JUST TRANSITION

discussion

2026-07

INSTITUT FÜR ÖKONOMIE UND ÖKUMENE

SWIPE, SELL, SUSTAIN?

Discussion of the boom in secondhand clothing from a global justice perspective

BY ALINA MATT UND JISKA GOJOWCZYK

Illustration: Irem Kurt

A large proportion of people in Germany own unused products, many of them in their wardrobes. That is a treasure trove for the booming second-hand market. After books, clothing is the most frequently sold category of second-hand goods (Wilts/Fecke 2021). The global market value for second-hand clothing is estimated at around 220 billion euros in 2025. Within just four years, the value is expected to increase by more than 96 billion euros. It is therefore anticipated that the second-hand market will grow 2.7 times faster than the global garment market as a whole (ThredUp 2025).

For years, the garment industry has been criticized for global exploitation and a lack of sustainability. The industry consumes excessive resources; materials cannot be meaningfully reused, microplastics contaminate and chemicals poison water and soils. Above all, brands, investors, and retailers reap financial profits. The levers for influence of precariously employed workers in globalized supply chains are very limited. The same is true for many affected communities.

The new resale developments could initiate changes in the sector. Nevertheless, there has so far been little discussion of how the emerging second-hand market can be assessed from a global justice perspective. The present discussion paper analyzes to what extent and under what conditions the second-hand trend can contribute to a more economically just and environmentally friendly sector.

This debate tolerates no delay, for new political instruments are intended to address the enormous social and ecological problems of the sector. The EU Textile Strategy aims to pave the way toward a more circular use of resources. By contrast, regulations on human rights due diligence in supply chains are under attack in Europe.

PROBLEMATIC STATUS QUO

The garment industry is considered a paradigmatic example of exploitation in globalized supply chains.

Production regions are shaped by constant international competition for orders from major market actors. Competition is held primarily by reducing production costs, thereby promoting low wages and poor working conditions as well as disregarding environmental standards. Violations of labor rights such as forced labor, verbal and physical harassment, and restrictions on freedom of association are well documented for the supply chain (cf., for example, Ferenschild 2018; 2021).

The ecological costs are also evident, including the massive consumption of water, land, and crude oil. The most widely used fossil-based material, polyester, accounted for 57% of fiber production in 2023—far more than, for instance, cotton. Despite increases in the share of recycled fibers, the global production of new polyester fibers also continued to rise, so that the proportion of recycled fibers even declined slightly from 2022 to 2023 (Textile Exchange 2025: 48).

Moreover, the garment industry produces far too many goods. It is not only consumers who leave clothing unused in their wardrobes. Returns—especially in online retail—and unsold goods also result in garments losing value without ever being worn, becoming a burden for retailers in high-consumption countries such as Germany.

Waste management is a visible problem along the entire value chain. Before use, this includes, among other things, cutting scraps and unsellable products. After use, part of the garments ends up in the trash—in Germany, according to residual waste analyses by the Federal Environment Agency, this amounted a few years ago to an estimated four kilograms per person per year (period 2017–2019) (Dornbusch et al. 2020; Gözet/Wilts 2022: 21). For decades, another share is disposed of after first use via collection systems (on average an estimated 15 kg per person per year, BMUKN 2025), much of which is then exported. The transport and disposal of exported second-hand clothing generates an annual carbon footprint of 17 kilograms of CO_2 per person in Germany (Coscieme et al. 2022). The list of externalized costs incurred by the industry along the entire chain is extensive. This includes, for example, enormous microplastic abrasion during use and the problems of used clothing management, which are also described in more detail below (cf. Gözet/Wilts 2022: 13, 21).

17

The transport and disposal of exported second-hand clothing generate an average of 1.5 kilograms of CO_2 per person in Germany each year.

CIRCULAR ECONOMY AS A SOLUTION STRATEGY

Today, around a quarter of worn-out textiles are turned into painter's fleece, insulation material or cleaning rags. Due to the loss of value of the products, it is downcycling (BMUKN 2025). Genuine circular loops would only emerge if fiber-to-fiber recycling enabled the production of materials and products of equal value. Technological developments in this field are highly dynamic. So far, however, no procedure has been adopted on a large scale. Up to now, decisions in production have generally *not* been geared towards recyclability.

To reduce resource use and waste, hopes are particularly being placed on strengthening the principles of the circular economy. These include repairability, reusability, and reintegrating materials into the production process. Questions of design and consumer behavior are highlighted. New business models, such as sharing or borrowing clothing, are discussed but have so far received only very limited support.

