COLLECTING DISCARTED TEXTILES

Do's & Don'ts

Reflow

waag technology & society

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INTRODUCTION

The textile industry has a high environmental impact, whether it is through the production of the fibres, the processes of making a fabric or textile product, or the use of the final product (e.g. washing, drying, or ironing). After textiles have been used, they are usually discarded and the systems that take care of collecting old textiles come into play. The collection of discarded textiles marks the beginning of the textile waste processing sequence. The collector usually gathers the discarded textiles as part of a textile processing business and then passes on the discarded materials to the next step in the chain: the sorting company. While the collection phase is only one link in the recycling chain, the benefits of collecting discarded textiles are obvious for both the people and the planet.

SECONDHAND AND HAND-ME-DOWNS

Ideally, textiles would pass through several hands before being handed off to a collector so that the time of use for a textile product is prolonged and the carbon footprint is reduced. Buying secondhand products is one of the easiest ways to reduce the carbon footprint of your closet. You can find secondhand items on websites like "Marktplaats", purchase vintage pieces through Vinted and other apps, see if your friends and family might offer you some hand-me-down items, or browse vintage and secondhand shops. After you've given the product a second home and are ready to let it go, it may still be good enough for someone else to enjoy. So, if it looks fit for a third home, sell it or give it away. If you're certain no one can use it, then discard it through the proper channels (see chapter 1).

THE RAG MAN

In the not so distant past, textiles were considered very valuable materials and their use was sustained as long as possible. During this era, a designated "rag man" would drive through the streets and collect old, discarded textiles. In fact, the threadbare textiles he gathered were still considered valuable enough that the rag man would even pay a small fee to those he collected from. After collection, the rag man would then sort and sell the collected material to processors who could turn these discarded textiles into other products (e.g. non wovens). The advantage to this system was that the rag man provided a clear, human connection between textiles, their use and their second life.

Today, the rag man has been replaced by secondhand shops, where you must drop off your discarded textile products. If these shops could expand their services to collecting textiles from your home (an app could be the first contact), the rag man could return to the streets of Amsterdam.

One of the goals of the Reflow programme is to investigate if this method of textile collection could be organised in Amsterdam, and whether or not it could be a business model for smart, young entrepreneurs.

COLLECTING THROUGH TEXTILE CONTAINERS

In many regions, textile waste is collected in a top-down, organised manner. The City of Amsterdam, for instance, has contracted the company Sympany to collect textile waste from textile containers. These containers can be found in many locations all over Amsterdam.

Click here [link] to find one close to you.

Once full, the contents of these containers is picked up by trucks and transported to the sorting centers.

SIMPLE RULES
TO MAXIMISE THE VALUE OF THE COLLECTED TEXILES

- Keep it dry and clean
- Avoid contamination with non-textile materials or waste.
- No bulky products.
  Keep the textile waste manageable so that manual sorting is possible.
- Bulky products (like mattresses, furniture, and carpets) are collected from the municipal waste yard.

To reduce your carbon footprint, help keep collected textile waste clean and dry. And please remember that it only takes a tiny amount of waste to spoil the entire contents of a textile container.

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KG/YEAR/PP

AMSTERDAM COLLECTED TEXTILE

#facts&figures