

How making can help us consume less

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Not so long ago, the basic skills needed for repairing and refurbishing - such as sewing, knitting, woodworking and metalworking - were taught in schools. But teaching these crafts is out of fashion. Anyone over the age of 40 today could have used these skills to make presents for their parents and would have known how to handle small repairs. Fashion is not always readymade by big brands; it is possible to create and sew our own clothes, adapt and alter them, repair them, or replace a button.

For the younger generations today, this knowledge is nearly lost. In a UK survey [one in four](#) people said they couldn't sew on a button; every second respondent couldn't repair a hole or fix a seam. Designer and founder of [Fashion Revolution](#), Orsola Castro, knows why: "because of ubiquitous fast fashion a whole generation has lost these abilities".

In the 1980s, followers of the post-punk scene expressed their individuality by designing and adapting their own clothes. These days, there are prefabricated imitations of this "look" at every fashion discount store.

Consumerism - a vicious cycle

It's difficult to escape the vicious cycle set in motion by modern consumer society. Cheap products make it unnecessary to make do and mend. We've lost our respect for things and lost the ability to maintain them. Now we've lost all our reservations about buying more and more new products and using them for ever shorter periods of time. This throwaway culture now is endemic in fast fashion, and in many other everyday products like electronics, toys and household goods.

Consumerism is killing our planet. It's heating up the climate, burning too much fossil fuel, destroying habitats and landscapes. It's not only nature that is paying the price for this, but millions of people are forced to work in often life-threatening and exploitative conditions.

But we can **MAKE** a change

People in sewing and repair cafes, DIY communities, urban gardens, maker spaces and Fab labs around the world are proving that lots of us have the desire to create something with our own hands. It's easier to do it if we share resources, materials and tools.

Anyone who once made a table or a bed by themselves would think twice before buying a flimsy flat-pack from a Swedish furniture store. Anyone who has knitted their own jumper would avoid cheap polyester knitwear. And anyone who has planted lettuce in their garden, cherished them and defended them against snails, would be reluctant to throw food away - because they know how hard it can be to grow.

When you make something, you buy more consciously, whether it's food, fashion or mobile phones. Your experience of creating something makes you reflect on your consumption patterns more, and it's more likely that you find a way to repair, care for and share your things before throwing them out. It's essential that we share this culture in our communities and make spaces where skills, knowledge and experiences can be shared.

Making meets tech

We are not advocating a return to a time before modern technology where we would produce everything ourselves. But the maker community proves that DIY, the internet and the latest tech are all part of the same movement. Technology connects us with knowledge that can be shared widely with communities around the globe.

There are online communities like [Shareable](#) and [Instructables](#) that provide us with easy to follow guidelines on how to make things. These offline and online communities are invaluable platforms for acquiring and sharing knowledge and skills. They're counteracting the loss of craftsmanship - and throwing a spanner in the works of the throwaway society.

Follow our Instagram channel [@makesmthng](#) for further inspiration and to connect with makers around the globe.

Many of you have already started to rediscover the art, craft and joy of making: cooking, mending clothes, fixing electronics, upcycling used goods, growing your own food. You're making your own cosmetics; cleaning with vinegar and baking soda, ditching plastic and sharing your clothes, bikes and homes with each other. MAKE SMTHNG Week is your showcase for creative, innovative and unique alternatives to shopping something new.

Why?

Because we are buying too much stuff. There are billions of people on this planet who all shop for food, fashion and technology. To produce many of the goods we use, companies are contributing to climate change, destroying forests and polluting our oceans.

The amount of waste we create is mind-boggling. Every piece of plastic produced in the last 60 years still exists. As things get cheaper with planned obsolescence built in, we throw them away more often. In our consumerist societies, shopping counts for more than preserving things.



Plastic waste collected in Germany

We buy **twice as many clothes** as we did 20 years ago, and wear them for half as long. It's now cheaper to buy new things than to repair them. Even though our technology is advanced enough to instantly connect all corners of the world, we still can't repair our mobile phones.

We need to shift from a throw-away culture to one where we value things again. We envision a world where we make the most of our resources.

Each of us can take small actions in our everyday lives that together create a monumental change.

MAKE IT HAPPEN

From 2-10 December, we invite you to MAKE SMTHNG Week - a week of action happening in cities around the globe.

- If you run a community space such as a makerspace, fab-lab, sewing cafe and you have events running in December, please upload them to our page to let people know about them.
- Share our page with your community and invite them to download our toolkit on how to get involved in MAKE SMTHNG Week.
- Ask them to tag their Instagram pics of selfmade, upcycled, repaired and shared items with

a little story and hashtag #makesmthng - the best ideas will be featured on our Instagram channel @makesmthng and curated on this website.