

Interview Transcripts

P1

Repair Practices

What kind of repair or refurbishment service do you (or your company) offer?

Through a project I offered tools for repairing shoes

A pair of shoes designed to be repaired and also they were coming with a toolkit to repair the shoes – which could be used to repair things in the house

I also organise a repair café in V

I organise events to we share skills on repairing

Myself, I'm more into the textiles side of things but we always organise that there is someone who knows about electronics for the appliances.

We're not registered with (repair café) we're more just self-organised. Me and two friends and we're hosted in bookshops and cafes in V

Before Covid we were very active, now it's a bit harder to organise these sorts of events

We follow repair movement – we're just not registered with their trademark.

What things tend to be repaired most frequently?

A lot of clothing stuff

Simple things a button missing

A lots of zippers are coming to the repair café

And some appliances

We had a few times, tools for listening to music, its some appliances with some emotional attached. We didn't have someone come with an electronic juicer.

The project was about the shoes, so I never repaired the shoes of other people

What are the key reasons for garment failure?

The textile – wool garments there's a lot of wear where the product consumed
So the elbows mainly or the wrists, that really uses the materials in the fabric.

But then for all the other garments, for us most of the time it was the zippers

Those parts where you have the connection between 2 different components.

Fastenings the more sensitive parts, the weaker parts of the garments

A lot of strain put on them through the use. Its also through the use and how they are attached. It can happen they just untie.

Zippers we had the most on shoes, while you wear shoes with zippers you are pulling, the force you put in it. So in the end we had some issues with having a zipper on a shoe.

Its very hard to repair as then its connected to leather. To unstitch it the leather is much more damaged than fabric would be. Also its glued next to the heel and its not only stitched maybe its more part of the construction of the shoe so to be able to substitute it you would have to break it apart, which makes it really hard.

What tools do you consider essential to the practice of repair?

Glue! Which is the worst

Glue and tape it helps in a lot of situations, essential to figure out how to fix things. Needle and thread. The way we do in our repair cafe is not fine repairing – its repairing with people that are not necessarily highly skilled. The needle is thicker than what you would use for doing fine mending.

But its easier for someone who's never held needle in their hand to work with it.

The thread is not the same colour as the fabric cos then you can see what you're doing rather than trying to hide it.

The mending becomes visible – you know its not going to be highly precise so you might as well play with it and make it something that shows.

Balance right between those who are highly skilled

In those situations where we do it most of the time people were not necessarily skilled, they are curious.

They come thinking we're going to repair stuff for them, which wasn't the case. It was about doing stuff together but they were open to it.

There were 3 types of repair kits

1 for darning – a thread and needle, very long needle. This wooden egg to get the structure.

I designed a darning mushroom shoe – a simplified shape of the shoe – keep it inside to keep the shape – like a last what you shape the shoe on when you do it out of leather– follow the curve that was necessary for the shoe ergonomically – then you can follow it.

Adjust on some curves rather than doing everything flat

A felting kit – a square sponges – ontop of which you do needle felting – that was shaped to a specific shape so it could fit inside a show.

Patches to iron ontop of the shoe – you could iron the rubber components were separate, you could separate them from the cotton components. I have the visuals for this if wanted.

Design for Durability

This section investigates techniques and strategies to extend the lifespan of garments.

What repair or customisation techniques do you rely on?

Substituting components, that's the other way. I did multiple shoe project and at the base of them was the idea that you could repair them.

The first one, that I told you about had these 3 kits so the cotton part could be mended. The others an upper made out of leather and the idea was you could still stitch it, it was flat it was a different kind of construction, but the idea was you could substitute the sole quite easily as you could assemble and disassemble it, it wasn't stitched or glued.

So also the cotton one, the sole and insole was made out of rubber and they were holding the whole structure together, you could substitute it, in the moment (if) something broken.

What do you consider are the barriers to mending?

The value of things, I think its time and the value of things in the sense that most of the groups that we consume, they are quite cheap. If we speak about wearables, clothing and so if you want to rely on an outside service for repairing, the costs it takes is usually the same as you've paid for your fast fashion clothing so then you prefer to just buy something else rather than invest? in my opinion. (not that I do that but I think that is the problem)

I think because we give less value to goods the economical value is quite low then we don't look for ways of repairing. I think its really the skills, because I have the feeling the

information of how to do it, we could find them online, you always know someone who is crafty – to who you could go and ask. You know that if you do it yourself its going to take time, you take your time for something you consider valuable. Otherwise, its an economical issue I think.

How do you support consumers to creatively repurpose, embellish or upgrade damaged items through personalisation options?

At the repair café lets say yes. We play more on using the reparation as on aesthetic value, not hiding but showing it.

People that knew how to repair came along, to check the situation and to be useful. And then we were pairing people

You ok with your t-shirt that has a hole – why don't you do it together?

Its quite successful –15 people a night they were coming –

We were doing it in a bar, we were going table to table, gathering and attracting people.

We are going to a place where there are already people

Materials Experience

This section explores the experience of materials and their qualities.

How do you assess material properties to decide on a choice of repair technique, method of embellishment, matching a material for patching etc?

We are always talking about clothing right?

We try to match the repairing with the same material you have to repair. So if it's a cotton shoe we try to use cotton thread so we try to keep it mono-material for the end of life of the product instead of mixing it up. Also they are, in repair café it was very much according to the value of the material you are working with and the function. If you are working with leather shoes for example then we were taking care for fixing it with other leather. Keeping the same quality for the value and for the function.

So if I was mending a leather shoe with a cotton thread then through use we would have created more issues than solve the problems. If it rains then the shoe/thread is sucking more water than what the leather does. But then for the repair café for clothing we can be a bit more creative, and everything was working.

How do you examine and assess materials to discover their properties, detect changes as they degrade and make creative judgements?

Through experience, in the sense of comparing it to other things we have seen. If it's a pair of jeans that have rips, its consumed on the bottom its about trying to feel where its been more of less consumed. Also, how the person is wearing the garment.

The way shoes were designed they were reinforced in spots where particularly shoes get more consumed. I did it also by looking at shoes. I collected a lot of used shoes and I tried to look at where were the parts that were more broken, so on textile shoes you have the tendency of having a hole where the toe is, the big toe is on the foot.

So, when I designed the shoe I reinforce that area with more layers of cotton because cotton shoes consume there (I think she's using the word consume instead of wear?)

So in the design I try to implement that and I thought about the tools for repairing – it was not pre-shaped could go in pre-shaped part but it was the patch was square so you could cut it and you could place it accordingly to how it was consumed. When you think about shoes they really age differently according to how a person walks or the shape of the foot – relationship between the shape of the foot and the shape of the shoe – the points of wear and points of use.

When I developed the project I took a lot of shoes from my classmates and I discovered that I consumed the internal part of the sole, a friend of mine just the front. And its really just something that not notice much the way we walk but then from seeing where it was more consuming you see how we put the weight, I walk in a way, she walks in a way, another way. I studied the use in order to be able to design something that would resist. What I observed was that every use is very different. I had to think about an object that would be flexible to be repaired in multiple ways according to use.

What sensations and senses help you assess materials?

Smell to identify fibres it helps a lot. Or touch, its really a matter of touching and pulling. Do some, like mechanical tests with the hands on the shoe, or on the garment.

Pulling, twisting, or like (demonstrates with her hands) and putting it against the light to see where its consumed, to see through, trying to see if it comes apart or not so you know if you can attach your stitch there or to go a bit further as you need something more solid to stitch on.

Do you support consumers/learners/citizens to interact with materials in ways that can facilitate more expressive, repair and upgrade decisions?

Lets say with the café, yes. In my work I often work inside fab labs. I have interactions with citizens in fab labs, and its where I do work with materials and I speak about my work. A side of my work its about talking about my work with citizens, workshops inside fab labs that are open to everyone, not only designers. And inside the repair café.

Network, Society and Community

This section identifies key actors, ways to build community to enable interaction and collaboration with consumers (citizens) towards enacting a CE.

How do you connect, collaborate and create opportunities with your community and key actors involved in repair practices?

The first project was the development of graduation project – all the other projects were developed inside fab labs with residencies there. I collaborated with another designer and cos we developed inside fab labs, were having sessions with people in fab lab community – worked a lot in creating manuals, sharing information about how to build the shoe, use the shoes and also disassemble them and how to fix them. The design process was done with the community – in fab lab Belgium and in London.

The other shoes we use are leather cutting technologies. In that case the idea is that we share digital files – you can easily reproduce locally the components for repairing of the shoe, you just need a cutting machine.

So technologies yes become key in allowing the reparation

For us it was important not to think the components come from a company – as companies come and go but the know-how on how to do it should be open and should be done with

accessible technology so the files are shared online and you can download them for free and if you want you can do it yourself.

How can society scale up consumer demand for repair and customisation practices?

I think that if CDO would finance spaces and put salaries – pay people make it back as a profession, not necessarily highly specialised as in you repair just shoes but like when you go to a repair cafe you know you'll be able to repair a lot of different things from clothing to appliances. If there would be shops where you could go and this would happen then yes I think that would allow you to scale up. It's not necessarily it's a service its everyday at least and it works better, as you have people that don't have the time to commit to something like this.

City halls could facilitate this by giving spaces, by financing.

It becomes just private enterprise – a shop that does that – it's risky – it's not easy to solve something like this – because as you said its niche right now – it's about changing attitudes, changing a mentality – it should be economically supported in these big schemes that are financing circular economies – it should be part of it too.

P2

We are a CIC and we're a place-based initiative and we're very firmly offline. So its interesting to see how we interface potentially with the digital world.

We're very much rooted in the concepts of localism and what does localism look like as a clothing practice in the context of sustainability.

There are three of us, three co-founders and we all come from fashion and social enterprise backgrounds. We're all from Totnes, which is where our flagship space is. And we have a growing membership there, not only on the ground of local practitioners who are members of our space who either work or deliver through our space. But also wider citizen members who take part in all the different programming and things that we offer. We're quite a layered space and we have hopefully something for everyone.

Q: How many people are involved?

Somewhere, around 100 people at the moment. The other thing that we are is a replicable space so we have three affiliate spaces now. One is in Kirklees, one in Ryde on the Isle of Whyte and I'm starting one here in France. So we very much designed Mend Assembly as a replicable model that can be translated and adapted to any given community.

Repair Practices

This section examines repair practices looking at tools as well as types and frequency of repair.

What kind of repair or refurbishment service do you (or your company) offer?

All clothing and textile based but predominantly clothing. Our aim is to have specialist repairers and 'alterationists'. Some people specialise in knitwear for example, some people who specialise more in alterations and evening wear and that kind of thing. Some people

are increasingly specialising in visible mending. So there are many different kinds of techniques we offer depending on the practitioners available in our spaces.

Q: Would you call yourself a repairer?

I've got a job right here behind me. Yes I am. I'm starting to take on projects here now as well. I've got a pair of trousers that I'm doing some visible mending on. I'm doing a slight alteration on another pair. Yes so yes.

What things tend to be repaired most frequently?

I haven't been on the ground there so much cos I've been working remotely for most of the time.

From what I understand they get a lot of trousers that are ripped, crotch repairs the classic, jeans but also knitwear, holes in knitwear. Then alterations as well, people wanting things to be, you know, taken up, let out. We also get people coming in who want replications of long-loved but worn-out garments that we also provide a service to replicate. So that's been quite interesting, but really the full gamut. There's any kind of repair.

That's a new avenue, to completely remake something from scratch? That somebodies got an attachment to.

What are the key reasons for garment failure?

I think kids leggings, the knees wearing out on kids leggings. Is quite a common one. I think outerwear as well. We've done a few special sessions just for outer wear because of rips and tears in outerwear or zips as well. Zips are the classic. Zips that have gone, zip replacement is a really common one.

What tools do you consider essential to the practice of repair?

Needle and thread. We use a lot of scraps, offcuts and patches, that kind of haberdashery stuff. We have in our studio domestic and industrial machines. We're lucky to have overlockers and those can make a huge difference. We don't have any darning machines as yet so all that kind of stuff is done by hand. A darning machine would be lovely if we can ever get our hands on one.

Q: I've never heard of a darning machine?

They're kind of like an embroidery head and you can get a special roller for it so you can almost rebuild fabric by sewing it. Its used a lot on denim. It's a good one for denim repairs.

Design for Durability

This section investigates techniques and strategies to extend the lifespan of garments.

What repair or customisation techniques do you rely on?

Visible mending is one of the ones we like to promote. We run a weekly social event, mending sessions that are open to anyone and everyone in our community and we encourage people to bring their mending projects. Quite often it is mending and we encourage them to mend their own clothes rather than having us do it. But yes a zip replacement is a fundamental mending technique that is, I think we couldn't really do without.

You know basic hand stitching as well is something we find ourselves using a lot, more than you might expect. But also deconstruction is a huge part of mending, knowing how to take something apart properly so that it can be put back together and so you aren't ruining it.

So those are some of the basic techniques that you aren't necessarily taught at fashion school.

Do you think you need skills of a tailor to deconstruct or can anybody do it?

I think anyone can learn how to do it. Its not rocket science, if you can get your head around how something's put together, which is usually quite straightforward for garments. You can learn about how to take it apart.

How do you support consumers to creatively repurpose, embellish or upgrade damaged items through personalisation options?

Supporting people to see what the different options are, maybe they haven't heard about visible repair? And they need a little bit of support to demonstrate what that's all about?

Yes basically when someone brings something in we usually give them two options. So there's the kinds of discrete mends and repairs which is where it's not so visible. We try to make it look as good as new kind of thing. And then there's the visible mending which is a whole world of different techniques from Sashiko to darning to embroidery to, all sorts of different types of embellishment which can be used also to repair.

Q: Do you have samplers that might...?

We haven't got to that yet. We've just moved into a new space and we're just in the process of building back up our mending and alterations business. But absolutely that's one of the ideas that specialist menders and practitioners will put samplers into a book and people will be able to browse and choose their mending style, their alteration style.

We're also starting to work with brands doing branded mending and alterations, we have another kind of approach.

Are there any other sustainable practices and services (sharing, adapting, passing on, renting) that you'd like to offer in future?

As part of our permanent offer we have a clothes swap for our members so all members of the space have access and then we sometimes open that out and we hold regular clothes swaps so we definitely encourage clothes swapping as a really good option. We also have a pattern archive which is local to Totnes or whichever space it is, so drawing on the expertise of local practitioners we, instead of making a load of stuff then trying to sell it, we have what we call a pattern archive which is like a showcase space where practitioners can submit designs and then people can come in and browse that and then have things made to order. Or do a workshop and make it themselves. So that's one of the ways that we're creating a different type of approach to acquiring clothing rather than it always being a financial transaction we just shop for something, particularly in a digital space and we're really trying to come back into physical spaces to create connection with material, to create connection with practice to create connection with people in a very real way.

Q: And creativity I think is a big part of that.

And people's confidence in terms of making, as makers, as users rather than just as consumers.

Part of the point of Mend Assembly is that we have permanent spaces that are for this and its not just a novelty, its not just a one-off swap you know once a year, its something that happens as a side, and this is a permanent space and a permanent offer and that's whats been so diminished in our daily lives, in our home lives, which is where it used to live.

What kind of support would enable you to do this? (financial, partnerships, reskilling, technical)

We've had a tiny little local grant, which we've otherwise been working basically pro-bono because we're so passionate about the vision of what we're trying to create. We absolutely would love some funding from the government, gov funding for what we're doing cos all of the funding we've applied for we've been turned down and there seems to be such an emphasis on bio-regenerated materials or everything being digital and digitised. And actually when it comes down to it, with all the extended producer responsibility legislation with all of these things, what we need is people who know how to do things and especially people who know how to repair. And there's a huge skills gap in this country right now. We can't find people with the skills to be able to do the repairs. We've got customers literally lining down the street who want to have things repaired but we have got a skills gap. So what we would really like, yeah we would love some funding for training, to become alterationists, repairists, to fund local people to create these spaces, these permanent spaces. And yes I do think it should be government funded.

What do you consider are the barriers to mending?

Skills gap. There aren't enough people that know how to do it anymore.

Also price. You know, there's such a warped pricing landscape that we're working in. 18:50 The price of a new garment is at times even cheaper than it is to repair something. And so customer sense of value and how they value repair. So there's a mindset barrier as well. There's such a high predilection to purchase that one of the things we're also working on is trying to create space and mindset shift and encourage people to value what they have, value maker shed? and learning new ways of caring for their clothes but also repairing as well.

Materials Experience

This section explores the experience of materials and their qualities.

How do you assess material properties to decide on a choice of repair technique, method of embellishment, matching a material for patching etc?

For us this is the biggest reason why we're offline because clothing and textiles are material. They're tactile and sensory and it's really important, not just for us as practitioners but for citizens, particularly young people who are so distanced now from the digital interactions they have with clothing, they are so far removed from practical assessment of materials. So yeah one of the things that we do is really try and encourage that contact with materials in our space. We have a fabric library that we keep for the practitioners and also for our members that we can order from. We work with local textile providers, either with merchants from our town, we're lucky enough to have an eco-specific merchant in our town. And I think the way that we select materials is based on the principles of recycling and slow fashion and responsible materials. It's practice. So all of us who are engaged in it have some background in understanding that so we would always first and foremost be looking at end-of-line, scraps, remnants or otherwise certified organic or low-impact materials to work with. We're never buying big rolls of material. So from there we'd look at the unique needs of whatever the repair job is and then match that accordingly. We also offer a bank of

micro-production for other local businesses for example. We're making aprons at the moment for example from ex-army stretcher fabric. So we're very much positioned to source and innovate and translate with what we have locally available to us.

How do you examine and assess materials to discover their properties, detect changes as they degrade and make creative judgements?

It's a very personalised assessment process and that does come with a level of experience and a level of hands-on experience. For example, I'm altering this pair of linen trousers (shows me green trousers) so I've got, I'm taking in some tucks. This is a really nice, quite heavy linen fabric. So instead of using a machine on this I'm going to hand-stitch it because of the material and it will be better as a hand-stitched job than a machine-stitched job. See below:

I don't know if that is the thing you mean?

Q: that decision that you've made is based on your experience of the fabric itself and the way the fabric will sit once its finished. So its to do with weight of fabric and its that interplay of all those particular things.

Yes and for this garment that's a fairly loose fitting trouser but its got a lot of movement where the alterations happening so its needs to be a little more flexible. You know linen with a rigid stitch on it tends to open up the weave rather than go with the weave so yes.

Do you use any other senses of sensations to help you make that assessment?

I always use smell and we always encourage everyone to use smell, it's a primary sense and its very relevant to textiles. We also use things like heat and kind of feeling a fabric. My daughter actually, she's only 5 but she can't stand touching acrylic for example, already, so there are all those sorts of sensory perceptions that we definitely encourage and again that you cannot get through a digital interface and are so fundamental to understanding how our bodies react to textiles and materials.

Do you support your customers, who you are repairing with or for to also have that material engagement?

Yes absolutely where there's an opportunity to do so. We try and create as many opportunities for engagement as possible. So through our weekly social event we have all kinds of different people coming through the door and there is always different banter and there's always opportunities for knowledge transfer not just from us to them but peer to peer as well because there's a lot of knowledge held in every given community, which isn't necessarily accessed in the way that we live and the way that we interact. So we create spaces where there's a natural flow of knowledge between everyday people is also a big part of what we're about. I was at an event the other day and someone taught me how to crochet and I taught her how to crochet with old tights, you know? So I'll show you actually. I've been wanted to learn how to crochet for ages and she just stopped on the stand that I was on and she just taught me how to crochet. And this is somebody's sports leggings that were just going basically to landfill. So I think there are all kinds of examples of when we create space these opportunities arise.

Network, Society and Community

This section identifies key actors, ways to build community to enable interaction and collaboration with consumers towards enacting a CE.

How do you connect, collaborate and create opportunities with your community and key actors involved in repair practices?

The weekly social yes. The thing is we don't see textiles and clothing as only citizen products or activities, but they also relate to other businesses. And we're very lucky in Totnes to be right at the centre of a lot of progressive activities across lots of different sectors. Primarily agriculture and food and you know transition towns started in Totnes. We've got Riverford Farm is there, we've got a wealth of pioneering initiatives. We've really tapped into them and we're adding another layer now with the textiles and clothing. We're also looking towards movements like the Fibreshed movement. But ultimately, we're creating products and we're filling a gap which we're finding a real appetite for and in fact in Totnes what we're finding most interesting is actually the micro-production for other businesses is one of the leading services that we offer now. There're all kinds of different businesses that need textile products. From pubs or small boutique hotels that need upcycling of their linens to restaurants like I mentioned earlier that need aprons. We've got a bike hub that also needs Aprons. So aprons is one of those things that lots of different businesses that aren't fashion businesses but we are pretty much positioning ourselves to provide local upcycled or responsible versions of these types of common textile clothing products that otherwise people would be shopping from farther afield and needing to import. And the missing factor is again the skills and just the innovation of what we've got locally. So that's very much where we're positioned to fill that gap and it seems we're getting a really great response.

Q: what about responding to textile waste?

We do haberdashery drives from time to time. We have individuals who have a stock of materials that they don't want to work with anymore or threads or batons so we do get a lot of donations, even machines as well, sometimes time. Up in Kirklees in West Yorkshire, they're in a slightly different region and there's much more, you know, much more factory activity happening there. So they are definitely starting to partner with local producers and getting end of line, all kinds of different materials, made available to them, which they're translating again into locally relevant products. The Isle of Wight the same. They've got a lot of waste materials from the boating industry, sails and wetsuits and all sorts of things. Different types of textiles that are there. So each region has different resources. And where I am here in France, there's a lot of wool and everywhere there's just a huge amount of garment waste. So we're also really trying to position ourselves to be translators of that. So we're encouraging people to stop exporting textile and garment waste to the global south, basically. Because that's such a huge problem.

And so we're really trying to encourage people to, first and foremost, understand that problem and then secondly to work with us to try to re-translate it. And this is one example of that, you know (shows previous crochet waste leggings piece).

These tights that would have potentially been shipped somewhere else and become someone else's landfill. So we're really trying to work with materials in a really kind of localised way.

Q: I really like that word translation, to translate a second-hand garment into something else. That's a really nice idea.

One of the practitioners in Kirklees, that's one of the signature patterns they've got. In their pattern archive up in Kirklees is making jumpers into leggings.

Do you use technology for social connection, collaboration and learning?

Yes absolutely, we have a website and we do all of our booking and marketing. Its not entirely online but I'd say 60% at least 60-70% of the marketing is online and the rest is offline. We do a lot of offline marketing as well. But the booking is the most important thing for us and that's online. We also have a section of our website which is a directory because we feel like there's no place to find all of these amazing initiatives happening all around the world.

So we've started a global directory of place-based initiatives like ours in all different parts of the world. So that's growing and we definitely rely on the digital space for that. Eventually we would like to have a digital area, a digitised version of our offer that local practitioners can benefit from. So for example there might be a practitioner that has a dye recipe in the space in the Isle of Wight and they want to make that more available more widely so maybe there's a commerce element, a commerce platform that might be made available eventually. But first and foremost is the idea that we're not competitive with each other because we're localised and so we're much more able to collaborate and we don't want to compete in the digital space. Because its just not the way that we see things going forward.

How can society scale up consumer demand for repair and customisation practices?

Yes you could also start funding places like ours so we can scale up ourselves, so we can replicate.

You know there's a massive need for us, you know like I said we're doing this pro bono but if our team was fully funded and we had the capacity to replicate, you know even just 10 different locations in the UK, in that way create a permanent offer. Because without a permanent offer there's not the capacity for uptake. People have to get used to something. You know we've been here three years now, through the pandemic I'll say as well. We've somehow managed to survive and that really sort of scuppered us. So we're just kind of coming out of that and people are really starting to get it. But it takes time and it takes consistency and that's where we need funding to be able to create these spaces. Yes and that in itself will create the mindset shift that's needed.

We're partnering with another, with Riverford actually, the founders of Riverford Farm to create monthly round table sessions, kind of stitch and bitch sessions to invite their audience and our audience to come and discuss the issues as well.

So I think we just need more permanence around these kinds of offers and more funding for it. We're going to do it regardless of whether we get funding or not as we're gonna be self-sufficient eventually but I think the government could be doing things differently.

It just seems like the funding is going towards initiatives that are taking on textiles and making them into new textiles to feed the existing volume consumption and that's one part of the solution but there's got to be multiple solutions and yes it would be good to see more of an emphasis on service-based and experiential-based practice instead of just such a fixation on retail, basically and consumerism which is where we're still at even with the circularity conversation.

I think it depends on how circularity is defined as well though and I think that's one of the problems is that circularity in many cases is only defined as textile take-back schemes, where its textile to textile recycling schemes which is, you know someone's making something out of a plastic bottle, that is not circularity. Recycling is not circularity, it's a very

different landscape and that's what we're really trying to be a part of creating. Is a very very different landscape overall where hyper-consumption becomes a smaller element.

P3

Repair Practices

This section examines repair practices looking at tools as well as types and frequency of repair.

What kind of repair or refurbishment service do you (or your company) offer?

The service that I offer is all done by (hand) all bespoke and my main activity is visible mending so I believe that mending should be celebrated and you know that it becomes something that creates a new garment, a new story so that's where, that's my focus.

What things tend to be repaired most frequently?

I'd say the things that come up mostly, knitwear and that is moths. So knitwear and moth holes. T-shirts and denim

What are the key reasons for garment failure?

I would say that there are areas that manufacturers do not reinforce. The crotch area of jeans. If that was reinforced in some way that would save any number of garments from being thrown away. The same with t-shirts, they wear out under the arms so that's where you get a lot of holes starting. So there are failures like that that I could be addressed via design. The main failures I would say are natural occurrences. So it is moths and people spill stuff on themselves.

So I think that's where the visible mending comes in is not necessarily down to garment technology, its down to wearing and external factors.

What tools do you consider essential to the practice of repair?

Patience. Understanding of materials. So these are, you can have the tools as in needle, thread, scissors, yarn, those are essential materials. But in terms of the things that you need in order to do a repair is an understanding of the materials that you're working with, an understanding of what your client wants from their repair. An understanding of the value of the materials and the labour that went into making clothes.

Design for Durability

This section investigates techniques and strategies to extend the lifespan of garments.

What repair or customisation techniques do you rely on?

So I use basically hand embroidery skills, so I employ a different number of stitches, which I use to create my designs. I use Swiss darning and weave darning particularly on knitwear but sometimes I'll use the weave darn on woven fabrics as well. So those are the techniques that I employ. I wouldn't necessarily call it the traditional Sashiko but I use patching and overstitching as well. So those are the ways that I mend things.

How do you support consumers to creatively repurpose, embellish or upgrade damaged items through personalisation options?

The process that I use, I ask them to send me pictures of what they need repaired. Then I will make a suggestion to them via my own kind of gallery or Instagram to say here are some ideas that we could look at. If they agree to that, to the solution that I've put forward, then I generally ask them to send the item to me then I will lay out some colours on the garment because when you have something, you know, take photos of things on your phone, they're never, the colours are never right. So I always at that point get the garment give an option, one that's usually quite bright, one that's more neutral and say which one do you prefer? And then we take it from there

Q: So they're not in the room with you? You're using technology to support you in that? I suppose you do that with patching material as well?

Yes I have a mixture because people will find me locally and sometimes people do come to me and then I'll say right we'll get the threads out and we'll place the threads on there and then we choose things together. I would say its 50/50 done locally or done via technology. The result is the same as far as I can see. So far.

Q: I just wondered about patching materials, if you used the same technique to lay out a choice, of a couple of different ones and people choose the one they like?

Generally with, a lot of the time with denim people want a close match so you don't really need to give them examples. They've got a hole they want it patched in a Sashiko style so you know then I'll just get the closest denim. But yes definitely I've got various scraps of fabric I never throw anything away here. You know everything gets cut up into squares and put somewhere else. You know you've got options there to provide users with.

Are there any other sustainable practices and services (sharing, adapting, passing on, renting) that you'd like to offer in future?

Me personally no. I think there are, I engage with other services so things like Nuw Wardrobe where you can swap and exchange clothes. They've set up the technology, they do that really well. I've made it very much that I'm not creating things for people to buy. I'm very much saying you've got something that is damaged, I can put that back into circulation. I don't want to start creating ranges so people then start to buy new things, its not it goes against the thought process.

What do you consider are the barriers to mending?

The biggest barrier is that we have in our society a false understanding of the value of a piece of clothing. We are not being charged the true cost of that being made. Obviously workers are being exploited in many other countries, underpaid. We're not paying for the water that goes into.. we're not paying for the damage that's being done to the waterways. So you know all of these things. You can buy a t-shirt for 5 pounds, well you know its nowhere near the cost, so you know the barrier to mending is that people, only very early on in their understanding of what an item costs. Only a few people have the means to buy designer things or invest in some things that is more expensive so when you're looking at a Zara t-shirt that's 5.99 in order to repair that its more than 5.99 because we're not shipping them back out to people that we're going to underpay to do those repairs. So that process and trajectory of where things are ending up is going from the lowest paid to a service which is localised and built on western expectations of a cost. So that to me is the biggest

barrier, people understanding the true cost of what a piece of clothing takes to make, being prepared to pay that at the point where they buy it and therefore investing further on from that more money in keeping it.

Materials Experience

This section explores the experience of materials and their qualities.

How do you assess material properties to decide on a choice of repair technique, method of embellishment, matching a material for patching etc?

I would say most of the time, with knitwear there's the label. People will know if this is a cashmere jumper as they will have paid the price for a cashmere jumper. So there are things that people understand quite well, this is a wool jumper, this is a cashmere jumper, they can look at a label. You know that if they've got a jumper and it comes from a high street brand, it's not necessarily going to be a cashmere jumper there's going to be a blend in there. So I think from my point of view in terms of assessing materials I will use very similar techniques for each of them. You know if a thickness of wool, depending on the way that something is knitted, whether it's a machine knit, whether it's a hand knit if it's chunky or not. So I can generally tell from photos. If people take images, what that is, I will always ask people to look at the label. Um I think there is, when you get into something like sportswear that's a very different area for repair because being able to maintain that stretch and knowing that there are more points of tension but I've only had like three pieces of sportswear that I've looked at.

I think obviously we know denim, we know that as a fabric and most t-shirts are a cotton blend. I haven't had anything, suppose I've had a coat that had a slight wax finish on it and it's just knowing from my point of view it'll just take a bit more work to get through. I've got a fairly good materials understanding, people who are asking for their clothes to be repaired have very little materials understanding and especially where some people say it's a silk dress and it's just not, it's polyester but it feels silky. And you know a lot of the time people do cut the labels out because it's irritating or whatever reason so I think the knowledge is very poor on the client side.

I studied fashion although I've taken a very meandering career path in and out and away from fashion, you know. My early learning has been with materials and understanding material structure, you know how things are put together so I've had that from an early stage.

Q: How long you're been doing this for?

I've been mending my own stuff, since I was a kid I've sort of made and upcycled and made different things but in terms of more the visible repairs. So about 12 or 13 years ago I started I had my cashmere jumpers, found they were getting holes and started doing repairs on them. So I was just doing that for myself and 17.18 what happened in lockdown I needed, I have 2 kids that were in primary school, I had left a corporate job and was then looking for another job and was then the pandemic happened so I was like I haven't got the headspace to look for a job but I need to do something to keep me sane – I'm going to go back to my embroidery so then I posted stuff and people were like I love it can you do mine? And it went from there.

What are the typical mistakes that less experienced learners? make?

Yes people will say I've got a cardigan, its got 2 holes in it, how much will that cost to repair? I will provide them with an estimate for that then they'll say brilliant fantastic and they send it off to me and I'll hold it up and its got 10 holes in it. So then you're in a difficult position cos you've given somebody a quote for something they've asked for. You then don't know if they want to continue to make that investment cos its obviously far more than they originally thought and there's a level of trust with that, you know it just takes time cos then I have to photograph all of those ten holes and send them back to them and say look this is actually the damage that you've got on this garment. So it becomes another conversation. So that's the main area that I find difficult to manage with clients.

How do you examine and assess materials to discover their properties, detect changes as they degrade and make creative judgements?