Within the EU, the member states are obliged to pursue various targets and enact laws intended to lead to more circular economic practices by the EU Textile Strategy. The strategy includes design requirements, a ban on destroying unsold goods, extended producer responsibility for waste from the garment industry, and a focus on strengthening fiber-to-fiber recycling processes. Since the beginning of 2025, the EU Waste Framework Directive (EU) 851/2018 has required EU member states to collect textile waste separately. These measures could bring about major changes to the sector, making the analysis of risks and opportunities associated with new trends and established practices in the second-hand market all the more important.

First studies already show that human rights and environmental protection in a more circular fashion industry are not a given. For example, Dutch organizations, drawing on on-site investigations, uncovered social and labor-law abuses in the recycling industry in Panipat, the largest textile recycling center in India, as well as in Faisalabad in Pakistan. In this strongly informalized industry, working conditions are extremely precarious. The labor rights violations identified included child labor (Arisa/Sympany 2020; Arisa 2025; see also SÜDWIND/Arisa 2025). The Finnish organization Eetti emphasizes that an increasingly circular fashion industry does not automatically lead to improved living conditions worldwide:

> *"The current circular economy actions don't solve the social problems that run rampant in the clothing industry, one of these problems being that most of the people working in the industry don't earn a living wage.*
>
> *On the contrary: if circular economy is executed badly, it can make the situation even worse." (2024)*

The organization demands that companies examine the human rights implications of their actions, both in the transition of the industry and in current business models for used garment exports (Eetti 2024; Nurmi 2025; see also Lanyero 2024). This criticism is consistent with SÜDWIND's long-standing observations and analyses of the negative effects of used garment exports (cf. e.g. Gojowczyk/Hütz Adams 2021). The growing second-hand market therefore needs to be critically examined.

SECONDHAND – THE SOLUTION TO ALL PROBLEMS?

Second-hand clothing items can reach a new user through various channels, including clothes swaps, flea markets, charitable or commercial second-hand shops, or a wide range of online providers. According to *DER SPIEGEL*, physical retailers fear the growing competition from online platforms. However, the data situation regarding a possible shift from brick-and-mortar to online offerings is inconclusive (cf. Book et al. 2023; Momox Fashion 2020, 2024). Similarly difficult to quantify are increasingly popular clothes swap parties, which take place both in private settings and in organized forms, for example by political groups such as Greenpeace or the Clean Clothes Campaign (cf., for instance, kleidertausch.de).

THE ONLINE-MARKET

What is undisputed, however, is that online resellers such as Vinted or Momox make a substantial contribution to the second-hand trend. In October 2025, the Vinted app ranked first in the App Store in the "Shopping" category, ahead of the fast-fashion giants Temu (2nd place) and Amazon (5th place). Selling is free of charge. The platform generates revenue solely through buyer protection fees, paid add-on features, shipping services, and advertising (Melcher 2025).

According to estimates, by 2027 the online market for second-hand clothing will not only surpass the market value of physical second-hand stores but will even triple it (Statista 2025). Increasingly, a concentration of market players can be observed. For example, Vinted acquired successful formats such as "Mamikreisel" and "Rebelle." In 2024, the platform had more than 28 million active users, generated revenues of 813 million euros, and increased its transaction volume tenfold within five years. In France, the company has meanwhile become the market leader ahead of Shein and Temu (Melcher 2025).

35

percent of secondhand buyers spend the money they save on further secondhand purchases.

Buyers on Vinted and Momox are predominantly female and tend to be under 40 years of age (Momox Fashion 2020, 2024; Vinted 2023). By contrast, the cross-category resale platform Kleinanzeigen stated that its users in German roughly reflect the general age structure of the population. Kleinanzeigen is used by both private and commercial users, with the latter making up a relatively small share (email survey in October 2025).

Various market studies explore changes in purchasing decisions. Second-hand goods are cheaper and involve lower resource consumption than new products. Buyers often equate the consumption of second-hand goods with sustainable consumption. In surveys conducted by the platforms, around half of German customers state that purchasing used goods allows them to afford more overall. Thirty-five percent of them reinvest the money saved on further second-hand purchases. On Vinted, this leads to more than 70% of respondents stating that since buying on Vinted, they do not purchase fewer items of clothing than before. One fifth even reported buying more garments (E-commerce Germany n.d.; Momox Fashion 2020, 2022, 2024; Vinted 2023; Wilts/Fecke 2021). Second-hand does not appear to reduce the overall consumption of new goods. Both the fast-fashion market and the second-hand market are projected to grow over the next five years (Statista 2024).

