Clothing the Planet Within Limits: A Degrowth Approach to Fashion

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This policy brief was elaborated by Marula Tsagkari based on the report “Extraction Fashion” by War on Want and R&Di.

POLICY BRIEF

“You think this has nothing to do with you”

It starts with a simple decision: the choice of what to wear. You reach for your favorite shirt—a nice fabric that fits just right in a color that makes you feel confident. But behind that small, everyday choice lies a story you’ve never been told. In *The Devil Wears Prada*, Miranda Priestly delivers a sharp monologue about a sweater, exposing the intricate threads of choice and influence of the fashion industry. When her assistant, Andy, dismisses the importance of fashion, believing her choice of a simple blue sweater to be independent and insignificant, Miranda replies, “*You think this has nothing to do with you.*”

What appears to be a simple, casual garment is traced back to a deliberate choice made years prior by designers, editors, and industry insiders. Priestly dismantles the illusion of personal autonomy, highlighting how even “anti-fashion” choices are shaped by an intricate system of trends, hierarchies, and cultural capital. This dynamic persists today and beneath the allure of style lies an industry whose environmental and social impacts are anything but glamorous. That shirt might have traveled thousands of miles before it ended up in your hands, stitched together in a crowded factory by workers whose names you’ll never know, dyed with chemicals that may have poisoned a river halfway across the world, and marketed to you as part of a trend that’s already fading. This is the hidden journey of fashion.

Nowadays, the fashion industry is responsible for 10% of global emissions, and 20% of global wastewater while around 41 million hectares of land is being appropriated. Although the exact amount of land use varies per type of garment and material used, on average, 5.1 to 27 square meters per kilogram of textile is needed.

To address these systemic issues, a degrowth approach offers an alternative path forward. Degrowth questions the relentless pursuit of growth driven by profit and expansion, advocating instead for systems that prioritize well-being, equity, care and ecological balance. **Within this framework, the concept of de-fashion refers to the process and movement aimed at dismantling the dominant global fashion system, which is rooted in capitalist, extractivist, and colonial logics, and replacing it with diverse, localized, sustainable and care-based clothing practices.** It calls for a radical reduction of material and energy consumption in clothing production and challenges the ideologies of constant novelty, overconsumption, and fast fashion.

The present policy brief builds on a recent report written by War on Want and edited and published by Research and Degrowth International which brings forward new data to shed light on the unequal practices of the production side of the fashion industry and to highlight the need for a degrowth approach. Based on this data, a series of policy proposals is presented, focusing on three different levels: production, consumption, and intersectoral policies.