So I think, most things if you've got a jumper with moth holes I'll always ask people to put it in the freezer for two days before sending it to me. And its more about kind of providing some advice on aftercare. When you get this back from me stick it back in the freezer you know. Just put it outside, expose it to sun to kill off anything that is left there. I think with things like jean crotches you're, where there is a rip and a hole that's one area that people want repaired, but the other side of that will also have experienced some wear and tear and you're kind of although that doesn't have a hole **yet**, we'll reinforce that side as well because once you've got the strength here the other side is going to take more of the tension. So where do you kind of work on that. And certainly I've got a few of my kids t-shirts and because they're here and at home, you know every time it wears a little bit thinner and another hole appears just go and add something to it and it becomes a work in progress. And you can't do that with a client so much.

Do you use any other senses of sensations to help you make that assessment?

No, no, just look and feel. I'm allergic to animals and I can tell, I have to take an anti-histamine sometimes with garments because I'm so sensitive to dog and cat hair. I've only had one where I was so glad to get rid of it, it was like having a dog sat on my lap!

Do you support your customers, who you are repairing with or for to also have that material engagement?

If I've got things here, I mean I've got galleries on my website, I've got Instagram and generally I'm like if you see something there that you particularly like let me know and then I've got an idea of your style and you're aesthetic.

Otherwise I do workshops and that's where I get people to do a bit of actually feeling and touching different samples and explaining what's a woven, what's a knitted kind of fabric. I just don't think there's really necessarily that much time with clients, because you know noones paying for that time.

Network, Society and Community

This section identifies key actors, ways to build community to enable interaction and collaboration with consumers towards enacting a CE.

How do you connect, collaborate and create opportunities with your community and key actors involved in repair practices?

At the moment I've started working with, I'm in Islington and in March there are 3 ladies that opened the Islington Climate Centre so there are about 18 of them across the country, they all operate independently but they all support each other as a network. So the Climate Centre is only open on Saturdays at the moment though they have a different theme every Saturday so I did a Make and Mend Festival which meant that we looked at various different ways that we could get people to think about mending so we taught people, I did visible mending workshops, we set up sewing machines so we could teach people how to thread, you know wind up their bobbin thread their sewing machine and just have a go because people have got them at home they just don't use them, so we had another mender on site that was doing basic repairs, sewing on buttons, turning up a hem, mending a seam and showing people exactly what she was doing. You could bring something in and sit by her side and watch as she repaired it, so see something in action, watch a repair going on so you're not as scared of it and it's not so kind of mysterious. So I think finding places like that within your community is the way to engage. A range of people, you know there were kids there as well and there were kids using a sewing machine for the first time. So I think those things really do encourage people to think if I can just sew on a button I can save that pair of trousers.

Do you use technology for social connection, collaboration and learning?

So yes so any marketing you need to do is done through technology. I mainly use Instagram, I have avoided Facebook for so many years, can't quite bring myself to go there. But yeah as I'm building up more workshops I'm going to have to engage a bit more with Facebook and LinkedIn. So getting a personal brand, allowing people to direct message for commissions using things like linked tree to be able to book workshops setting up workshops on Eventbrite. So those are the things that technology really help with, reach a broad range of people and it builds up a community as well. There are different kinds of hashtags that people all over the world are very engaged with so I know that what I'm doing here is the same as what someone is doing in America and Finland and Australia so you become part of that movement. It's a very warm and welcoming kind of environment as well.

How can society scale up consumer demand for repair and customisation practices?

Well it's got to be the responsibility of the brand, well it's two things, the brands need to take responsibility for it and they need to support the craftspeople and the technologists to be able to offer that service. They need to be supporting it financially to say you've made this purchase, we care about you there's an ongoing responsibility that we have to keep you loyal to our brand. And the other side is legislation so if there are European countries that have introduced EPR that exists especially in France for white goods you have to be able to repair the things that you make. So if the government introduces EPR on all products then it forces brands to not end their connection to that garment at the point at which it gets sold.

Q: Anything else?

I think we've covered most of the things. There's gradually we're still up against companies pretty little thing, Boo Hoo, Shein worth millions of pounds -theres a sense of what is the point? The time its taken me to mend this one another 10 thousand have been produced! You're like when will it stop? So the education of consumers is still really key. And getting them to care.

P4

Repair Practices

This section examines repair practices looking at tools as well as types and frequency of repair.

What kind of repair or refurbishment service do you (or your company) offer?

P: I don't think there's anything we wouldn't have a go at.

P: a lot of hems, zips seem to be what everyone wants

P: we do our standard repairs

Q: you're talking about clothing

P: mainly clothing but X has upholstered that pouffe. Its clothes mainly

P: alterations. What we try to do is coerce people gently to have visible mending as we think it should be seen. That doesn't go down that well with a lot of people cos they see it as a bit of a shame, well that's the history of it, isn't it? If you've got mended clothes you haven't quite made it. So we try to convince them that its something to be proud of in your clothes. So we're working our way into that aren't we, there've been a few visible mends done.

P: I think because this was a sewing shop before and they did standard alterations, mends and repairs I think a lot of customers have come back. We're trying to introduce them all to the visible and creative mending but it's a relatively new thing isn't it? What we've done is we've repaired a lot of clothes that we're now selling. So for example we had one customer who didn't have any chain clothes and there's only charity shop so one customer came and she bought some very cheap clothes in a charity shop and asked if we could, kind of, decorate them and embellish them. So we like that idea that you can buy a bog standard navy blue cardigan from a charity shop here and we can help you make it a bit different, to stand out and be unique and personal to you. We can do something with it, do something with them.

We've done a few workshops with community events for the jubilee but we haven't yet done a standalone workshop.

P: I tried to it last week and said bring your dress in it needs a zip and said I'd take her through doing a zip. It was so busy in here you know you couldn't xx We didn't actually do the zip in the end. She unpicked it and tacked it one so you know she could probably do it, so hopefully we gave her the knowledge that hopefully she could fix it.

What things tend to be repaired most frequently?

Zips, zips and hems isn't it? Yes but that's not repair is it?

P: dress hems, zips

What are the key reasons for garment failure?

P: Jeans, a lot of crotch, trouser crotch. I did 3 visible mends on a guys shorts and 2 pairs of jeans. He was very very pleased with them. So yes crotch.

Q: what about knitwear, elbows?

P: moths is the main

P: we haven't been brought moths...cashmere with hundreds of holes in it.

What tools do you consider essential to the practice of repair?

Ooh seam ripper. Some very sharp embroidery scissors.

I have a tin, size of a small mint tin and I'm just thinking what I have in that tin. Needles, pins, scissors, unpicker, couple of buttons, safety pins some thread and embroidery silks. A bit of wool as well. That would be standard, I can't imagine going anywhere without it.

P: sewing machine for me, I need a sewing machine.

Design for Durability

This section investigates techniques and strategies to extend the lifespan of garments.

What repair or customisation techniques do you rely on?

I do patches a lot. I make patches and knit?

P: Darning? You do mending with the darn on woollies.

Sashiko mend

ZigZag on the machine. Needlefelting

P: Patches is a favourite for me.

P: kind of forget what you know don't you? these knitted patches covering the holes

These are good for x?

Bits of old fabric that I can't get rid of that can be used as a patch.

These buttons, buttons can hide stains. I've just buttons here to attach threads. I don't know if its going off-piste a bit but we get given lots of wool, particularly acrylic wool so I'm always looking for ways to use wool beyond just knitting or crochet. And things like wrapping are quite useful for wool. I've been doing stuff like this, I know it's a bit off-piste but x free-range but its like finding other ways to use material you've got a lot of and avoid being thrown away. I know it is going away from repairing but its about using

You use words don't you in your

Q: which is a technique in itself isn't it, using words.

It attracts people and they are curious about whats written on there and they start engaging with why you've got it on there. You've sold a lot with puns, are they puns? You know being clever with words. And I've done 'hot under the collar' but I don't know what I'm going to use it for. Its massive!

If there's a hole in jeans for example I find it easier to make the patch first.

'Mend your ways'

P: it's just using what we have. That's what I like, we never buy anything, we get given things and then its like making use of it. And often to adorn clothes or something.

Not throwing anything away.

Cornish emblem.

You ought to show your jacket really, we did a mending workshop at X an ex-military base they had medals and was this a new jacket?

P: make my own medals and put some shiny buttons on. One about nature, flowers, trees, bees, butterflies, and then the fifties fabric that I can't resist. These are old buttons, beautiful old buttons. And I took the Primark label out, that's another conversation. Look and I put my label on with some snails.

P: we're having a debate about whether we should take the label out.

P: well I did it. I wanted to put a nicer one in.

Q: I think its important to keep the composition label there, so we know what its made of.

P: yeah yeah. I don't take them out. It doesn't really matter if its Primark or not. Its quite a well made jacket, you know.

P: that's a moth eaten beret. I've just played around with that, hip hip hooray. And its playing with words too.

How do you support consumers to creatively repurpose, embellish or upgrade damaged items through personalisation options?

We'll show them what we've done. This is what its all about (points to shop interior and clothes rails). So when people first come into the shop, I show them what we're all about. So I take them through the rail that we've got that's mended, look this is what you could do. The other rail we've got nice clothes that you might wanna buy or not.

P: which we call the blank canvas rail. So the idea is, you can buy them as they are.

P: there's not a lot you can do with zips. You could decorate couldn't you?

P: I think when people come in here, we encourage them to play, don't we X, to be a little bit creative in any way they want to be. We had some quite boring white cardigans and all we did was put different coloured buttons on and they just sold. I think some people want it simple, just replace buttons. Some people think you have to be sewers or something and we're saying you don't necessarily have to. That's why we've got boxes of patches, people can just buy a patch and sew

Are there any other sustainable practices and services (sharing, adapting, passing on, renting) that you'd like to offer in future?

P: Yes its just getting the time to work it all out.

So we'd like to be able to rent the bigger pieces. You don't need a ball gown in your wardrobe. Its getting round to working all that out. Its getting round to working out the workshops but we haven't had a minute. We want to do workshops but when are we going to fit them all in? We only have 2 days off.

SP: in our head we are a community interest company so we're very keen to work with other traders in Redruth town centre. So we've just been funded from Redruth unlimited and Feast, a grant. So the idea is that we're going to create art where we're going to talk with each shop keeper asking each shop keeper to think of a word beginning with RE from Redruth that would define their shop...

P: its going to be Recycle hopefully. So that we're re-this and re-that. Re-fit, re-fill, re-jig, whatever.

P: and we will make an artwork piece for them to wear, whether an apron or a pinnie or a shirt or a t-shirt for their shop. And then we're gonna celebrate it on national repair day, which is in October and have an event. So we're doing that this year and next year. So I guess its about, for X you're interest in x goes beyond repairing clothes doesn't it? Its about the beach cleaning, everything isn't it? Recycling, it goes beyond it

P: we all have a pact? Don't we and people need to work it out with clothes. Its massive isn't it

P: it is about joined up

P: it is about everybody, knowing that loved clothes lasts, its in that book. You know everybody has to clothe themselves don't they? And it should be a conscious decision about where and what you buy. If you need it from the very beginning.

P: and I guess, been having conversations with everyone in the town centre about whether you repair, whether you're a hair dresser or a grocer or a

P: yeah and he might get his buy new, hopefully he does he gets his scissors sharpened and doesn't go and buy a new pair. What are they going to be redoing in their? Hopefully it'll be something

P: we're starting off by going to X and looking at what was on the high street 200 years ago. We want to find out what repairing and recycling went on 200 years ago. If people were better than we are at looking after their shoes, clothes, tools

P: theres a mountain out there (of waste) they wouldn't have had that. There wouldn't be any rubbish, waste wasn't there, was it?

What kind of support would enable you to do this? (financial, partnerships, reskilling, technical)

How would we manage to do a workshop? Close the door? We don't want to close the door do we?

P: we thought we were going to do workshops on a Sunday. Having a critical friend I would say.

P: yes but what we want to do is the renting. We haven't even done the price list for mending yet that's how busy we've been. So whats going to help us start the workshops? P: It'd be nice to have some volunteers I guess, that would help.

P: we'd have to turn business away, if we're doing a workshop you can't come in. Its tricky isn't it?

P: its getting the balance, we have a shop and we want to be doing workshops. We can't do the things together.

We have had some critical friends who have given us some advice and that has helped us think outside the box.

What do you consider are the barriers to mending?

P: Cheap clothing. Cheap manufacture and cheap overproduction of clothes.

P: people not knowing, not educated. In manufacturing. How could you possibly have a jacket for £5 and be paid properly for it and it coming from the other side of the world. How does that work? So its all about education

P: at schools. I don't know if children are being taught sewing, mending at school. I don't think they are.

P: when you had your pocket money and you went and bought stuff, can you remember that far back? And where would you buy stuff? I can't remember can you? Treat yourself – did you treat yourself? It wasn't cheap, you had to save up didn't you?

P: I think cheap clothing is the big one, don't you? And it's a bit complicated with charity shops really. We've got some fantastic charity shops in Redruth that are cheap. But that encourages throwaway as things only cost a pound. People buy that and it doesn't fit and they just throw away and you don't know what happens to it - do you?

Materials Experience

This section explores the experience of materials and their qualities.

How do you assess material properties to decide on a choice of repair technique, method of embellishment, matching a material for patching etc?

Well I've learnt by making mistakes really. You've got to use similar fabric as the garment. So wool with wool, heavier cloth, denim to fix good denim. What about you, your wool, cashmere. You have got cashmere wool? Yeah so fixing it like for like. That's why I'm making mistakes really cos you can't wash things. Got to wash them at certain temperature. If you fix jeans with wool that's not going to work. So have we learnt that along the way? Cos I wasn't doing that at the beginning.

P: well I did my grandpas wool merino top with cotton but then I've also learnt that you don't have to wash wool, hardly ever. So whether I'll wash that top ever I'm not sure. Its navy so I never wear it anyway! It's a good example of how to fix, cos I did loads of patches on it, Sashiko with the cottons. We call them silks but they're cottons really aren't they? You know the embroidery silk is cotton. Just to confuse you?

Q: so learning your materials

P: yes

P; and weight, its weight is similar

P: learning the silks. We did a very simple sewing thing with x and you split your silks and the length of your silk that you should use, you know from there to there (demonstrates against arm), not a very long one. Different size needles, I didn't know that. The smaller the needle the better if its very thin fabric cos you're not going to damage the fabric. It makes perfect sense but I didn't think about it. Its easy to thread, if it's a big needle lets plough in but now I don't.

How do you examine and assess materials to discover their properties, detect changes as they degrade and make creative judgements?

He really loved that, so that's how I fixed his trousers. If we ask about people will give us their trousers that are ripped. People are coming in with garments aren't they? We've got an ironing board full of cashmere jumpers.

Q: so what made you decide on this repair technique here? This kind of Sashiko over stitching?

P: I don't know (answers below). See I put wool there, that was a bad move! I did that early on, a year or so ago. That's wool, its felted. I washed them afterwards. There you are, that's not gonna be great is it? Thats going to pucker and be seersucker!

P: well I'd much prefer to do it like this. The shorts that guy just picked up I did on the machine. It's a lot quicker with the sewing machine. But this is a lovely thing to do in the evening generally just to relax really.

That's why I did it, its not particularly cos its...

P: and its more subtle, you don't want an outside patch there it would look silly.

P: no I like working from you know, pinning that on and then sewing it, I go round and then I do that.

Do you use any other senses of sensations to help you make that assessment?

P: touch and sight

P: I bought this because this is typical (shows biscuit wrapper from caramel)

I know this is really different but X we would not throw that away would we.

Its definitely visual. I think we both like pattern, colour. We're always looking for patterns even if they're on a biscuit wrapper or material. All the time really aren't we? We've just

bought from a car boot a set of shelves someone started a gold leaf but hadn't finished.
What did X do last night?

P: I've got those marshmallow wrappers...

P: well I opened my button box and what should I find - my Ferrero Roche wrappers that I'd done smoothed you know. You know that pleasing thing you can do with them. So I've covered the rest with them, cos I wasn't going to buy gold leaf. It was gold leaf. So I've just PVA'd them on. Hopefully it'll look alright. I'm not buying

Q: what's it for?

P: well its about a 3 foot heart, a display cabinet. About this big, gold. It glows! The woman wanted rid of it, she said 10 quid. And the guy went 5 get rid of it. And it'll look great in the window with messages or patches would be great. Messages.

So subliminally we hope to put messages out there, we have got messages out there now

P: I'm just thinking the baubles, is that linked? No...

Do you support your customers, who you are repairing with or for to also have that material engagement?

If think we just have those conversations naturally. We encourage people to come in and look and try. We're not precious about what we've got in here. We want people to look through the rails to hold the clothes, try them on, touch them. I think we're always talking about nylon, plastics and cotton and all sorts of things in clothes. I think we're having those conversations naturally aren't we?

Network, Society and Community

This section identifies key actors, ways to build community to enable interaction and collaboration with consumers towards enacting a CE.

How do you connect, collaborate and create opportunities with your community and key actors involved in repair practices?

Well I guess whatever events have taken place in Redruth recently we have taken part in.

P: we through ourselves at them. So I'm attending the Town Council. Chambers of commerce.

Q: this is all to promote repair?

P: well its to get, I just want to talk about rubbish collection and recycling. Cos its not happening. That why I was so excited to see that box. There's no recycling for these houses and flats.

And I wanted to see if this traffic was being monitored for its particulates and if its an illegal level, which it will be...and they are measuring it out there. I need to find out...

Q: this is part of a bigger picture?

P: awareness raising

P: and whats the other thing? (points) to do with small businesses.. what 's that thing we're going to tonight?

P: the high street action HAZ Heritage Action Zone, it's a fund from Historic England and government?

P: there are 30 of us, towns chosen to benefit from these.

An independent group of traders, promote ourselves and the high street,

Q: do you see your shop as a community hub?

P: That's what we want it to be yes.

P: we've got to know a lot of people

Q: they're coming here not just to get something repaired but for a social occasion. Either way they're raising awareness of other things.

P: definitely. And I think when we have our setup, our Sunday workshop it'll be more and more so, don't you?

Do you use technology for social connection, collaboration and learning?

We don't really. Instagram is our main form of.. We don't really use Facebook. We obviously apply for grants and things so we apply for grants.

P: thankfully we don't need it. We've been so busy I think its quite good we haven't been on too much social media. We haven't needed it.

Q: some people have talked about Youtube videos, tutorials that show people how to repair.

P: Yeah I use them. So I used them for those trousers, (touches trousers she showed earlier)

P: we have done them a few times, videos but that's when other people have organised them. I think, we did one for in X town council – we did one for them.

P: and we did the darning thing with the orange lady didn't we?

P: but we haven't set one up ourselves, we've only done them by invitation really. So it might be something we do in the future but I think we both love the face-to-face

P: I'd rather speak to people

P: we love encouraging people f-2-f – and I believe in starting in your local community really as much as you can.

Q: but you do use yourselves Youtube videos to learn new techniques

P: Yes I do, really useful. You just put in exactly what you want and it just comes up. So I put in.. Actually the armhole thing. I did some armholes for somebody's linen top last week. And that wasn't in so I made it up. Used a bit of scissor action.

Q: you mean you've identified a gap in Youtube tutorials and you could make one?

No I think my machine was so old it didn't want to play it. I never do it in one munch, you do it in dribs don't you? Although I do do a lot of mending on one day. I wouldn't want to just keep doing it, you need breaks don't you?

How can society scale up consumer demand for repair and customisation practices?

Well in that book, mend book Kate Sekulas, she finishes her brilliant book and says the high street should look like this and every high street should have a mending shop. That's what she'd like to see. You know it should be integral to every high street, because the high street is turning into something else. But I think we fit in well cos we've got a coffee shop next door so we're they can drop off, have a coffee and get my groceries. Still got a grocery shop. Get my hair cut, so the charity shops. So its all ticking along pretty well.

P: and I guess the message, our tag line across our door there is we care, share and repair. So it is about encouraging people to care about what they wear. And we're all about sharing skills aren't we, that's our x workshops. We're not the experts anyone can learn to mend. And the last bit is repair on every level And its called X, its about making amends with your environment, with people, with your clothes. We're thinking broader than just clothes really.

We're wanting to make connections with people, its not just about selling. The HAZ is about the high street has to change, its not just the place of commerce, its got to be where people

meet. Its got to be a place where there are cultural activities going on. People getting to know each other.

P5

Repair Practices

This section examines repair practices looking at tools as well as types and frequency of repair.

What kind of repair or refurbishment service do you (or your company) offer?

Mainly we run repair cafes which are monthly popup events. They tend to run for about 3 hours at a weekend where members of the public can come in and have their items fixed completely for free by volunteers. And they can give a donation if they wish. But we also do a little bit of work around permanent repair spaces as well. We have one permanent high street shop in Newport town centre and that's open 5 days a week and people can pop in and have clothing and other items fixed as and when a volunteer is available.

What things tend to be repaired most frequently?

Just specifically to do with textiles or generally? The large majority of the stuff we fix is small household electricals. That's the most popular category by a long way. That's things like toasters, coffee machines, lots of hoovers and lawn mowers and things like that. But we also fix a whole range of other categories so textiles, bikes, antiques, furniture, what else do we do? We also do a lot of IT and tech. A little bit of everything really.

What are the key reasons for garment failure?

I can't tell you off the top of my head but I can get you that data from our database if that's helpful, after this call.

What tools do you consider essential to the practice of repair?

With textiles we tend to have the fixers bring their sewing machines along. Needles and thread, spare buttons, spare zips. Zips tend to be a really common one, they go wrong. Then for electrical fixings, bike fixings etc there tend to be lots of other equipment we need. .Do you want me to go into that?

We provide all of our volunteers with volunteer packs and they get lots of support from their organiser who is a volunteer who runs the repair café, and I think that's quite essential. And also the communal social side of the repair café as well, which I think really helps support the volunteers. That's really really important to us. The 'café' side of the repair café. Our tea, coffee and cakes never fail to improve the atmosphere as well.

Q: yeah that's really great. When you say x do you mean somebody like a mentor when you say...

Not so much a mentor but we have someone in the community that runs each repair café and they're really really key to what we do. I don't think it would work without those people. And they are very well connected in their community and they are the ones that ensure repair café happens every month, communicate with all the volunteers and check all the policies and processes as well. But they are our main point of contact for each of those repair cafes. So they're kind of lead volunteer if you like. So they don't x them in terms of

skills or fixing and often that person doesn't actually fix but they just make sure that that event happens and are kind of the anchor point in the community I guess.

Q: and they're all volunteers

Yes they are.

Design for Durability

This section investigates techniques and strategies to extend the lifespan of garments.

What repair or customisation techniques do you rely on?

So we don't do any customisation. We don't do any alterations, we only do repairs. So the way we normally differentiate it is if your jeans are ripped we would fix it but we wouldn't take the jeans up for example. That's because we're very set on not competing with local businesses and there often are local seamstresses. When we were doing alterations we had people bring in bags and bags of clothes to be altered and that's not what we do. We're about fixing items not altering them. So we don't really do customisation but we do kind of lots of repairs on zips and buttons and tears and lots of broken handbag straps, broken jewellery chains, things like that.

How do you support consumers to creatively repurpose, embellish or upgrade damaged items through personalisation options?

We do encourage people to repair for themselves. The repair café space isn't a drop off and collect space. You have to, or you're strongly encouraged to, sit with your fixer and kind of watch them fix the item and kind of have a conversation, chatting about the item or whatever it might be is really important. It gives you a chance as the visitor to see how the item is being repaired, maybe learn how to fix it for yourself next time or to feel confident to have a go next time. Often we find that it's not the skills that are lacking, it's the confidence that is lacking. So maybe taught something really simple such as how to sew on a button, but also it maybe that just by sitting and having that conversation they think oh I could do that myself next time. Or if a zip's broken I might know where to start next time. So it gets people more hands-on with their item, a little more confident with realising that repair is an option in the first place, I think.

Q: and that they can take part in that themselves

Yeah exactly

Are there any other sustainable practices and services (sharing, adapting, passing on, renting) that you'd like to offer in future?

Yes so some of our repair cafes do add things on to what they do. Clothes swaps, seed swaps. Some are based in community centres so there are other activities that they interact with. Pantry share and book share schemes, I dunno what else we've got, oh we've got garden sharpening lessons, various things across the repair café network. But we also work with xx, which is the library of things network, pretty much our sister organisation. We have shared funding and shared staff and things. So we do a lot around borrowing of items from our permanent shop space in X, we have a library of things there as well and zero waste concessions so we do a little bit around that too.

What kind of support would enable you to do this? (financial, partnerships, reskilling, technical)

Yes I guess for us, as a third sector organisation, funding is always important. We have very limited staff resource. We get most value as an organisation from staff and from people. And that would allow us to expand into other areas and increase the provision that we already give to our communities. We don't do a huge amount around formal training or formal reskilling. Its all quite informal and community-based, which works really well for our repair cafes but it would be nice to be able to offer some more formal skills sharing, qualifications that kind of thing around repair skills.

What do you consider are the barriers to mending?

So we track what is fixed in our repair cafes with our repair database. I'm happy to share that with you. We track whats not fixed as well, the percentage of items that come in, what's fixed and what's not and for those not fixed, why are they not. So for most of our products it comes down to a few reasons. They're either too worn out, that has to be about 20% of the items that aren't fixed. And the other main reasons tend to be no spare parts available. This doesn't massively apply to textiles to be honest, more to electrical items. No spare parts, no repair manual available or the manufacturer hasn't produced any information. And no way to access the products, so that is plastic casing is normally the main culprit stops you getting to the mechanical parts of the product so you can't fix the bits that broke without breaking the outside shell of x if that makes sense.

None of those massively apply to textiles. They don't tend to have a high fail rate, textiles. Sometimes products can't be fixed, well they can be fixed but the spare parts cost more than the x so that its not economical to fix. That potentially would apply to some very low cost textiles I guess, that the zip costs more than buying a new t-shirt or whatever it might be. But yes textiles have quite a high success rate. They're generally less technical I guess, the repairs. And so less can go wrong with them.

Materials Experience

This section explores the experience of materials and their qualities.

How do you assess material properties to decide on a choice of repair technique, method of embellishment, matching a material for patching etc?

I don't think I have enough knowledge on that area to comment.

What are the typical mistakes that less experienced learners? make?

Again I don't think I can really comment, sorry

How do you examine and assess materials to discover their properties, detect changes as they degrade and make creative judgements?

Our volunteers do give advice to visitors when they come in and I guess that could be about future proofing. I'm sure that is the case but I couldn't give you specific example of that.

Do you support your customers, who you are repairing with or for to also have that material engagement?

Yes so that comes back again to sitting the customer down with the fixer so that they can have a conversation with their item and feeling hopefully more confident about being more hands on with their item and also getting people to see repair as an option when something breaks. I think at the moment that isn't the immediate next step when something breaks, to

repair it, is to buy a new one and throw it out. So a bit of what we do is around that behaviour change in people, seeing repair as a first natural step when something breaks, and that again comes down to getting people to have those conversations in repair café spaces.

Q: I wonder if you have any anecdotal evidence that people are starting to act on that repair knowledge. That they have come back... whether you've seen that?

We have. We do get regular feedback and I can also provide you with that, so visitors. We get feedback through the repair forms, they've been at the event and they give us some feedback on how they've experienced the event. So we get feedback through, when they email us or get in touch via social media saying that they've had a go for themselves or that they've gone away and fixed something themselves. A lot of the time we get visitors that then become volunteers themselves, so they see the fixing happen and they realise that they can do that as well. So they wouldn't see themselves as a professional fixer or a x but when they see others, in the community they realise that actually they've been sewing for 50 years and they have all the skills required even though they aren't a professional seamstress but a volunteer. But yes we often get visitors who get in touch and say they've gone on to fix something for themselves.

Network, Society and Community

This section identifies key actors, ways to build community to enable interaction and collaboration with consumers towards enacting a CE.

How do you connect, collaborate and create opportunities with your community and key actors involved in repair practices?

In lots of different ways. So when a new repair café launches we will map local stakeholders and get in touch with them to get their support and to either get their stakeholders to come and volunteer with us or to tell their service-users about their programme. We work with local authorities a lot, various departments in Welsh government, various community groups, we link in with men shed, with W.I, schools. It really depends on the community that that repair café is based in. And that kind of local organiser that I mentioned earlier, their kind of role is to connect the repair café up with other local initiatives in the local area. So maybe the local food bank or the local charity shops we may do some repairs for them as well. Yeah all kinds really, it depends on the community.

Do you use technology for social connection, collaboration and learning or any other purpose?

So we use digital repair forms so that would be a form that someone fills in when they come into a repair café to tell us about them and they agree to some rules and liability things. They tell us about their item and whether or not it was fixed and give us feedback. And we collate that into a database so we can track trends of what kind of brands are breaking most regularly and what can't be fixed, why things can't be fixed. What our success rate is when it comes to fixing those kinds of things. Our feedback as well. We use a digital form for that. We use zoom and teams and things to connect volunteers all over Wales. Because we're pan Wales we're obviously not able to meet in person most of the time we do regular connect meetings for people to connect and share skills, swap advice and things and then we have an online FB group for all of our volunteers. There's about 600 people in there I think and they can ask questions about how to fix an item or get advice, they might be stuck

on a repair and they can give advice there or advice on how to run their repair café. Sometimes people put updates on product developments and things. Apple was in the press recently for iPhones not being repairable as they always are. And someone was putting in, commenting about that as well. So it's a bit of a forum space for people to talk about repair. And we did throughout Covid put on virtual coffee mornings for people to connect and share stories. Some online tutorial repair sessions as well where people could join and learn how to fix jewellery or bikes or things. But they tend to be less popular than in-person. People don't feel that confident repairing online we have discovered. We don't tend to do those now that Covid has hopefully gone away.

Q: what about data? Using data to understand your reach...Is there technology that collates all that information together?

Yes we have a big database that uses some software called Zoho and that breaks down all of that information from the repair forms and then we share that data with a number of organisations who put it into a wider picture. So particularly the Right to Repair movement, which looks at lobbying manufacturers and government, a European campaign on making things more repairable in the first place, making resources available to repair, so we share all that data from our Zoho database with them.

How can society scale up consumer demand for repair and customisation practices?

I think it's happening naturally at the moment because of cost of living crisis. We're seeing far more demand from people that need to repair rather than want to repair so I think it's kind of happening already anyway. Which is a bit of a sad reason for it to be happening but it's happening all the same.

At the moment we're doing some research about messaging and what works best when we're looking at that behaviour change piece, so I can't tell you exactly what that is but we're looking at things like, speaking about the cost of repair and the money saving around repair. Can that encourage more people to fix? We do know that climate change and environmental messaging doesn't work for everyone, it would be nice if that were the main driver but it's definitely not. And we did a paid marketing campaign in Oct last year, to before the cost of living crisis, and they create 4 audiences to target that campaign. One was money savers, one was people interested in volunteering, one was those interested in climate change and one was young people I think. And by far the x audience was people interested in saving money. So we have some data, it's mainly anecdotal around the main drivers for repair. But at the moment it keeps coming up as money saving. With climate change and environmental reasons lagging so I think for us it's about looking at all of those different areas and targeting the messaging. It can't be a one size fits all. And lots of people come to repair cafes without appreciating the environmental benefits. They may be there just for the social benefits. So I think there's lots to be said for the wellbeing benefits of repair as well. So we do get lots of people that come for mental health reasons and we track that in a volunteer survey as well. But often we get people who are autistic or who have mental health struggles and they just find it very therapeutic doing something hands-on where they're in the community and talking. So I think demonstrating those benefits as well will be quite key to getting more people involved. Sorry that's a very waffley answer but I don't think one approach is going to work, I think we have to target all of those different motivations.

I think our biggest challenge at the moment is just awareness, people not knowing about repair cafes. So we've got a lot of work to do around promoting them and getting people to

know about them. And that has improved as we've grown. We've had more demand as we've grown. But the point around the high street cafes and the permanent spaces, or one of the points, is around awareness and making repair more accessible, because at the moment our repair café popup spaces are obviously only monthly. So if you put something on a high street, right in people's faces that its open 5 days a week as a normal store would be, are they more likely to use it? Are they more likely to fix? And the other point is around high street regeneration, will that bring more people back into town centres where tradition retail isn't cutting it. We've only been open 6 months there and at the moment the data is obviously quite lacking but it isn't showing increased appetite for repair having permanent spaces. Its showing increased success when it comes to repair but its not showing increased use. But we've only got one space, so it would be useful to compare that when we open 4 more spaces, which is interesting to know maybe the popup community model works better.