Additional motives may encourage people to participate in the second-hand market. The new platforms offer private sellers an opportunity to supplement their income, particularly in the context of growing poverty and social inequality. Moreover, second-hand platforms function as queer, creative, and political spaces in which people can express themselves beyond gender norms, connect with one another, and take positions on fashion, deliberately breaking with prevailing clothing and gender norms (Huber 2020; Panju 2024).

Part of the background outlined above regarding purchasing decisions suggests a rebound effect: people buying second-hand clothing consume, on average, more clothing (2.28 items per month) than those buying only new clothing (1.86 items per month). Buyers purchase more clothing since second-hand products are cheaper but perceive this purchasing as environmentally friendly. As a result, the ecological and financial benefits of second-hand clothing are weakened or canceled out by overall increased consumption (Ciechelska et al. 2024).

Laitala and Klepp (2021) furthermore identify, in a comprehensive study conducted in China, Japan, the USA, the United Kingdom, and Germany, different usage patterns for second-hand versus newly purchased clothing. Garments are worn less frequently the longer ago they were acquired. Newly purchased items, however, are worn 30% more often over the same period than used ones. The effect varies in intensity for different clothing categories but is evident for everyday clothing as well as for occasion-specific garments such as suits. What owners intend to do with a garment also

appears to be relevant: if a garment is still intended to be donated or sold, it is worn less often than garments that are only intended to be disposed of. Garments that users plan to pass on to friends or family members are worn least frequently. When a garment is worn by a second or even third person, its "lifetime" before disposal is extended. However, with each change of ownership it is worn less often than after a new purchase. The authors conclude from this that circular economy initiatives should prioritize long-term use over second use.

Klooster et al. (2024) likewise emphasize that the frequency of actual use of a garment is crucial. Production accounts for the largest share of a garment's ecological impact, at 72 percent. Accordingly, environmental impact (per use) decreases rapidly as frequency of use increases, as the effects of the production phase are distributed across more uses. Second-hand buyers who wear an item only rarely may cause greater ecological impacts than users who wear a newly purchased item very intensively. Purchasing second-hand clothing is therefore not automatically the most environmentally friendly option simply because it is acquired second-hand.

This is also underscored by the climate calculation of the reseller Vinted. According to the reseller's own figures, buying a used garment on the platform instead of a new product results in an emissions saving of 1.8 kg of CO_2. Nevertheless, the sheer volume of deliveries leads to a relevant level of emissions. These account for 96 percent of Vinted's CO_2 emissions. International orders generate 35 percent more emissions than domestic orders. The company's total emissions from shipments alone amounted to 282 kt of CO_2 in 2021 (Vaayu Tech GmbH 2021). Based on the myclimate flight calculator, this corresponds to 128,000 round trips by one person from Frankfurt to New York. Dispatch also entails a high risk of labor rights violations (see box).

Online resellers are also increasingly confronted with fraudulent practices. Fast-fashion items are "greenwashed" and presented as unique pieces or beloved treasures to appeal to an environmentally conscious clientele on second-hand platforms (Panju 2024). With the false promise of good quality and ethical consumption, profits are thus generated from overpriced garments produced quickly and cheaply – and ultimately buyers still end up consuming clothing from questionable fast-fashion companies (Chandler 2021).

In Tanzania, second-hand clothing is also known as kafa ulaya. Translated, this means "the clothes of dead white people" (Brooks 2019: 128).

Little is known about working conditions in online retail itself beyond employee reviews. In late October 2025, the first strike in the company's history took place at its Leipzig site. Employees raised accusations of racism and reported performance pressure, Momox denies. Together with the trade union ver.di, employees demanded higher wages, respect, and better working conditions (Mdr 2025).

WORKING CONDITIONS IN THE TRANSPORT SECTOR: THE LAST MILE

The delivery of clothing purchased online on the so-called 'last mile' is related to problematic working conditions. Large parcel delivery companies often outsource deliveries to subcontractors, resulting in long chains of contractors and making it difficult to monitor and improve working conditions systematically. Delivery drivers face high performance pressures. They must deliver 250–270 parcels a day, often without regular breaks or overtime pay. Low wages, physically demanding work and the employment of people without secure residence status further exacerbate these conditions (Ferenschild, 2023).

