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Small is the new Big: scaling models of sustainable practice

Existing fashion theory proposes that one solution to unsustainable practices within the industry relies on building a re-connection between the value of fashion garments and the textile involved in their production. This paper identifies some of the issues surrounding an unsustainable manufacturing cycle and the associated problems of pre- and post-consumer textile waste that continue to cause considerable environmental problems when sent to landfill. A case study was conducted as part of the author's PhD research to explore the possibilities of changing existing production methods and crafting a solution that reuses textile waste recovered from industry to develop an innovative textile product. It demonstrates an opportunity to design a localised textile waste system in New Zealand which provides the raw material required to develop a value added, closed loop, innovative and sustainable textile product. Design led strategies serve as a platform to demonstrate how to re-design and initiate a new pathway for the New Zealand apparel sectors pre and post-consumer waste, embedding sustainable theories to initiate a change in existing production cycles. This challenges current thinking around a universal approach to what is a complex social, economic and environmental issue. Moreover, the study demonstrates the potential for textile production to reconnect people with the value of the original fibers whilst highlighting the possibility for a new production model that values scales of sustainable practice.