L: be interesting to see the data around that as it develops. Out of interest where are the other spaces that you're going to open?

The next one is in Pontypridd due to open in Sept. And we're in talks about where the next 3 would be. Its looking likely that we'll have one in Wrexham, one in Anglesey and the fourth one is up for debate at the moment. We have some funding to support communities to replicate Newport so they need to get the funding from the spaces essentially working with some local authorities to do that. So Pontypridd is confirmed, they've had their funding. We're looking at different models, the one in Pontypridd is very arts focused, an old Lloyds bank on the high street, its going to be a drama/dance focused centre. So a lot of the repair will be around costumes, from a textiles perspective, costumes and things like that. And the one in Wrexham we're putting it into an existing organisation so probably ground works space and whether that can self-sustain it a little better. So lots of models at the moment. I think it will take us a little while to figure out the best model for that and there're much larger challenges around financial sustainability when its shop space than when its popup community events. So that will be the main challenge I think.

Q: Can I ask you briefly what you think of in-house repair services? Do you think that's a useful model?

Yes, yes I do. I kinda mentioned it earlier but one of our ethos's is not competing with repair businesses so we want to see repair in all forms. So I think anything businesses can be doing to repair is useful as long as its not greenwashing. But a lot of the repair stuff doesn't seem to be greenwashing, a lot of the reuse stuff does, you know when you trade-in clothes and you get a voucher so essentially, you're just buying more stuff that I'm not a fan of. But I've just a couple of in-house repair services and they've been really good. So having gym leggings cut into shorts when they've ripped so you can carry on using them as gym shorts instead of gym leggings. Its lulu lemon that does that and I think that's a really good idea. I haven't used Patagonia so I can't comment on that one but I do think repair becoming a bit more mainstream is going to be useful as there is still a lot of stigma around repair I think. And lots and lots of our volunteers are older, you know the people with the skills tend to be, I am generalising a bit here but the large majority of our volunteers are over 40. I think that's because there's a real skills gap. Young people haven't been brought up sewing. Older people have been brought up sewing and lots of our volunteers aren't professional seamstresses, they've been taught by their Grandma and she was taught by her Grandma

and its just been passed down. And that doesn't seem to happen anymore, the passing down of skills doesn't happen because there hasn't been a need to because we haven't repaired our clothes, we've just bought new. So we're, at the moment looking at how we can be working with schools to how we can bring those repair skills back in but it's a real culture shift I think. Its almost trying go backwards to go forwards. Back to that make do and mend mentality.

Sorry I've really gone off businesses. But my point is that if it comes into high streets and it comes into mainstream brands it will only help with that behaviour change piece? Again, it will only help with that awareness of repair as an option. When we speak to most young people they wouldn't even think to get their jeans mended, they'd just buy a new pair cos its so easy to do that and its fairly cheap. And that connection to their items has just totally been lost. You talk about being custodians of items, we see that massively that when somebody gets something repaired in a repair café, they take much better care of it. They feel more connected to that item and they feel more guilty throwing it away essentially. Because some time and effort has gone in to looking after it. So I think repairing in all forms, in businesses, in high streets, even if its not free repair paid for repair can only be a good thing.

Q: and hopefully creating jobs that way.

Yeah definitely but the skills are needed first, I think.

Q: Yes that's a big problem isn't it, material skills, understanding materials and how to work with them.

Having products made well in the first place, you know there's no point, well not no point but it's a lot harder to repair fast fashion items. Its why the only in-house repair services I've seen and I might be wrong here tend to be on much higher price-point items that are designed better in the first place and therefore can be repaired. Patagonia's whole message is about buying better, better made products last longer and I'm not surprised that they can do a repair service but if you looked at Primark I highly doubt they'd be able to do a repair service cos the items are just so flimsy and badly made in the first place. So I do think that repair services in s are a really great idea but I think that has to go hand-in-hand with better designed products. Cos otherwise there's less scope to fix them in the first place, they're just too low-quality.

P6

Repair Practices

This section examines repair practices looking at tools as well as types and frequency of repair.

What kind of repair , remake, customisation or refurbishment service do you (or your company) offer?

Well none really. But I have created resources to support people to reknit. So to use knitting based techniques and knowledge to rework knitted garments in a knitterly way. So I created resources with the aim of supporting home knitters to engage in that practice.

What things tend to be repaired most frequently?

Jumpers and cardigans in terms of what the items are. And issues, if there are physical issues then, holes in elbows or ragged cuffs is the main one that would definitely count as prompts for repair. So my work possibly extends beyond what you're interested in here because it puts together a whole range of techniques to rework a knitted item and the thing you were reworking didn't have to have something wrong with it. So you might choose to rework it cos you wanted to not because there was a hole in it. So I would see that conceptually as a kind of repair, repairing the emotional link between the person and the garment, sometimes there would be a mismatch between the person and the garment. So the garment no longer fits or the garment no longer seems interesting to the person so they would do something to it to make it fit or make it more interesting. But in strict terms those aren't acts of repair because there isn't a physical issue with them.

What are the key reasons for garment failure?

See above

What tools do you consider essential to the practice of repair? (question changing slightly to what social and wellbeing resources do you offer your volunteers?)

So the approach that I use, which certainly isn't all of repair but uses knit processes involves knitting needles of many different sizes including particularly fine ones so if you want to pick up stitches from extremely fine-gauge knitwear. Yes basically knitting

Q: And that would include, I suppose, different kinds of yarn to match the garment?

Um yes if we're talking materials as well as tools. Then yes the use of yarn, and match is a flexible concept because you usually can't get the exact same yarn that the original piece was made from. So a consideration of what would suit that item is a big part of deciding what to do. And part of the thing that I've been trying to support is encouraging people to feel that they can work on a fine gauge piece of knitwear, which is finer than you would ever hand-knit and to change the gauge, so pick up tiny stitches and then decrease in your first row or your first rows to create a smaller number of stitches but where the fabric still lays flat. So you're creating a smaller number of bigger stitches after picking up a larger number of smaller stitches and so the yarn that you're using won't be the same gauge as what the original thing was knitted from.

Q: I see the yarn would be thicker

Yes it would be thicker and appropriate to the gauge that you're going to knit at. So yes working within the realms of what you have and what is available is a big part of that consideration because you can only work with what you can find.

There's another tool that I use for one of my processes which is called stitch hacking which is formed by laddering and reforming ladders of stitches so retrospectively insert a design. You could use it to repair as well, it is actually a repair technique if the stitches have laddered down you can reform the columns of stitches. And that's a latch tool so it's the same as a needle on a knitting machine.

Q: so you're purposefully making the ladder so you can add in a contrasting colour or whatever?

Not adding in a different colour, just reconfiguring the loops that are already there. So you're working with, in stitch hacking you're working with the yarn that's already there. If you ladder down you're releasing the loops there from the interconnected structure and then reforming those exact same loops into a new structure so you're retrospectively inserting textured design.

I guess the other thing would be a knitters needle, so a blunt chunky needle to do the sewing part at the end of the knitting process. I think that's all of the kit.

Oh knitters graph paper, so if you wanted to plan out a design its good to use graph paper that is, ideally matches the scale of the knitting that you're working on or at least a proportion of the stitches so knitted stitches are shorter than they are wide. So if you were planning something out on square graph paper and then knitted it, whatever you were knitting would come out squashed. So it depends how complicated the thing is that you're planning but some element of pen and paper, sometimes graph paper depending on what it is you want to plan.

Q: yes really interesting that hasn't come up yet, the use of paper for planning.

It's a big thing because if people are reknitting and if you're reworking a garment, you're essentially designing it. You are designing the process so the guidance that I've created can only be and is intentionally quite open and flexible so it takes you through the process but the thing that you are applying it to could be so endlessly variable that it can't be a fixed thing so you really have to be thinking through and planning ahead. And knitting is so planning dependent, I mean you could probably pick something up and knit but it probably wouldn't come out with the dimensions you wanted it to. And you're kind of stuck with the number of stitches that you've got at the beginning so I would say for knitting planning is more necessary for the process than it would be if you were doing a more sewing based process where you'd be more responsive to what is happening as it goes along.

Q: Do you have resources to help people go through this reknit process? I myself would be quite interested in doing it.

The stuff that there is on the website. So there's a spectrum of techniques, so there are 12 techniques, which run the whole spectrum of things that you can do with a knitted garment. A number of the techniques there is more detailed guidance which includes suggestions and examples of things that people have done before, maths guidance so this thing if you're going from a smaller gauge, a finer gauge to a larger gauge what ratio to decrease your stiches, so take people through this process in the most user friendly way leaving room for variation in the fact that every one of their garments will be completely different. Yes its not there for every process but a few of them there's quite detailed stuff.

Design for Durability

This section investigates techniques and strategies to extend the lifespan of garments.

What repair or customisation techniques do you rely on?

Yes so in the reknit spectrum the spectrum of processes it doesn't distinguish at all between repair and other kinds of extend the life kind of processes. They're organised technically in terms of what you're doing to the knitted fabric and you could use each one, in principle to address any kind of physical problem to repair this thing I will use this process to do it or to transform the thing in order to make it be more interesting to you or change the fit. So when I was developing the techniques I was really thinking in a technical way what you could do to knitted fabric, I wasn't thinking 'somebodies got a hole in the elbow of their cardigan, they should do this', it was what can you do with a knitted fabric, here are all the different things you can do and you can look for yourself to see which paths feel appropriate to the situation that you're in. So the two ideas are completely merged together. So some of the techniques wouldn't feel appropriate, other way of repairing a physical problem.

Probably all of them would have some air of design for durability cos they're all intended to, you would have to put a lot of time and effort in to use any of them.

You'd only do that, the people I've worked with, their thinking as they've done this, they've only engage in a reknit process, which is quite labour intensive, slow and requires a lot of effort. You would only do that if the piece was sufficiently interesting and important to you to be worth the effort. And you have enough confidence in your abilities that you think you're going to have a reasonably good result. These reknit things, its not like anybody would be doing them with any garment at the drop of a hat, because it takes a lot of time and a lot of effort. I would say in general, I would do it, go through this process for something which feels already emotionally significant to them but which has a physical problem and they can't wear it anymore so they're motivated to re-work it. 13.37 Or I guess there are some other people who have done something with a garment that doesn't feel particularly interesting to them but its in their wardrobe and they kind of feel a sense of responsibility to make it usable to make them want to wear it. They're motivated to put in the effort to make it into something they will wear and it will become emotionally significant. There are two versions going on I think.

Q: And I suppose the act of doing something to make it into something interesting turns it into something that is emotionally significant

Yes that's what they hope and that's the intention. Of course, a point that I've been at pains to make since I did my PhD research and wrote my book about home-made clothes is that there's a really big danger in assuming that making something yourself or mending yourself will make it emotionally significant because often the thing doesn't turn out how you wanted it to do. And then its emotionally rife? with negative feelings because you feel stupid for having done it wrong and you shove it to the back of the wardrobe. So the hope of emotionally durability is there but I guess I want to highlight the fact that making and mending things is quite hard and doing it well can be quite hard and people can be quite hard on themselves about the standard of what they come up with. So there's always that danger that is may be emotionally negatively significant.

Q: That's an interesting problem because you can't reverse that necessarily.

You can't but I found happening in my research and that I wrote about those feeling of, I think something not coming out well, I mean objectively 'that didn't go well', that will always happen and it will happen less if we did more making and mending because our collective skills would be better and there would be more people around to help you. So if you're one person by yourself doing something, no one around as there would have been in the olden days where the woman down the road is really good at it to help me, anybody else then you're a bit stuck the more psychological or social aspect, which is like, actually objectively quite good but it feels unsatisfactory to the person that's done it cos we're used to a lot of new things that come from the shops, which are kind of perfect. And the way to overcome that is to have more people doing it but in the interim having more people who are repairing, remaking and reknitting connected to each other so they're validating each others choices, increased peoples sense of confidence in the thing that they've done, change the thing that they've done and helps them feel that it's a worthwhile use of time and effort and good aesthetic outcome and something that you'd want to put on your body to express who you are. Or if the only person that you know that does that and you've had a go at doing it and the people around you are used to buying things from the shops, look at it a bit weird and they think it's a bit strange then you're not gonna feel very confident in the thing that you've done. If you share a picture of what you've done, either with real people

around you or with peers on social media or something and everyone's like, 'oh my god you've done that way better than..., that 's so cool' then you're obviously gonna feel socially validated in your choice of what you've done and feel more confident about it and therefore wear it and other people will see that you're wearing that thing and they'll feel more confident in wearing their thing. So I think that we need to be wary of the temptation to think that emotional durability is straightforward. The input of craft effort equals 'hurrah! Look at this significant thing that I really want to use and wear but equally its not that things always go wrong. And then when things have gone wrong its not perceived that you haven't done it very well, it could be much more about social acceptability. There are things you can do to build support around that, which I mean already on social media. People have done mending and people are like 'oh wow that's really great', its exactly that kind of validation that other consumerist fashion comes from a magazine or seeing buying from a shop, that's telling you that's an acceptable thing to wear, the support of peers who are interested in the same kind of thing, I think also forms that validation that supports the durability and the use of the thing.

Q: Yes I think it has to happen on a wider level not just individual but society as they get used to seeing alternative forms of clothing/garments and the way that they've been worked – standards of acceptability. The kind of aesthetics that people will become more used to. Looking at alternative ways of creating garments, whatever that may be.

That attachment is not straightforward

Yes it's a seductive idea but not always borne out by experience.

How do you support consumers to creatively repurpose, embellish or upgrade damaged items through personalisation options?

Answer above

What do you consider are the barriers to mending?

Well in terms of the reknit processes that we've been talking about, you need to have decent knitting skills to be able to reknit. So sometimes people are like 'can you run a little workshop at this event'? No, its not something that people can just come along and have a go at for 10 minutes and get a nice result. Its like its really quite complicated and slow.

Obviously a lot of knitters like complicated and slow things that's why they choose to knit.

Unapologetically the project aims at a particular group of people, which is people that already have knitting skills that is obviously a minority of people in this country...

I wrote a journal article that's in the journal of textile design research and practice about the reknit stuff and in that I did a kind of journey of what somebody would need to do and think and to have in order to successfully think of and plan and execute and be satisfied with a reknit project. They would first need to be aware that reknitting was even a thing, which most people aren't cos we're kind of trained into thinking that what knitting is, is getting the yarn getting the pattern, following the instructions from start to finish and having a new thing. And you're either happy with the new thing or you're not. Then put it to one side and wear it or don't and go through the process again. So the first barrier is even knowing that it is a thing that could be done. And then if you think that it is a thing that could be done, you need to think that it is a thing that you could do. If you have knitting skills you would be able to do it but you'd need to feel confident about doing some kind of design. You need to make more choices than you do if you just come along and pick up a pattern and follow the instructions.

The whole process of doing something like a reknit kind of project is very open-ended and contingent and involves what David Pye, an RCA person for older days, the workmanship of risk, you know it could go wrong at any point., you'll have to go back, it might go wrong and you have to re-jig what you're doing. Its such a different experience, emotionally its such a different experience to following a pattern reassuring saying we have the instructions all the way through. You might go wrong, you might have to go back and then all of that social validation stuff that we've just discussed. So yes awareness, I suppose and confidence and skill. And kind of an infrastructure of support. Cos what was really nice in my PhD research was the group of knitters that I worked with, they were all decent knitter, ranged from someone who was very very skilled and prolific to someone who could knit perfectly well but wasn't very confident and didn't knit a huge amount. But between them they really, we x the techniques in different ways then they moved on to reknit an item from their wardrobes, that was the main x and they were really supporting each other with suggestions and I was there, I wasn't really needed. I was there as a technical consultant kind of. But in terms of the creative decisions around what colour to put with what, they were really helping each other but I remember really commenting, I wouldn't really feel very confident about having a go at this by myself at home. They were all having a go at this slightly different thing, helping each other out with the technical kind of things like how you will actually go about doing it and the creative decisions that you need to make. To replace a cuff are you going to make it back as it was or do you want to make it a bit different. What stitch do I need if I'm going to make it different? I don't know how to do that, oh here's something that I did, the colours are lovely they're going to suit you so nicely. All of these things are like woven together, aesthetic and the personal and identity and the technical and it really showed me how much you would be having to do by yourself if you were choosing to do this project from nowhere, just on a solo basis. So yes we obviously don't have anything like that kind of peer-based infrastructure in place that would really help people to do this.

Q: Yeah and the group dynamic that enabled people to feel that confidence.

Q: I've read some of your work about the closed nature of the garment, That idea of opening up a garment. How did your participants cope with that fear of opening something up and reknit it? Whether part of your role was supporting them to do that?

Yeah good question, absolutely. What, It was a little bit like having a group, and the project they were coming to these workshops and they were doing a project. That in itself was a massive sense of permission. Its like you were coming to a thing and what we're doing is trying this new thing together. So they were already primed and ready to do something that they wouldn't have felt confident to do by themselves. And that involved opening a garment physically opening a garment, cutting, unravelling. It also involved designing and making grid? decisions that they wouldn't have felt allowed to as amateur knitters at home. And also sampling so kind of playing around with things. Obviously if you're following a pattern someone else has done all of the figuring out and playing and you have the often very enjoyable job of following their instructions and then thinking how that textile is created following their instruction. You can't do that if you're reknitting cos everything is different and what pattern or stitch you would need can't be set. So the knitter needs to do more sampling and experimenting. So another they said was 'oh I would never just sit around and play with stitches, it feels like a waste of time. A really interesting psychological thing like 'what is a waste of time'? To be honest to me hand-knitting in general is an enjoyable waste

of time cos it's by no means the most efficient way of making a garment. But even when people are choosing to hand-knit something very slowly they still see doing some extra knitting as being a waste and the productive hand knitting of making the garment is a legitimate waste of time. So the structure of the project also gave them permission to play and to try things out. It gave them permission to open things up, permission to design and permission to sample. And I feel the designing and the sampling is necessary for that kind of doing something that is open-ended. I'm sure it would be present in other sorts of repair even if they weren't so laborious and involved as a re-knit project would be.

The thing about the physical, the practical act of opening a garment we took time to work with some scrap garments that I've got from a charity shop and play practiced physically undoing seams, seeing how a linked seam on an industrially made knitwear, how it works, how you do it and how its undone and how it feels when you cut a piece of fabric, a piece of knitted fabric. We have the impression that it will completely disintegrate and actually it doesn't, it kind of sits there and nothing crazy happens. And I think taking that time to again kinda play, sample but playing and sampling at the physical intervention without it being your precious garment or you know the one that you've chosen to work on really built their confidence. Yeah definitely gave them confidence that if you cut it doesn't just unravel, and if you cut a stitch, understanding in very material practical terms what the processes can feel like.

Q: I like the idea of giving yourself permission to do that.

Materials Experience

This section explores the experience of materials and their qualities.

How do you assess material properties to decide on a choice of repair technique, method of embellishment, matching a material for patching etc? Whatever technique you're involved with, how do you assess material properties? 31:48

Well I was just giving a talk about the reknit stuff to some people last week. We ended up by talking quite a lot about talking to the garment. That would be assessing its material properties. You can't do a reknit project just kind of galloping in and saying I'm going to do this to this thing cos it might not be what that thing needs or physically enables you to do.

So we were talking about having a conversation with the garment and asking it what it wants. And I think what it wants is embedded in its materiality. In that, something that's very felted won't unravel, the fibres won't come apart to unravel and you could get a sense of that by exploring the fabric, pulling it one way or another.

Something that's very felted won't unravel but fibers won't come apart to unravel and you could get a sense of that by kind of exploring the fabric pulling it one way or another, you could kind of see it, but the fibres in the yarn were separatable if you see what I mean. I was thinking about the gauge, you know, so this thing about are the stitches, will I be able to pick up those stitches with the smallest knitting needle that I have already or are they beyond even that I mean, I think I probably could pick up from any piece of industrially produced knitwear just need some extremely fine knitting needles. So yeah and sort of looking at the seams definitely so it makes a big difference whether something has been knitted to shape and then linked together so that the pieces of the panels of the garments are actually knitted in shape and could therefore be unravelled like that or whether it's been overlapped together so it's been knitted, as like blanks and then cut and overlapped, you can't unravel that it causes problems if you wanted to of open something up and pick up

stitches because you've got this awful overlapped seam in there. It's not impossible, but it would change what you then chose to do.

So yeah kind of thinking about the fibre. Finding information if there's a garment label that will be helpful, but also just handling the fabric and looking at its construction.

I guess the other thing to say is that, like I say things can go wrong, is that this is really like any repair like the same if you're doing DIY in your House. You think you know what you're going to do with that wall and you think you figured it out and you've planned and you'd like what does this wall okay it needs to this. And then you start doing it and unexpected problems presents itself which you couldn't have anticipated from the position of it being sort of whole. And then you open it up and it reveals a secret, and so the same thing can happen with opening up a garment you think Oh yes, I know what I'm going to do with this. And then you start trying and then you suddenly realize oh this yarn is awful to try and unravel it just won't come, I really thought it would and it won't. I was cutting straight, but now I realize the whole thing is slightly on the knit of the garment it's a slightly on the slant that's messed up the thing that I was trying to do.

Assessing it through like handling and careful observation before you start but also being open to the fact that further secrets may reveal themselves as you're actually working with it and being emotionally ready for that um disappointment, or sometimes it could be an opportunity.

Q: And it could be an opportunity absolutely.

And what about typical mistakes that less experienced people make in their handling and knowledge of materials (I suppose similar kinds of things)?

Yeah and kind of not recognizing the differences between the things that they're looking at, because if you, you know, the thing about using knitting and skills techniques and knowledge, the knowledge comes through knitting and an understanding of knit where I would show you the difference between a stocking stitch fabric and a double faced fabric, or the difference between a garment knitted to shape and something overlapped. Like I just look at something and I understand it immediately in those terms, as I'm very familiar with the structure of knitwear. But to somebody else, especially if they don't have a lot of knitting experience, still don't actually... There's quite a lot of people who can knit but they don't really understand how what they do with their hands makes the things that they end up with, I found. So, there's people who can follow a pattern, and they can knit but they don't really deeply understand the relationship between the process and the outcome, and that means that they if they go wrong, but just when their knitting if they go wrong they're kind of stuck because they're like it's still x? and I don't know what that is, and I think it's a similar thing that you could be able to knit but look at a piece of knitting and not be able to sort of decode its construction and therefore what its capacities are in terms of what you could do with it. yeah it generally comes through kind of experience of making, I think.

How do you examine and assess materials to detect changes as they degrade, make creative judgments.

Again, about that knowledge of how materials changed over time to. Yeah I guess that's less something that I would do because I generally would either be looking at a garment. If I was working with other people, I would just be looking at something that they brought so it would just be at that time that they'd brought something I guess in my own wardrobe I'm noticing that something needs intervention. Often things going in on the elbow so I'm noticing when I put my arm up that I can see the color of whatever I'm wearing underneath kind of grinning through and that that piece is becoming worn out, and I want to stop before it

becomes a hole, because a hole is more tedious to fix than a worn out area. So yeah I suppose kind of material changes in that kind of way.

What sensations and senses help you assess materials? Do you use any other senses when you're assessing materials.

I guess I look at them. I feel them. and feel not just like i'm feeling with surface or something, but like, especially with knitwear you get a sense of how something behaves by pulling it laterally and vertically. And thinking about how it's behaving then you're kind of using your body to you to kind of the resistance, or something i'm just looking at something that's what I do yeah I can kind of imagine myself talking to someone about their garments and I would be like tugging at things quite a lot, you know sort of getting a sense of like how sturdy is this thing.

(she demonstrates with a bit of fabric to hand)

Kind of holding and doing a bit of a wobbly thing like that (demonstrates) just getting a sense of like is it all right, and I think... If you're looking for holes there or getting a hand inside something. And they and making sure you're checking all of it, I wouldn't just look at something kind of flat because I probably wouldn't see if there was something wrong with it, but if I can kind of hold it up. Hold something up to the light to see if there's a hole. So a hole would really reveal itself if i've got light shining through it. (see image)

Q: Or areas of weakness.

Yeah exactly the same thing. Knitwear is kind of malleable I think that there's usually quite a lot of tugging involved.

Q: Yes, absolutely and the fact that you put your hand inside is also kind of creating more three dimensional effects.

Q: yeah so. Three dimensional effect stretching it out and also not getting confused by there being two thicknesses of fabric there at once. so i'm looking at it against my hand, rather than the two layers of the sleeve, as it were if it was flat.

And I think this may be slightly different things that I do if i'm looking to try and assess the problems with something I would be, you know that this like holding up, is there a holes and a warm bits or whatever, but then, if i'm thinking about... If I've then got an idea of what I want to do or i'm developing an idea of what I want to do with it, I would be looking at particular bits of it that related to what I want to do so, I would be looking at the seams, in particular, which are like really, really small, really close up, hard on the eyes and that's another one where i've had experiences in workshops where i'm trying to point something out to somebody and i'm like here there's a chain stitch, can you see? the edge of the selvage the fabric and changed it to coming down here. And it's visible, I can see that I can see that it's visible and i'm trying to show them the shape of the chain stitch and I can tell, they just can't, their eyes can't recognize the thing that i'm trying to point out because they're not, not like tuned in. Their level of understanding of the thing that I'm describing is not familiar to them. Its exactly the same if I was in the woods and some nature expert was going look up there, look at that book and i'd be like yeah like I must be able to see it because i'm looking in the right direction, but I can't distinguish the thing that the person is pointing out to me from everything else to look at I can really see it the same experience of someone like. I can see the some brand stuff there, but I can't see I can't distinguish the pit of it that you're talking about compared to obviously usually that stitching is the same color of the seam as the main garments so it makes it hard to see.

Q: yeah absolutely it's a bit like a kind of material literacy.

Totally totally and that's where it can help to deconstruct chunkier pieces of clothing. I just practice on things, but if the things that you're practicing with, you might have something where it's exactly the same chain stitch you know joining it, but if everything is bigger it's just easier to

see. And then you might get your eye in and can see it and can then translate that to something that's finer.

It's kind of other say is this thing about when people can knit but they kind of don't. They somehow can't quite fully understand the thing that they're making and so you're trying to point out to them, the shapes of stitches and again it's like you saying the words but it's not quite going in because they're quite overwhelmed by everything they're learning and figuring out and they just can't quite distinguish the things that seem very obvious to me i've been doing it for such a long time.

So yeah we're both looking at the same thing and we both have the same level of eyesight but I can see something that they can't see and i'm sure it will be exactly the same if we were looking at something else that they were familiar with and was new to me I wouldn't be able to distinguish between the thing that they were pointing out so yeah definitely yeah visual material literacy something.

Q: yeah well, I think it goes back to that craft knowledge doesn't it that is developed over time. It does take a long time to develop material knowledge and perhaps that something that we need to make sure is not lost from our children do education that they are still be able to access that material knowledge in different ways particularly through handling knowledge of materials. Yeah and I think particularly found so, for example in my PhD group the woman who was a very, very expert very prolific knitter. She just she could recognize everything she all of that knowledge had come through making and following patterns and she could translate it to reenacting just like that, because she could spot everything and should figure it out so many things from you know, making a mistake here and there are working out a way of fixing it she had very very broad knowledge that could then be really well easily applied to these kind of mending re-knitting practices. Whereas people who did less of it were less confident with the how the structure works, and what bit is doing what when you looking at the fabric, and so they they built up less from.

From making and I quite like that you know that this really powerful literacy has come from following patterns so something which can sometimes denigrated by people and obviously I was trying to offer an alternative to. But yeah the knowledge that this woman in particular was really demonstrating very much that came through just lots of experience of making gave her that familiarity with the structure that could then be applied to re-making.

Yeah interesting we're so used to having patterns aren't we that we rely on when we're knitting that it's very hard, sometimes to imagine alternatives to that.

Yeah yeah yeah but it's, I really like that. I wanted to imagine alternatives, but also enjoy recognizing the skill and the understanding that the patterns had enabled her to develop. It wasn't like we have limited it, it really enables us to try out so many things that she had such a deep knowledge that was going through using patterns that she was then able to apply it.

Q: yeah absolutely, interesting great thank you. So the last section I don't want to take up too much more of your time is about network society and community.

How do you connect collaborate and create opportunities with your community and key actors involved in repair, embellishment, customization practices?

And so I probably don't have so much to say about this because i'm not really active in trying to promote these things. So I developed this stuff initially for my PhD and then developed it further, including the website, when I had an exhibition at Rugby art gallery or Museum in 2017 and then we toured the exhibition to the knitting and stitching shows.

So that was a really nice opportunity to So it was it was in a person, a public gallery, in a town. And then, it toured you're stitching shows where we were able to engage directly with a lot of knitting enthusiasts so that was really That was really nice and then i've kind of parked it since

i've been working on other projects so i'm I guess informally and talk to other people who do mending kind of stuff but not in any Structured or particularly active kind of way.

Do you use technology for social connection collaboration and learning?

Okay, sometimes go through a little, little bits and bursts of putting re-knit stuff on instagram at the start to the pandemic I did a little push on kind of sharing different processes and examples. I think the main thing for me is the videos being on YouTube so the instructional videos are all embedded on the website where they're part of a set of instructions for like replacing the cuff or something but they're also just posted individually each bit on YouTube and some of them i've had, I mean by no means loads and loads of hits and plays, but the some that have obviously must be useful to somebody somewhere for some particular beta what they're trying to do. And yeah I think those are quite a nice right like making these web resources of trying to create this kind of flexible set of guidance that isn't a pattern it's not a set a set sequence of instructions, but Combining text images videos can be embedded there, I find that a really nice way of Putting that kind of information together for people to come and use.

Q: And I suppose you haven't had any feedback on how many people have used your videos just the hits that you've talked about. Do you yourself use any YouTube videos tutorials?

No, I don't think so I. My mending at home is fairly basic and tedious and mainly involves trying to reinforce the knees of trousers for small boys who are very good at destroying them.

How can society scale up consumer demand for repair and customization practices?

Yeah, I think something about kind of infrastructure to support social validation as well as knowledge sharing, I think we sometimes don't think about the kind of social validation part of it, and think just, you show people how to do something and they'll know how to do it and then they'll do it. i'm kind of recognizing the time and the effort involved in doing those things. I guess there's one other thing that I think about sometimes which is about kind of diversity of aesthetics, so I, my impression sometimes is that initiatives that try to support people to do repairing or upcycling or whatever there's like it doesn't run the full variety of different aesthetic preferences that there might be in fashion, culture and they may often have quite a kind of twee homely cozy fun kind of thing which I just don't like at all, and so, if I was somebody, if I wasn't me with my knowledge of how to do things that aesthetic would really put me off from engaging with something. And i'm sure will appeal to some people, so it's not allowed to exist, but I think there needs to be if there could be so much going on, that there are different aesthetics, of how to go about things, both in terms of the aesthetics, of the garment's themselves, but also the way in which the the information is presented.

So no I. That has informed the way that, for example, I put together the stuff on the re-knit revolution website is I don't want it to look kind of twee. I want it to have a different aesthetic, but of course that then might appeal to some people and not to some other people, but that's inevitable I think so kind of more diversity in terms of how initiatives and techniques and outcomes are presented, I think, would enable it to include a broader range of people because it just tends to be a kind of a certain cozy default, that is quite dominant and can limit its appeal.

Q: yeah, I suppose, looking at more kind of inclusive forms of aesthetics. Yes, out of interest what kind of aesthetic were you kind of aiming for, then.

Well, I guess i'll try and go kind of clean my I always use white and red, as I kind of red as my main kind of main color going back to when I have my knitwear label, I always use black and white and red As I kind of revolutionary constructivist kind of references, so they don't necessarily come through strongly but yeah I try and go for kind of clean and strong I suppose. And not cozy

and twee, that's my intention, and it is quite intentional that on the reknit spectrum where there's all of these different garments and they all it starts with an off-white very basic jumper at the top, and then, as it comes down into the 12 different processes just each one is made so that the intervention is in red. And that's it, so I didn't purposely try to make them be almost like yeah it was like, if you like, not introducing any other variables, so it wasn't like we'll do this one on this garment and this one, and this one, because then it would have been like so visually noisy but also Like you don't like that fairisle thing or you don't like that, whatever it is, you might be put off that process, whereas I was trying to just really focus attention on the technique, by doing it in a very kind of basic and consistent manner to try and sort of take some of the aesthetic judgment out of it so obviously. there's still aesthetic judgment there because when I put on an embellishment or a pocket, I have to think about what that looks like I can't make anything completely and totally neutral isn't such a thing doesn't exist. I was trying to yeah have most of like blueprints that people would then be able to project their own aesthetic preferences on to the idea of the technique. Yeah, it's a really interesting one.