THE EXPORT-MARKET

Regional economic activity based on used clothing can have positive effects on the local economy in large cities in OECD countries (Vladimirova et al. 2024). At the same time, the share of low-quality clothing that is unsuitable for local reuse and in poor condition is increasing. In Germany, for example, collection organizations have for years complained about the declining quality of donated goods and the associated rapid decrease in the profitability of the used-clothing sales business model (Vladimirova et al. 2024; see also ARD 2025). By contrast, there has been little discussion of the extent to which the second-hand trend in Germany and direct sales via online platforms further lower the quality level of collected clothing. Clothing that is not resold often ends up in collection containers. The subsequent trade is complex.

Low-quality items which appear unsuitable for the European second-hand market are exported abroad in large quantities. In many countries, on a micro-level, people handle the goods creatively and profitably. At the same time, these exports not only lead to a problematic economic sector that leaves little room for domestic production to develop, but also to an immense waste problem and the pollution of soil and waterways. Elmar Stroomer from Africa Collect Textiles also emphasizes the responsibility for this in an interview:

> *„People cannot ship in millions of kilos of (used) textiles and look away when they end up in rivers. We believe it is time to add a waste tax on imported items and the funds should be*

invested in high-end collection and recycling infrastructure." (Ghosh 2022)

The trade, which has been going on for decades, creates new dependencies for local actors in secondhand markets in East and West Africa. At the same time, these markets provide employment and income. For example, for women, who face disadvantages in the formal sector due to culturally determined gender norms, the informal mitumba trade in East Africa can provide an option to gain economic independence (Panju, 2024). If the flow of used clothing from abroad dries up, new sources of income must be secured to compensate for the financial loss.

WHAT CAN THE SECOND-HAND BOOM ACHIEVE—AND WHAT CAN IT NOT?

First, a growing second-hand market does not necessarily mean that the fashion industry is becoming more circular or sustainable. Reselling garments does extend its lifespan, but it does not guarantee more frequent use. Nor does second-hand use contribute to the recyclability of new fabrics in a way that would create a circular loop (Imsirovic 2023).

Furthermore, a just transition requires creating more value overall with less clothing and distributing this value more fairly on a global scale (see also Hachfeld and Schenk, 2024). Yet such crucial components of a just transition have so far been lacking: more value must be generated in production, and workers must be better remunerated for their labor. The industry must operate within planetary boundaries, and human rights must be guaranteed along the entire value chain (Nurmi 2025). In line with the concept of a just transition (see box), the perspective of workers must play a central role in restructuring. It should be ensured that the voices of marginalized workers—such as those marginalized on the basis of age, status, ethnicity, or gender—are heard.

Moreover, the ongoing overproduction in the fashion sector continues to result in enormous quantities of garments that are never or barely used: overconsumption, rapid fashion cycles, unsold store merchandise, and returns from online retail diminish the value of goods without any actual use. When the 'surplus' ends up on the second-hand market, it is, contrary to popular perception, environmentally harmful, because it would be far better not to produce it in the first place.

The secondhand boom does not necessarily lead to changed business models in the corporate landscape.

The existence of second-hand markets and formats can provide companies with channels to dispose of this merchandise "in compliance with regulations" without questioning their own business models. The problems of social and economic injustice in global resale and reuse in recycling are discussed in detail in other works. Growth in secondhand markets without further changes therefore cannot be interpreted as an indication that business models that generate profit from exploitation and ecological waste are truly transforming.

JUST TRANSITION

The concept of **"Just Transition"** was first used within the US labor movement in the 1980s. As stricter environmental regulations threatened the closure of particularly polluting industries, trade unions advocated to ensure that the ecological transformation would not be carried out at the expense of workers, that jobs would be secured, and that workers would be granted greater participation rights.
Further information on the topic of just transition can be found in SÜDWIND's blog posts and Instagram series under the hashtags **#LassAndersMachen** and **#JustFashion**.

SECONDHAND AS ONE OF MANY STEPS TOWARD JUST TRANSITION

Building on this discussion, we identify the following four goals for changing production and consumption patterns that need to be achieved in a just fashion industry:[1]

REDUCE RESOURCE CONSUMPTION.

The resource consumption of the fashion industry must be reduced. This concerns, on the one hand, the primary use of raw materials to produce garments and, on the other, the sector's contribution to CO_2 emissions and chemical pollution. It is crucial to extend the lifespan of textiles, to increase their frequency of use before depreciation, and to promote the transition to a circular system.