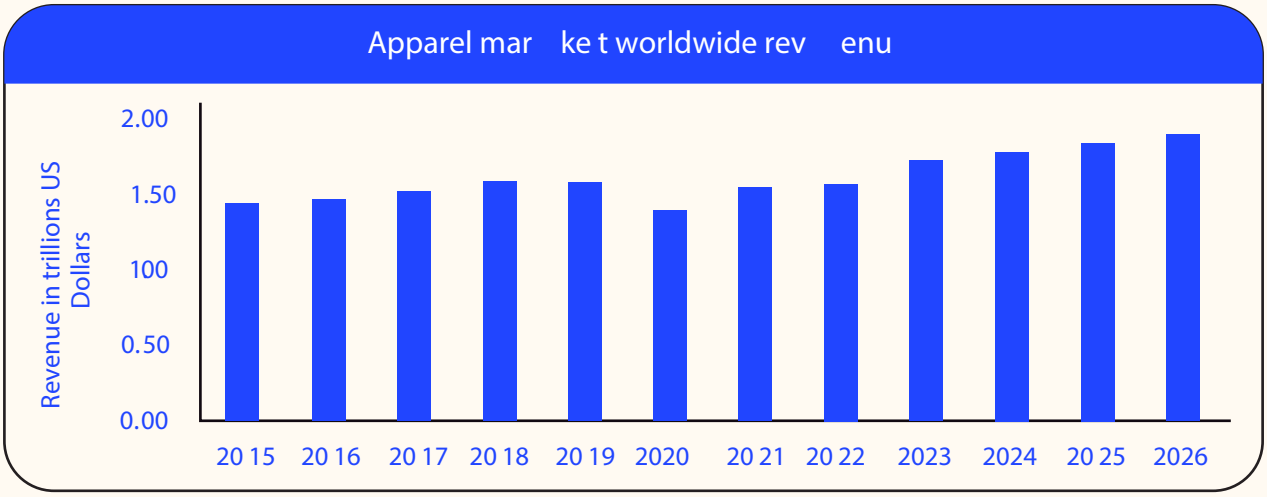
Chains of Impact

The fashion industry plays a significant role in the global economy, generating a value of USD 1.3 trillion and providing employment to over 300 million people across the value chain (Ellen MacArthur Foundation). It is a global powerhouse, influencing cultures, economies, and identities. The global fashion market is expected to have a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 7.64% from 2025 to 2029, reaching $2.04 trillion by 2029 (Figure 1). China is becoming the predominant market revenue generator with a projected market volume of $276.42 billion in 2025. The sectors that are expected to experience the fastest growth in the period 2025-2029 are sustainable fashion (CAGR of 26.8%), fast-fashion (CAGR of 11%), and e-commerce fashion (CAGR 7.65).

Currently over 100 billion clothes are produced annually which corresponds to 12.5 pieces of clothing for every person in the world, if equally distributed. This number surpasses by far the global demand leading to an excess of clothing items.

In fact, the average person in the USA purchases 53 items of clothing per year, followed by the UK, where the average number is 33 items annually. This indicates the unequal purchase of apparel worldwide reflecting significant disparities in consumption patterns.

Some 40% of purchased clothes are rarely or never worn and around 80% of end-of-life garments end up in landfills or incinerators.



Data Source: Statista

This continuous growth of the fashion industry does not come without cost. From the exploitation of garment workers to the excessive consumption of natural resources and the proliferation of waste, the fashion system exemplifies the unsustainable trajectory of our growth-driven economic model. Resources such as land, biomass, metals, minerals, and human labor are sourced from the Global South to satisfy the fashion demands of the European Union's 27 member states (EU-27) and the United Kingdom (Hoskins & Lemos, 2025).

The climate crisis stands as the most urgent ethical and political challenge of our time. As the clock ticks towards irreversible damage, the fashion industry, which is largely controlled by corporations in the Global North, serves as a clear example of unsustainable practices.

Land, Water, Minerals and Emissions

It all starts with a piece of land. One that has sustained communities for generations. Perhaps it's a field in Africa where food once grew, Amazonian forests that sheltered wildlife, or a pastureland in Mongolia where herders tended their flocks. But as the global fashion industry's need for raw materials grows, the need for new land expands and its purpose shifts.

What was once a source of nourishment and life is now planted with monocrops like cotton, stripped bares for grazing livestock to produce leather, or cleared to mine the metals needed for fast fashion accessories.

Grasslands in Mongolia have experienced an 80% decline in their native vegetation and are seeing desertification on a massive scale due to over-grazing practices for the production of cashmere. Rivers are being heavily polluted by fertilizers and toxic chemicals used to produce cotton and farmers and traditional pastoral practices are being pushed aside as industrial farming and extraction take over. Such impacts fall disproportionately on the Global South, which serves as the primary source of resources and land for global production. In 2021, most of the land used by the European fashion industry was in Africa (about 46,645.64 km2) of which 10,426.42 km² are in South Africa.

There are also other types of resources. A total of 189,261 kilotons (kt) of minerals and 45,889 kt of metals were used by the fashion industry in 2021 to produce items such as decorative elements, machinery, synthetic fibers and for production automation to be consumed in the EU. From these 4,235 kt of metals and 48,638 kt of minerals come from China alone. Copper (19,130.9 kt), iron (10,132.87 kt), and gold (8,712.15 kt) were the most widely used metals in the fashion industry for EU consumption. Globally, Chile is the leading producer of copper, where intensive mining activities are already harming natural ecosystems like the Atacama Desert and the local communities who have long inhabited these ecosystems.