Q: yeah No, it has come up a few times this idea of aesthetics, and how we begin to, you know, shift the conversation around the kinds of aesthetics that are out there and almost develop signatures, signature styles, I suppose that just as designers do anyway in the way that they design.

P7

Repair Practices

This section examines repair practices looking at tools as well as types and frequency of repair.

What kind of repair , remake, customisation or refurbishment service do you (or your company) offer?

All of the above. So because we manufacture all of our own products, we have the capacity to do all of those things. So we do bespoke pieces all the time, we do refurbishment all the time and we do repairs all the time.

What things tend to be repaired most frequently?

It drives us crazy but hardware has a point .01 failure rate so your product will be fine but then a metal clasp will go. So you replace the clasp, that happens. That's probably the most frequent thing, hardware failure, which is depressing for us because we don't make the hardware. I think the next thing is generally MOT's, so people want it to be spruced up and tidied up, so if people are constantly setting bags down, down and down, again and again, it'll wear out in the bottom corners. Like common, happens in all handbags, so we replace that, we'll fix those.

Then we get crazy ones, like someone left their bag next to the rabbit hutch and the rabbit chewed through the handles so we had to replace the handles. Or someone was mugged and often muggers aren't interested in the bag they just want the cash so the bag was chucked under a hedge in one of the parks in London and was discovered about 8 months later after Winter and there was a business card in one of the pockets from the lady that owned it so someone found it and called that lady and she got her bag back. But the rivets

had rusted and the lining had gone mouldy so we replaced the lining and rivets for that one. But in general its just wear and tear.

Some people can have a product for 10 years and it looks perfect. Some people can have a product for 10 mins and it doesn't. So people look after products in totally different ways.

What are the key reasons for garment failure?

See above

What tools do you consider essential to the practice of repair? (question changing slightly to what social and wellbeing resources do you offer your volunteers?)

All the tools, literally. So I don't know why, I don't know how you can set up an extra repair business if you weren't a manufacturer in the first place because you need all the tools. You need all the sewing machines, the x machines, the edge painting machines, the river press. You need all of them. If you're going to offer a full repair service you essentially need to be able to remanufacture the bags, so if you don't have that setup, I don't know how you can do it.

Design for Durability

This section investigates techniques and strategies to extend the lifespan of garments.

What repair or customisation techniques do you rely on?

I think the biggest one is that we don't do seasonal collections. We make classic pieces and we introduce new pieces very rarely. And the wallet we make now, which is very similar to the wallet we made in 2007 is just a much much better version of that wallet because all of the feedback that we get, all of the repairs that ever come in, we use all of that information to just improve that design. So if we were doing seasonal collections we would never be able to learn that because you're changing the shape, changing the stitching, changing the corners, changing everything. But because we are an exclusive, classic business and we don't do that, we don't do those collections we have this ability to basically constantly improve on the products so the products that you buy now are benefitting from 15 years of learning what fails first and eliminating those failures.

Q: Do you have a mechanism for customer feedback, surveys or?

We don't do surveys, we just have very open communication with our customers. So when they get in touch with us about something... so when we, cos we manufacture ourselves, so this is where I see a lot of problems where you've got a business that's just design and marketing they don't make anything So if you don't make anything yourself what do you do with the feedback? Do you pass that on to the atelier? Maybe? Do you do that once a year? Maybe? So when something comes back to us that fails, comes back into our workshop in Kent and the whole craft team sees it and we have a discussion about it. Which is much more effective than a survey. And all of those items that come back to us that have failed, we keep them. You know we go back to them. So if we ever go 'why don't we try doing a corner like this on a bag', we go 'no cos in 2007 we had about 6 of these back' for the same reason, cos that corner is inherently weak so we don't do it again.

Q: Right so you can be much more responsive that way.

Yes and its also just the time. If you're constantly churning out new products you never learn. You're destined to repeat the same mistakes. If you don't manufacture yourself then where does that learning go?

How do you support consumers to creatively repurpose, embellish or upgrade damaged items through personalisation options?

Yeah well we do workshops come here and design their own products and build their own products with us. There are people who've had things for a while and often they want things refurbished and when they want things refurbished they'll say well can I have a different coloured zip or can I do this change. We have clients come to us that want something very specific and we make that for them. So we make bespoke pieces quite often. We have a customer who's in a wheelchair and she needs a very specific kind of handle so that she can carry it comfortably also it can slot really easily onto her chair so if she wants a new bag. Actually what's interesting with her is I think we've only sold her 2 bags but she sent 3 bags to us that she already had which we've modified the handle for so it would suit her lifestyle better. Um so we get those kinds of requests all the time.

Q: It sounds, anecdotally like your customers have quite a strong attachment to the products that they've purchased from you.

They have a strong attachment but also I think we're very approachable. You wouldn't call Louis Vuitton and say I've got an X bag could you adapt it for me. And yet the reverse happens to us all the time. Or a Mulberry bag, and Mulberry want to charge a fortune to repair it, what can you guys do? And we're like 'we'll just charge you the cost' because for us its more important that something works. We've also got, you know when you have a zipper and suddenly it stops zipping up. So you'll zip it and then a gap will appear behind. Well there's a fix for that that works in 99% of cases. So when people have an issue with one of our zippers we send them this presentation of how you can fix that zipper yourself at home and every time we've ever sent that out, and its because you've over-stressed the zipper, you've stretched it or something. But every time we've sent that out, people are like this is incredible then gone around the house and fixed 4 jackets and several other things where they thought it was a dead garment. And actually it's a very simple fix.

Are there any other sustainable practices and services (sharing, adapting, passing on, renting) that you'd like to offer in future?

Well its really interesting, I met the head of sustainability from Superdry yesterday and their big sustainability drive is to just stop discounting. Because they were over-producing to keep up with the demand for discounted goods, you know. And we don't do discounts ever and we don't do seasons, ever so we don't over-produce, ever. Because of that classic collection we're always able to understand how to make things better and how to repair them. I'm dubious about rental. I've read a lot of the research on rental and so far the companies that are going for it are still trying to do stuff with overproduced stock. And there's a report that came out of Finland, there's an institute for circular economy there that said that rental so far does not look like what people think it should be. So I'm dubious about it. We would and do offer 3rd life products. So if someone has one of our pieces that they no longer want and they get in touch with us and say 'oh do you still make that bowling bag?' Do you still make that bowling bag that you used to make in 2002 and the reason we stopped making that bowling bag is that we saw demand start to taper off so instead of just carrying on with stock we just stopped making it. So if one comes back to us we just get in touch with that waiting list and say 'hey look would you like a refurbished one' and we refurbish it and we sell it. But we don't, I mean we get ten of those a year so we're not at the volume of saturation yet where customers want to do that. We almost never see our pieces on Ebay.

And they're too valuable to throw in the bin, so I'm guessing for a 17 year old brand that some of these things are still in service. I speak to people all the time who say 'oh I've had this bag for 12 years' 'I've had this bag for 15 years and it still looks like new'. So its something that we do casually under the radar, if there starts to be a swelling of that with more people get in touch with us then we'll have a 'third life' section of the website. But right now there would be no products on it.

What do you consider are the barriers to mending?

Well the barrier is that we became stupid over the past 50 years and in many ways we became stupid. You know we became, we divorced ourselves from our food system, we divorced ourselves from our clothing system. We divorced ourselves largely from our communities and left, you know that took away skills. Took away local collaboration, neighbourliness skills. It took away an understanding of how food was produced and how perilous that is and how, you know we've got cheap food but that's cheap crap that killing the planet. And the same with clothing, we've got cheap crap that's killing the planet because people largely stopped making their own clothes, stopped knowing anyone who made their clothes and then it became fine for totally exploited women in Bangladesh or Sri Lanka or China or Thailand to be making clothes on our behalf.

So one of the barriers to mending is that we have two generations of people now that have never learnt to sew and will never know how to make anything for themselves. That's a problem. So they find the idea of turning on a sewing machine or threading up a needle and thread to be just impossible. And I don't think, part of the women's liberation movement was that women shouldn't be taught to do this but I think that part of the women's liberation movement is that everyone should have been taught to do these things. When I was growing up we had this class, home economics, which was exclusively female, which if you think about it is completely ridiculous. Its entirely ridiculous, so that only women should learn how to cook and sew. Yeah that's a big barrier that nobody knows how to do it and nobody knows anyone else who does it. So we have a huge issue, a huge knowledge gap. I think the other barrier is cost. Because we are relying on exploitative clothing for the vast majority of our clothing. If you think about what's sold on a volumetric basis a lot of it is incredibly cheap, so the cost of repairing... so if its incredibly cheap because it's the by-product of an exploitation, which is pretty much everything from Misguided, Shein, Primark, you just name all the companies then why is someone gonna invest in a repair that costs more than the good itself? Its because this cheapness, this exploitative idea has given everyone the idea that the manufacture of clothing is basically a worthless task, which it totally isn't but why would they invest in a repair? So we have, if you go to a tailor you might have bought a pair of jeans for 3 pounds and the tailor will charge you 7 pounds to hem them. And that doesn't make sense to people. Oh I'll just out and buy the right size and length of jeans. So this costs issue and this idea that we deserve cheap clothing somehow, that's also a barrier. So it's a lack of knowledge, it's a complete misunderstanding of exploitation that's another barrier. And maybe our highly specialised lifestyles where people think 'I am only going to do this, this is my job' instead of being a citizen, a global citizen is your job or being good for humanity is your job
All the bad in the world! We can link these things very casually to a lack of skills but it has a lot to do with the evils of capitalism

Materials Experience

This section explores the experience of materials and their qualities.

How do you assess material properties to decide on a choice of repair technique, method of embellishment, matching a material for patching etc?

Well we work with waste materials. And we work with a limited palette of materials. So its not like I'm sitting here going what can I go out to get to fix this. I only fix things with the materials we already have. And we know those materials inside out, we know what they can do and what they can't do. Yes we have a deep knowledge of the materials that we rescue and we know how to deploy them and we don't work with other materials. So yes we don't have a huge breadth of knowledge on all materials but we have an extremely deep knowledge of the materials that we work with.

Q: Just to push you a little more on that, how did that deep knowledge develop? Is that through a handling process or...

Its through tons of R and D. When we first started with the fire hose, cos I didn't want to have a fashion company, I just wanted to have the next best possible life for fire-hose, researching fire hose, what is it made of, what is its melting point. I read every academic paper I could find on nitrate rubber? I went to Yorkshire where firehose, this kind of firehose was invented, where its still made. I saw the manufacturing process, I talked to the technicians there, met loads of people at the fire service, talked to them about why it fails, why it bulges you know where things can go wrong. In the research that I did I found out that Louis Vuitton they've used complex polymers came around they've been using materials like this, which is why we set up a luxury business cos we thought that the way the luxury sector worked was obscene. That is represented a structural failure cos it didn't deliver for society or the environment. We had this material that was very similar to a material they were using and it was just going to landfill. So yes a ton of research and then some handling. We had to learn, nobody cleans firehose they just decommission it. We had to learn how to clean firehose, we developed over the years two to three different machines to clean firehose. One of the x had to build himself cos a machine like the one we envisaged didn't work. You go out to, there are some industrial symbiosis programmes out in the UK, we went out to some engineering x and there were people that wanted to charge 70k to build a machine and X said, you know I'm pretty sure with a couple of spot welds I could build a machine and we built a machine for our first fire-hose washing machine was twelve hundred pounds

Q: A bit of trial and error then?

Yes and a ton of research. Really paying attention to what's going on in the academic space. I mean we really researched every kind of cleaning equipment you know. Ozone, bubbling, you know. Obviously we weren't researching any equipment that required any intensive chemicals, we knew we would never use that. But yeah research, trial and error and yes just like a commitment. We committed to rescuing all the fire hoses in 2005 and we never rolled back on that. That means you have to know your problem, you have to know your material better than anyone else.

Q: and do you educate your customers about your material? Do you help them know it?

So pre-covid we've run a totally transparent process. Anyone can, you know historically anyone could come to the workshop at any time. During Covid we couldn't do that, you know we couldn't have that work and the demand now for people to come and visit and see what we're doing is so high that we've had to create a whole concept of tours. So now you can buy a slot, buy a tour with us and the reason we've had to do that is we've just literally

we'd show up for work on Monday and 10 people would arrive and then I can't get any work done! They wouldn't all arrive at once in some convenient fashion, they'd all arrive and one would leave and one arrive halfway through, so now we're going to do tours. But its still a transparent process, we show everyone whatever they want to see, we show them the entire process and answer every question that they have. I give talks at schools, quite frequently I lecture regularly, Oxford, Cambridge, Exeter you know the rest x so yeah we are constantly educating people about our materials, our processes, our philosophy of business. Q: Yes really interesting and great to hear there's an appetite for that. Yes huge and kinda overwhelming. If we were based in London, it would be a real problem. So one benefit we've got going for us is that people have to make an effort to get here. That's what saves us!

How do you examine and assess materials to discover their properties, detect changes as they degrade and make creative judgements?

Well fire hose doesn't degrade. Well yes of course it does but its not like a linen or a cotton or something like that. It's a high strength, industrial rubber so yes we'll get some people who'll somehow manage to go through the corners of their bag but I really don't know how they're doing that. I think they must tie them to the back of a bike and drag it down the road. Like, it's a very durable material. We've never had a belt that just tore through the belt, that just never happens. I mean people put belts through an enormous amount of stress. Metal fractures, yes, so we've had things with buckles. Now having doen, we've designed a solar-powered micro-course? So we can make our own hardware from blistered aluminium? and now that I understand the forging process and the metal casting process and I understand why there are failures. You know you have a tiny occlusion, too much oxygen, there's things that can create a flaw and if that flaw lines up with a few other flaws that's why you'll get a crack and of course that'll happen point 1 percent of the time. So we know that parachute for linings, its really really strong the x material but it doesn't love being stitched in certain ways so we've learned how to stitch it so that it stays together. And again its industrial nylon so we've had people that put cigarette lighters into their bags and then melted through it. I mean if you put that in any kind of bag you're going to cause damage. So yeah we do pay attention to things that wear out but not in a 'commissioning a PhD' kind of way.

Do you use any other senses of sensations to help you make that assessment?

Yeah fire hose smells, it smells of rubber and its funny we always get people like when a bag arrives, its not loads of people. So this is where I really know that people have very different senses of smell. Its incredibly subjective. About one percent of the bags that go out, we'll have some that come back and go, oh my god I thought this was going to smell like leather. It smells really different, and some people sometimes say it smells like smoke, cos I think they're trying to make this fire hose association. But really it just smells like rubber. And a lot of people aren't prepared for it to smell like rubber cos maybe they're unfamiliar with that. But there's no link between the smell of fire hose and any kind of degradation.

Network, Society and Community

This section identifies key actors, ways to build community to enable interaction and collaboration with consumers towards enacting a CE.

How do you connect, collaborate and create opportunities with your community and key actors involved in repair practices?

Our community is kind of interesting because we have some deeply embedded stakeholders like the London fire brigade, the Firefighters charity, people from the fire service in general of which there are 66,000 and there's their friends and their families. 50% of our profits are donated to the firefighter's charity and we collect our material directly from the London fire brigade so there's this loop of happiness I would say. So we kind of solve this waste problem for the London fire brigade and then 50% of the profits go back into the fire service community. So it's quite a virtuous circle I guess. And we do constant updates, you know everyone in the fire service is updated with what our annual donation is, how many hoses we rescued etc etc. And we know from how many fires we have? that that information is disseminated quite widely. Then you have other communities, you know we're based on a farm, we're doing regenerative agricultural practices here because the idea for us is that the business, all businesses have to be net regenerative or what's the point? And for us we wanted to get into the food system into soil carbon and all these other things. And in order to do regenerative agriculture, you know there's no synthetic fertiliser, there's nothing like that, no pesticides, no 'cides' no 'isers' basically. So you treat everything with compost and compost heat? But in order to set up an appropriate composting system you have to develop a really interesting rural circular economy. So we need wood chip waste and we have a whole link in with tree surgeons to get that. It's like a waste problem for them so they're happy for us to have it. We collect spent grains from brewers, we collect food waste from the local farm shop, we collect organic cow manure and organic manure from various neighbours that have cows, horses etc. And we make our compost here from a lasagne of those things. So I would say that having brought the project really back to this site where we manufacture and to a farm site, it's going to help us significantly cos we're building a big workshop and the intention of the workshop is that every Tuesday, every first Tues of the month or second Tues of the month or something like that we're going to open it up for, how can we as a community, as local community in north Kent solve certain agricultural problems, certain climate change issues, there are a lot of people round here who are reliant, we're in a drought right now. Most people's land is under severe water stress. There are ways to mitigate that especially if you're working on bringing micro-biology back to the soil. That's what we're doing with compost and compostees? You can also do it by armouring? Your soil, keeping living roots in the soil ... stop all ploughing and trying to convince ours to do that is quite difficult unless you can show a living example which we've got here. So I think there are going to be quite a few things you can start doing even in our hyper local community. And we've always been very engaged with people, and you know we share everything on social media. We're pretty warts and all, this is what's happening.

Q: Sounds like you're looking beyond just fashion and the luxury market.

Oh yeah we were never really interested in fashion. We are interested in fire hose, we're interested in solving environmental problems. We're interested in Economic models that are good for the planet and good for its people rather than good for nothing apart from making a small minority of people very wealthy. So that's why the business is run the way it is.

How can society scale up consumer demand for repair and customisation practices?

You know Mary Kray did this amazing, I mean we literally did a whole report on it in the UK. And I submitted to it and there were all kinds of people from Fashion Revolution and lots of people from within the Union of Concerned Researchers for Fashion and we were suggesting tax on clothing. Some people thought that would make clothing too expensive. I recommended a deposit, quite a weighty one so that we, because if suddenly when people bought a new shirt had to pay a ten pound deposit on it or something, they would think long and hard about that. It would be better if school uniforms were just deposit based so they were all just on loan. That would help a lot of parents that didn't have a lot of money but it would ensure that the good were cared for and looked after and then returned so they could be passed down to younger children as people outgrew them. So we need to start paying more for, and I know this is like, sounds really harsh and we've got a cost of living crisis but we don't appreciate what we don't pay for. The thing that is overpriced in our society is rent and housing and everything else is under-priced. And we need to change that or we will never change our relationship to the material world. So we don't cost carbon, you know, we need a carbon tax, that would help. We need a clothing tax to wean ourselves off fast fashion and if there was a tax like that and then that tax didn't exist for upcycled goods or mended goods or repaired goods or goods you buy on Ebay cos you're buying from the second-hand economy then that's going to create an advantage for the businesses that are doing things right.

Q: What was the name of that report you contributed to?

It was Mary Kray, it was a government one. It was obviously before the last election because she didn't get back in. It was a huge thing and there were these 16, it was a 16 point plan that got submitted to government. These are the things we think you can do to deal with the fact that fashion is one of the biggest contributors to climate change and source of micro-fibres and pollution and all these other things.

Anything else you'd like to say that we haven't covered?

Just the whole, none of these things are going to work if businesses just bolt them on. The whole value set that underpins business has got to change. So I'm a certified social enterprise, we're one of the founders of UK B-Corps but one of the things I'm more interested in is changing the business act, changing the companies act because right now you're legally obliged as a director of a business to maximise shareholder gain. That's like your legal obligation, Fidous shary do? That's what it is. And that's stupid! We know its stupid, everybody knows that that's completely dumb. The business act is saying you can only maximise shareholder gain if you're not doing it at the expense of the planet and its people and if every company that wanted to exist in the UK had to sign up for that we would lose a heck of a lot of companies. OR a heck of a lot of companies would have to pivot completely so for me the biggest thing is actually the business model itself. How do you make your money and at who's expense and at what expense do you make your money. And if its at anyone's expense or the planets expense then its dirty money and you shouldn't be making it. So that's the big thing for me that has to change or else the rest of it is just icing. We're messing around with icing and we need to mess around with the cake, with the whole recipe.

Q: I think all businesses should be thinking of giving something back to society, which is what the social enterprise model is. So yes I think that is the way forward.

It's been the way forward for decades and decades but unless we deal with it legally it's not going to happen.

We're pre-programmed to be greedy and selfish unfortunately.

Q: Yes this is how we move towards a post-growth economy, thinking more about our communities and how we can have some social impact.

P8

Repair Practices

This section examines repair practices looking at tools as well as types and frequency of repair.

What kind of repair , remake, customisation or refurbishment service do you (or your company) offer?

We are currently working on restoration, cleaning and repairs. On handbags and shoes, mending and alterations on clothing. It's not like we're going to stop on these but it's where we start and where we see the. These are the main items that people start caring about in their wardrobe.

What things tend to be repaired most frequently?

On shoes it would be soles and tips? Colour is something that is a big speciality for us and it is hard to find in the market. Handbag colour as well and alteration like, if you have a tear on a handbag or something that is vintage and it needs, you know fix. A strap or an edge. These are the main things that we work on.

What are the key reasons for garment failure?

The shoes, that's more wear, wear and tear. So I don't see that as a failure although it does make the item need a repair. On garments I would say the main reason is poor materials, poor fitting and lack of care. So poor materials exclusively from the brand, poor fitting it can be both, brands making a bad pattern or the person not using it as they should and lack of care, not cleaning or not taking care so well or stuffing items or colour transfer. The care part, And it's the biggest part of the lifespan of the item to be honest

What tools do you consider essential to the practice of repair? Re-phrase question? What mindset is essential?

The main one for me is a problem-solving approach. I don't think that any technique will make anything work but having a problem-solving approach and transferring skills is the main thing that we use and connection with the consumer. Cos you need to understand what they are looking at when they're repairing, is it like the financial value of the item, is it emotional? To understand what they want out of that repair.

Q: OK so when you think about tools you're thinking less about equipment and more about an approach, a mindset.

Yes

Repair involves so much. So if I say a stitching machine, it won't do the colours so you always need the human factor there too to analyse it be able to do everything.

Q: Yes exactly, making decisions around what to do...That fits in with the next question.

Design for Durability

This section investigates techniques and strategies to extend the lifespan of garments.

What repair or customisation techniques do you rely on?

On shoes we do standard shoe repairs so its like the cobbler experience. So we do replacement, stretching restoring heels and tips, replacing zips. That last part is about colour restoration and texture. And the handbags is the main thing as well restoration, colour, texture and the repairs. Material replacement and stitching.

Q: What about with clothes?

With clothes we do darning and we do alterations as well.

How do you support consumers to creatively repurpose, embellish or upgrade damaged items through personalisation options?

Yes we do support consumers. We can give them alternatives; we educate online as well. As long as its not something we produce a counterfeit, which would be a branded hardware, that would be like a very direct breach to the brand itself. We can offer everything else creatively as that person needs that item to still be functional for them. So if they need a strap to be shorter or change the colour we can help with that as long as we're not using a branded counterfeit.

Q: so do you show them examples online of different things that they can have done?

Yes I think a good example is the partnership we have with X as they do satin shoes. And the shoes when they're worn in parties they get dirt. People use a lot for weddings for example and they don't want to use that colour anymore so we offer options of re-dying those items and cleaning. On the particular satin shoes we have options of the colour. So that's an example of how we already standardise of what we offer as a customisation.

Q: That partnership with MB they are able to substitute parts for you?

Yes so we can keep the original in the main components.

Are there any other sustainable practices and services (sharing, adapting, passing on, renting) that you'd like to offer in future?

Not in our current model. Our focus is more on the aftercare model itself using our platform to provide the aftercare across the brands. So our focus is on the techniques and on the platform to standardise these processes. The parts of renting, I think there are people who are very specialised in that so that's a whole new territory so at the moment its not of interest to us.

What kind of support would enable you to deliver your aftercare model? (financial, partnerships, reskilling, technical)

Definitely financial, especially now there's been so much change in the landscape of, not just repair, but also the start-ups in general. The demand's changed completely so that's always a support that's helpful for us.

Partnerships for sure – we're always in touch with brands and looking into creating new models of partnerships.

And reskilling and technical is something that we do internally, to train our staff is something we always invest time in how we're gonna train them and get them to a good standard that we expect.

What do you consider are the barriers to mending?

I would say like cost versus time. It is something that is very time demanding and sometimes peoples expectations of the price – a lot of times that might be more than the item itself. If you have a good affair, a good level approach to those items.

And lack of experienced people as we always need to train our staff.

Its all very homemade and to create that in a standardised way, its difficult as well.

And to work with a three-dimensional item as that's completely different to working on a flat piece of fabric or materials.

Q: This is big consideration...

Yes it's a whole new skillset, time span. Its not the same as a production line in the, one that you start the item from scratch, you require more skilled artisans for that.

Q: do you struggle finding skilled artisans?

I think that's where our problem-solving comes in because we use people that have experience in different types of materials and we introduce them to our technique so they don't come completely new, apart from cleaning which is something that we do need to teach from scratch and colour restoration. But yes its difficult. You always need to have a different way of recruiting people and have a good training in-house.

Materials Experience

This section explores the experience of materials and their qualities.

How do you assess material properties to decide on a choice of repair technique, method of embellishment, matching a material for patching etc?

So, it's a combination. This section the questions were very similar so I'll see if I can find a different point on each one. It's a combination between our experience, our senses like touch and look (at) how it wears and knowledge of what materials that brands uses. And also from the past items that we worked on we have lots of repeats. So it might seem that we do different thing everyday but people have similar tastes and fashion is, everybody like wants to have the same items basically. So we do get lots of repeats, we do know what everyone is working with and what brand standard of material is, we know what Hermes is going to be using as a 'ladder' leather?14.50 like what kind of fabric you get on a piece of clothing. The clothing you have the labels as well so its not one thing, you need to give a more holistic approach to that.

Q: The people involved in clothing know about different material and cloth, whereas people working with shoes know about different kind of materials such as leather...

A lot of our staff has leather working experience, they are really skilled artisans. We have people that came from textile backgrounds. When we do our training we see which side they're lacking so we'll teach them that as well. And if it gets to the last resort? And people

didn't understand how to analyse an item then we have for sure someone that would be able to assess but we rarely get to that.

Q: So is it a specific stage that you teach? Assessment and analysis of materials as something that you focus on in your Atelier?

Yes yes the first thing that we teach is how to assess cos even cleaning needs assessment so its part of everything that we do. We assess for quoting as well. Our client services team, they need to assess as well so its not just the people that will be working on, we need to have a team that knows how to assess since when we receive the item so that we are offering the correct services.

And part of that, because we had so many times that standardise, its something that we already built into our platform so when they do the quoting, the times that we quote, that's already including and considering our past experience.

Q: does that sometimes result in a quote that's not quite right where you have to go back and adjust it, some mistakes..?

Yeah. That might happen because when you open the item. We do an initial assessment when the customer sends a picture so we do like a pre-quote. When we receive the item we do a final quote. Customer services might be able to do that quote directly or they might ask for one of our specialist from the Atelier to help assess that. And yeah is might be that when we are working on the item something unexpected happens or we see that the flaws actually different or sometimes we do need to re-assess.

And we focus on doing that and not fixing without communicating to the customer. The main thing that we have is really good communication. They are aware of all the risk and the possibilities as well.

And also for the good as well, its not all bad. Sometimes they don't know what the possibilities are that we can do with that item. So they just want, you know, to clean the item and we can actually make that item look much better doing colour. Or it could be that they ask for a full refurbishment and we say 'actually this is just dirty' so you know we're very honest in that sense and working our best to get that item looking as good as we can.

What are the typical mistakes that less experienced learners make?

As you said before there is a difference between repairing and making an item from scratch that is the main mistake. Because the approach is different so how are you gonna reach that part is different. You need to take into account all the life that the item already had, wears and tears, light, light effects the item as well so you're gonna have... even if it looks brand new its not gonna be the same material that you got in the shops so that's where we try to adjust everything to make the item look good for the moment that its...

How do you examine and assess materials to discover their properties, detect changes as they degrade and make creative judgements?

You can compare between different panels of the item to see if one side is more worn than the other. If we need to test something physically we test a part that is inconspicuous like inside the lining, something before working on the damage itself. 22.50 Or we get a piece of material that we have in-house and test as much as we can like next to the item.

We try to only get to the actual flaw when we have a better understanding of what that is. Otherwise you're just creating a bigger damage.

Q: Where you get items in where you don't have a partnership with a brand and sourcing materials for patching etc how do you do that? Is that part of the judgement of the repairer?

We have a good base, like a good material library already, sourcing materials in Paris, in Italy which is where most of the brands will get their materials from. We try to go as much as we can to the same suppliers to keep the same level of quality. And yes sometimes we might not find exactly the same, we try to match the colour or communicate with the customer if its not exactly the same. Yes that came from experience as well, cos if you just source from the UK you're not going to have much a variety, a choice or quality so we always need to be sourcing but you always need to be in a smaller scale. Get good material in a smaller scale. Leather, we keep good leather 25.11 in standard colours, if we need to adjust the colour. And if its something that we always have then we already order in that colour if we can.

Q: Have you ever had people who've brought in vegan alternatives, that aren't leather. Can you also try to make that kind of thing?

Yeah the vegan is always the challenge as the materials are not always repairable. These are the most challenging for us. We try to do colour restoration or texture restoration which we do most of the time. That's something that you don't get a good result so sometimes we replace the material or even some we have to say no depending on how damaged it is. And they are usually very damaged.

Q: do you keep track over the things you can repair and don't repair? Do you have data available?

Yes and I don't know if I mentioned before but we buy stock to test. If we see that its something that is happening a lot to customers items, we'll buy a pair for us like shoes or clothing to practice more and see if we can find alternatives. So vegan leather is one of these that we could test endlessly but it's a tough one to get... you know you might get one off results but a good standard so that we can say we always get it right is tough.

Q: not a lot of information going back to the manufacturers. Could you feed that info back to the manufacturers – would that be helpful?

We have discussed a lot with some of the brands that work exclusively with vegan leather and we try to develop something together as well but it's a combination of costs you know and then commercial aspects of partnerships. So we are definitely open for that, you know. And we have been in discussions to.. I think when you have a proper partnership then its easier to have a proper way to feedback but we do as much as we can on that side. And there have been some brands that do some materials as well but the cost of the item is not worth for them to do the repairs.

Q: You would have thought they'd be up for looking at alternatives, looking at ways to reinforce...just having that conversation

They are but when you get at the cost part, that's when things get difficult. If it's a material that's too easy for you to make one from scratch then repairing a piece, the materials they get so damaged and the leather you have, its not a healing property but you know you have a whole layer of material there. It's a live material, so its more adaptive, which is a shame. We're still working on it. We can't stop because brands are going after the alternative materials but you can see from when we get vintage items like 40 year old handbags that they age way better than...

You replace whole pieces of material. Like vintage bags they have lining like crumbling from fake leather 30.00 we replace everything back from x leather most of the time.

Q: you have a material knowledge that's valuable

Network, Society and Community

This section identifies key actors, ways to build community to enable interaction and collaboration with consumers towards enacting a CE.

How do you connect, collaborate and create opportunities with your community and key actors involved in repair practices?

We always contribute to the dissemination of information. So we educate our consumers since the beginning to show what are the possibilities. When you say we do a restoration service, they say 'ah nice' they have no idea what we're capable of. So its a lot of, when we send the quotes, we say everything that we can do to the item. They might not accept but they keep that in mind, you know for future reference when they're sending other items. We try to show a lot the before and after online too to educate the consumers as well, to show how the skill we need when we're working on the pieces. And we have partnerships with influencers on social media with Brands sometimes and we collaborated also with Ellen MacArthur foundation on their book around circular fashion so there's always something going on. With the brands that do reselling as well we have a lot of conversations with them and they send items directly to us. We are always having new approaches to how we can improve the landscape.

Do you use technology for social connection, collaboration and learning or any other purpose?

The media to disseminate and internally we gather data to offer everything that we do, so we have a good database of every single item that we've worked on and we use that to improve our systems and services, our pricing and to see what we can offer that we're still not doing. I think that's really important to us. We use technology as well for training our staff so we can keep a good standardised system.

How can society scale up consumer demand for repair and customisation practices?