The SÜDWIND Institute demands:

- ✓ New legislation must drive the development of optimized collection and recycling systems *and* ensure human rights due diligence from the outset,
- ✓ New legislation must work toward reducing the use of fossil primary raw materials, improving durability and repairability, curbing microplastic pollution, and stopping overproduction,

[1] For illustrative purposes, these goals are formulated in a comprehensive and concise manner. For a more detailed elaboration of the necessary changes, see, for example, Hachfeld/Schenk 2024.

- ✓ Political incentives and funding must facilitate the structural development of local repair, care, swapping, and rental initiatives,
- ✓ Awareness-raising programs and support measures for the population in Germany, as well as support for municipalities, must ensure the local implementation, acceptance, and use of these structures.

REDUCE TEXTILE WASTE.

The textile value chain does not end with sales in second-hand shops or the disposal of old clothes in containers. Textile waste must be reduced and the negative effects of exports curbed. Fashion companies and retail must take responsibility for decades of textile overproduction.

The SÜDWIND Institute demands:

- ✓ The Extended Producer Responsibility system to be established in Germany must be introduced, designed, and monitored in a globally responsible and inclusive manner,
- ✓ Revenues from the Extended Producer Responsibility system must also be used for a just transition and ecological restoration in global regions that have imported used clothing,
- ✓ The trade in used clothing must be critically examined and transformed; new business models in Europe, for example for upcycling and repair, and in former importing countries, for example for new production, must be developed and strengthened,
- ✓ Transparency must be made mandatory in the used-clothing trade as well as within the framework of Extended Producer Responsibility.

REDISTRIBUTE POWER.

To redistribute power along the entire value chain, democratic and participatory practices are key. Those affected must be able to assert their rights across borders and draw attention to abuse.

The SÜDWIND Institute demands:

- ✓ National and international legislation (such as the CSDDD and the LkSG) must provide a framework for enforcing human rights due diligence along the entire supply chain,
- ✓ The role of workers as agents of change must be strengthened; among other things, a form must be established that enables actor groups from used clothing importing countries co-create the transition,
- ✓ Existing ILO core labor standards must be strengthened, and shrinking spaces for trade unions and civil society organizations worldwide must be actively countered,
- ✓ The representation of marginalized groups and grassroots human rights initiatives must be strengthened in textile-producing and used-clothing importing regions, as well as in transnational processes for a just transition and a circular economy in the fashion industry.

REDISTRIBUTE SURPLUS VALUE AND PURCHASING POWER.

For a just fashion industry, the redistribution of surplus value is indispensable. This includes redistribution along the value chain as well as within companies and national economies.

The SÜDWIND Institute demands:

- ✓ Living wages, collective bargaining, and redistribution of surplus value in favor of producing countries must be enforced through regulatory measures and respective corporate decisions,
- ✓ Value creation must be possible through resale, repair, sharing, renting, and recycling,
- ✓ Neocolonial structures and inequalities must be consciously dismantled in fashion design and dissemination.

CONCLUSION

How do we assess developments in the secondhand fashion and garment market? Does the boom contribute to a more just fashion industry? The analysis shows that this question cannot be answered with a simple "yes" or "no." Rather, the answer depends on the specific conditions of the purchases. From an individual perspective, buying secondhand can be meaningful if it replaces a new purchase and the garment is worn frequently over a long period of time. However, shifting fast-fashion consumption habits to Vinted & Co. is not sufficient. A secondhand purchase is not a free pass. The same critical questions that apply when buying new must be asked here, too (e.g., about the material or about human rights in the supply chain). Need-based, conscious, and reduced consumption are still necessary.

For the sector to become truly just, power and resources must be redistributed along the entire value chain, which currently lies primarily with brands, investors, and retailers. Voices of workers must be placed at the center to promote democratic and participatory value creation. Redistribution must be guided by political regulation and accompanied by more conscious consumption behavior. The idea of a just fashion industry must not end with purchase. Structures for longer use, repair, and fair trading relationships must also be part of the discourse. It should also be remembered that the demand for clothing does not necessarily have to be met by market-based formats.

The boom in secondhand fashion must be explicitly political, accompanied by a forceful demand for political change, and contribute to the just transition. Many regions already have related entrepreneurial and political approaches, initiatives, and groups that can be supported today.

