

EVALUATION CONCLUSION on the RWN TEXTILE UPCYCLING PILOT PROJECT

based on “A Case Study of textile upcycling in an educational setting”

Dissertation by Aoife Ryan, St. Angela’s College, Sligo, National University of Ireland Galway

with additional comments from

Dr. Sarah Miller, CEO, Rediscovery Centre Dublin and the RWN Textile Upcycling Pilot Project Steering Group

Rebecca Dobson, Roscommon Environmental Network and the RWN Textile Upcycling Pilot Project Steering Group

Main Conclusions

Within the author’s literature review, it was found that the current production methods employed, specifically by the textile and fashion industry, need to change as we are dangerously close to crossing more planetary boundaries and suffering the consequences of our reckless, unsustainable actions (Rocktröm et al, 2009). It was also discovered that as consumers are slow, or reluctant to change their shopping patterns and habits, it is has become imperative for industry to take responsibility to reshape its production methods, preventing further damages to our environment (Kawamura, 2005, cited in Ruppert-Stroescu et al., 2015)

Having analysed the experiences and opinions of the RWN Training Upcycling Project (TUP) participants, and gathered the tutor’s perceptions of the overall project, the author deemed that the project was a success from an educational perspective. The project has the potential to succeed as a sustainable business. It needs the time, tutor and dedicated participants to help it succeed further and have more far-reaching benefits. It encompassed many elements from sewing skills, understanding of textiles to business skills and environmental awareness. While, at times the balance between theory and practical could have been revised, the participants learned many different skills throughout the project. The Author noted that participants each stated they gained a new skill or outlook from the project such as improved interpersonal skills or developing their creativity. She concluded that time and resources for upcycling limited the project outcomes.

Overall, the group was an educational success as it provided time, space and the opportunity for the women to grow individually, and as a unit in a variety of ways. It educated the participants on the need for more sustainable practices within production and provided the participants with the basic tools and skills to carry out upcycling. The author suggested that his could be further developed if given more time.

Comments on the main Case Study by Dr Sarah Miller, CEO, Rediscovery Centre Dublin and the RWN Textile Upcycling Pilot Project Steering Group

Read the report & recommendations and found nothing unexpected. Agreed that the participants need more than 4 hours a week. Was undecided with respect to needing 2 tutors as yes it provides for a more holistic project but suggests that a consultant could be used to market products which could also be sold through a third party online. Agreed that it will be more productive with respect to keeping the same women on but it depends on the project goals. Trade-off between training numbers v's technical proficiency.

Comments on the main Case Study by Rebecca Dobson, Roscommon Environmental Network and the RWN Textile Upcycling Pilot Project Steering Group

An excellent reflective piece on the project. Overall thought that the project is a huge success. It raises awareness about environmental issues - namely unsustainable and sustainable practices within the textile industry to an audience who otherwise may not have been interested in the environment. She added that the dissertation acknowledges that the environmental impacts could be explored more, to this end, as suggested perhaps a module on environmental sustainability could be included. The concept of sustainability can be easily overlooked, and is often misunderstood, so this could be something worth exploring further. She commented that it is often the case that individuals do not make the connection between their actions, the actions of their local community and the impact that this can have nationally and globally on communities and individuals. There are many organisations that offer workshops on this concept eg. Galway One World Centre.

Rebecca noted that it is interesting that skills including communication were recognised and given value. Communication is key to improving the environment and talking about it is the sure way of raising awareness about it. In terms of scope - there is plenty to build on. There are so many different types of textile industries. She suggested that the group could take a different topic/sub-topic each time - fashion (upcycling casual/leisure or formal/evening or wedding or occasional etc) home (upcycling building materials or hard furnishings or soft furnishings) art (upcycling for sculptures etc). In relation to time and transport, she wondered if the project is time-limited as it aimed to achieve so much? She understands that a pilot project often has to be very ambitious, it is often the case that it takes on too much, and suggested that a more bit-sized approach could work. She acknowledged that transport is an issue and wondered could an online element be factored in which would also reflect an environmental ethos. She concluded that what this project has done and is doing is spreading knowledge on how individuals and communities can live more sustainable lives by practicing upcycling. The group that are involved consist of individuals who may not otherwise have been interested or involved in environmental projects, thus the project has the ability to reach a target audience that may otherwise have been unreachable. She finishes by noting that it is always easier to preach to the converted but that this project has gone beyond that.