I think its similar to what we've been doing. Educating consumers, educating brands and standardising processes because it's a very broken, like aftercare is a very broken part of the system and brands were not interested, they're starting now as is a whole new skillset to what they have. And the makers they are more like one-off artisans so they don't x and they don't pass on their knowledge as well. So standardising is definitely a big player in scaling up. And that's mainly my job to standardise craftsmanship as much as we can. To reach more people.

Q: So when you say 'standardisation' do you mean to find formulas or templates for ways of doing things that can be repeated over and over again?

Yes from how we assess the item, they might seem like one item, it's a unique piece but we always get the same kind of repairs so its very, we've been gathering information on everything that we're doing pricewise, how long we take to work on each component and that's what we , how we use our platform to see, what's the best way to repair that item. That we have less risks a good time to use on the repair. That's what I mean by standardizing.

Q: You said that aftercare services are broken? Do you mean that the communication between...

Yeah because when you get to... I worked in retail as well and I can see that when the customer goes back to the store there is very limited to what the brands offer on repairing. Anything that is an accident or a recall, lifecycle of the item. If you had a damage they will work on, they will only work on like a factory fault. Anything else and you need to find an external person to do the repair and that's where you might not get the guarantee of quality, the same level. That's basically why we started the business. Also turn-arounds are really bad, like basically ship the items to Italy it takes 3 months. So its not much interest for the brands to have that and it's a shame because it's the biggest part of the cycle.

Q: What do you think about those brands that have inhouse repair services? Is that a way forward do you think?

Yes for sure. With circularity being a hot topic now. Not just hot but essential. I think its gonna become the norm, same as sustainability which is part x of as well. Yeah I think they're having to turn their attention to this now which is great. Because that's where you lose quality, you lose the customer experience so we're always interested in improving that and for the brands to have a better approach to the items as well.

Q: A bit more responsibility?

Yeah and that will keep the level that they want, you know, have something in a standard that they would accept. So its not just... I think they need to change their perspective a lot. They expect a store bought item like in factory conditions but its not that once you start wearing it.

P9

Repair Practices

This section examines repair practices looking at tools as well as types and frequency of repair.

What kind of repair , remake, customisation or refurbishment service do you (or your company) offer?

0:37

I offer core education on basic repair skills which are missing in society. And I train up people to teach people these core skills. And I offer a website, which teaches, both the core skills left and right handed, provides downloads that so for you catch every type of learner and there's a reference document, so the downloads are left and right handed instructions for core skills and then have a variety of slow mending tutorials on specific mends, so that would be jeans on how to mend knitwear, in different ways with different issues, from small holes to large holes lycra small holes to large holes and how to ladder-stitch coats, how to use specific materials which i've researched, so the Sports clothes I use wooley nylon because you can get the stretch and then show the different stitch uses for those in say leggings and sports shoes and then.

2:14

Also, some patching some basic visual work so some basic embroidery skills and, finally, using tape to patch things which are made of such fine fibers the micro fibers and cloths used for say outdoor sports clothes like quilted jackets gore-tex clothing, how you simply tape them You cannot needle to them you tape them, so we have.

2:47

Oh, then I also offer an educational section, which is where there's a program for schools and completely matched to the curriculum for, the textile curriculum, for Scotland, England and Wales and England includes Northern Ireland where the project is devised to appeal to upper years of primary, lower years of secondary and then leading in to the higher years of secondary and along with that there's videos on core textile constructions and core fibers. And all the resources to teach that.

Q: yeah and I will come back onto the teaching materials and how they're being used that's really interesting

What things tend to be repaired most frequently?

jeans jeans. Crotch in jeans. Our video has had just about 500,000 views which for a non-sexy subject is pretty cool and small holes in knitwear is 200,000 views.

4:08

Q: really good yes that's huge numbers.

4:12

yeah yeah and mending the toe of a running shoe is heading to 35,000. So you have a video on how to repair a shoe as well?

4:26

yeah yeah. Okay, two things. How to mend the lining on walking shoes, how to, when things have broken that I feel as long you know i've thought about how to mend things and i've made illustrative videos but what I don't do is do them repetitively or put what I do normally out online.

4:50

Q: Okay interesting.

4:51

I do illustrative work as a tutorial yeah.

5:02

Q: Great What about the best ones i've been to. So you've talked a little bit about.

5:09

Q: The crotch on jeans and the parts of the shoe.

What are the key reasons for garment failure?

When it's wear, and I would say, these days, it's textile wear, that's the biggest one and that will be from a degrading of textile materials, in my opinion yeah.

What tools do you consider essential to the practice of repair, re-make, customization or refurbishment?

Needle and thread i'm gonna have to close my eyes here concentrate so needle and thread some pins and some sharp scissors and I use NIPS (type of scissor) . Those.

Q: Oh yes, yeah.

6:06

Extras, an un-picker. Then the range of needles you use and what you're doing then influences the threads you use. So, for most I just use polyester because it's thread that's available by the time something is broken i'm not going to go out and search for a cotton thread to mend something i'd rather have the garment had a longer life so very often it's a polyester thread. All wool, and I use ScanPhil (Brand of thread?) for darning.

6:33

Embroidery thread. Because when particularly wool items or Jersey items are very fine, finer than a 12 gauge or 20 gauge, then you need to be using a finer thread you can't, unless you're planning, otherwise you make holes in the cloth.

7:02

So, then, I used embroidery threads. Two maybe.

7:14

And then finally, essential in my regard for wardrobe now is the Woolie? nylon. Or not wardrobe but is woolie nylon. Problem with woolie nylon is that it's not sold in many colors. Do you know what i'm talking about with woolie nylon?

7:25

Q: I don't really know.

7:34

I had to think long and hard before advising people on how to mend lycra and I had a very bad huge tear on one of my lycra running trousers, so you can't mend it with an ordinary tightly bound polyester thread, because it will simply cut through as you stretch the materials.

7:47

So you need a thread, which is going to have stretch but also is multi fiber in order to, i'm not a scientist i'm not gonna use the right words, but in order to sort of disperse the pressure.

8:11

Q: Right.

8:18

And so woolie nylon is what you use for cheap overclocking machines. It's a nylon multi fiber thread. And so it fulfills all those needs, that I just talked about.

8:34

Q: You particularly use it on lycra.

8:37

yeah use it on anything which has stretch you can't see this but it's super fine I could take a photo. There against my face.

8:49

Q: yeah but its stranded?

8:50

It's stranded yeah. Beyond the denier is so fine.

8:54

Q: yeah interesting very useful material for you.

8:58

Well, I hope its a useful material for many people, but I have to get views on it, you know, I have to get people to buy into it and it's expensive to buy. The problem is that you can't at the moment, because it's multi fiber you can't wind it into smaller amounts, without affecting the quality.

9:10

Design for Durability

This section investigates techniques and strategies to extend the lifespan of garments.

What repair or customisation techniques do you rely on?

9:48

Yes, so, first of all, and fix quickly. Secondly. So if it's just, that's why I want people to know core skills, because very often if you fix it at the beginning, it doesn't fray. It obviously doesn't increase and so, and that's where I think we really need to get the public skilled up that's my wish. And

then longevity. I'll show you the tape. The tape that's good for, for instance puffer jackets which are very popular or multi anything which is a very fine, fine fiber is spinnaker tape.

10:44

Because it's a multi fiber sorry it's a very fine weave With, I'm having a moment, rip stop-design. It's designed for water repellent, see because it's designed for boats.

11:08

So it's an adhesion is extremely good. It comes in a variety of colours which are you know quite funky you can cut it to shape providing you don't cut sharp corners on the tape and all you do is apply it.

11:13

Q: Really, you don't then stitch it on?

11:28

No, no, you mustn't stitch on multi fiber you know if you start stitching, for instance, if its feather or it's insulated with a synthetic, any of those synthetic fillers they'll come straight through with your needle because your needle is even the finest needle and the finest thread is so much bigger than the fibres that you're sewing.

11:43

Q: right away, see okay very interesting fix how did you learn about it?

11:52

I didn't, I researched it and invented it.

12:02

Q: So it's your own unique technique?

12:02

Probably I mean i'm not alone I don't think, but as a textile you know, this is where this is my approach to things. You know i've been in the business or been in textiles a long time, and so my knowledge of textile fibers and function is pretty big and so I just had to sit, to think and look and research, and that was my research, and I know it works.

12:34

Q: When you say you have to think and look, I mean did you do some kind of mechanical tests or you kind of just by looking at it and understanding, I suppose understanding the fibers themselves so you can make that decision.

12:35

How do you support customers or consumers to creatively repurpose embellished or upgrade damaged items through personalization options?

On our website we've got a few upcycling ideas and it's all about teaching the core techniques that you can use in order to upcycle it, so for instance, if i'm shortening a jumper.

I turned a dress into a jumper which I wear a lot more now, and so I illustrated how I went about that, so that if you watch that you could then have the skills to do it, otherwise. So i've done that for a few pieces and I've taught a lot of sewing. And so i've taught people to upcycle, but my observation is that each item is individual each creative objective is individual and so I would rather teach the core skills and enable the individual to make their decisions and that's my role.

13:53

Q: yeah when you say core skills, **what are you including in core skills?**

14:01

Understand of fibres and fabrics and how they're going to respond and hand skills.

And I don't do machine on purpose, because there are plenty of people who teach needlework or machines sewing online. If you've got a machine you're probably really into it anyway. So our principle is that everything is hand so that anyone can do it. yeah and if you then start find you

have a light? for it costs nothing either you know costs next to nothing to nothing. And so that's our whole in the market and that's where we placed ourselves.

14:56

Q: yeah absolutely I think that makes it more accessible, but there's also something about hand stitching because I, this is what I like doing it feels like you have slightly more control.

15:02

More control is absolutely it, so I own an industrial machine over there i've got three machines in this room. But when it comes to redesigning clothing I'd absolutely rather do it by hand. I frequently find if as a skilled sewer I can so seams and do things, but if you have that , you work with the cloth you're right. And so, and also, if you make a mistake, you haven't ruined it if you need to unpick it.

15:41

Q: know exactly so much easier isn't it.

15:46

I agree with you completely. Yeah and also you can get into embroidery and decoration and things with hands that make it more yours.

15:55

Q: yeah yeah it feels more personal you can develop a kind of signature style that belongs that's more yours.

16:01

Are there any other sustainable practices and services that you'd like to offer in future?

16:11

Oh yeah yeah I mean we have social media as everybody does and I don't we don't always talk about what we're doing we try and influence behavior so its way goes way beyond repair so we talk what at the beginning of the summer season when we're getting all these adverts for dresses for occasions we were putting out social media posts saying buy, exchange, borrow, adapt you know use our website, if you want ideas for adaption and then talking about waste and yeah and we will talk about 'what are the best fibers?' so if you're buying what, if you do need to buy from new or you're buying secondhand, I try to get people to think about the fibers and the construction, so that they'll know how long things will last. We're a small voice in the wind aren't we?

17:22

Q: The next question asks **what kind of support would you welcome financial, partnerships, reskilling, technical to help you maybe become slightly bigger voice?**

17:40

We're in meetings with people who really influence education. Because how the educational structure is organized is politics, foremost. And then history in my eyes of how things have been and textiles is one of those areas where the way in which we teach, it has to be radically changed. People don't understand, unless I speak to them. In my view, education about textiles should no longer be craft we shouldn't actually unless people do it as an exam we shouldn't be giving them experience on machines. We should be talking in the early years about textiles through a sustainability knowledge life skills program where you engage people in experimentation, interest, de-construction of garments, hand skills, fibre knowledge and they can then extend what area of that interest them they're not crafters, 90% of the country are not artistic. So what we need to do is engage those people in recognizing what they wear is a value the knowledge about what they wear as a value to them, but also, it could give them a future.

19:00

We need pattern-cutters in the future and they're not creative thinkers necessarily there're skilled technicians, we need the inventors of new fibres the organizers of manufacturing, we need the

hand-skilled workers. And we only need a very small number of designers. Everything we do is geared towards design.

19:32

Q: yeah exactly without enough emphasis on these key core skills as you call them

19:36

And so interesting you know people you can't put it back in the box once you know it, so you know if you become aware of the value of cotton, and when you should be wearing it, all the value, you know how polyester functions and the fact that it doesn't biodegrade but what you can do to extend the life of it, as a young person you're really skilled up. You can tell i'm passionate about it.

20:04

I have the brush off from all the Ministers of Education 18 months ago, so when I produced this piece of work for schools, which they would integrate into an existing curriculum, which was very important, every Education Minister wrote back to me and told me that hand-skills were all included. But we know they weren't because they were one of the recommendations that Dylis Williams made from the report that hand-skills should be included in key stage I think she said, two and three.

20:30

So it's just two people are just, they don't get the vision, they don't get the vision. So, however, we get people to get the vision and make changes would appeal to me.

Funding would be nice, because I do the entire thing for free, as my colleague x does. I put aside some money for this project sometime ago and I do run it from that. And I will be paying x a sort of monthly stipend soon and that will be from my own money, I have to debate whether we set up as a group. We're both self employed, so we could charge anytime.

21:11

Q: Do you charge for mending services?

21:28

I don't mend for others, I teach. And I do mend for others, but I usually use it as a learning or illustrative function.

21:37

Q: Right okay yeah same for me, I do mend for others, but not very often and not enough if I were to charge people, which I don't. yeah wouldn't be enough to sustain me, but like you say it's a learning process and it's about kind of raising awareness as well, for people to understand the link between repair practices and life extension and thinking more deeply about what they're wearing.

22:10

I know i've influenced people, I know I know there's been a considerable amount of influence, so I am running on time wise. And I know I know I have influenced people to change their behaviors to, for instance, to stop buying new completely somebody I met recently said to me.

Since I met you i've stopped buying anything new, but I tell you what my wardrobe is much more interesting because I don't worry about spending money in charity shops.

22:31

Q: Yes, really interesting isn't it great if you've managed to influence just one person about something.

22:42

I managed to influence A few school curriculums to so that goes way beyond.

22:50

Q: yeah yeah that's really interesting, I think we need to think much more yes strategically about well education people in charge of education, you need to think about how we bring in these

skills to teach our children how to understand materials think it's really important and how to work with them

So what do you consider are the barriers to mending?

23:07

Time and confidence and reasoning. With the emphasis on a shortage of, on people's budgets right now. it's interesting that repair has not come up at all. And I think there must be some sort of historical, psychological, embedded fear of recommending it from an authority point of view you can't say 'let's get mending', 'it saves you money', because it appears that you're making people there's something to do with poverty, I can't express this properly.

23:48

yeah I find an awful lot of people that get it are those who are more financially secure anyway.

24:06

Q: yeah that's interesting I might be to do with awareness greater awareness of what the implications are i'm not sure. But I think that you're right it's not necessarily voiced, but I did interview x and she told me that she seen they've seen an increase in people coming to their repair cafes because of what she called the cost of living crisis.

And so, because people are beginning to feel the pinch, they are thinking well i'm going to repair my things to make them last longer because it's an issue of you know, money is not about sustainability it's not about the environment that's not why they're doing it. they're doing it for these other reasons, because they can't afford to buy new things.

24:58

Well, certainly, I think that that would be welcome in terms of the social benefits if that, if it's increasing in skill base it's so interesting this, though, because you may find that they've previously been aware of mending or they had previous mending skills and they want to be helped reacquire them. But there is a section of society who would regard going back to wearing something that was mended as a, they couldn't accept it in terms of their own well being. It is, it is very complicated, so say, you know I did a project at COP, so I was part of, not at COP, but I was part of an organization, part of Glasgow Chamber of Commerce and a business that's a B corp and they had five slots a day, and it was talking about rethinking clothing there a big business in rental, rental business and they run a repair section, as a result of that they're also training a lot of young people. And there were five slots a day, and two of them were mine, so I talked about the environment and somebody in-house from Glasgow delivered core hand skills and we could divide the room, I could visually divide the room up immediately into sort of thirds. Those that couldn't give a shit, those that were quite well educated, who already bought from charity shops already were into it already repair repair and the middle section were the section to go for, you know, obviously. But fear fear of trying fear of failing fear of lack of knowledge, was a very, very obvious behaviour in that lot. Right yeah.

27:09

Q: Interesting isn't it so it's almost about making them feel more confident and what they do know.

27:14

And also, you can I assumed I didn't know these individuals very well that the ones that were already bought into it, it was part of a family change. So parents will be talking about and their mates will be talking about the benefits and people who follow of charity shop purchasing of craft ISM of not that I like that word very much but yeah and it would be alien to their home structure As well as individual confidence.

27:52

Q: yeah so it's almost part of the lifestyle. Great that you've had that experience to, we need to have more experiences like that and make you know that more widespread.

28:09

Q: So i'm going to move on to the next section which explores the experience of materials and their qualities.

Materials Experience

This section explores the experience of materials and their qualities.

How do you assess material properties to decide on a choice of repair technique, method of embellishment, matching a material for patching etc?

28:33

yeah so first of all, obviously, is how its constructed, so if it's woven that's one method if it's knitted that's another. If it's a very, for instance i'm looking at something that needs mending here that's a sweatshirt, that's still knitted but it's got less stretch and it's thicker so first of all, you assess the behavior of it, and then the size of the weave, the fibers, which are linked to the size of the weave or knit and then the location. The type of mend required, that's obvious, so whether it's just a split whether it's worn and if it's worn it's a patch because you need to reinforce the cloth. You know, one of the mistakes that very easily made is when garments wear at a particular point of pressure and the fibres grin? or whatever people sew them back together again, but of course it's going to split again. So anything where there's wear or pressure, then you need to patch to reinforce.

29:55

What are the typical mistakes that less experienced learners make?

30:02

To sew together a split. And just the fact that you're sewing a split together. And there are wonderful videos with masses of views on YouTube of people going i'm just mended my jeans and you think what happens next well i've just mended the inside of my jacket.

30:22

Q: yeah oh right have you seen those videos then.

30:35

Oh yeah yeah yeah.

30:38

Q: yeah that'd be interesting to see, they are making videos of the wrong thing to do.

30:39

Plenty and it's huge yeah massive.

30:48

How do you examine and assess materials to discover their properties, detect changes as they degrade and make creative judgements?

30:52

And well usually you, you can pull materials apart or stretch them and you either see through it. Or you can see where the fibres are starting to wear so they're going to they're not going to last long they're going to unravel and you can crunch it see whether it responds if it should be a fabric that is happy to be creased will usually respond after crease. yeah so it's the normal sort of fraying or thin yeah.

31:34

Do you use any other sensations or senses to help you?

31:50

Do I use any other senses? No it's mostly visual and touch.

I had a terrible experience when I was helping, I was working quite a few years ago. On this beginning of repair with vulnerable groups, and one of the guys only had two jumpers and the entire neckline, neck had come off a shawl, and so I said i'd mend it for him. Sensory experience unreal! And I couldn't wash it til I'd mended it!

32:21

Q: No, this is it, this is washing is a kind of quite an essential part of maintenance isn't it? It cost 80 pence and took 10 minutes and I just sewed it back on with wool. And it changed his life. Where he was he had nothing he was a very, very vulnerable drug addict former drug addict who had major mental health problems and only had two jumpers and lived in Scotland.

32:47

Q: Right Okay, so he needed to wear them both at the same time that we.

33:00

needed to wear one or the other, but he had none.

33:07

Q: yeah interesting the link between repair and wellbeing I think it's we talked about it a lot but i'm not always sure we're talking about well being in the same way we don't always where we talk about well being is it means different things to different people. But I think there's definitely a benefit, especially if you're a maker from engaging in material practices that and being creative that come yeah affect your well being. So different forms of it anyway sorry.

Do you support consumers to interact with materials in ways that can facilitate more expressive repair and upgrade decisions?

33:54

Oh yeah yeah I mean anything that works for them. And you know. Do you mean being creative and being inventive?

34:11

Q: I know in your workshop you showed us how to do. i'm gonna forget the name of the stitch. It was not herringbone...

34:23

Yes, it was blanket stitch around the cuff.

Q: so it's a kind of you know I wouldn't even have thought to do that so it's a kind of you know, opening people's eyes to what's possible?

34:26

Yes, yeah I would absolutely do that, you see, if you look that's where it's helpful to have the amount of knowledge, because if you look and think i've got a very fine lambswool or cashmere jumper, you know that kind of thinness, you can't really darn it without ruining it. You know, because it's too thick. You know, and if you're creative all the time, if you look at what the problem is and you problem solve then you end up with the best mending solution rather than thinking oh it's a jumper I need to darn.

35:17

i'm very against darning actually. Well yeah not against it. Whenever I say to people, what I do they always go oh I darn, that's the first thing they think of and I hardly ever darn. Don't really use darning, because darning is creating a woven cloth on a three-way stretch knit fabric and so, for the most part, there are much better solutions.

35:32

Q: yeah it's interesting because it's the one technique your grandma always shows you there's a hole in your sock of that you would darn it and it is the woven basically what you're creating is a woven structure, on top of the knitted structure.

35:44

yeah and it's difficult to do. So you usually fail. And these days that might mean for me socks. You might wear socks around the house but normally socks are a mixture of nylon and Mostly nylon cotton and that's for a reason is because the nylon wears a long time, so you end up you can't darn those socks, the majority can't be done. Though there's I save all the old clothes, that really have got no future and I take them to the dump and I put them in the burning. This i've got control.

36:37

Q: yeah yeah but there's nothing else you can really do to some of these.

36:39

well known and turn them into tea towels and dish cloths it's just not realistic.

36:43

Q: know and they could get recycled into stuffing.

36:49

Q: Or, and that kind of thing but that's not going to be up cycled it'll always be a lower quality use.

36:53

that they would be we've got so much cloth that's being.

37:03

I mean there's it, what is it 9%, I think, is what it used to be 9% only is turned into alternative textile provision which is installation, old blankets, whatever it's a very small percentage, so my socks are unlikely to be in that.

37:16

Q: yeah, it is a small percentage right i'm going to move to the last section which identifies it's called network society and community, which is, Where be interesting to hear a bit more about your educational resources and how they're used this section identifies key actors ways to build community, To enable interaction and collaboration with consumers towards enacting a circular economy.

Network, Society and Community

This section identifies key actors, ways to build community to enable interaction and collaboration with consumers towards enacting a CE.

How do you connect, collaborate and create opportunities with your community and key actors involved in repair practices?

37:54

Through the provision of resources, the provision of classes and Reference materials.

38:09

Q: How many schools have you worked have used your resources are they just in Scotland?

38:17

No and but, but a lot of people have used my resources so, for instance, as a charity in Cambridge that does that started up shortly after we did and work with vulnerable women teaching sewing skills and they've used what they've learned from me to teach those women.

38:23

there's a woman i've been working with for 18 months now in Cambridgeshire has rewritten all her schemes of work for school. Yeah and I know that resources are used in Edinburgh through

something called the shrub? cooperative and through stitch it don't ditch it. So, even though there's, they always hand out my teaching methods. And that's the whole aim of what I do is to enable others. There's people in Australia, who are doing that. There's a woman in America who's changed the way in which she approaches textiles and is now working with primary schools using our resources and what she's learned from attending courses.

39:24

I won't be able to account for what's done, which you know in marketing terms is foolish. But that doesn't really worry me, you know, so long as there's somebody and there's a couple of people in Blackpool there's a couple of repair shops as one in his Amir.

39:43

chesham I worked a lot with the chesham repair cafes and they've they use a lot of our stuff and I train their people to teach.

39:52

Q: But some of them get in contact with you to...?

40:06

Work yeah yeah yeah some of them, some of them afterwards or it's like anything in life, you know you. You learn something you say thank you and you go off and you get on with life, then you. yeah yeah we've had very good feedback.

40:23

Q: You have okay well that's good that's something.

40:26

And this year we're starting in local schools so we're going to work on a three year project with a primary school the Catholic primary school in town here.

40:28

i've got a couple of senior schools, who i'm working with in this coming autumn tempo VID has messed everything up.

40:37

we're going to start a project with developing the young workforce locally too, which is all about skilling people up for the workforce. And we may be involved with sustainable fashion week as the education partner and i'll go down there and do a lecture and we'll have a repair from there will be part of the repair room, but I want to start a repair networks so Ellie I met yesterday and we decided that we would initiate an Aberdeen repair what you were network. So that people, we can have meetings will meet will create a sort of repair CAFE bi weekly anyway people just bring along what they want to mend, but I want to get people other people to go out into say Community centers. So that it's not just me so i've got and teaching some vulnerable communities this autumn and I don't want to be the only person who does it I need to skill up other people who do it because that's, the only way that you will change people's minds.

41:38

Q: yeah.

41:54

Absolutely i've been asked to speak at a W.I (Women's Institute) meeting soon. And you know, if there are younger people there who are prepared to give time to engage in a textile relevant way you know I don't want I don't want people not to recognize the now. So i'll train people up to recognize that it's not just what I learned from my granny. It's the now they have to be in the now. Sorry, if i'm babbling on...

42:30

Q: No, no, no that's okay I just I just wonder what you meant by in the now you mean kind of making the skills more relevant to fabrics that we have now.

42:33

Everything, yes completely, so telling them, I mean people don't understand what viscose is they don't know what viscose is so. Talking about Viscose modal and its origins, you know and we've got various i've got various powerpoints which show we've discussed that sort of thing and more details, so I would educate people about that sort of thing.

42:50

Q: right they see.

43:03

Because otherwise you meet people who say 'oh yeah I mend' and you know I darn and I don't know why anybody doesn't. But they don't understand the context of today.

43:13

Q: yeah no that's really interesting is that throws a whole new kind of light on, you know how to how to do repair.

43:18

Well, if 200 when I started this project Canopy said that 70,000 true? Indigenous and ancient forest trees have been chopped down for cellulosic cloth and when I finally went to do that work at COP I had to update it to 200,000. Yes in four years!

43:50

Q: yeah that's terrible I didn't yeah I didn't know, there was that link between yeah making. So yeah we surrounded the knowledge and awareness of what's actually happening now isn't it, not just the techniques that can be. Understanding where our fabrics are coming from putting that all in context.

44:08

Yes, and I think it makes it interesting too.

44:14

Q: yeah though it makes it interesting makes it relevant to people, but it fits in with your, this idea of education and raising awareness as being.

44:17

Q: quite crucial lever to how we begin to understand.

44:25

Q: You know, repair practices and how they fit into our lives and that comes on to the next question how

How can society scale up consumer demand for repair and customisation practices?

Possibly what you're doing in terms of your educational resources is the way that we can scale up.

44:43

I have all sorts of ideas, of course, in my dream world because i'm just one person doing little stuff not and you know not many people know about it when I Finally, get them to run through it teachers or whatever they go God I didn't know that was really there i'm going well yeah it's been there 18 months two years i've been trying to tell you about it but I think we should have done it should be on BBC bite size. And I think we should have a really good series on telly, a documentary about the fibres we wear. Not the clothes we wear, but the fibres we wear, because if you start with that you can discuss all sorts of angles of it. And you can make it entirely relevant, but of course you think to talk about the clothing that they made into.

45:35

Q: yeah.

45:41

And because for me and always it's been since I went into education it's been the lack of fibre discussion about fibres that's you know fibres at the root of absolutely everything, even when I

went to teach in university that students didn't know that they didn't know about fibres. So I have a passion for that, and I think, then, if you can start to get sort of celebrities or influencers on board, you know, for instance, an exciting piece of news last week was that Community clothing which dub dub Patrick Grant is engaged with and won the contract for the England, I want to say Commonwealth Games, clothing and all of it is being made locally in Britain near the Games, but the great thing is there's no badges they're removable which has always been one of my things so you know influencing sports people would have a huge impact on our environmental, on the clothing damage that we do in the UK, the couple of things mend your kit, know how to mend your kit and get men doing it. And also stop the labeling. You know, Africa doesn't want any more shirts with local sponsors on them.

47:18

Q: No, no, exactly they've made that clear.

47:20

Anyway, is that relevant to what you were asking me?

47:23

Q: yeah no definitely this idea of how we scale up mending practices in society, thinking about different ways of doing that and actually i'm thinking about your educational resources. I was talking to Richmond Council, I think it was Wandsworth Council because they're working on a project to reduce consumption. Consumption emissions from consumption in London. One of the ways they're doing it is about educating the population about different things and they've got you know plastics they've got transport and but they've also got textiles. So, within the textiles category they wanted to go into schools, so they could begin to educate young people about the importance of clothing and repairs and I mentioned your resources to them. So I hope that's all right.

48:17

I would love that, because actually what I always thought that would be good, is to have repair, because now you're making me think a bit more broadly.. Councils should have repair skills on all their websites. The business about going into schools is very tricky. Schools are inundated with people who want to go in to them to talk about their specific issue.

48:36

And that's why i'm in my dream i'm very focused on trying to actually change the curriculum, because that reduces the pressure on the teachers it actually enables the children not to feel pressured from outside, because we are. We are really making our young people feel responsible for stuff when what we have to do is give them the skills to be able to manage for themselves. So i've always had a thing about Councils i've also in my dream wanted to contact big companies like SUEZ and get, they need to reduce the amount of waste that they receive and also make sure that its purposed right. So that if they if, like our providers of recycling and things got into an education Program. yeah it's a it's an sort of national thinking thing. I also had an idea once which was about a national mend-a-thon...

P10

Repair Practices

This section examines repair practices looking at tools as well as types and frequency of repair.

What kind of repair , remake, customisation or refurbishment service do you (or your company) offer?

Q: You were saying...comparative analysis in.

I'm doing this comparative study in Ukraine and in Denmark and the basic idea is that due to the historical and political economical features, set of practices, set of slow practices, has in Ukrainian context, but also in the post-socialist context has been conserved till today, so an initial assumption was that we can learn a lot from that context and the practices which could potentially integrate to practices in the western world, specifically in reference to Denmark and I have created a group of six participants and three in Denmark and three in Ukraine, all of the main requirement was to practice mending on a regular basis, and it hadn't be so elaborated or sophisticated. As soon as people do it at home it could fulfill the requirements and initially we did a series of wardrobe interviews to understand, that was asking people to open up the wardrobes and to show me the mended garments which were mended by them, or by someone else.

And so one of the main differences was that repair infrastructure in Denmark is quite weak, while in Ukrainian context, people can rely on repair services and seamstress services and almost every woman in a (post) socialist context have their own seamstress so that is one of the things which somehow I think is missing, and then I was asking the participants to replicate this wardrobe study with the representative of older generations so to understand how do people consume clothes and how the practices of today, mending practices, differ from the practices of the past and then in the last stage we were looking into how mending competencies are developed so we were doing a series of participatory workshops looking into yeah into competencies, which are needed for enabling mending practices.

2:39

Q: yeah really interesting so looking at how skills get passed down from one generation to another.

2:55

Partly. Yeah partly it was, but it was quite a small part. I was focusing more on the practice itself and also like how mending practices embedded into broader and yeah like set of different practices of care, not only mending but like, on the one hand, throughout practice self care and on the other hand there are practices, like craft practices, because mending, what I found out, it cannot stand out of practices of knitting or altering clothes and so on.

3:22

Q: Okay yeah no that's interesting.

3:48

Q: Well i'll start some of the questions, then, and that will help to I think tease out some of your research, which sounds really interesting for this project. So you yourself are you a repair practitioner? A theorist?

4:11

Yes, I'm an eco-social designer, an approach and research at the moment and i'm a repair practitioner like I do it since I was...I learned it at school because I grew up in Ukraine, so, on the one hand, it was passed within the family, I learned it and then I implemented my skills at the school and then I continued with the mending practice so yeah.

4:32

Q: Okay, great and what things tend to be repaired most frequently from your perspective or from the perspective of your research and your participants, what would you say?

4:50

Well, I was most frequently... it's really difficult actually to derive kind of categories and linking to a typology of the damage, I would say I cannot say that basically all the garments but also like textile objects which people have at home are often repaired, but also like shoes which I would have said, like textile structure and yeah.

5:43

Q: yeah.

5:53

I think that's the most the most common thing is kind of really basic open seams as that I also found out that.

5:54

In the past.

6:05

When people are doing kind of overlocking they had to put an extra seam to reinforce it and then with production like fast production, this part of reinforcing is somehow missing, and so it was one of the most common damages just an open seam so easy but in fact, it is...

6:33

yeah yeah.

6:35

Q: No interesting that from fast fashion, that they don't reinforce for me an extra step that costs more money to reinforce some of these seams.

6:37

yeah.

6:48

Q: yeah do you have an example from your participants of a particular repair item that might have a story or something attached to it that you can share.

6:49

Well it's really difficult to I mean.