Fossil fuels play a significant role throughout the fashion industry's complex supply chain, from the use of fertilizers to the energy that runs the factories. The industry is responsible for 2-8 % of global carbon emissions- estimated to be more than those of aviation and shipping combined. Its annual GHG (greenhouse gas) emissions are projected to reach 2.8 billion tonnes by 2030 (Global Fashion Agenda, 2017).

A quick look at the data reveals how the fashion industry relied on China, Russia, and the Middle East for the provision of fossil fuels used across the supply chain that meets EU's final demand. A report by R&Di and War on Want concluded that upstream activities (material production, yarn and

fabric preparation, wet processes and cut and trim) accounted for more than two thirds of the carbon emissions generated by the fashion industry. Despite the pressing need to reduce emissions, very little has been done to address these systemic issues. To these, one should add the microplastics that end up in the oceans, the waste production and the use of hazardous materials, and quickly it becomes evident why the fashion industry is one of the most polluting industries.

Yet, the story isn't complete without the hands that make it all possible. Labor is the invisible thread, the backbone of the global fashion industry. In 2021, over half of the human labor required to produce fashion for the EU and UK came from China (1,257,028 years), India (1,069,555 years), and the rest of Asia (784,948 years), with a further share drawn from the rest of Africa, and from lower-wage Eastern and Southeastern European countries. The concept of "cheap labor" in the garment industry is far from natural; it is the result of centuries of imperialist predatory economic systems that have systematically devalued labor and resources.

Is there space for fashion in a degrowth world?

The impact of fashion does not end with production but extends into the very ways we express ourselves and relate to others through consumption patterns. It starts with the clothes we wear; the music we listen to and the way we form our friendships and relationships. Fashion is a pervasive force, a nonverbal means of communication. Think of the punk movement, where music and fashion coalesced into a powerful expression of rebellion, or the hip-hop culture, which melds beats, lyrics, and urban fashion into a shared language of resistance and empowerment. Fashion operates as a cultural symbol, forming bonds within communities.

This is not new, in fact fashion has existed almost as long as humans. From the tunics of ancient Greek and the linen of the Egyptians to the corsets of the 17th and 18th centuries, the evolution of

fashion mirrors humanity's own journey. And because of this entanglement, fashion systems are "*intimately related to economic forces, social relations, political hierarchies, as well as technological possibilities*" (Chen, 2023).

In her work, activist and writer Hoda Katebi has shed light on many of these instances, from the erasure of war crimes by H&M and the campaign of "This is What A Feminist Looks Like" t-shirts made in sweatshops, to the use Muslim models, often as a performative gesture of inclusivity, while simultaneously engaging in practices that harm their very communities back home.

One cannot choose to be apolitical about fashion choices and degrowth is about politicizing our choices. Even if you choose not to follow or care about fashion, this is a political act. And degrowth as a political project should engage more meaningfully with the political side of fashion. This means moving beyond critiques of overproduction and environmental harm to include the ways the industry perpetuates neocolonialism, labor injustices, and cultural erasure. Fashion seen through a degrowth lens can also mean liberation. So how might fashion look under a system liberated from capitalism and the growth imperative?

What degrowth in fashion truly means

After explaining why, the fashion industry and fashion cultures need a complete restructuring, we now propose degrowth as a way to reimagine fashion. In fact, there has been an increased interest in degrowth within fashion circles in recent years. Articles in the New York Times, Vogue and Glamour signal a shift in discussions around the fashion industry. At the same time, degrowth scholars have used the fashion industry as a primary example of a destructive industry that needs to degrow. Alternative proposals coming from the degrowth world include the ¨de-fashion¨ concept elaborated by Fashion Act Now (FAN). A de-fashion approach is rooted in both a material and a mental shift that

moves beyond clothing systems based on colonial extraction and exploitation. It proposes the elimination of ¨sacrifice zones¨ and the creation of a new clothing system based on an ecosystem of commons like the not-for-profit platform, OurCommon. Market (OC.M) which is supported by FAN.

