

Event Summary

Future Fibres Network Plus Sandpit Event at University of Huddersfield



3 Sept 2024

The Future Fibres Network Plus is part of the UKRI Network Plus in Circular Fashion and Textiles: a collaboration between the University of the Arts London, University of Huddersfield, University of Leeds, University of Plymouth and the UK Fashion and Textile Association led by the University of Exeter. For more information go to www.futurefibresnetworkplus.com or email ffnplus@exeter.ac.uk.

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Key Headlines:

1. Interdisciplinary collaboration is essential to address the challenges of circular transformation in the fashion and textile industry and help to create a circular fashion ecosystem in the UK with an innovation-led mindset.
2. The dedication and passion of industry experts are key drivers in advancing sustainability within the textile and fashion sectors, pushing boundaries in sustainable design and innovation.
3. Collaboration among stakeholders—academia, industry, and innovators—continues to grow, as they work together to tackle the challenges of circular transformation and sustainable development.
4. Open, transparent communication about the challenges we face is necessary for moving forward collectively and achieving meaningful change in sustainability efforts.

Advancing Circularity in Fashion and Textiles

On Tuesday 3rd September 2024, the Future Fibre Network+ Sandpit Event was held at the University of Huddersfield. Professor Tamara Galloway and Professor Parikshit Goswami opened the event and emphasised that the circulation transformation of the textile and garment industry is crucial to the realisation of circular and sustainable development of the global fashion industry. They highlighted that this Sandpit event is a creative collaborative session to bring together industry experts, academic researchers and stakeholders to foster interdisciplinary collaborations and explore novel research initiatives or solutions to the challenges of circular transformation in fashion and textile industry.

Next, Adam Mansell (CEO at UK Fashion & Textile Association) and Professor Parikshit Goswami (University of Huddersfield) delivered an impactful presentation. Adam provided an overview of the current status, practices and challenges of the circular transformation in the UK fashion and textile industry. He also introduced the UKRI Circular Fashion Programme and networks, which aims to foster collaboration between industry, academia, and innovators to accelerate work and expertise needed to create a circular fashion ecosystem in the UK with an innovation-led mindset. Adam and Prof. Goswami emphasised the significance of establishing effective communication

mechanism among multiple stakeholders across the value chain to enhance cooperation and promote the systematic circular transformation of the UK's textile and fashion industry. They also highlighted the importance of building a green, circular, and low-carbon textile industry system.

“If full materials circulatory for textiles were at 24 hours on a clock face, we’d only be at 14 minutes past midnight, with 23 ¾ hours left to go.” Adam Mansell

This was followed by an excellent presentation by Paraskevi Fotoglou (sustainability Engineer at Camira Fabrics) and Professor Richard Blackburn from the University of Leeds. Paraskevi gave an overview of the phased progress that Camira Fabrics has made which improve the utilisation efficiency of industry resource, along with the basic characteristics of their own circular development. They mentioned that this ecological design was an important support for the circular fashion, adhering to life cycle principles to minimize resource consumption and reduce pollutant generation and emissions. Paraskevi also emphasised the challenges in textile circularity, including compliance with GRS standards and the fact that legislation often lags behind technological advances.

Future Fibre Impact workshop

The next session was the ‘Future Fibre Impact’ workshop, led by Dr Ben Parker from University of Exeter. Attendees engaged in discussions to better understand the sustainability challenges companies face and to foster interdisciplinary communication. Participants then joined tables to interview the “provocateur” about their item, discovering aspects like its material, lifespan, usage, and downstream effects. They also explored the environmental, economic, and societal impacts of these items, along with the associated challenges.

Industry Insights and Collaborative Innovations

After the first part of the workshop and a coffee break, the event continued with two inspiring presentations, where industry experts and academic researchers engaged in interview-style discussions to delve into the sustainable transformation of textiles. Paul Dudley (Head of Sustainability & Engineering) shared his insights on starting a sustainability journey at AW Hainsworth and Sons.

Paul and Assistant Professor Alana James from Northumbria University had an interdisciplinary conversation exploring opportunities for collaboration and addressing shared challenges on creating sustainable change in the future of the textile and fashion industries.

“There are no secrets. If we collaborate, we can make a better world for textiles.” Paul Dudley

Joff Ward (Managing Director at CorkSol UK) and Associate Professor Kayleigh Wyles (University of Plymouth) focused on the application of sustainable materials in housing and the potential market for natural or recycled fibre. Joff discussed the use of cork in housing for thermal insulation purposes, highlighting how it reduced heat loss through the walls of heritage buildings by up to 30%. In the end, Joff called on all stakeholders in sustainable development—governments, large and small enterprises, designers, associations, and research institutions—to coordinate and collaborate on a larger scale, united by the common vision of circular development, to explore more transformation paths and provide industrial solutions.

Future Fibre Redesign workshop

The workshop items and worksheets were displayed around the lunch area, allowing attendees from other tables to observe and contribute insights or express interest in the items. After lunch, we moved into the second part of the workshop, ‘Future Fibre Redesign’ led by Dr Max Kelly from the University of Plymouth. Participants discussed how redesign could address the impacts highlighted in the morning session, sparking a range of imaginative and thought-provoking conversations, outlined strategies for achieving outcomes and potential challenges.

Exploring sustainability and innovation

The final session involved two impactful presentations. Andrew Hogley (CEO at British Wool) highlighted the lack of sustainable demand for wool. A large quantity of wool goes to waste, and high processing costs, along with low returns, are impacting supply chain volumes. Professor Tamara Galloway from University of Exeter emphasised low environmental impact of wool fibre, particularly its minimal contribution to microplastic

pollution, and urged for more research to support its sustainable use and address knowledge gaps.

Next, Professor Kate Goldsworthy (University of the Arts London) and Professor Stephen Russell (University of Leeds) focused on the sustainability and scaling circular fashion in terms of technology, data and design. Professor Goldsworthy introduced three Circular Fashion Innovation Networks: The Back to Baselines network (to understand environmental impacts), the Future Fibre network (to minimize harm during design), and the IMPACT+ network (to assess environmental effects). She also highlighted a case study on scaling circular polyester recycling in the UK, addressing its carbon impact, research outcomes and industry challenges.

After a day of engaging interesting and inspiring conversations, the event closed with Professor Tamara Galloway, Professor Parikshit Goswami and Associate Professor Kayleigh Wyles summarising the key takeaways from the Future Fibre Network+ Sandpit Event and gathering valuable insights from attendees. The event underscored the crucial role of interdisciplinary collaboration in tackling the challenges of circular

transformation in fashion and textiles. Participants recognized that the passion of industry experts drives progress in sustainability. The event also highlighted the increasing collaboration among stakeholders and the importance of open, transparent communication to address challenges. Together, these elements pave the way for a more sustainable and circular future in the textile and fashion industries.

For more information or subscribe to our newsletter please go to the website: www.futurefibresnetworkplus.com or email ffnplus@exeter.ac.uk

The Future Fibres Network+ works alongside our fellow sub-networks; [IMPACT+](#) and [Back to Baselines in Circular Fashion and Textiles](#). These three sub-networks are part of the UKRI Circular Fashion and Textile Network Plus: a collaboration that seeks to understand and drive the fashion and textile industry towards sustainable and responsible practices.



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