7:02

Every the whole research was based around garments and stories and also it culminated into several repair projects. There were six participants and they did two projects each of them and, of course, every garment has a story and I don't know if I should individuate one.

7:24

Q: No that's okay.

7:43

Q: I don't know so yeah as a follow up if there might be a particular item you if you want to send any images to me or anything like that or add an annotation that would be fine, but we can talk about that afterwards.

7:45

What are the key reasons for garment failure?

but I think you've already covered that with your comment about the typology of failure, so I don't know if you want to say anything about failure in terms of garments?

8:19

Well failure I don't... i'm not sure whether it's I can.... Let me think because the term failure itself, it depends also on how people interpret the practice because it might be a failure if people have an obstacle like mending becomes an obstacle, but in case when people are engaged with the practice, it becomes more an opportunity so it's not seen as a failure actually.

8:47

Q: yeah yeah.

8:59

I don't know if i'm answering i'm just ..x..a bit.

9:00

Q: yeah no that's interesting because I do repair myself, and we do talk about holes as being an opportunity and something that could potentially be celebrated.

9:05

But yeah just thinking that Like right now i'm wearing this one, which I don't know you can see, there are some mends like on it. Also, like was the choice of the thread and the colour and so on and I started to notice it when I had the first hole, and I was a bit like hesitating but as soon as I found my way of mending into it and thinking like what I will wear it with so it became kind of every time I have a new hole i'm almost happy because it's growing and growing and then you pattern on this garment? so it's getting even exciting so yeah.

10:14

Q: Yes, almost an evolution. Almost like a life of its own that it develops over time yeah Nice.

What tools do you or your participants consider essential to the practice of repair, remake, customization, refurbishment.

10:18

And so, in terms of tools. First of all, I was studying like analyzing all the like all the tools we check with found, like all tools, starting from mending mushrooms needle-weaving, reweaving? machines and all those things, and actually it was also part of the process that I redesigned these tools like, tangible tools which could be printed like 3D printed to enable (excellent) reproduction elsewhere of these tools, but the point is that tools are not enough on their own, because they are integrated with the competencies so tools it's only one part of the practice.

11:44

yeah so there can be this like tools as mending mushrooms, sewing machines, but also materials themselves which people use as additional materials, but also understanding the garment and other aspects, like analysis.

11:46

Q: yeah absolutely and what you said about competencies about level of skill and that's something that's learned over time, so that all kind of comes together doesn't it.

12:05

yeah you.

12:14

Q: Oh really interesting what you said about 3D printed tools is that something that we can have a look at.

12:15

Yes I can send you some... it's not online yet, and I can send you some pictures.

12:23

Q: yeah that'd be great, thank you be really good to see some of that.

12:32

Q: So the next section is called design for durability, where we investigating techniques and strategies to extend the lifespan of garments.

Design for Durability

This section investigates techniques and strategies to extend the lifespan of garments.

What repair or customisation techniques do you rely on?

and you've just shown me on your jumper and I don't know whether you call that would you call that visible repair or in or more discreet.

12:47

As well in terms of that's interesting that you're saying visible or discrete because I was working on that level, as well as like on different levels of engagement and different competencies, which are needed for each level actually and, on the one hand, this is not discrete it's more I call it not visible but expressive mending the way I can express myself through this mend and yeah so it's not discreet at all and it's.

13:31

Q: ya know.

13:36

Q: expressive yeah because visible mending tends to be very expressive from what i've also done myself. What about the participants that you worked with. Would they call themselves expressive all visible repairers what other techniques might they employ?

13:38

Oh well, the techniques, I would say is that the techniques are not they don't differ from those from the past and the techniques pre say it's as it was I was also analyzing like all the books, with different mending techniques both in western context but also like in post-socialist context. They have a lot of literature on that but the point is that there is a great discussion on visible mending or expressive mending, whatever we call it, but it's not the only dimension because we have cases where people have and want to do discreet in a discreet way so it's like more mundane mending I would say is that not always it's a case that people want to do it in a really visible and bright way, there are some cases is if it's like under the armpit people won't do it in there want to put a red heart under the armpit or something like that so there are different differences also there.

15:09

Q: yeah Okay, thank you.

How do you support consumers to creatively repurpose embellished or upgrade damaged items

I don't know if this applies to you, but you might want to think about your participants how they support people to creatively repurpose or embellish or upgrade damaged items.

15:36

I support them within the process and I was also doing several workshops in Italy, a like mending workshops and I was to supporting them with materials and with tools and also facilitating they understanding which directions they would go whether it's discrete whether its expressive for direction and yeah in that sense, I guess that I was providing some support.

16:11

Q: yeah Okay, thank you um i'm going to move to the next section which explores the experience of materials and their qualities.

How do you assess or your participants, how did you see them assess material properties, to decide on a choice of repair technique.

16:23

And well that I find that that part is the most challenging because people don't have enough knowledge. Even though they're all practitioners like they're all menders, and that is the most difficult part to understand how the materials behave somehow and it's also come, even though, like it.

17:06

Somehow I was just reflecting on it recently because even though they tried something before somehow each piece each garment is so unique and they have specific damages and specific

materials and often it results in trial and stitching and trial again and finding like a way for that specific garment that assessing it in advance it's not that easy for people.

17:30

yeah but also looking into my practice like my mending practice often even being designer and having several competencies, which could facilitate and then like envisioning the final outcome it's a moment when I started interacting with materials additional materials and the garment itself and the materials are guiding you, and that was one of the things which came out within the process, because as a group we were trying to envision our projects but then when they were interacting with materials and the garments and they would change in materials and techniques and try it out and then stitching and doing again, so there is something interesting, I find it interesting that it's not so easy to plan and it's become kind of I wouldn't say an obstacle, but when designer have to work with that it becomes quite challenging it's something similar to emotional attachment with a garment which has been discussed for decades, but at the end there has never been any kind of outcome, because what is emotional for one person is not emotional for another, and no one was able to trace any kind of pattern, as I see it, so.

19:15

yeah I don't know what to think about it.

19:31

Q: So what, what are the typical mistakes, then that people make when they're handling materials trying to make creative decisions with them?

19:36

Well it's also like weight of the material of the garment with the weight of additional material, for instance, or trying to use some techniques which are suitable for knitted garments or woven garment, for example.

20:08

yeah so.

20:13

Q: yeah the wrong technique for the wrong type of fabric.

20:19

What about examining materials and assessing them to detect changes as they degrade over time?

20:21

Q: Have you noticed in your research how people make those decisions? Do they hold the fabric up to the light, how do they assess the levels of degradation to make maybe predictions about repair that might need to take place now or in the future?

20:50

Well, I mean that becomes also visible when the material becomes thinner and they see it but what I experienced people don't – that somehow logical to reinforce before it breaks, but people don't do it, they start repair when there is an actual damage and not at the stage when it has to be reinforced.

21:20

Q: What you said about emotional attachment, whether that has any bearing on people's motivation, obviously, to repair.

21:22

Q: And if something is damaged to such an extent, if they have no attachment, then they will just get rid of that item whether there's a link between yeah i'm not sure emotional attachment and it's how it kind of manifests what you've seen how people understand that attachment.

21:48

Rather, a different there are different layers of the understanding, I would say, but it's not it's mostly how do people feel in the garments because it's not necessarily something a unique or something that has a story sometimes things are quite easy they buy even something that was second-hand which is poor quality, for instance, and they feel so comfortable in that garment that they keep wearing this and somehow they feel comfortable and bold with this garment which cannot be somehow explained because it's not a unique design garment, high quality or which has some particular story, they just create this emotional attachment to the practice of wearing this garment and then, of course, they want to prolong the lifespan of the garment and they mend.

22:53

Q: yeah so it could be to do with comfort and wear that kind of the rhythms of use almost.

23:03

Yes it's comfort, but it's also somehow how they're making their garments a garment which live within the system of the wardrobe or which is linked to other garments which creates like you know yeah it's more systemic view but also comfort and how does it feel in terms of, they see themselves beautiful with that garment, it suits them in the shape and colour in a comfort like the material itself is one of the aspects.

23:37

Q: I see so it's almost could be related to self image.

23:49

Yes, yeah.

23:54

Okay, like their identity construction somehow.

23:56

Q: yeah yeah and how that garment fits into that identity construction, but like you say in relationship to other garments as well.

24:01

Q: Do you have any published work around your wardrobe studies that I could look at.

24:17

Yes, there is one article, which has been published, but it was published not in English unfortunately so.

24:26

yeah also one workshop on northeast conference, one year ago, but it's I can send it to you, but it's just a description of the workshop it's quite short and if you pages, but yeah.

24:27

Q: yeah that would be useful, thank you, I like that idea of a kind of a garment in relationship with other garments that hasn't really come up yet. It would be interesting to explore that further.

24:52

Q:

Do you or your participants support consumers to interact with materials in ways that can facilitate more expressive repair and upgrade decisions?

24:57

Q: So, for example, if people who are receiving the repaired item don't know very much about what the possibilities of expressive repair are, how do you support them to understand what is possible, what the opportunities are?

25:13

Well, first of all, I mean within our curation I was providing a lot of examples both made on like mending samples of representative of different techniques. But also mended garments because, of course, having a beautiful sample it's one thing, but then applying it to the garments it's totally

different so I was yeah initiating discussion with showing examples which, which come from my practice.

26:06

Q: yeah no i've got a lot of samples as well, but they are you know, obviously rectangular pieces where i'm showing different techniques and I think it's really useful to see how that applies to a garment itself it's almost like having a garment as a sample.

26:11

Q: Okay, so i'm going to move on to the final section, which is called network society and community to identify key actors ways to build community to enable interaction and collaboration with consumers towards enacting a circular economy.

How do you or your participants connect, collaborate & create opportunities with a community involved in repair practices?

26:34

Well, I mean within my project, we have created our autonomous community, I would say, and so I don't know how it could be relevant like for you in that sense of talking about community from a broader perspective. I think that there might be relevant to look into a repair cafe communities and things like that I don't know if you came across a PhD of Marian Durana? who did her PhD on Mending and Alto University in 2019 so she started the repair cafes in different, she did a multi-sided ethnography? in Finland and Australia, I guess, and somewhere else so yeah that might be interesting to look into. But in terms of creating community, and if it can facilitate engagement with practice, I think that it might be relevant in the initial stages for people who are not members and who are approaching the practice so they need the support from the Community to yeah to understand like how to engage with...

But what I found out is that as soon as people become autonomous, a practice, like mending practice a pure? on a domestic level mostly.

28:31

And because it's something that you do when you have a bit of time and you don't have to plan it to go with a garment to this repair CAFE which might be open, once a month, for instance, or something like that, so that is kind of an obstacle for creating this community is this irregular setting of repair cafes, because if I have something that i'm planning to wear tomorrow, for instance, and I feel that there is a small damage I'm not waiting one month to go to the repair café. I'm just sitting and doing at home.

29:09

Then of course there are different levels also of engagement with the assumption done on the way? with a few stitches it can be something elaborate, in which you invest a lot of time and try to do something which is my expressive or discrete as well if it should be properly done, it involves different skill set, and of course time.

29:51

Q: A bit earlier you mentioned competencies and I just wondered if the community can support this development of competence in different areas?

29:53

I think, so I think that definitely it can support but it might be, I mean physical one but also online community where yeah people can just give an advice or maybe they came across a similar issue and can yeah facilitate somehow the process.

30:18

Q: yeah Thank you and talking about technology, **did you use in your research or do you use technology for social connection, collaboration and learning?**

30:31

So for we did several workshops online because also considering pandemic within the time frame of PhD. And yeah we worked on Miro board we constantly used Zoom for meetings and we had an our telegram channel to communicate to our? work there and yeah.

31:12

Q: Okay.

31:20

Q: And how can society So **what are the barriers for mending you think and how can society scale up the demand for repair and customization services?**

31:22

So there are different barriers which we could talk about but definitely, it can be this clash of, we are used to live in a fast temporality somehow and we are approaching slow one, but the point is that not all the practices of our daily life are in the slow mode? yet so to have time simply mending requires a lot of time and the people who have quite rigid time schedules, not enough time for sitting and maybe doing it, as it was in the past, where people had different rhythms and lifestyles, definitely time is one of the barriers, then in terms of competencies if someone wants to learn it, there are a lot of resources online on YouTube and but again I guess that those resources are somehow going to a certain stage, and then there are some small tweaks tricks? which you cannot really see through the screen.

32:52

And there are some things that requires like intervention, but people, people can get stuck in some point, because they start doing something and they don't know how to proceed, and they don't see it on online that specific tutorial they don't know what are the names for the technique what they should search for and how they should do deal with a specific problem so that is awesome.

33:15

yeah and then, of course, knowledge of materials and, like all the competencies, which are required for different levels of engagement with practice as those as well, somehow.

33:37

yeah can, should be learned in the schools like was in school education but, again, like for instance, in Ukraine and context it's still taught in the schools and but it's not taught, as it was taught in the past, because probably there is meaning, which is missing at the moment and people don't see the point to learn it, or at least it was in this moment of transition from coming out from this Socialist mode of consumption into capitalist mode, people lost the meaning of the practice so also in learning in teaching it's represented I guess.

34:22

Q: yeah it's really interesting because um I have interviewed some Organizations, companies over here that are involved in aftercare services and obviously they employ people who have got these materials skills to repair branded goods.

34:58

Q: So I just wondered well you've got the aftercare services, but then you've also got in-house repair services with a company like Toast or Patagonia or ? who have in-house repair services so there's this kind of requirement now for people to have these skills to be able to work in this way, so i'm just thinking about your research and also different countries that you've been looking at what you think or whether they exist, the same kind of level of in-house repair service that is within a brand itself whether that concept kind of translates into other contexts?

35:31

I mean there are a lot of examples of companies who are doing in house repair, but, as I see it, I mean it's good that they are repairing their own clothes which are produced by that specific brands, but what is happening to all other clothes we have a mountains of clothes everywhere

and also second-hand consumption is increasing and those garments maybe necessitate more repair than some branded garments which may be a bit higher quality so it's not that easy that they break immediately, it would require also some time to sew it ...they definitely exist, but what is happening again, with all the garments which are not yeah brand garments and I think that there is a need for those kind of repair services that and, for instance in Ukrainian context there is a network of seamstresses, which can deal with that.

You can bring whatever garment you want, and it will be repaired, but that also facilitates understanding of different levels of complexity of the damage and of repair, because in Ukraine people don't try to do really sophisticated repairs. They make this evaluation and say well this garment we can do at home on the domestic level but other garments we should bring to the seamstress, for instance.

37:27

Q: yeah i'm just wondering about cost and whether people feel that it's worth paying the cost of the repair when it might have been very cheap to begin with, especially if it was secondhand but they're willing to actually pay the money to the seamstresses who have to obviously make a living.

37:47

yes I mean this types of services in Ukraine, there are quite cheap and affordable why it wouldn't be possible to do it in UK, for instance, because people should make a living. Like everything is proportional right. And that's why we need different solutions in western countries.

P11

Repair Practices

This section examines repair practices looking at tools as well as types and frequency of repair.

What kind of repair or refurbishment service do you (or your company) offer?

we're looking at the how we can encourage.

0:29

Q: Citizens to extend the life cycle of their clothes, through various repair customization upgrade practices.

0:37

Q: And we're hoping to develop some digital tools that can support citizens consumers in to do this.

0:45

Q: So, at the moment we're just getting an overview of the landscape of repair and customization so that we can then begin to develop some scenarios that will help us to develop the digital tools So Your comments will be able to feed into that process, but if you're interested, we can keep in touch and we can keep you know up to date on how that is developing.

1:04

And, and would they be said, like Apps and things like that is that the kind of thing i'm thinking what is a digital tools?

1:17

Q: and possibly Apps but also looking at the technology that people have around them that's accessible to them so. If an APP is not going to be accessible to everybody, then we'd look at more accessible tools, however, that plays out so we're not quite sure what the shape of it is

going to be yet so it's been early days. So we'll probably know a little bit more by the end of the year, early next year, how they're going to look but um yeah I can keep you informed on the project progress, if you're interested.

1:54

Q: And it might get to do some focus groups with various participants citizens or people that are involved in this area, to give us a bit more direction on how the digital tools develop.

1:55

Just the digital world is so not my space that I can't was almost as a digital tool I can't even Imagine what that would be sort of an APP on your phone but i'm sure yeah come come together once you've got that research in place.

2:14

Q: yeah, I think, so I think doing this background research will really help give it some direction.

2:22

Q: But yeah and that you know we don't we'll let off, you know that might be one of the possible outcomes, but there might be other things as well that we look at that more kind of web based.

2:28

interface that make sense.

2:36

Okay, great Thank you.

2:39

Q: So, thank you very much for taking part, I know a little bit about sustainable fashion week.

2:43

Q: But i'll begin by asking about repair practices, looking at tools, as well as types and frequency of repair, so what kind of repair remake customization or refurbishment service, do you or your organization offer.

2:49

We're hoping to extend this in time funding permitting and we're really struggling to get any funding at all the moment.

3:02

And so we're very tiny team, but we, at the moment we run a little repair shop that that moves around Bristol into the different wards we're sort of semi focusing on areas, the priority areas in Bristol which have high levels of deprivation and diversity, and we this little place is called a Stitch and Switch, a clothes swap and a repair shop and we just sort of move that around to give people a sort of access to repair for their clothes that doesn't come with a cost attached and we'll be having a repair shop at our flagship event in September as well, and also a sort of festival in the summer and we're just broadly yeah moving that around so it's kind of accessible in different areas, but we should then hopefully in time funding permitting get into a permanent space in the city Center which will do accessible repairs on an ongoing basis.

3:53

Q: what kinds of things tend to be repaired most frequently from your experience.

4:08

That's a good question I actually don't have the answer because I coordinate the event that we have... I personally don't have the confidence to repair other people's clothes myself, so I can repair my own clothes and my kids clothes, but we have two much more experienced repairers two or three, but we have two on at each event. And they do the repairs so i'd have to ask them, but I think it's broadly from what i've seen them doing is mostly tops rather than bottoms which surprises me, because i'm forever mending my kids trouser knees.

4:35

Q: Yes, I know, and I do a little bit of repair repair CAFE here in falmouth. I live in Cornwall at the moment and I do a lot of crotches and I can be quite a popular repair yeah.

4:53

Is that for women with their extra friction?

Q: Not necessarily no, i've done some men's crotches as well and some of the ladies I work with they've done shorts for men in that area, so it does seem to be quite a popular repair.

5:14

Q: Repair well it'd be great if there if I don't know if you want to if you can be in touch with your repairers that you work with because we are looking for images of repaired items and whether they have any stories behind them so that might be something you could ask them about?

5:28

5:36

Q: And key reasons for garment failure we've touched on that a little bit So what about tools what tools do you consider essential to the practice of repair remake customization refurbishment and again, you can You can skip this question if you, you know, think it would be better answered by your repairers.

5:52

I am, do you mean digital tools or physical tools or just anything.

5:59

I just think needle and thread I think that's, the most important thing, because obviously sewing machines are amazing and I couldn't live without one just for the sort of stuff that I do, but I think that when you have a needle and thread it's, I think it can be quite quick to pick up basic stitches and if you don't mind too much about the neatness of the mend, then I think almost anybody can you know, ,unless its sort of an inability physically that sort of, what's the word, prohibit you from using that kind of those fine motor skills almost anyone can mend almost anything by hand with a needle and thread and a patch, but I think beyond that, obviously, you need you can depending on how what you want the mend to look like and how you want it to last, and what you know, etc, etc, you can get you can go much more comprehensive in terms of using machines and then using Online tutorials which I think of as a tool that are really, really important for people who are starting out.

7:08

Q: yeah no definitely Thank you and the next section investigates techniques and strategies to extend the lifespan of garment. What techniques, do you or your repairers rely on.

7:13

I would say, always because of my experience in mending knees, that both myself and my kids that's what I mend the most is knees and trousers, but to other techniques always when you're patching either to underlay or overlay to really, really large extent so just through trial and error, I know that when i've been patching around a hole, even if you give quite a lot of material around it will always then rip further up the leg where the material as it thins is put under more pressure by the patch that you've added.

7:58

So to almost you want to, I think the idea of BORO repair is really interesting because it's sort of building layers upon layers to keep a garment in use, and I think that's one of the, For me that's the tip i'd give anybody in terms of repair is give repair more surface area than you expect to, because the strength of the fabric has been compromised, much more than you realize around a small hole (or whatever).

8:22

Q: yeah no absolutely and that's really interesting and then what about other techniques that you're you know, like visible mending or kind of invisible mending. That kind of technique darning anything else that you want to mention.

8:43

And I would go i've been for my I would go depends on the person I think visible mending is quite a personal thing I think lots of people would rather just have their garment put back, you know as close as to the new version as possible and other people like the idea of customizing instead of adding embellishment whilst mending, so I think it really depends on the person I am I would go for me, I always go towards invisible and but with my kids i'd go like visible mending and sort of try and make it jazzy at the same time. yeah i'm yet to learn darning but i'd like to.

9:28

Q: Okay, how do you support consumers to creatively repurpose, embellish or upgrade damaged items through personalization options, so I suppose, this would be more for the repair pop up that you offer how you support people to understand that there are other options available, I suppose.

9:43

Well through our events, what we offer is either we will mend people's clothes for them on the spot that they bring along but also then we host skills workshops and we sign post, what we're trying to do, I mean was such a tiny team and we're so limited, but we try to provide resources for people so that either we go ahead and either will mend it for you, or we'll stage this workshop, which is slightly more accessible, because it's low cost and Or we signpost people to tutorials where they can then learn themselves so we try to give people different options and obviously just I think comms generally I think and showing images of beautifully mended or repaired or repurposed items gives people inspiration to do it themselves as well, I think.

10:32

Q: yeah absolutely and are there any other sustainable practices and services, sharing adapting passing on renting that you'd like to offer in future.

10:39

Skills learning is just the main thing for us. Our baseline is information sharing and skills learnings if we can support more and more skills being taught either by us, or just broadly by other people, the better.

11:03

So, on a personal level, I co-chair, the **Sustainability and Social Justice Committee for Fashion Roundtable** and I also sit on their education committee. On the education committee we're looking at how we can get these skills, sewing skills back into the curriculum as a technical skill, not just a craft or art.

11:30

Q: yeah interesting and what kind of support would enable you to to offer more services financial partnerships reskilling technical etc, what kind of support, do you need?

11:34

Funding funding funding funding we just I think we haven't had a single successful funding application yet and so, everything we do is on a voluntary basis, which, after ? i'm full time volunteer at the moment and every day is a struggle, because of that but I, my sense, so rationally i'd say it's because, of course, everyone needs funding at the moment it's really competitive it's a really difficult time financially for most people and my gut tells me that they're the value of clothing repair is not valued yet by the funders, by the people reading funding applications if they're not personally engaging with sustainability and fashion, they just write it off as something which is not a necessity and i'm not linking it to the drop in the sorry, the rise in the cost of living and the drop in disposable income that could be used to therefore get clothes

mended which I think people don't do that frequently anyway, but I think all of these things are very, very interlinked and people reading funding applications don't yet see the value in this shift in our relationship with clothing in providing people with accessible clothing repairs, particularly at time where they have less and less income to use in that you know, for those kind of purposes.

13:06

Q: yeah absolutely I was talking to X and she said she's seen an increase in people attending their repair CAFÉ sessions, because of the cost of living crisis that's what she you know.

13:25

Interesting yeah.

13:29

It was just that when we started our stitch and switches', the assumption was that the clothing swap was going to be more popular more of a draw than the repairs and it's been on balance has been the opposite, so the repairs, have been the draw and people have been enjoying the clothing swap as a kind of side offering rather than coming to the clothing shop and maybe then getting interested in repair.

13:54

Q: just out of interest the clothing swap do you charge people to take part in that.

13:59

No.

14:04

Q: Okay, because I went to one where I had to pay six quid or something to take part in, and there is a kind of voucher scheme, so that was kind of organized...

14:06

There are lots of these, and they do it for fundraising purposes and a charity will do it for fundraising purposes and that's fine but the whole point of what we're trying to do to make it accessible to everyone, sustainability and fashion. So it's great if lots of middle class people can pay to swap their clothing that's lovely but actually the people who might be more need of.

14:27

orders might want to have a bit of water every fresh but might not be able to afford it, and that we're trying to ensure that more people are included through making sure that what we do is low cost, but then of course we have therefore no income streams at all, apart from sponsorship. And that's really time, which is why we're so reliant on getting funding and it's so frustrating when there's seemingly a lack of value in what we do and because you could so easily go 'well we'll just start charging a fee then'. And then, of course, you just back into that cycle of people not being included, who need to be included in this kind of whole narrative.

15:08

Q: yeah yeah really interesting.

15:13

Q: Okay, thank you and you talked a little bit earlier about material thinning and being able to recognize where it's thinning and where to put the patch. So the next section is about materials experience and understanding their qualities.

15:22

Q: How do you assess material properties, to decide on a choice of repair technique, method of embellishment except all, matching a material for patching. So how do you assess materials?

15:31

And then I would probably be a good one for the repairers themselves as more experienced people like who do at a better standard and, but personally I would go, and this might be wrong, but I always go slightly thicker so if i've got the path when i'm patching or sort of underlying, as it were, I do this unless it's going to make it.

15:57

Because i'm always thinking trousers cos thats the only thing I ever need to repair and I would go for a slightly thicker material than the actual trouser material.

16:06

But of course if you're doing a dress or skirt you're gonna have to think about how it hangs which would be yeah I think about all that all those kind of things in terms of and matching stretch and grain and all that kind of thing but broadly with mending primarily denim knees i'd get a slightly thicker bit of denim to go underneath.

16:36

Q: yeah and just a little bit more about that understanding of materials when you're not working with denim, which is a cotton, or it might have some elastine in it, do you understand what other materials are? Because I think there's a lot of kind of people that don't know the difference between a nylon, polyester and a cotton, cotton poly mix that kind of thing which can also obviously help your repair decisions.

16:49

yeah and for me again, it would always be about I'd go by feeling I mean i'd know what the mix was and i'd be able to get that pretty quickly and then I would be able to go by feel in terms of what then I used to match the patch and but broadly I'd say that people definitely need more understanding about materials and that's a really cool part of the education stuff that we're working on and we were partnering with **X** as our sort of official education partner, because their approach is really two pronged in that way. It's looking at skills learning but also understanding of materials just exactly as you're describing so that, broadly people can; a.) know what the material mix is in the item they're mending, but then b.) in a secondary and I can't talk too much coffee this morning, but then secondarily that they'd know what they need to patch it with.

17:50

Q: yeah absolutely I actually I have spoken to X

And we were talking about fibers as well...

There is a lack of knowledge around fibers which could be something improved within this kind of education package that we put together great okay and - What typical mistakes that less experienced people make when they don't understand, in their handling and knowledge of materials I don't know if you've got any comments around that?

18:38

I don't probably I guess that's one for the repairers, but we, again, looking at the whole, the material integrity and much, much more beyond what you're mending like and what impact it's going to have on the rest of the garment if you're sort of snagging or tweaking or tightening one area what that's going to do to the rest of the garment, I think that's a really important thing to think about.

19:02

Q: yeah Okay, thank you and we'll move on to the last section, which is network society and community, how do you connect collaborate and create opportunities with your community and key actors involved in repair practices.

19:10

and probably just those primarily those events that we move around in Bristol, where we just keep, yeah moving it around and building communities, specifically for those events in those areas.

19:32

Q: Okay, and do you use technology for social connection collaboration and learning.

19:37

I don't think so know we've been our main channel, it will just use social media channels and then face to face contact and that's pretty much it in terms of our resources.

19:45

Q: yeah Okay, and what do you consider are the barriers to mending and how can, well bigger question how can society scale up demand for repair customization practices?

19:55

I think it needs people need the skills and understanding, and I think it needs support from right from the top right from government.

There's this work i'm doing that moment, supporting Fashion Roundtable around EPR and an investment from government and local authorities in, either in skills learning or in people, offering sort of circular fashion kind of models, like repairs and I think it's really necessary, I think that's really the only way is as a kind of Grassroots action it's only going to go so far, but it needs real investment support from Councils and from government.

20:48

Q: yeah no absolutely I agree.

20:55

Q: Okay, thank you very much X that's the end is there anything else you'd like to add that maybe we haven't covered.

20:58

No so I mean as.

21:04

If i'd known I should have sort of sense that will be more about repair because I could have got perhaps I could perhaps if you've got some like three questions or anything i'm meeting the repairers next Monday and if there's if you if you want anything that was more sort of technically useful to you and not obviously because I can only answer so much technically and I could put it to them and ask if any of them are happy to just give you a couple of questions, a couple of answers back around sort of the technicalities repairs.

21:22

Q: That would be great Thank you yeah okay i'll send you a couple of questions and maybe just a request for any images of an item that might have been repaired and maybe the feedback that they got from that, the story behind that item.

21:47

Q: yeah we are looking at having a retail space in October November. So that might be an opportunity which is going to be in X.

22:01

Q: But it might be an opportunity for us to be able to begin to showcase the possibilities of what repair and customization is and what it can offer to consumers as an option alternative option to consuming, yeah new clothes.

22:19

amazing well, let us yeah, let us know when it launches and we can obviously post about it on socials and stuff if that's helpful.

P12

My internets being a little bit dodgy so just before we start i'm going to just switch it over to my data if thats alright because it's just been a bit robotic sometimes.

0:03

Q: it's a bit jerky isn't it.

0:12

yeah it's like almost there but not quite so i'll just change it over.

Fine okay good and yesterday tell me a telling you a little bit about me and stitch stuff that was the question right.

0:51

Q: yeah So the first question is about repair practices, **what kind of repair, remake, customization or refurbishment service to you or your organization offer?**, so I suppose you can just tell me a little bit about what you all do.

0:58

At X we're a Community Benefit Society, and our kind of main aim is to inspire action on sustainable fashion and the ways that we do that is to teach and we kind of try and educate about sewing skills in our local community, so we put on a lot of workshops where we're teaching people how to use its own machines and also how to repair and up cycle their clothes and with the aim of if they have already have those skills they know how to keep those neater? a little bit longer and also maybe have more of an appreciation of what it takes to make garments as well and that's important.

1:41

And yeah so we do this with kind of like monthly workshops, where people will come to fix kind of specific items like denim and we do a lot of denim patching Or, just like general repair stuff and kind of alterations as well, and then we also have monthly events called repair cafes which we run in X we've run ran one for years and X but we kind of moved over in the pandemic to Stretford. And the Stretford ones up and running and, hopefully, in the next couple of weeks, the Chorlton one will be back as well.

2:17

And so, repair cafes are events that are volunteer-led and customers can kind of bring in an item and they'll get a bit of time with our repair experts to kind of discuss what's going on, see if they can help fix it most of the time they do manage to fix on the day. And, or if not, they get a bit of advice about what they can do with that item going forwards and then we also do a lot of like talks and education events which is more about the importance of repair and why it's important to keep your clothes in use for longer and then doing things in schools or just like talks for other organizations as well.

2:46

Q: Great Thank you do you also have a shop?

3:01

We do have a shop so we have a reclaimed fabric store, so we take in donations and generally, maybe 70% from peoples' personal stashes and then like 30% from businesses like dead stock and end of rolls, that kind of thing. And that's all like fabric or other kind of haberdashery craft stuff that we then Like sell on or make available for reuse usually quite a lot cheaper than kind of your other fabric high street stores.

3:27

And we don't actually take in we don't repair ourselves that we wouldn't take in and anything to repair just generally because its own business, you do you spend all your time doing that, which is great that people, especially customers, we have a lot of people coming in to ask them for it and one of our volunteers actually. Last year, she made a map of Manchester, so we can give them a map and they'll have pinpoints of everyone who does repair your clothes, so we have some information to pass on so because it's yeah at the end of the day, so it's just not going to be for everyone, so at least we can find, post them to the people who then can repair their clothes for them.

4:05

Q: yeah that's really interesting, so you yourselves are not doing repair as an income stream?

4:14

No so Stitched Up's been running for about 10 years this year actually and i've only been part of it for the last three or four years as a volunteer and then three years as a staff member. And, but I think right at the beginning, they were taking them in and it just kind of overtook what they were doing really quickly because And also it's not that lucrative because what people expect to pay because of how kind of cheap clothing is to then to make it actually financially viable when you're trying to pay someone you know living wage and everything it became quite difficult I think and quite quickly, so we just didn't do that and focused on passing on the skills to do it themselves.