Esther Leslie, a professor of political aesthetics at Birkbeck, University of London, and an expert in Marxist theories of aesthetics and culture, suggests that in an anti-capitalist system, the fashion industry might resemble a platform like Etsy. She envisions a landscape of countless small-scale creators, not producing to survive or profit from others' lack of skills, but to share their talents and ideas. In such a system, she argues, the concept of fashion as we know it would dissolve, replaced by a flourishing of 'micro fashions' and creative experimentation, where self-expression takes center stage.

This decentralized network of makers, upcyclers, farmers, natural dyers, and designers could operate within local commons, using shared tools, shared workshops, cooperatively owned textile mills and communal gardens, open-source designs, and regionally sourced materials. Moving beyond patents, open design and pattern-sharing initiatives like the Open-Source Fashion Cookbook envision designs and production methods that are developed collaboratively and shared globally without patents or restrictive copyrights, much like open-source software. In this direction, modular design principles such as the use of detachable sleeves and other interchangeable parts can make repair and customization easy and allow communities to tailor the garments to their needs.

Another approach that approximates what we envision as degrowth in fashion comes from Kate Fletcher and Mathilda Tham who proposed a transformative shift toward what they describe as an "Earth First" fashion system (2019). This approach, called defashioning, centers the planet's carrying capacity as the fundamental boundary for all human activity. It calls for dismantling the current fashion industry, which prioritizes profit and growth, and replacing it with a *"pluriverse of clothing systems that are fair, local, decolonial and profoundly respectful and nurturing"* (Niessen, 2022).

Examples of what this vision might look like include community-owned clothing libraries which focus on items that might be worn once (suits, dressy or seasonal items). Thus, instead of buying a new garment these 'libraries' allow you to borrow it. Examples of these models can be found around the world, from the Clothing Library in Dover to Vaatepuu and Vaaterekki in Finland. Other possibilities could be seasonless made-to-order production that eliminates waste or repair cafés and visible mending collectives that increase the lifetime of garments, all of which are flourishing around the world.

A Minimal Wardrobe

Degrowth also advocates for a simpler life, and this should also be reflected in a "simpler (or minimal) wardrobe." This entails a conscious decision to move beyond the idea of retail therapy and dependence on material goods for happiness. Alternatively, crafting or mending techniques can offer new skills and happiness. A minimal wardrobe also invites creativity and reuse. The principles of minimizing and simplifying can extend far beyond a single project and transform various aspects of life. Many people find that the mental clarity and emotional freedom gained from decluttering their wardrobe inspire a desire for less in other areas as well. For example, **Project 333 challenges people to dress with only 33 items for 3 months and the #30Wears trend encourages wearing each item at least 30 times before replacing it.** This shift often leads to a deeper focus on experiences and passions. Instead of spending hours browsing through stores or scrolling for Instagram-only pieces, this newfound simplicity allows for more meaningful pursuits, like sewing and mending.

Focus on the local

The idea of localized fashion systems is not new. Little neighborhood shops with close-to-source manufacturing and on-demand clothes for specific communities focused on local tastes, traditions, and functional requirements embrace this idea. Localized fashion prioritizes quality over quantity and creativity over mass production. For instance, local or regional fiber-to-fabric initiatives localize the whole production through local supply networks and circular soil-to-soil practices. Other examples include initiatives like the Northern California Fibershed that develop regional fiber systems to source local materials and connect farmers, mills, dyers, and designers within the same bioregion. Or The Orkney Craft Trail in Scotland, the Vida Nueva Women's Weaving Cooperative in Oaxaca and many more initiatives that demonstrate how fashion can be embedded in local economies and reflect and strengthen regional identities.

Alternative business models

Business models that focus on durability, repair, and recyclability, renting or exchanging over-owning and slow fashion cooperatives are some of the alternatives to the current profit-driven business model.

A recent study on business models of degrowth akin brands revealed that degrowth-oriented fashion brands are redefining the industry with values like responsibility, transparency, and environmental

awareness. Affordability is another important component of degrowth-oriented fashion business models. Good quality and durable clothes should be affordable and accessible to working people and not only to elites. This means designing garments to last for years, offering repair services as a standard, and ensuring that pricing reflects fair wages for workers without inflating costs to increase profits.