For a short version of the paper for education work check: https://tinyurl.com/4tr9er9h

🕮 LITERATURE[2]

ARD (2025): Plusminus: Altkleider – Droht das Aus für die Container? ARD Mediathek. https://www.ardmediathek.de/video/plusminus/altkleider-droht-das-aus-fuer-die-container/das-erste/Y3JpZDovL2Rhc2Vyc3RlLmRlL3BsdXNtaW51cy8xMjBhYWIwMC0xYjRiLTQ2YzUtYThmOC1hMWMzODdjMDNhMDM.

Arisa/ Sympany (2020): Textile recycling unravelled. Exploring post- and pre-consumer textile recycling value chains in Panipat, India. Arisa/ Sympany. https://arisa.nl/wp-content/uploads/TextileRecyclingUnravelled.pdf.

Arisa (2025): The human cost of textile recycling. Case study India. Arisa. https://arisa.nl/wp-content/uploads/Trendpaper-Human-Cost-India.pdf.

Book, Simon/ Katharina Koerth/ Franca Quecke/ Kristina Gnirke/ Anton Rainer (2023): Kommerzialisierung von Flohmärkten. Tod der Trödler, DER SPIEGEL, [online] https://www.spiegel.de/wirtschaft/flohmaerkte-wie-eine-romantische-idee-kommerzialisiert-wird-tod-der-troedler-a-6be2592a-63de-480b-8434-8f82225978f1.

Brooks, Andrew (2019): Clothing Poverty: The Hidden World of Fast Fashion and Second-Hand Clothes, London: Zed Books.

Bundesministerium für Umwelt, Klimaschutz, Naturschutz und nukleare Sicherheit (BMUKN) (2025): FAQ "Getrennte Sammlung von Textilabfällen", BMUKN, [online] https://www.bundesumweltministerium.de/themen/nachhaltigkeit/konsum-und-produkte/produktbereiche/mode-und-textilien/faq-getrennte-sammlung-von-textilabfaellen.

Chandler, Bethany (2021): Are Second-Hand Clothing Sites a Sustainable Form of Fashion?, MessMag, [online] https://messmag.com/are-second-hand-clothing-sites-a-sustainable-form-of-fashion/.

Clean Clothes Campaign (2025): Gestaltung eines gerechten Wandels. Hitze und Rechte von Textilarbeiter:innen. Translated by Kampagne für Saubere Kleidung (Deutschland) + Clean Clothes Kampagne (Österreich). November 2025 [online] https://saubere-kleidung.de/2025/11/hitze-und-recht-von-textilarbeiterinnen/.

Ciechelska, Agnieszka/Anna Matel/Tomasz Poskrobko/Edyta Sidorczuk-Pietraszko (2024): Circular economy rebound effect in the context of second-hand clothing consumption, Economics and Environment, 87, 635. https://doi.org/10.34659/eis.2023.87.4.635.

Coscieme, Luca/Lewis Akenji/Elli Latva-Hakuni/Katia Vladimirova/Kirsi Niinimäki/Claudia Henninger/Cosette Joyner-Martinez/Kristian Nielsen/Samira Iran/Erminia D´ Itria (2022): Unfit, Unfair, Unfashionable: Resizing Fashion for a Fair Consumption Space. Hot or Cool Institute, Berlin. https://hotorcool.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Hot_or_Cool_1_5_fashion_report_.pdf.

Dornbusch, Heinz-Josef/ Lara Hannes/ Manfred Santjer/ Carsten Böhm/ Susanne Wüst/ Bertram Zwisele/ Michael Kern/ Hans-Jörg Siepenkothen/ Manfred Kanthak (2020): Vergleichende Analyse von Siedlungsrestabfällen aus repräsentativen Regionen in Deutschland zur Bestimmung des Anteils an Problemstoffen und verwertbaren Materialien. Umweltbundesamt.
https://www.umweltbundesamt.de/publikationen/vergleichende-analyse-von-siedlungsrestabfaellen.

E-commerce Germany (n.d.): Re-commerce in Germany: Consumer trends and market potential [study], E-commerce Germany, [online] https://ecommercegermany.com/blog/re-commerce-germany-market?utm_source.

Eetti (2024): Fast fashion and circular economy: cherry picking and band-aid solutions, Eetti, [online] https://eetti.fi/en/sisallot/fast-fashion-and-circular-economy-cherry-picking-and-band-aid-solutions/#just-transition.

In addition to the literature review, the secondhand platforms eBay, Kleinanzeigen, Mädchenflohmarkt, Momox, Sellpy, Shpock, Vinted, and Zalando Pre-Owned were asked to participate in a written interview in fall 2025. Only Kleinanzeigen responded.

