumers purchase 2.15 million tonnes of new clothing and shoes each year in the UK. (<http://www.traid.org.uk>)

## Key Organizations

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**Waste Online** - <http://www.wasteonline.org.uk>

A thorough overview of textiles recycling including facts and figures, and details of what happens to the clothes we recycle.

**Textile Recycling Association** –

<http://www.textile-recycling.org.uk>

A trade association to promote textiles recycling.

**Traid** - <http://www.traid.org.uk/>

Traid's charity shops sell donated clothes and they also design a range of reconstructed clothes.

## Reading Materials

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Braungart, W. & McDonough, M. (2002) *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way we Make Things* USA: North Point Press

Palmer, A. & Clark, H. (2004) *Old Clothes, New Looks: Second-hand Fashion* Oxford: Berg

*Well Dressed: the present and future sustainability of clothing and textiles in the UK* (2006) University of Cambridge Institute for Manufacturing  
<http://www.ifm.eng.cam.ac.uk/sustainability/>

Gwilt, A. And Rissanen, T. (2011) *Shaping Sustainable Fashion: Changing the Way we Make and Use Clothes* Earthscan: UK

## Projects of Interest:

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### Rebecca Earley -

<http://www.beckyearley.com/>  
Earley has developed an exhaust printing technique on second-hand polyester clothing that produces no water pollution or chemical or fabric waste.

### Kate Goldsworthy –

<http://www.kategoldsworthy.co.uk/>  
Kate Goldsworthy is a textile designer and researcher, working in the area of new finishing technologies, particularly the recycling and reuse of polyesters.

### Ever & Again: Rethinking Recycled Textiles (2005 – 2009) <http://www.everandagain.info/>

A three-year research project by the TED Project, exploring textile 'upcycling' from the designers' perspective.

## Companies and Designers

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### From Somewhere -

<http://www.fromsomewhere.co.uk/>  
Recycling since 1997, a sustainable womenswear fashion label up-cycling high end fashion and textile surplus such as swatches, production off-cuts and end of rolls into garments.

### Junky Styling -

<http://www.clothingrecyclinglondon.com/>  
Restyling and 'twisting' old tailored garments to create new ones, Junky are a well established label with a shop in East London and also provide a wardrobe surgery service.

### Worn Again -

<http://www.antiapathy.org/wornagain/>  
99% recycled shoes from Terra Plana, and Anti-Apathy. Made from recycled suits, tyres, car seat leather, towelling and lining.

### Raeburn -

<http://www.christopherraeburn.co.uk/>  
Menswear label which produces garments using de-commissioned European military stock.

## Audio Visual Resources

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Michael Braungarten, author of *Cradle to Cradle*

The Do Lectures, UK 2009  
<http://vimeo.com/2362082>

'The Wisdom of Designing Cradle to Cradle', William McDonough  
TED Talks, US 2009  
[http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/william\\_mcdonough\\_on\\_cradle\\_to\\_cradle\\_design.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/william_mcdonough_on_cradle_to_cradle_design.html)

'Zero Waste Fashion', Mark Liu  
Beyond Green conference, Amsterdam 2009  
<http://webcolleges.hva.nl/webcollege/Viewer/?peid=48a4c6b4705a4b6ebf4b5e5060846ef2>