4:45

Q: yeah that's interesting, thank you. So in terms of your income streams you're collecting money from the shop selling dead stock?

5:17

Yes, it's about 60% traded so that's coming from the shop and coming from the workshops that we put on. So we have a public programme of workshops where people pay to come on to them and then we have about 40% we do a lot of projects are kind of... Covid skewed everything a little bit anyway. And, but we do like a lot of funded projects as well and where will either be like and yeah we'll just do like a series of workshops with a certain group. And then they'll be free to attend obviously because they'll be funded by whichever funder. Partner events as well, like we had a walk in wardrobe ones for young people, so that was kind of like an interactive exhibition almost where you come... And there was a little bit about repair, you know, we had a workshop that they could kind of drop into, but there was also a bit about swapping clothes and styling about how you can kind of make the most out of your wardrobe already through just like restyling it and then to like educate like videos and ways to get involved more like taking action like petitions or those kind of things.

6:03

Q: Great Okay, so you actually a paid staff member.

6:21

yeah there's no well so there's three of us. We work as a workers Co op so there's three full time members, and then we have another part time Member who does like our finance stuff. And then we have another person on the board of directors as well and we've got a couple of funded staff members as well, but just for a six month period yeah there's three of us kind of full time paid.

6:38

Q: Okay, great Thank you um so the next question i'm not sure whether you can answer that well, perhaps in the repair CAFE you can say

what things tend to be repaired most frequently and do you have any example images or anything like that?

6:51

And yeah I definitely can send you by email I've got loads of images of repair CAFE and other repair stuff if you want them and I can send them over after if that's easier. yeah absolutely. So repair cafe wise, obviously and it depends on which volunteers we get, that we have coming in. And we have two really great ones and alpha? that he can just lend a hand to almost anything he is amazing, but he does like furniture and mechanical items. and more recently we've got people who do like phones, you know software kind of stuff, and I say we get hoover's in all the time as a massive one people always bring make small and like household appliances those kind of things and we've had lately.

7:36

Q: In terms of clothes and accessories?

7:55

Clothes and accessories, i'd say denim is a huge one because they are really long lasting, but then there's the knees and the crotch go quite quickly, but then you've got the rest of the garment that's like really good so then we get jeans in quite a lot. Then we get outer wear, coats and things and it's really just a bit of everything. I'd say probably T-shirts less so, because they'll usually at the end of their life and like if they've gone wrong it's harder to kind of repair, but we have a lot of ways people I think people and because they're kind of low quality, a lot of the time, this time. People don't want to repair them because they're kind of pilled all over or stretched or discolored or something and so i'd say that one is more of an up-cycle and we do that with T-shirts, but yeah denim is probably the biggest single category, but we do get things like all sorts really.

8:43

Q: Interesting what you said about upcycling, so how do you up cycle T-shirts?

8:54

So we have a workshop that's called '**T-Shirts to Coasters**' and I can get an example, I have one here. I just put them away from a workshop we did on Monday so they're just right there but yeah so you can make T shirt yarn out of T shirts you cut it up into strips and you just get something that you can use how you'd use any other kind of wool. And so you can make little pots of their just kind of plaited together. I don't know if it's coming up. Or coasters as well. So we run them as their own workshops and there's also you can make shopping bags out of them, you can use them for cleaning rags as well and you can do just really simple stuff that often doesn't take that much sewing as well, so can kind of be a bit more, some people do I think just have a mental block with sewing so it's a good like introductory one to convince people that they can make things. I think people sometimes just think that they can't do those things themselves. And they're really easy.

10:13

Q: I think it's a lot about building up confidence isn't it.

10:15

yeah definitely, I think, especially because a lot of people, I know working at 'Stitched Up' a lot of the people that sew they learn at home, a lot of the time if they've really got into it, if there was someone at home that sewed and showed them how to sew. So I think if you don't have that and maybe you just did it at school, it's really limited you just kind of see yourself as not being able to do it. And when things are so simple to do, and it is just kind of convincing people to give it a go and then they realize that they can.

10:41

Q: yeah no that's really empowering isn't it and do they pay to come to these upcycling workshops.

10:49

So it's a bit of a mix and we.

10:56

Probably we run kind of like every month, or will run our kind of standard program and yeah probably get. That pay to come in, probably get about 50 participants a month, and then other times we get hired we get hired externally quite a lot, so a company will pay, a lot of the time those participants won't pay to get on but will be paid by whoever's running it. And then yeah so we do external workshops quite a lot and then yeah some time and we do get funding as well. And often as actually sometimes will kind of work with the people who have hired us will have applied for funding in order to you know kind of work together in that way. And so we do

probably reached about the same amount of people who are paying to come on and but like yeah its free as well for them.

11:41

Q: just out of interest, how much would somebody pay to come on one of your upcycling workshops if they were paying?

11:52

And so they range from about 15 pounds I can look up exactly what the, I think our 'Re-do your Denim' on is 12 off the top my head and then they go up to, say one-off evening ones, and which would be kind of like that, the coasters or like maybe just learning the real basics of sewing or something or like up-cycle printing kind of ones and I usually start from like 12 to 25 for kind of like one day ,one evening, and then we also run courses that run over like a few weeks and that's more targeted towards building up your sewing skills like machine sewing skills and then they kind of go up to about hundred pounds for a four week course.

12:37

Q: yeah okay interesting.

12:45

we've launched a kind of a pay it forward scheme, because obviously it is kind of : A you know it's like people just don't have a lot of money around to do things, and so we have launched a scheme, so people can pay for someone that you know put money towards a ticket that then someone else can kind of apply for. Its kind of in its infancy at the moment, but hopefully that that can make it more accessible to people as well.

13:03

What about tools what tools do you consider essential to the practice of repair, remake, customization, upgrade?

13:19

And well just your basic. We kind of run a group, quite a few hand sewing workshops because we're quite mobile, especially when we go out and do external workshops. And it's not always practical to take sewing machines with you just because we're traveling about or you know to take it for all of the people that are going to be there. Sometimes we might be able to take one or two, but if we do a workshop for like 12 people so it's kind of a small part of it, and so really just like needles, thread something to patch with, you can do quite a lot with just that they're really, really basic stuff and as long as you've got yeah something to patch with and somehow some way to attach it needle and thread and then, but then obviously as a machine, you can kind of do more interesting things from that.

14:02

Q: yeah OK, so the next section investigates techniques and strategies to extend the lifespan of garments so you've talked about upcycling, are there any other techniques, would you want to say anything more about upcycling because we haven't had a lot of discussion about that so far with interviewees so yeah

What techniques do you rely on?

14:18

And yeah I think before we get to upcycling, right from the start, when you purchase something not that its necessarily in the life?, but I do think it's really important to understand like the materials and how long you expect something to last before you get it. Is this something that you can see yourself wearing for a few years because either you're going to still like it or is it going to last, all of those things, and then, when you bring it home washing it in the right way, you know that, like taking care of it in the right way also are really important and then repairing it and then

when it does kind of come to the end of its life and you are thinking...It is about the end of its life functionally, but I think also if we're honest with ourselves, it has to be serving us in like an aesthetic way, a lot of the time as well, like people who are into fashion and everything they want to look at the reason they're doing it as a creative expression so we have to acknowledge the fact that people might get bored or something of what they're wearing too, so how can you keep your interest in, anything that you've got as well.
taking care of it in the right way – care, washing

15:29

And I think for me, its like when i'm upcycling something i'm often wanting to like keep the features of what it originally was because it's kind of like as a badge of honor almost like I don't want to hide the fact i've upcycled this thing, i'm kind of making a statement about it and doing that in a way that doesn't look too crafty, but yeah so, for example, denim is quite a good one, because there is really distinctive, even if it's just the stitching down the leg, you often have a contrast stitching or something and I think it's really like yeah good to keep those features that you can kind of and make the most of that. Was that what was the sorry I think I went off topic there...

16:18

Q: you're talking about techniques and so you kind of mentioned briefly the visible mending almost so visible mending as opposed to invisible as a technique that you're kind of applying to some of these garments is interesting, but i'm interested as well in this idea of aesthetic and you said to move away from the crafted aesthetic. So what are you moving towards?

16:33

I guess you just have to like em. So the way you I don't know, for example, now patchwork is kind of quite popular and stuff like that. I think there's like a fustiness sometimes when people think about craft, people think about their grandma doing it or something and it's I guess it's just like keeping the creativity and something that I really enjoy about the job is that you, when you start to like push people a little bit they can be really creative and come up with these things that don't look like their grandma's done it and that like yeah they look like genuinely something that you would really want to wear and you're not just doing it for the sake of doing it. But yeah I think that's just about like sharing ideas and we're all more creative I think when you talk to people about it so when you share those ideas and you might like borrow someone's technique and then you evolve it a little bit and that's how it grows. And the bigger the upcycling movement is the kind of more innovative it'll become and the more we'll see these really like cool techniques out there. And people would actually want to.

17:46

Q: yeah I think you're right the bigger it becomes, the more it's going to be more visible and the more that kind of aesthetic becomes more accepted to people, they're more comfortable wearing it.

17:49

yeah definitely because kind of taking like a mirror, like masks, when we all had to start wearing masks at the beginning, I think people felt really self-conscious like it felt really weird to go out with something on your face. And then everyone starts like everyone had to do it, so it just becomes second nature and you wouldn't even think about it now. And it's that kind of like I think some people at the beginning, and like because I have to wear so much repaired stuff obviously just the nature of my job, but I think some people feel a bit funny about it, but the more you see it and the more visible it becomes and you think oh it's actually really normal and good to do that, then you can it yeah that people will be much more comfortable.

18:27

how do you support people to creatively repurpose, embellish or upgrade damaged items through personalization options?

18:41

So we yes its through our workshops and bringing people in, and I think even having the shop and just talking to people like so people will come in and be like 'I want this repaired' and we can give the options of coming to our, even if it's a repair CAFE or giving them these options of going to see other people. But just having that discussion with them about like what possibilities they could do. Just like talking to people about it and then yeah through the workshops we provide like when they come in, we have all the tools we have the teachers there that can take them through it. And we have some videos online as well, and even just directing people to YouTube it's such a like, a really useful resources, so much free information out there as well. And yeah yeah just talking to people in that way, and then through the workshops, providing the equipment and the skills.

19:32

Q: Absolutely so you're already using technology as a way to support some of your activities.

19:39

yeah the videos were... it was actually during Covid we were really lucky that we managed to get some funding to do them, because then obviously we could do them separately and at home? you know we could actually do that even in that kind of Covid world. And then yeah there is already so much stuff out there, so we were able to make some of our own but also yeah just like YouTube is amazing for a crafter and I think it's sometimes, it's the confidence, that you were saying about before, to start, but then, once you start you kind of understand the basics of what that person is saying. And you can just pause and stuff they're like the videos can be really useful.

20:18

Q: yeah do you make your own tutorials and put them up?

20:22

So we did it mostly during Covid when we were closed and stuff. Since everything's reopened and we've just been busy doing workshops and stuff but yeah We obviously that's a resource that can last forever so we've just got that we've got all those videos now that we made and on our web site available for people to see and and, yes, can can use them again and again.

20:38

Q: yeah absolutely.

20:49

are there any other sustainable practices and services that you'd like to offer in future?

20:52

And I think it's This whole discussion with someone, the other day, like, I think that we just build on what we already have, like, I think that we, it's reaching more people and expanding like to Like more workshops, you know, maybe more specific to what people want listening to what the Community want. And we've run things like clothes swaps as well, so at the moment we doing them every kind of like four months or so I think it just be getting out reaching new audiences and just carrying on with those same things and kind of normalizing all of those things that we're already doing and but yeah just reaching more people are discussing them in different ways we're always looking to ways, because I think we're everyone's you know we can kind of be in an ECHO chamber and everyone's in these pockets and there's different motivations for why you'd want to make your clothes last longer it could be, because it's for environmental reasons, it could be like cost reasons, it could be just sentimentally you really like your clothes and there's lots of people will just have.

22:03

Q: Sorry about that, that was the dog!

22:04

But yeah like there are lots of different motivations, and I think we're always trying to find ways to engage people on, for these different reasons, like they have different reasons for arriving here, but how can we kind of get the same outcome for them making their clothes last longer.

22:09

Q: yeah interesting how you can kind of raise people's awareness of these issues and methods of doing that yeah.

22:26

I think with fashion it's like I think people see it, sustainable fashion sometimes they see it, they if people think about that. They think that's going to be really expensive that's going to be because like i'm gonna have to buy like this organic whatever. Or fashion, maybe they're like 'well I don't really care about what I look like' fashion is kind of like this other thing to me. But we all wear clothes to go out and about so it affects everyone really and there's ways to like the kind of the quote, that the most sustainable garments is the one already in your wardrobe and stuff so it doesn't have to be that you're going out and buying new stuff or that you have to be really quote 'fashionable' to do it, I think yeah people just see it as a bit other sometimes and it's trying to get them on board as well.

23:20

Q: yeah, Thank you really interesting. We're going to move on to the next section which explores the experience of materials and their qualities.

how do you assess material properties to decide on the choice of repair technique or method of embellishment or upgrade or type of patch to use. How do you assess materials?

23:25

So we because that's obviously something we do with whoever wants to repair them as well take us back to the start, I guess, we have taken textile donations and we have a group of volunteers who kind of sort stuff initially for us, so we try and weigh everything that comes in, so that we can kind of get an idea of what we're diverting from landfill for our own like reporting. And then and so to do that, we also asked the volunteers to try and sort into natural mix and synthetic and properties so but that's all because of how we're set up and the practicalities of it we don't have a lab or a safe way to like burn it or anything so we just do it kind of by feel and by us discussing, we have a few reference books and as kind of discussing with volunteers. We're really lucky that we have a lot of our volunteers know quite a bit about textiles when they come in, so, and that is great for us and also they kind of can share with the other volunteers as well.

24:30

But it's an imperfect system, because it is just us like feeling it and looking at it looking like visually and tactically then thinking about its properties. And, and then so then we'll kind of sort and, and it is a huge undertaking, I think the second hand market because it just takes so much sorting and organization of the stuff you're getting in and but then yeah when we're working with people in workshops, or like how to repair stuff and it's always just kind of trying to match i'd say like if you're looking at the similar weights similar like stretch properties and similar ways it handles and drapes and just discussing with them the importance of why that happens and materials quite good for it, you can hold it up, and you can say like look if you patch that with this it's going to fall in a different way or it's going to stretch in a different way and it's having the two things in front of you, I feel like you can get the message across quite well to help people understand why they're doing that and I think when you understand why you more likely to take that information with you and further on and, yes, I think it's just it's that we just work through all of those and we have so much stuff here that we're lucky that we can usually have some type of fabric that will fit with whatever needs repairing.

25:42

what are the typical mistakes that less experienced people make when it comes to handling the knowledge of materials?

25:55

And I think people, they just they go a bit too fast, I think. Like sewing and everything like that it takes quite a lot of patience and we're not really used to having that kind of patience, I think. And so, people will either get frustrated because it's kind of not going as fast as maybe they want it to go and then they'll try and do it faster and then that'll mess up, whatever they're trying to do and I think patience is one, and then I think the other thing is confidence people just don't believe that they can do it, so you have to try to like talk them around to and believing that they can think.

26:31

how do you examine and assess materials to detect changes as they degrade to make creative judgments,

26:42

So if I take, for example, our clothes swaps we will, at the end of each clothes swap we always end up with quite a lot more stuff than we've started with, you know, like we all kind of maybe the qualities changed because people have taken better stuff. So we'll try and have a bit of a clear out so that we're not kind of getting, but we can kind of keep the quality up so that our clothes swaps they're appealing to come to. And so, will kind of have discussions with our volunteers usually help us sort that out, and then so for that, when we're dealing with clothes we usually look at a label, so we can actually look at what it's made off, so if it's cotton or polyester and will often say because we get so much kind of like High Street Jersey that's polyester we often say we would prefer to just give back to charity afterwards, because it, it will just it will pill quite quickly or go Bobbly and won't last that long and we am so we'll look at things like that, as well, total natural makeup of the fabric, if we have that information and yeah the way again it's like that, and like holding up the light visual tactile and yeah.

27:59

Q: Thank you. So the last section talks about Networks, Society and Community we've talked already about use of technology for collaboration and learning.

what else do you do to connect, collaborate and create opportunities with your community, particularly in upcycling and repair practices?

28:21

Think a huge idea is our volunteer program we actually have quite a thriving volunteer program which is really nice and I think people come to for different reasons, so we do have a lot of people who are good at sewing, and the volunteer, what their tasks will be, will be all kinds, helping us in the shop with sorting out all of the donations and then getting them out into the shop or events like the clothes swap. And we also have quite a few sewing days each month as well, and so, then people can come along and maybe hopefully we'll be able to show them a bit about sewing quite formally but sometimes it's kind of like they just have to muck in and get on with it, and like I say there's lots of the volunteers with really strong skills they can kind of pass them on between them as well.

29:08

And, and one of those kind of sewing things they'll do is to make samples for us to take and we'll take them and show around. So I think that, then they gain those skills themselves, and I think there's a an extra sense of pride, if your stuff is on show as well, like. I know that one of our volunteers ended up on Disney on Channel four and, like her trousers that she'd made for us

ended up on there and I think that was a massive sense of pride for her because she's seeing them displayed as well or we'll have them in the shop or on social media as well.

29:43

I think yeah like volunteers and they're all from kind of the local area generally as well and or you know surrounding areas. And so having the shop as well we like to bring people in so we can talk to customers and public about that and always with inspiration on the wall, so we can show them what we mean by upcycling and what we mean by repair and how it can actually look like something you might want to wear not just like it's a chore to do it and that you actually want to do because you'd want to wear that garment in that way. And then we do try and do like, we had an open day last week, where we just invited the Community in to either join us as a member or just to talk a little bit about repair and upcycling, and so obviously being in a Community benefit society our profit has to go back to benefit the community in some ways so we're kind of always looking at ways to engage them, engage local people to see what they want and how they want us to benefit them.

30:31

Q: yeah it's really great that you've got a shop where you can do that, no, I think that makes your life a little bit easier for connecting with people.

30:42

yeah it really does because, and I don't know - is it Manchester or Sheffield University sorry?

Q: it's the X

30:58

yes, sorry I am yeah so we're based in X, which is in this mall that's a bit like a time warp when you go in. It feels a bit like you've gone back to the 80s. But in it there's a lot of like empty shops, it's just a strange place. And, but then there's that real sense of community like that this has been around for ages like...People just love to come and they'll start, the reason they come into the shop is to tell you that it like used to be a shoe shop and you go okay great, but then you start having these conversations with people and they want to, there is a quite a strong sense of community and in Stretford and a sense of ownership about the mall as well, but I think that people do care what's going on here and so yeah it's been I think we didn't really think, like all of these extra benefits we've had from the shop even, just like in terms of promoting workshops just chatting to people getting more donations in cos people know about it and know that we take donations and...All of that has been yes a really good thing having a shop front.

31:52

Q: yeah definitely I mean you just mentioned a pair of trousers that were on Channel four. Would it be worth sending a picture of those? Were they a repaired pair of trousers?

32:07

They were just upcycled. They were just patches though. The thing I was doing on Channel 4 was to show how you could repair stuff so I don't actually think that we did patch them but it could be a patch basically and there's lots of different hearts on a pair of jeans and then what - the other ones were from just basically as examples of repair isn't it? I just make a list of things.

32:26

Q: yeah I mean it doesn't have to be a lot, because actually we were looking also at the story behind the garment so whether the garment meant something particularly valuable to somebody, was the value financial was the value kind of emotional, what was the value of the garment to that person so yeah maybe a little bit of the story behind it and So yeah just a couple of things doesn't have to be a lot, but something that was meaningful to somebody and why it might have been meaningful would be really useful.

32:52

yeah absolutely i'll put out definitely those trousers and we'll have a few things here and i'll put i'll ask the volunteers if anyone wants to send in some pictures with a story, if you like, and.

33:02

Q: that'd be great thanks they don't mind it being kind of used in our research.

33:11

Because it might watch out.

33:17

Q: I didn't know if we wrote a paper about it, you know it might show up in one of the papers but, again, that might be quite nice for them to feature so yeah great well, thank you very much Caitlin, that was really interesting.

33:18

I mean it's always nice to talk to other people about it so yeah.

33:34

Q: yeah...and what you've got is a really interesting model that works, because you're able to bring in funding from different streams and make it kind of long lasting. And some of the people i've spoken to are really struggling with funding. So i'm just wondering if this is a model of working that would be almost like a model that you could share with other people so that they could almost develop something that would enable them to make a living, I suppose.

33:53

And it's like because it's our dream that there'd be like a stitched up in every city has you know people doing this all over and so definitely. Cos we found a way that's really helped us with funding is that we have like a social prescribing stream now, so what we propose a lot of projects that's like craft for well being, and obviously just sneaking in the message of sustainability when we get there and it's like reducing waste, all of our materials comes from that. And, but just like the primary, like I say lots of people have different motivations for getting involved and some of its that its really good for your mental health, to make, to produce something to make something. And, just like have a few hours where you're just like calmly sewing and you're not thinking about anything else is can be really nice.

34:52

Q: And yeah.

34:53

yeah definitely.

34:54

Q: yeah I think that's really powerful it's just whether the sustainable message gets a little bit lost sometimes because of the more kind of well-being message is taking priority.

34:55

yeah and I think, because we are running a few of them it's definitely interesting because I think the people that come to our workshops are motivated already to be more sustainable that's kind of how they might have found us, you know that that's a big thing for them.

But then the well-being ones those people don't necessarily have those motivations because they've come to us for a completely different reason. But then they're kind of the more interesting people because you feel that maybe you can make a bigger difference because you can take them from having not thought about it at all to then just kind of sneaking in a few messages about how just a few choices can actually like really help and make a big difference.

And, but yeah it's definitely and I think one thing we probably struggle..., just because of the way there's only three of us, and we do too much, is reporting our impact, like it's hard to know like it's all anecdotal stuff and you don't actually know how much behaviour change comes from it. And it's really difficult for us to like to maintain that kind, we get feedback always at the end of projects and stuff like that, but then maybe a few months later it's hard to know whether that

change has stuck and if any behaviours have changed. So that's definitely something i'd love to see us improve because it just be nice to see like 'are we making an impact?' 'which bits are working, which bits aren't?'.
36:11

Q: yeah I know it's interesting you mentioned that because I was going to ask you about data and the data that you collect, because I think you mentioned that earlier that you collect data around some of your workshops that you do, how many people come. That kind of thing so long as you kind of keep track of your data and maybe feedback from participants and that's all really useful part of reporting...
36:35

yeah and it's like it's building on it and bit by bit. You know we have a good basis and it would always be good to do more, the more people we get the more we can do that...
36:45

Q: yeah great okay well thanks very much I don't want to take up any more of your time. yeah let's stay in touch if that's all right, and we can tell you about how the project is progressing. And maybe they'll be more opportunities in future for us to run some workshops, perhaps. And trials with the digital tools so.
37:14

Like we have quite a good network if we can pass things out like to the Community or volunteers you know. If we also obviously we can be involved, but then, if you need any other people as well, you can let us know....

P13

Q: As you are London based you might be interested in further work that we're doing and being involved in that, but I can let you know as.
0:11

Q: Thank you so the first questions around repair practices.
0:12

Q: What kind of repair remake customization or refurbishment service to you or your organization offer?
0:20

Okay, so I offer a few different services so I guess, the first thing is we do get a lot of inquiries of people wanting to you know the classic alterations or repairs to clothes, which we don't tend to do we prefer to teach people those skills, so we always try and if people are open to that or we kind of gently persuade and for people to consider learning the skills, because we think that's more long lasting than us just doing it for someone, so we do do a range of classes teaching repair skills in hand sewing, in fabric and also in woollens and we offer work on the sewing machine as well, so people can learn how to use a sewing machine from scratch through to then taking on more ambitious projects like alterations or up-cycling and you know more transformation projects.

I personally offer a service called remember me.
1:22

Which is more of a kind of transformative service, so people bring clothes that hold sentimental value.

It might be their children's clothes or lost loved ones or some something special they have in their wardrobe that they don't want to part with but they're not using. And I then work with that person to create a special object, it could be for the home so cushions, quilts or it could be, then a remake of that garment into a restyled item.

2:11

Q: Great is that very well used that service?

2:18

Well, i've been offering it since so i've been in business, since 2000 and I started the Remember Me service in 2006. So i've been consistently offering it since that time, and you know there isn't really a fixed pattern in terms of how people engage with it.

2:32

You know it's sort of like ebbs and flows they might be so recently i've had a number of commissions and then it makes you know quiet down and then, as it comes towards say Christmas time people then might think of the service as a sort of special gift for a family or friend, you know.

2:54

Q: yeah yes great really interesting.

3:00

Thank you know, so I think it, it depends on my energy levels as well and where i'm putting my thoughts and energy, so when I start to I guess promote it more than that generates more interest because i've got a number of strands to my business I guess you know my focus can shift between these different strands and so recently I have been sort of thinking more about the service i'm.

3:12

Q: Just you working on your own?

3:32

or know my someone works with me three days a week in the shop side to look after the shop, to give me time in the studio or to teach and then I do work with other freelance makers, so they will come in on a more ad hoc basis to teach classes, or if I get a large Commission, for example, you know, then i'll you know get in some makers to support the project.

3:42

But yeah essentially it's just me.

4:00

Q: yeah Okay, thank you um what things tend to be repaired or Well, like you said with your service what what type of things tend to be repaired or up cycled or customized most frequently.

4:11

Or the remember me service. Recently there seems to have been a lot of ties.

4:23

Q: ties?

4:30

ties yeah.

4:31

Because I think with the tie maybe we're moving into a time where the tie is less fashionable. But the fabric within the ties is quite interesting and it's quite emotive I think it's you know, particularly for gentlemen it's something You might remember as well that stand out piece, you know that they wore and creates also potentially quite an interesting textile when you read piece

together the ties, you know, so it forms a new fabric. With something that's quite beautiful already.

5:03

Q: Great that's interesting i've not heard about the tie that has come up yet at all so it's nice to hear about something different, and.

5:08

Then, what else do you want to know anything else, so I think you know it's our children's baby grows it's quite popular because I think there's a size element remembering your child being that small.

And it gives that kind of that phase as well Of the you know the newborn I think evokes a lot of special memories for parents.

5:31

yeah and so other things, well at the moment i'm doing a Commission for ladies with her dad's clothing and for herself and two brothers and that's a real range it's like his whole wardrobe that i'm reworking so coats, shirts, T shirts, jogging pants.

5:37

Q: When you say re-working -are you repairing them or are you upcycling them.

6:02

yeah i'm upcycling sorry, as I said at the beginning, I don't do standard, you know repairs and alterations if people want that type of service I try and encourage people to join a class.

6:06

Yes, it'll work I do it's upcycling so as a transformation i'm taking a garment that used to you know you understand the principle of upcycling but you know it's taking apart the garment and turning it into something completely different.

6:19

Q: Right, so that you're doing it for a whole wardrobe for this Commission.

6:36

But it seems pretty much yeah I mean it's not absolutely everything but there's a lot of pieces there that she's provided me with.

6:41

Q: Right, interesting and I don't know whether you would be willing to give an example of an item And with an image that you could send that we could have a look at.

6:57

me if you have a look on my website and under commissions and there's a whole section called remember me, and if you click in there, you can see some examples of previous commission's.

7:02

Q: yeah Okay, thank you i'll have a look, and so the next question might not be relevant, what are the key reasons for garment failure I don't know if you want to say anything about garment failure or damage.

7:15

yeah What do you mean by failure? So damage, something that can't be worn anymore people can't use it?

7:40

Q: it's a bit unstable, should we turn on.

7:43

i've turned my video off is that better.

7:45

Q: yeah that's better, I think.

7:48

yeah and so, could you define what you mean by garment failure?

7:50

Q: Well um, so I do repair down here in X so there's a lot of crotch repairs to trousers. So they're kind of seems to be weaknesses in certain parts of garments that perhaps manufacturers could reinforce them don't wear we always see a lot of wear and tear you know, like you would in cuffs on jumpers, or was that kind of thing. So I just wondered if you had any experience yourself have particular areas of garment damage or places that you know things that you have to remake in certain areas, or we can move on, if you prefer.

8:34

Well, no, well, this is relevant to the classes, that I do, because obviously i'm teaching the skills that are in line with what I've identified as what would be common repairs for people.

8:44

And so with the fabric items, certainly, as you said, things like around the crotch area, particularly in London you've got a lot of people cycling so that's somewhere that you know, is a high wear and tear area and things like the knees, particularly for children is a quite very common one, with parents needing to you know, and the rest of the garment is still in very good condition.

9:11

I think kind of things like buttons not being stitched on very well and often stitched on in a whole string you know so one goes, and then a whole load of buttons go.

9:26

And garments not being provided with spare buttons as maybe once was the case as well. What else so also on the wollens's side, as you said, the cuffs definitely unraveling and seams you know the seams don't seem to be joined together so quite often someone come in and it's just quite a simple seam has just come undone and just don't seem to be made very strongly or have been reinforced, so they open up quite easily.

9:52

And then you know we are experiencing, I think lots of moths attacking you know the sort of a surge of Moths has grown and so people are having culls and you know, also because we promote knitting as well, and you know other forms of hand making as well as upcycling so That people are investing a lot of time into the making their knitwear you know wanting to look after and care and are willing to stop do the you know if a moth holes appear, they want to repair that item but haven't always got the skills to do that.

10:32

Q: Absolutely.

10:51

And what else would be quite common. Things like hems you know, like hems coming undone. That seems to be a popular one.

11:05

yeah I think and just suppose we also encourage, even if something is damaged or stained, To you know consider adding something to it to extend the life of it sometimes I think it's a shift in. As well as you mentioned the garment failure it's sort of, then the person's perception of that and trying to move that around so someone feels more empowered or look at it from a new perspective, you know less or conventional way of doing that repair.

11:26

It has to be hidden. So I think you know you're probably noticing the rise of visible mending happening.

11:48

Q: yeah I have. yeah but I don't think people always people want that.

11:53

Absolutely, and that depends on someone circumstances, you know, maybe the the nature of their work, what's you know deemed acceptable in your workplace in terms of you know your attire.

11:59

And also someone's taste, you know that they wanted to perhaps have something that's more discreet, so we promote both sides in the classes, you know we can show you how to achieve More invisible repair or alteration through to a more creative make over.

12:24

Q: Okay well that's one of the next questions. What techniques do you rely on so you showed both techniques, visible and invisible forms of mending.

12:38

yeah definitely so in the fabric based hand sewing class, I will show five key stitches and which can be used in all sorts of different ways of repair. And alterations you know someone doesn't have a sewing machine, so we also want to try and promote a low tech way as well that doesn't rely on machinery, you know. So just a needle and thread quite simple.

13:05

So I identified five key stitches I teach and then I have examples of garments that i've repaired or up cycled where i've used those stitches you know, so the person can then and all right, I see how that relates. Yes, i'm making this little pouch here with the stitches but now I can see how this relates and people can bring in bits of clothing with them as well, so they might not work on them in the class, but I can you know advise them.

13:27

yeah and in the woollens class. I teach three or four different methods of darning or you know woollen repair from fixing a whole to you know, reinforcing edges to rejoining seams, and again I show you know how you can do this as an invisible mend and how to blend your repair through to you know, perhaps you want to use this as an opportunity for transformation and you know show off your repair.

13:54

Q: Absolutely, thank you, and so the tools, because the next question is about tools that you consider essential to repair, remake, customization or refurbishment the tools very much relate to the techniques you're demonstrating at the time.

14:14

yeah so the tools would be you know, a basic sewing kit. And needle threads scissors. You know darning mushroom for darning a selection of wools.

14:39

If you're going down the embroidery drew some people, we know we also show embroidery how that can be used as a means of you know embellishing or repairing as well.

14:46

So embroidery threads things like pins tape measure you know so you're kind of basic sewing kit.

14:58

And then you know conscious of you know, explaining you know so that is accessible that people don't feel like they have to depending again on someone circumstances.

15:07

You know you don't have to buy really expensive kit to do this, I do sort of say it's worth you know for things like scissors dressmaking scissors I think it's worth buying well you know, so it's a lifelong item and machines as well you know, to consider carefully when you're buying a sewing machine the longevity of that machine.