Despite the number of alternatives that can be found around the world, these remain at niche level. Systemic barriers such as internal limitations in brand structure, external pressures from market competition, and cultural resistance to shifting away from traditional growth paradigms often hinder widespread adoption. To overcome these barriers and to move from the individual to the systemic level, a concrete set of degrowth-oriented policies should be in place.

Fashion Policy Today

Currently there are a number of international and supranational policies aiming to regulate the fashion industry and its impacts. These include the EU Textile Labelling Regulation that sets rules for how textiles sold in the EU must be labelled to ensure consumer transparency, the EU Microplastic Regulation that sets requirements for design, production, and labelling of products including textiles regarding the use of microplastics and the EU's Corporate Due Diligence Directive that requires large companies to identify, prevent, and address human rights abuses and environmental harm in their operations and supply chains, including in the textile sector.

The EU's proposed 2023 Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles aims to ensure that textiles are produced in ways that safeguard both people and the planet, are designed for durability, and are responsibly managed at the end of their lifecycle. In 2022, the state of New York introduced the Fashion Sustainability and Social Accountability Act, which aims to bring accountability and transparency to the fashion industry. The policy comes in the aftermath of the class-action lawsuit filed against H&M in 2021 for greenwashing in its "Conscious Collection". The proposed EU Strategy aims to hold the fashion industry accountable for its impact on climate change through transparent reporting of company policies around environmental and social due diligence.

Perhaps the most radical fashion policy comes from France. In June 2025, France is in the process of approving a bill to regulate fast fashion, including a ban on advertising for ultra-fast fashion companies like Shein and Temu which produce more than 10,000 new items every day. The policy requires companies to share information about the carbon footprint, resource use, and recyclability of each item, with fines of up to 50% of the product's price for failing to comply, as well as an environmental surcharge starting at €5 and rising to €10 by 2030. However, other traditional fast-fashion brands like Inditex and H&M aren't impacted by the bill, although their production models also rely on rapid production, high output and cheap outsourced labor. The bill signals, however, that voluntary industry commitment and consumer demand by themselves are insufficient; regulation must also play a role.

Fashion policy towards Degrowth

Demand-side efficiency and sufficiency

Although placing the sole responsibility to the consumers is unjust and insufficient, demand-side interventions are essential for steering the textile industry toward sustainability and securing consumer engagement. Demand- side efficiency approaches focus on consuming better and sufficiency on consuming less.

The British Fashion Council states that the current amount of clothing available on the planet is sufficient to clothe the next six generations of humanity. This means that clothes consumption needs to be significantly reduced. For instance, research from Berlin's Hot Or Cool Institute suggests that limiting purchases to only 5 new garments per year will be necessary in order to achieve goal of limiting global warming to 2,7 degrees. This is significantly lower than the average 35 new garments purchased by Americans annually.

Public awareness initiatives could be designed to actively shift consumer habits away from overconsumption by promoting clothing swaps, rental services, and redefine second-hand shopping as desirable and socially valued alternatives to buying new. Educational programs on the impacts of the fashion industry combined with a curriculum that promotes alternatives and new skills like mending, sewing and repair techniques

can alter the way people relate to fashion. A 2023 study found that sustainability awareness among Millennials and Gen Z positively influences consumers' commitment, which in turn enhances intentions to purchase eco-friendly fashion.

However, consumer-based approaches should also consider that overconsumption is not a global phenomenon. Clothing poverty is still present not only in the Global South, but even in Europe. As the industry shifts toward fairly priced garments, governments must put in place support measures that enable low-income consumers to fully enjoy their "right to adequate clothing" without artificially low prices through the exploitation of people or the environment.