European Environment Agency (EEA) (2022): Textiles and the environment: the role of design in Europe's circular economy, [online] https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/analysis/publications/textiles-and-the-environment-the-role-of-design-in-europes-circular-economy-1.

Ferenschild, Sabine (2018): Flinke Finger. Kinderarbeit auf indischen Baumwollsaatgutfeldern. SÜDWIND e. V. https://www.suedwind-institut.de/informieren/aktuelle-veroeffentlichungen/beitrag/flinke-finger-kinderarbeit-auf-indischen-baumwollsaatgutfeldern.

Ferenschild, Sabine (2021): Der Freiheit so fern. Zwangsarbeit im 21. Jahrhundert. SÜDWIND e. V. https://www.suedwind-institut.de/informieren/themen/arbeitsrechte-global/beitrag/der-freiheit-so-fern-zwangsarbeit-im-21-jahrhundert.

Ferenschild, Sabine (2023): Logistik und Menschenrechte: Die letzte Meile im Textilhandel. SÜDWIND e. V. https://www.suedwind-institut.de/informieren/aktuelle-veroeffentlichungen/beitrag/logistik-und-menschenrechte-die-letzte-meile-im-textilhandel.

Ghosh, Subir (2022): Importers of 'mitumba' should be held responsible for the waste this sector creates, Texfash, [online] https://texfash.com/special/importers-of-mitumba-should-be-held-responsible-for-the-waste-this-sector-creates.

Gojowczyk, Jiska/Friedel Hütz-Adams (2021): Warum behalten wir unseren Schuh nicht für uns? Ungerechte Wirtschaftsbeziehungen zwischen Europa und Afrika am Beispiel alter Schuhe. SÜDWIND e. V. https://www.suedwind-institut.de/fileadmin/Suedwind/Publikationen/2021/Titel%20Publikationen%202021/2021-32-FS_Alte%20Schuhe.pdf.

Gözet, Burcu/ Henning Wilts (2022): Die Kreislaufwirtschaft als neues Narrativ für die Textilindustrie. Eine Analyse der textilen Wertschöpfungskette mit Blick auf Deutschlands Chancen einer kreislaufwirtschaftlichen Transformation (Zukunftsimpuls Nr. 23). Wuppertal Institut. https://epub.wupperinst.org/frontdoor/deliver/index/docId/7999/file/zi23_textilindustrie.pdf.

Hachfeld, David/Elisabeth Schenk (2024): One-Earth Fashion: 33 Transformation Targets for a Just Fashion System within Planetary Boundaries. Public Eye. https://www.publiceye.ch/fileadmin/img/Mode/One_earth_fashion/One-Earth_Fashion_Full_Report_2024.pdf.

Huber, Eliza (2020): For Depop's Queer Sellers, Fashion Is A Form of Self-Expression, Refinery29, [online] https://www.refinery29.com/en-gb/2020/07/9892758/depop-pride-campaign.

Imsirovic, Medina (2023): Wie sozial gerecht ist Second Hand wirklich?, Fashion Changers, [online] https://fashionchangers.de/second-hand-soziale-gerechtigkeit/.

Klooster, Astrid/ Blanca Bellostas/ Marvin Henry/ Li Shen (2024): Do We Save the Environment by Buying Second-Hand Clothes? The Environmental Impacts of Second-Hand Textile Fashion and the Influence of Consumer Choices, Journal of Circular Economy, 2(3). https://doi.org/10.55845/ZZUG7076.

Laitala, Kirsi/Ingun Grimstad Klepp (2021): Clothing Longevity: The Relationship Between The Number of Users, How Long and How Many Times Garments are Used. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/352993692_Clothing_Longevity_The_Relationship_Between_The_Number_of_Users_How_Long_and_How_Many_Times_Garments_are_Used.

Lanyero, Faith Irene (2024): Wo endet Ausbeutung in der Bekleidungsindustrie?, SÜDWIND Blog, [online] https://suedwind-institut.blogspot.com/2024/07/wo-endet-ausbeutung-in-der.html.

Mdr (2025, 30. Oktober): Verdi-Streik bei Momox in Leipzig: Unternehmen weist Kritik zurück, Mdr, [online] https://www.mdr.de/nachrichten/sachsen/leipzig/leipzig-leipzig-land/streik-momox-arbeitskampf-lohn-102.html#Streik.

Melcher, Angelika (2025): Secondhand: Wie Vinted den Modemarkt verändert, Wirtschafts Woche, [online] https://www.wiwo.de/unternehmen/handel/secondhand-wie-vinted-den-modemarkt-veraendert/100133306.html.