15:30

Because I also sell brothers – I'm a brother dealer as well here at fabrication sell machines, so we always encourage you know to try before you buy you know so it's a really thought-through process.

15:40

Well, what else. But also explained that often you see a lot of supplies in charity shops or jumble sales so locally here our local hospice does four jumble sales a year, you might come across things like mending wool or you know Someone's sewing box.

16:15

To look out for you know, so if you haven't got much money to invest in all this equipment and stuff you know you need the basics to get going, that look out keep looking out for bits.

16:31

Q: whereabouts are you based?

16:33

X

16:34

OK, so the shops on X

16:36

Q: Okay I'll see if I can come and visit you at some point. Are there any other sustainable practices and services that you'd like to offer in future sharing adapting passing on renting anything.

16:48

Well there's something I haven't mentioned that I do is that I do offer a Community craft club.

16:57

Every two weeks, this is an opportunity for people to access the studio and facilities, you know so they can book in for a sewing machine. So we have one table for handwork one table for machine sewing, and this is a very low cost social, if you want, where people are coming and often repairs is a popular. You know project that people bring because I'm also on hand to make suggestions and support people so I'm not teaching the skills from scratch it's more of a kind of supporting Service and the social element, as well as is really important, so community is you know one of the values here.

17:42

Q: yeah absolutely I think that's really important part of this work is to share the skills and help upskill the local community.

17:59

Definitely, because I think you know a lot of it is with confidence and perception.

18:03

And also, you know we're just really keen to encourage to bring different people together different generations who have different you know so will often have some much older person who's you know very skilled actually you know they can then share their knowledge with someone that hasn't, you know, a younger person, maybe that hasn't had those opportunities yet much like how I did with my grandmothers.

18:22

Q: yeah I know I agree, so what kind of support would enable you to continue with the Community outreach or the other work that you do? financial partnerships reskilling, technical, is there any other support you can identify that would help you either reach more people or.

18:34

I mean, I guess the work I do for X, because you know the studio spaces only got capacity for so many people it's a more it's quite an intimate settings so you know you'd on those Community

sessions we usually get a maximum I think the most we could probably realistically cater for is about 16 people in the space.

19:07

and obviously during these covid times we were reducing that so we spread across the shop floor and the downstairs studio to kind of space people out a little bit more.

19:18

But I do do um you know free range work as well, where I go out and about and I have worked with a number of partners over the years, and you know people like Wrap who had the 'Love your Clothes' campaign.

19:37

And so that was a very interesting experience, because then I kind of got to bring what I bring here locally across different boroughs in London and they had you know, sourced grants to be able to offer you know, so it was free for people to attend, but I was still getting paid, you know for my expertise, I was also bringing along equipment You know, which obviously I have to maintain. My machine and I needed to employ people to assist me because the groups were quite large and drive machines across London. But that was very successful And attracted you know a lot of people to them and people were bringing in you know items of clothing to be repaired so it's or similar field to my craft club or something like you know a mending craft, you know you mentioned the repair cafes so I also work with them Restart project and in Hackney we have the Hackney fixers, that Bridget Harvey's part of who i'm sure you've interviewed Bridget.

21:05

Q: No, I haven't yet. Actually, I would like to, i'm not sure I can do many more interviews.

21:10

And so that so that was like a local initiative in line with the restart.

21:17

So, and they were interested in introducing a clothing element, so they approached and myself, and they were already working with Bridget.

21:22

And so people could start bringing along clothing to these types of events so they were also very successful and they managed to source a little bit of you know, funding to be able to pay people or those that have it does heavily rely on volunteers and i've done a lot of volunteering work myself and I have to balance, obviously, how much volunteering work that I can offer Because i'm also trying to you know run a small business and sustain that business and You know I do employ someone and have premises to pay for.

22:06

Q: yeah absolutely well, thank you i'm going to move on to the next section, which is about materials and their qualities.

22:10

yeah.

22:18

Q: How do you assess material properties, to decide on a choice of repair technique method of embellishment etc so it's about materials and their qualities, how do you assess them.

22:19

hmm.

22:33

Q: In terms of you know, some people have talked about mechanical tests, where they rub the material, they hold it up to the light to assess it that kind of thing.

22:34

Q: too I have.

22:44

A funny question to sort of analyze I guess because When you've been handling fabrics and fibers for a long time I guess the process becomes more intuitive and more...So I suppose it sort of evaluate...Trying to remember something that I just do automatically and but it's kind of about it's also sharing that with people.

23:05

So it's looking at you know things like the labels, what something's made of, and you can you know if you're unsure what the content is if maybe purchase something from a charity shop. If you can see a bit of the fiber out the classic one is like a burn test, you know, to see if it's a natural I mean it depends what someone wants to do with it, if you're trying to match.

23:31

You know if I was doing An alteration where you're trying to maybe add in some similar fabric as a patch or an insert I guess that Information's quite important, because you're thinking about the washing and how those fabrics might sit together.

24:03

So I suppose i've not thought too much about that, other than I suppose I just handle it and look at it with my senses.

24:10

Q: Well, this is it. People use touch and vision to analysis, but after many years you just seem to know certain things.

24:20

Exactly, it's an intuitive process and a knowing. It moves into a 'knowing' yeah it and you know when people are looking for these suggestions with all, what can I do with this then that kind of intuitive knowing kicks in and you're like I do this or this and this and that's obviously all based on your learnt and practical experience.

24:39

Q: yeah absolutely.

24:52

Q: So what about typical mistakes that less experienced people make when handling materials.

24:54

I think it's maybe the...I would say it's just a sort of perhaps that slowing down factor, or just taking your time with something I think people might rush something and then not do the job properly. or not, you know if they're hand sewing they might not have learned how to knot off the thread, or they might be sewing on a button and the button hasn't been secured properly into the fabric, so you might not do enough stitches to you know hold it.

25:26

For things like your coat buttons are a bit longer to kind of then wrap the thread around the back of the shank to reinforce it, so I guess it's the kind of little finishing touches that you might not be aware of unless someone's shown you, that's that tip.

25:51

Q: Do you think that people often mistake fabrics so they might think it's a wool blend when it's actually not or anything like that to do with material knowledge.

26:11

Well yeah because I guess it again, that will come with experience, so I think.

26:29

Particularly if you're someone that's shopping on the high street with a lot of things on you know there's less natural people are perhaps less familiar with natural fibers.

26:38

yeah sorry i'm struggling to answer that one.

26:51
Q: No that's Okay, we can move on and...Well it's a little bit more about materials and how you detect changes yeah.

26:57
Right yeah I think.

27:02
With materials I'd say I mean it is important thing with washing and care. So a classic is I think people don't realize that wool needs to be hand washed on very cool wash so you have these incidents of shrunken items or with the dye or looking at how something's been dyed and then might washed it too hot and then the dye seeps out into other items, you know which can then spoil things.

27:20
Q: yeah yeah that's a big one isn't it.

27:36
yeah certainly sort of understanding how to care and look after and wash things in my observation would be quite key.

27:38
So that would require yeah looking at the label. So with the 'Love your Clothes Campaign', they had the whole campaign round getting people to understand the care labels.

27:47
Q: Right.

27:59
Read. Reading care labels because, again, it goes back to the rushing and slowing down being mindful and thoughtful.

28:00
Q: yeah well absolutely and I think people are rushing around too much to even bother reading labels – half the time.

28:09
yeah yeah.

28:15
Q: Okay, great Thank you we'll move on to the last section, which is about society and community. How do you create opportunities with your community involved in repair or upcycling practices? how do you connect collaborate and create opportunities with your community.

28:17
And I guess i'm quite fortunate having a shop right in the middle of community.

28:37
Q: yeah.

28:43
You know this is really key because you've got that face to face contact you know with people. Within the shop environment, you know we engage people we talk to people we encourage people. We consider the shop a Community space, rather than that well I do joke that i'm a business masquerading as a community Center.

28:50
which can seem, but you know if you think about your local post office it's the same thing you know or a marketplace, you know where it's a meeting point for people, so we have some really good conversations and engagement and then that can then, We can then let people know about what we offer in terms of you know, the craft club or the classes, or maybe we've been invited you know to other places.

29:33
So I have a newsletter I write a monthly newsletter that people can sign up for and find out news keep in touch and that way we use the door to advertise you know little posters about you know our offerings and services.

29:44
And then you know, obviously once people are involved, those sorts of opportunities and interconnected opportunities happen quite naturally.

30:05
Because, then you know, share things you know you hear of something that's and then you think Oh, that person would appreciate knowing about that, you know the kind of it happens through conversation.

30:14
Q: Absolutely, yes, really handy having a shop.

30:31
And I think the face to face, you know people are hungry for that, because You know my concern is, as we move into more sort of digitalization that people are actually seeking connection through those mediums but actually are becoming more isolated.

30:51
Q: yeah I think you're right.

30:53
Q: Do you use technology for social connection or learning?

31:00
Well, I try to a little bit i'm very conscious of not getting too drawn into it, because I do have a physical space.

31:02
So I do use social media to you know inform people of what we're up to to you know it's been useful for connecting with people in different parts of the country and the world, and you know you can sort of follow what other like minded creatives are working on, you know so there's a whole movement growing of this kind of you know mending, upcycling all across so it's quite fascinating to watch that and how different you know I guess different areas and different cultures will approach it.

31:36
Yes, for sort of, kind of, inspiration as well, and just to sort of keep informed of I guess the collective. Collective mindset societal mindset and the planetary mindset and how those shifts are happening.

32:02
Q: yeah which, I think, possibly that answer links to the next one, which is the final question about how we can how society can scale up people's demand for repair upcycling customization practices, maybe it's about you know them being aware of what's happening, and perhaps technology can take a role in that in raising awareness and creating this movement like you say this movement of, around upcycling practices.

32:20
Be and I think kind of perhaps shining a light on, You know, because potentially within every local neighbourhood you could have a version of Fabrications, you know.

32:45
You could have you know 'Love your Clothes' was a national campaign and they had this idea of the, You know, a person within every neighbourhood that had these skills that they could you know shine a light on so if opportunities coming up in Manchester, you know you had a team there that were skilled in being able to offer those kinds of you know, workshops or

opportunities or partnerships, because they were also trying to connect with stores, you know, so we did some work with John Lewis, for example, you know, offering workshops in store.

33:13

With them so it's almost like you know you could have all these little independent branches all around but somehow the technology could guide people to who's doing what in their local neighbourhood.

33:29

Q: yeah that that would be interesting isn't it kind of mapping.

33:45

yeah mapping and I think. Actually, the sustainable Hackney, Hackney fixes started to do something along those lines, but on a local level mapping out who was offering repair services, you know also you know not just my area of clothing, but also with the electronics and you know other forms like shoes and cars and.

34:00

Q: yeah they do all sorts definitely.

34:12

Q: Well, great that Thank you very much, that was really interesting we've come to the end of our questions so I'll turn the recording off.

34:16

P14

0:30

Yeah, yeah, yeah, that's fine.

I'll talk to her about that, because there might be a solution that I'm missing that I don't have. I'm working at home today, so I can't access any new software and stuff. But I'll talk to her about that.

0:36

Q: We don't. We don't need. We can just have it typed just so long as you're agreeing to. It's all anonymous, anyway. But I'm working for a project called CX Digital Tools, which stands for consumer experience digital tools. We're looking at dematerialization for the circular economy

0:57

Q: and one of the things that we're doing. We're looking at brand scenarios as well as well as I repair, brand repairs, community repairs. We've got 3 scenarios that we're particularly interested in. In terms of how we're looking at resale, re use, repair, customization practices to encourage people to become custodians of their clothes, to look after them, and to feel that they've got agency in how they can take part in circular practices.

1:35

Q: So we are particularly interested in the brand, and one of your colleagues, I think, came to one of our workshops recently, where we showcase some digital tools that we're developing. They're in very early stage prototype to help people to support people to repair their clothes.

1:47

Q: So how these tools develop in the future we'd be really interested in getting brands involved to help us to kind of shape their development. So your company would be really useful for us as we move forward with this project.

So that's just a bit of background about us. You know the work that we're doing in repair and customization, and how we're using technology to support us.

2:25
So yeah, if that's a bit of background. And if you got any questions I will carry on and ask you a few questions about X . If that's okay, see how we can map the 2 together.

2:36
what kind of service does your company offer?

2:51
Okay, so our elevate pitch to brands, or how we kind of encapsulate it is that we are here to help brands become more circular. It is that simple, and what that means is, and we actually talk about like this.

3:05
Yeah, Another line on that is that we're helping brands and their customers realize more sustainable clothing future.

3:15
And where we get involved is, we see brands as acting as as being able to surface this in front of their customers and get them to think about the relationship they have with their clothes.

3:30
Brands traditionally have had a very linear trading model. If you think that they design, make, market, sell, that's the end of it right, unless something comes back because it's faulty. So.

3:48
But there is a clear delineation when Brands engagement with what they're putting out into the world - stops.
well. where the change is happening is being driven by 2 things. In our view, one is conscious consumption and the second one is around regulation. Basically so there's a carrot and a stick here for brands wanting to get involved.

4:16
And for brands that's quite frightening concept to have to get involved with, because it's a whole different industry and approach to being able to deliver circularity or post ownership engagement to customers basically with products.

4:39
So what we do is we handle everything...end to end. And there are 3 key bits to our business. Basically we have take back technology that works in store and online.

4:54
We then have processes where we will then decide around what the onward future journey of that garment that might come back to us is, and that will be. We try and always maximize, reuse. So there'll be garments at different grade qualities. Some will be good enough to turn around and go straight back out to customers through resale. Some of them might not make the resale quality grade, but can still be re worn, so those would go out through physical retail environments or bulk to other markets where the value can be realized in that process from the Eastern Europe we do less to Africa. And we we're minimizing what we do for Africa basically, to hardly anything now, if anything at all. And then **there will be garments where repair can come into play, and we have our own in house repair studio**, and we're starting to dabble a bit with upcycling where the value creation is there

5:57
and then Sorry.

6:14
No, no, I didn't want to stop here. It's just that thinking i'll, i'll ask you about the upcycling.

6:18
I saw your mouth about to move so to do. Do jump in when when you want to.

and then recycling.

So we are the we've been doing. We don't personally do it. We've been working with fibre to fibre providers basically renew sales in Scandinavia, recover in Southern Europe for about a year now, where what we act as is the feedstock aggregator, for specialist recyclers.

6:43

We're doing cashmere re-spinning in Prato?

6:55

we're looking at re-spinning back in the uk for higher quality we'll

6:59

What's driving this circularity catalyst now is the tech's leaving the lab and starting to get into a place where, for some things it's pre commercialization at the moment.

7:07

But for others

it's very much it's there, and it's happening basically. So the world we're creating for brands is one where we're creating re-use loops basically where garments can get into the hands of... We want to see a world where a garment has 3 maybe 4 owners in its cycle, and then, when it's done it comes back into us and then we will push it off into its recycling path where the where we're maximizing the resource usage from that garment. So you know. not turning it into building installation basically trying to get it into something where we're reaching circularity around that.

8:05

and that's the world that we... we're also doing quite a bit now, where you know, we actively getting involved in RFID and single garment identity. So product passports. So

for us, where we want to be in 5 years time is to be able to map all of those journeys. And then also we're working with companies who are doing the carbon

data calculations at the moment. So then we can apply that baseline data that's created to those cycles and then be able to communicate to consumers the value of that impact that they are making, basically which we will have in 6 months. And then the ability for brands to actually build all us to be able to build score cards for brands around the impact that they're actually making.

9:16

Q: Yeah, that's really interesting.

9:28

Q: So I was going to ask you about the re. use loops.

Q: Is there a way, then, that you're using technology to be able to track those cycles and those owners that have gone through those journeys.

9:34

9:45

Q: RFID?

9:47

Yeah, so that that's kind of where we're moving to at the moment. because we give every garment we process its own unique ID.

So what we are going to be doing is starting to look at putting RFID into the garments that we actually sell and then

enabling people to trade those back in when they're done with them, or do various other things potentially with them.

10:17

That whole product key unlocks that because what one of the things we we we now doing is, we're ingesting brand catalogues.

So we suck in

all the product information that a brand has on a particular garment.

and because we've got

which is great. But the problem with that is, you do need a product key to be able to then relate.

Make that relationship between the garment and the data.

10:59

because you, I mean you can't sit there and manually do it because it just wouldn't happen. But a couple of the brands we're working with are putting RFID into all their garments.

11:00

and we're actually doing a very big

project for one brand like a large UK brand around helping them deal with all the customer returns, issues

deadstock, all of those pieces where we're actually

with this particular brand, now helping them capture

recurrent faults.

issues with garments, and then being able to push that back up into the supply chain or the design processes.

11:35

Q: Yeah, that's really interesting. Is this a project, then, that we can find out more about later on in the next few months when you've had a chance to.

11:45

Yeah, I mean, if they're prepared, I I can talk to you conceptually about it. Basically

and obviously there will be certain things that we're open to share publicly, but other bits that

clearly we consider a bit of competitive advantage. So you know we are bits we talk about. But

you know there are a lot of people trying to play in this space at the moment, as you can imagine.

12:09

Q: Okay? Well, we'll come back to that because there are other colleagues. So i'm. Working with, particularly in supply, chain and consumer experience and material science who would be interested in some of the work that you're doing. But maybe we can arrange something in the future that could bring those strands together. But I think right now.

12:21

Q: Sorry

12:38

and One other thing I was going to say is. we've also just in association with BFTA And a couple of other people

formed a consortium, and we've won 3 and a half 1 million pounds. That's been about UK funding

to build an automated end of life textile saltation? facility.

12:57

Q: Oh, really, okay.

13:05

Q: that would also be very interesting to the Textile Circularity Center that I involved with as well.

13:14

Q: So yeah, Great, we'll map that journey as you're on it in the future.

13:16

Q: So i'll just come back to the idea of repair, because that's quite central to the project I'm working on.

How our repair and refurbishment services embedded in your business model?

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so very heavily in terms of we have our own repair studio basically in house. and we make a value judgment on the garment as to whether or not the unit economics of repairing that item makes sense. And if we can, we will repair it.

13:56

Q: Okay.

13:59

Q: So how do you make that kind of judgment is that from the person grading it? Because I know you've got a grading system. The

14:08

Q: experience, the knowledge of that person doing the grading.

14:09

Yeah, we're actually using technology. We're starting to use technology to make that decision for the person as well. So systems will make a judgment as to whether or not that garment is economically viable to repair. So there will be considerations around resale value, cost to repair, and what the brand is, demands, kind of multiple, like half a dozen factors basically that that define that and that's something we've just implemented as part of this returns process piece, we're doing.

14:48

Q: Yeah. And what you mentioned about the brand catalogue having an understanding of what the materials that we use to make that garment, having as much information as you can about how you can match fabric, match color, match threads that kind of thing that's going to be really useful to you in your future work.

15:15

Yeah, I mean it is. technology for us. We are systemizing so much of this, because there is, as you know you can appreciate a massive overhead, especially in the UK associated with repairing items and have to make very highly informed decisions around whether or not it's cost effective to repair. Because if you don't resell that garment, you still spent the money on repairing it. and that gets out control quite quickly.

15:53

Q: Right. Okay. So you're looking at the extent of the damage and other factors, such as staining or fading all kinds of things to make that decision, that judgment.

15:57

Yeah.

16:08

Q: Do you have a training process where you train people to have that knowledge?

16:09

Yeah.

And what we're trying to do is automate more of it. So some of the value judgments and criteria is made with technology. And we're basically giving people - the people who are processing the items, you know a final veto on whether or not that item does make sense to repair or not.

Q: I see. 16:37

Q: Yeah, interesting. And what kind of technology do you use? Are you able to? 16:41

So we build it. We build it. It's all our own IP. 16:43

Q: Oh, okay, these are your systems that you've built. 16:52

Yeah, we've got quite a strong tech team. I mean, we we literally built a whole tech stack around this process because it doesn't exist. Like we've had to build our own warehouse management systems, our own listing technology. 16:54

We've done a lot of work around data, normalization around garment categorization. Because with all of this you need really clean data to be able to make these sort of value judgments. 16:58

Q: And does that extend to understanding types of damage. 17:29

Q: So the difference between a stain and a hole and a missing button, these kind of different kinds of damage that you might see coming in. 17:34

Yeah. So we, we, by mapping that we know what the you know whether or not we can make a value judgment as to whether or not it makes sense to repair an item based on that, because we can then triangulate based on who the brand is. or the resale price, like they. what the repair damage is, and the system will then go if this falls outside of tolerance. then it's too risky. It doesn't make economic sense to repair it 17:38

Q: right, I see. And you'd standardize some of those processes. 18:23

Q: So you can look at all you know, holes on knees in the same way. Make that judgment. 18:28

Yeah, pretty much. 18:32

you know. And and the thing here is that Brand is probably the one of the key differentiators in this 18:38

Q: I would see. So if it were a Seasalt item, for example. a branded item is more likely, you know. You're more likely to sell it 18:48

if it's a pair of River Island jeans, we're probably not repairing them. If it's a pair of Edwin Jeans or Nudie jeans, or you know a brand like that. Then you've got more latitude to fix it. 18:53

But you've also got more latitude with, say, a Finestair coat that we know was £250 originally, we can then go. Yeah, actually, we can put a new zip in there for £25. 19:11

Q: Yeah, exactly. Makes economic sense. s19:15

19:29

And you're tracking. I know that the the person that we met from X . He said that everything that's listed as pre loved and repaired, gets listed as repaired. So everybody knows they're buying a repaired item.

19:32

Are you having success in selling those repaired items?

Hmm. People. We've just done some research. Actually, in 60% of people survey. I think, said that I think it's a lot higher than I thought. Were up for buying repaired.

19:58

Q: I see interesting, and that is an invisible repair rather than a visible repair, because I know that there's a lot of kind of, you know, people working in the space, creating visible repairs, more expressive and eye catching. But presumably you don't, you don't do that?

20:18

We do both. And actually that for us moves more into a world about upcycling. Because, yeah, because you know. Then there's a delineation here, and it's also different brands. And you have to reflect your customer audience because some Brands' customers will see it as a badge of honour.

20:40

you know, if you think Patagonia right and all that, you know that that whole thing. And then you get into other brands. If you're a premium, women's wear brand right, you don't want a visible, you know repair on a £300 dress, are you?

But if you're a slightly more scrappy street brand, then actually it's a different audience who are probably like this is cool, man. So let's celebrate it

21:03

Q: Right? Okay. So again, you're making a judgment about the brand, the item and the kind of market that you're gonna bring in.

21:16

Yeah.

21:23

Q: yeah, interesting. So you don't work with external companies to do the repair. You're doing it all in-house
Yeah.

21:24

Q: and that was cheaper for you, I suppose, because you would say

21:32

it's more about core competency. There's a number of reasons for it. A.) we have control more control.

21:37

We have
in the past worked with somebody who was external. But
you know, like as soon as anyone touches anything.
it adds money to the process. Right Also, as soon as you move something out the building you've got control issue. and you'll create more carbon, you know, moving stuff around. One of the biggest

problems in this space at the moment is the whole fragment, fragmented nature of kind of where people are doing different bits in the jigsaw puzzle and moving stuff from place to place. Just layers so much carbon on right, that if you then start looking at

the value judgment around that I mean. A good example of this is kind of at the moment you've got denim going from America down to Pakistan and India to then be demetalized and cut.

22:49

and then going in a container over to Scandinavia to renew sell to power their 5 to 5 solutions. Basically it's a lot of carbon there. Isn't that kind of going through that process.

22:58

Yeah. And the energy involved.

23:07

Q: Yeah, interesting if you try and cut that down.

23:10

Q: So a few more kind of standard questions.

What things tend to be repaired most frequently.

23:20

Q: is it denim?

23:22

Knitwear probably.

23:28

Q: Yeah, okay.

23:30

Q: that's

can be quite fragile. You mentioned Finesterre and Patagonia, so I know they do a lot of outdoor gear

23:34

to to see

23:41

Finesterre are one of our brands. The thing about Finesterre is that's really interesting is most of what we get back is a bio-hazard.

23:43

because you know the customers are so a very outdoorsy it's not like they're buying an outdoor brand

23:53

full

24:02

to be cool like it actually does get warm to death.

and therefore a lot. What we get back is just like. you know, because some of it is difficult to recycle is so badly, you know, or so heavily used.

24:10

But we do do stuff with, I mean again, it's back to this value thing, and you know brand audience perception, because if you get insulated back from then you can repair it, because if it's clean, because the value is there.

24:24

but also that's a classic one where a brand like Finesterre their customers are happy or like, buy into the whole thing or visible mending basically because it's a badge of honor.

24:48

Q: Yeah. So you find they might be more ethically or responsibly more responsible and more aware.

24:56

Yeah, I mean, the thing about this is, if you think about clothing, it's really interesting isn't it because clothing is an extension of the self. You know it's about You're making a statement about yourself by the brand you choose, and where and in the same way with like people who consider themselves to be hyper, sustainably minded. Wearing a a repaired garment has a degree of self actualization of, you know their mentality and behavior about it.

25:29

Q: Yeah, definitely.

25:36

Q: I'm sure that those customers would also be interested in the metrics. How much carbon their pre loved clothing choices is saving.

25:39

I think this is the in. Now this is an interesting thing, because I actually think where the sea change happens, here is servicing that for people who've never thought about it before, right, so being able to say to someone that he buys.

you know, from a High Street brand, this is the amount of water you saved by buying a pair of pre-loved jeans. You know it's that. Actually it's a bit like the Thunbergs like right, you know, when you kind of talking big numbers.

Climate emergency people switch off. If you can basically make figures relational to their everyday life all of a sudden, people kind of go well, that's 5 baths or 25 showers that it takes to make a pair of jeans you know that all of a sudden creates light bulb moments for people.

26:34

Q: Yeah, that's interesting. Isn't it, **because it also makes them feel that they have some agency that they can actually make a difference.**

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Q: Yeah.

26:54

Empowerment. So one of my analogies is always around. This is coffee cups and more disposable water bottles. Right? Because that you immediately empower people by making a simple change by buying a keep cup or a reuseable water bottle.

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you know. Oh, I can make a difference that easily. And this is very much what we're trying to enable around our up what we're doing, **because we're very much about trying to open up pre-loved to people who would never consider buying it before.**

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All our cues are about making buying pre-loved like buying new, if it doesn't fit return it we ozone cleanse everything.

27:38

The photography is very high quality, so it gives you the reassurance in what you're buying. And, strangely enough, our return rate is like less than 6% which the High Street is 15 to 18%, which is really interesting. I think it' be higher, but it's not.

27:58

Q: No, no, that's interesting. Isn't it

so in terms of barriers, barriers to engaging in this area, Would you say that was one of them that people feel disempowered, and which we need to find ways to empower them. Give them the knowledge, the information, to make those better decisions.

28:11

Life isn't it, I mean, make it easy for people they'll engage. I think one of the other things here is we've created a throw away society. We, you know we've

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You talked to the beginning about how clothing is devalued in the eyes of most people. Now, when you cut tags out of them. we we also own a very large bulk, clothing, sortation business, which is, we process 700 tons a month through that we run bins for local authorities, charities, things like that.

28:58

When you stand on the line you could stand on the line watching the clothes come out the clothing banks. You'd only have to wait 3 or 4 min till you saw a handful of items with tags still on them, basically never been worn.

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Q: No, it's really shocking.

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you know, and that's the so your thing here about agency is very important. Empowerment in a number of ways removing the barriers to engagement is important. but also the whole convenience Economy thing here has. you know. driven it's also a bit like we've got a bit of a time bomb with clothing in the UK. Because the whole it's a pain in the back side for local authorities. They're trying to push it off on brands, which is where the whole EPR thing comes back into, and DEFRA they for moving towards that. It's probably a good thing.

29:56

but you know the whole model around bulk collection in the UK is completely screwed, because local authorities are looking at this as a revenue generator rather than a rather than a a service provision, or a like. Their Impetus is around income rather than around diversion from landfill in the way that they operate their schemes.

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And that's problematic, because it's just created a race to the bottom where noone can invest in those solutions basically anymore.

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So i'm deviating here a bit, but that that the whole thing of agency is is true, and we talk about

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often. This thing of I think clothing is next it. It started with food right around what you put into your body. You you people started asking questions and going. Hang on a minute. You know what? What does go on to farm all of this stuff that i'm eating and ingesting the the next one, I think, was skin care and what you put on your skin all the biggest growing cosmetics, brands and skin care brands at the moment all the ones who are transparent, right? You know they are the ones who are blown up.

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Q: Yeah, that's true. That's where the body shop came in. Why did it take up too much of your time? I just want to quickly ask you about materials, and how your team examine and assess materials because some of the tools that we're developing are around understanding what materials are especially where labels get cut off. and it's. It's very hard to to assess and inspect and understand materials.

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Q: So

32:00
Q: I just wanted to understand a bit more about your teams approach to I, just because presumably your pre love clothes come in with labels cut off. So you have this job of trying to understand what they are made from. 32:15
Q: and how you go about that.

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We've got technology that will read a garment and understand what the material composition of it is. So basically we run it under a scanner. We can read it, and with a one and a half percent degree of accuracy, we know what the material composition of it is

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Q: even for blends.

32:41
Yeah.

32:43
Q: okay, interesting.

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Q: And that feeds into your decision making around whether it's

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Recycling. So this has been one of the blockers around fibre to fiber, because the tolerance's on it are so high. and you can't trust what's on the care label, anyway, because generally what tends to happen is that a brand will lab test the samples, and then, when the full production happens. their suppliers in wherever it might be, will slip in an inferior grade which is undetectable to the brand and thats created another 5 - 10% margin for them.

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Q: Oh, okay, Well, that means that they're gonna get returns and faults in garments that maybe they didn't anticipate.

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Oh, it's less about that. It's more just in terms of trying to put it in to a fibre to fibre process. Basically you know, you you might think Garment says one thing, and it says one thing on the label. But what is actually in that is very different. And also, if you've got a composition that, like the tolerances at the moment are so tight on fibre to fibre processes with cotton blends and things like that, and different people can do different things with them. you know, if there's a lab stain in there Renewcel? can't touch it.

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So then, that has to go to a different fibre to fibre processor.
So a lot of the work we're doing with Innovate,
All this funding for innovate is to commercialize that process.

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Q: Right? Okay? Well, it'd be great to find out a bit more about that project. Your innovate project. So maybe we'll find. Well there's a way we can find out more about that.

34:37
Q: Is there anything else you want to say about your work at X about the way things are going?

34:57
Yeah, I think we we're actually turning a bit of a corner now around engagement. I think what we're going to is a point where the technology is now starting to get to a place where we can. There's a load of things happening. Technology is becoming reality in the recycling space.

35:21
Consumer interest is there to actually, you know, we're only just getting started with it.

And I think the brands are recognizing that they need to be the... Be participants in this and being more caring as businesses. Basically. So there is a degree of corporate responsibility here. So I think everything's starting to coalesce.

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which is actually it's good news for us, but it's good news for for kind of everyone, because it will drive people into more responsible use of clothing. And I think this whole thing about exactly what you said about agency to repair... One of the other big things we're doing is a whole education piece around trying to make motivate people or upscale people to start, you know. embracing all the old skills of being lost, you know, around stitching stuff up and things like that, and that's a very big piece of what we're doing.

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Q: Oh, okay, Well, it would be interesting to talk to you about that another time, because some of the tools that we're developing are particularly about upskilling individuals to be able to to repair for themselves, and to understand the materials and the processes involved.

So that might be a way that we can kind of complement your education program with that

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Have a look at our Instagram – one went up today about how to fix knitwear basically. How to fix a hole in the collar. Basically

37:01

And we're making that just very, you know, in a very accessible it's actually not that difficult kind of way.

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Q: Yeah, yeah, it'd be good to run some workshops so we can.

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Q: That's coming next.

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So we want to actually get people, you know, to be able to do drop in so things like that. So couple of the brands we're working with already. We're looking at Store take overs - where people can come in and learn from our repair team.

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Q: Okay, sounds good. Well, I shall watch this space, maybe something together.

37:41

Yeah, i'm, we're happy to keep. Yeah, I mean, we're happy to talk to you guys. I mean, our view is the more people who are getting behind this more it becomes, you know a self fulfilling prophecy right so happy to to remain involved. Just reach out to us.

37:52

and we'll, we'll happily support it if we can. That sounds good.