Textiles Workshop: World Café Notes

Question 1: Most surprising or shocking thing learned today?

Microfibers

- [Difficult to] capture of microfibers at wastewater treatment plants
- Washing machine once had filters but don't any longer
- There is legislation being proposed now that could help with textile waste/microfibers

Recycling

- High cost to recycle textiles
- Generation X is the worst at recycling
- That recycling is not the #1 eco-solution
- Recycled batteries in textiles make recycling them again challenging/impossible

Industry

- New innovation – Mango materials using methane and bacteria to make fiber
- Home and hospitality textiles are mostly cotton, about 70%
- Low cost of textile raw materials for export
- Military is the biggest buyer of rags
- Growing amount of plastic in clothes – overwhelming to think about

Infrastructure

- Lack of understanding about existing infrastructure
- Lack of infrastructure
- Aquafil's lack of access to reliable power
- The US is way behind Europe
- Amount of landfilling by textile manufacturing (post-industrial)

What's lacking…

- Upcycling not included in anyone's list [presentation]
- How few companies are doing something?
- Our waste hierarchy has reuse as a high priority, but not much happening at the government level
- How little consumers understand about labels

Question 2: If we wish to reduce textile waste by 50% by 2030, what new collaborations must happen?

Education

- Consumer education
- CSU/UCs – education and collection
- Consumer education – early education coupled with in-place infrastructure (or what is the point of teaching kids to do the right thing)
- Encourage repair and maintenance
- Humanizing textiles – the people who make the clothes need to be visible
- Getting cultural influencers on board – the "Greta" of textiles (Media/Hollywood)
- Take back programs and recreation collaboration (i.e. connecting artists with brands)

Recycling

- Collectors with sorters/graders
- Sorter/graders with mechanical and chemical recyclers regarding specifications
- Brands with mechanical and chemical recyclers

Manufacturing/retail

- Brands with consumers & government with consumers
- Financers with infrastructure with research & development folks
- Garment workers' rights/sustainable fair wage – public sourcing
- California Apparel Brand Coalition – producer responsibility
- State and college contracted clothing vendors need to be in the conversation

Government

- Need circular infrastructure systems + collection + private and public funding
- LA Cleantech incubator and the City of LA – postindustrial to post consumer

Question 3: What should the state government be doing?

Promoting reuse and repair

- Make frugality fun – mending bars and social events
- Community closets

Education

- Home Economics school curriculum
  - Focus on teaching how to repair clothes
- Collaboration with educators/universities/preschools/high schools

o Revamp education around carbon cycle and greenhouse gas emissions
- Education and outreach and marketing
- Create press releases with facts about the waste problem and solutions for reusing at the household level

Funding
- Grants -> MORE! $100 millions!
- Fund infrastructure, education, repair + reuse
- Change funding model – prevention, reduction, re-use
- Reduce barrier to entry for grant process for small, front-end businesses/any applicant
- Funding, supporting and facilitating collaboration with everyone mentioned in Question #2
- Provide grant funding for new technology & consumer education
- R + D for scaling, mirror other countries which are doing it
- Government subsidies for mom and pop thrift stores to collaborate with designers (or activities like mobile mending)

Infrastructure
- Incentivizing local infrastructure
- Infrastructure development and investment

Legislation/Policy
- Policies that internalize costs
- Lobby federal to reduce subsidies for cotton production
- Washing machines/Prop 65
- Industrial bond development program - add environmental criteria
- Not allow single use and Styrofoam products in the EPA building
- Taxation on cheap imports
- Taxing non-recycled fibers
- Tax bad producers eco/economic incentives (extended producer responsibility)
- More EPR/eco-modulation (industry dollars, not consumer fee)
- Uniformity at the state level such as bins & collection
- RFID coding embedded in product
- Ban PFAS

Data Collection
- Waste diversion is the wrong metric, need to focus on source reduction
- Data tracking and more textile categories in the waste characterization
- Tools – list of recyclers in the state

Education

- Awareness campaign
- Make secondhand cool (social media)
- Emphasize importance of craft (knitting, sewing)
- Early childhood education for repair (i.e. home economics)

Legislation

- Legislation supporting retail take-back programs
  - + manufacturers
  - + localities
- Reuse/repair items exempt from sales tax
- Tax rebate for repair and reuse

Technology

- Enable on demand stock replenishment
- Redesign of yarns
  - More than a filter issue – Stormwater (Ocean Protection council)

Business

- Clothing rental i.e. Rent the Runway
- Inspire different targeted industries
- Create trends and competition
- Recognition of business case
- Incentivize leasing programs
  - Deposit and refund

Building spaces for community reuse/repair

- Pop-up repair café
- Popularize repair care with BIG BRANDS
- Clothing swaps, swap meet/flea markets (like Santa Cruz)
- Thrift store
- How to make/repair/reuse appealing?
- Reduce barriers to secondhand stores

Individual

- Don't buy stuff you don't need
- Rental/renting clothes
- New Year's Resolution – consignment/recommerce for a year!