Momox fashion (2020): Second Hand Fashion Report 2020, [online] https://momox.biz/images/Pressemitteilungen/2020/sh_fashion_report_2020_mxf.pdf.

Momox fashion (2022): Second Hand Fashion Report 2022, [online] https://www.momoxfashion.com/de/reports/2022-fashion-report?.com.

Momox fashion (2024): Second Hand Fashion Report 2024, [online] https://momox.biz/images/Pressemitteilungen/momox%20Second%20Hand%20Report%20fashion%202024_final.pdf.

Nurmi, Anniina (2025): Circular economy and human rights in the fashion industry. A guide to a just transition for companies. Eetti. https://eetti.fi/wp-content/uploads/Eetti-Circular-economy-and-human-rights-in-the-fashion-industry-2025.pdf.

Panju, Maha (2024): What Goes Around Comes Around? The Sustainability Paradox of Second-Hand Clothing Marketplaces in a Cross-Cultural Context, East African Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies, 7(1), pp. 1-27. https://doi.org/10.37284/eajis.7.1.1799.

Statista (2024): Fast fashion & second-hand fashion market growth 2029, Statista, [online] https://www.statista.com/statistics/1237898/fast-and-second-hand-fashion-market-growth-in-the-us/.

Statista (2025): Online resale volume and growth rate in the U.S. 2023-2027, Statista, [online] https://www.statista.com/statistics/1387653/us-ecommerce-resale-volume/.

SÜDWIND/ Arisa (2025): Ein Kreislauf mit Risiken: Ein Gespräch mit Susanne von der niederländischen Organisation Arisa, SÜDWIND Blog, [online] https://suedwind-institut.blogspot.com/2025/10/ein-kreislauf-mit-risiken-ein-gesprach.html.

Textile Exchange (2025): Materials Market Report 2024, Textile Exchange, [online] https://textileexchange.org/knowledge-center/reports/materials-market-report-2024/.

ThredUp (2025): Resale Report 2025. https://cf-assets-tup.thredup.com/resale_report/2025/ThredUp_Resale_Report_2025.pdf.

Vaayu Tech GmbH. (2021): Climate change Impact report: Understanding the avoided emissions of Second-Hand shopping on Vinted. https://press-center-static.vinted.com/Vaayu_x_Vinted_Full_Climate_Impact_Report_2021_045f9e5c4b.pdf.

Vinted (2023): Making Secondhand First Choice. Our Impact Report 2023. https://press-center-static.vinted.com/Impact_Report_EN_2023_d4e3d4399e.pdf.

Vladimirova, Katia/ Yassie Samie/ Irene Maldini/ Samira Iran/ Kirsi Laitala/ Claudia E. Henninger/ Sarah Ibrahim Alosaimi/ Kelly Drennan/ Hannah Lam/ Ana-Luisa Teixeira/ Iva Jestratijevic/ Sabine Weber (2024): Urban transitions toward sufficiency-oriented circular post-consumer textile economies, Nature Cities, 1, pp. 769–779. https://doi.org/10.1038/s44284-024-00140-7.

Wilts, Henning/Martina Fecke (2021): ReUse und Secondhand in Deutschland: Einstellungen zum Thema Abfallvermeidung und Nachhaltigkeit. https://epub.wupperinst.org/frontdoor/index/index/docId/7656.

SÜDWIND is committed to economic, social, and ecological justice worldwide. We conduct research, expose unjust structures, make them public, and offer alternatives for action. We combine development policy education, public relations, and lobbying, and promote demands in campaigns, society, business, and politics. For 30 years.

IMPRINT

Bonn, February 2026

PUBLISHER:
SÜDWIND e.V.
Kaiserstraße 201, 53113 Bonn
Tel.: +49(0)228-763698-0
info@suedwind-institut.de
www.suedwind-institut.de

The responsibility for the content of this publication lies with the authors..

BANK ACCOUNT SÜDWIND:
KD-Bank
IBAN: DE45 3506 0190 0000 9988 77
BIC: GENODED1DKD

AUTHORS:
Alina Matt und Jiska Gojowczyk, PhD

EDITING:
Rosanna Giannelli
V.i.S.d.P.: Dr. Ulrike Dufner

DISCUSSION PAPER

Swipe, Sell, Sustain:
A discussion of the boom in secondhand clothing from a global justice perspective

DP 2026-07

Co-funded by the European Union