Mandatory repair services, partner with local repair shops and mending skills

Mending and cloth repair techniques have a long history. They are currently regaining attention as a sustainable habit and to make clothes with stories. In her book Craft of Use: Post-Growth Fashion, Kate Fletcher explores many of these stories and the creation of clothes that hold memories and reflect meaningful connections to their wearers. Soft policies that can support mending and repair practices include mending and knitting classes at school, community workshops to teach repair techniques, storytelling platforms where individuals can share personal experiences tied to repaired garments and promote guidelines for consumers on how to care for and extend the lifespan of their clothes. **Fashion can be reimagined not as a fleeting trend but as a craft, an art form, and a sustainable practice that honors both the material and the human stories it holds. In a similar vein, clothes exchange and sharing can also create stronger community bonds offering platforms and spaces for people to connect with each other.**

Mandatory repair services or partnerships with local repair shops combined with a ban on planned obsolescence can increase the lifetime of garments. Although currently many brands offer repair services for their clothes, very often the low price of new garments disincentivizes repair, which takes time and effort. For instance, a Right-to-Repair mandatory policy for clothing like the one for electronics, will require clothing brands to provide repair services for a guaranteed period after the purchase. This can also be done through partnerships with certified local repair shops. Repair cards or vouchers and credits can foster changes in consumer behavior.

Standardized Labels

Creating standardized labeling systems that clearly convey a product's sustainability credentials is a powerful strategy for promoting transparency and informed consumer choices. Governments, in collaboration with industry stakeholders, can develop these systems to provide straightforward, reliable information about the environmental impact

of products, empowering consumers to make more sustainable purchasing decisions. Although several certifications are already in place (Fairtrade, B Corp, Global Recycled Standard), it is often challenging for consumers to distinguish them, leading to lack of trust in the labels. To add to this, a study examining the credibility of sustainability labels and tags used by Germany's two largest online fashion retailers, Zalando and Otto, found that about two thirds of items carried private labels, while only one third featured sustainability information verified by third parties. Of the 25 third-party labels identified, just 10 were deemed credible. These findings further highlight the need for standardized labels that ensure transparency.

Prohibit extravagant fashion weeks that promote seasonal overproduction and excessive consumption.

"The most sustainable fashion show is one that doesn't happen" argues journalist Alden Wicker in her piece "Fashion Week Is Simply Not Sustainable". People and garments flying from around the world for 20-minute shows which produce high levels of CO2 emissions and trash while creating constant demand for new collections, thereby driving production, is a clear example of the unsustainable practices of the fashion industry.

As an alternative, consider drastically slowing down the pace. Instead of multiple fashion weeks each year, hold a single event per season, rotating between cities in need of economic revitalization on a two- or three-year cycle. Groups like Extinction Rebellion advocate for the outright cancellation of events like London Fashion Week, citing its significant carbon footprint and its role in fueling the relentless consumerism behind fast fashion. They argue that fashion should reflect the culture and values of the present moment, yet the industry clings to an outdated seasonal model that perpetuates the unsustainable demand for new designs and materials.

Impose strict regulations on high-end shopping streets (e.g., limits on luxury brand store density, mandatory sustainability audits, or caps on product volume per store).

It is true that with online shopping the landscape of shopping malls and high-end retail is rapidly changing. High-end brands spend hundreds of millions of dollars on properties in popular corridors that house their flagship stores or could in the future. In doing so, they push away small family-owned shops and replace communities through rapid rent increases. In order to combat this, rental control, density limits for luxury stores, and the requirement of mixed-use development are some of the concrete policies that can encourage the integration of retail spaces into the broader community and limit the monopolization and speculation of prime real estate.

Ban public (or all) advertisement

This is a core policy for degrowth, as a complete ban on advertising could bring immediate benefits to people's well-being by liberating them from the constant manipulation to desire what they don't have. Banning discount sales and free returns can further tackle overconsumption.

Regulate online shopping

Around 76% of US adults shop online. Global online retail sales amount to $5.2 trillion. Fashion e-commerce accounts for an estimated $145.2 billion or 40.5% of the total apparel market revenue. However, online shopping has a huge environmental impact (mostly from transport and digital pollution) and is to a large degree controlled by certain oligopolies. Some of the ways to **regulate online shopping include shared delivery logistics (e.g. collective warehouses, shared delivery vehicles), limits on free returns for online shopping in order to address impulsive online shopping and dynamic taxation based on distance traveled and carbon footprint.**

Production side

The responsibility does not rest solely with consumers. With the fashion industry producing over 100 to 150 billion items of clothing annually, a massive advertising apparatus drives the proliferation of numerous fashion seasons and trends each year. Through a cap and share system, **garment production would be limited by a cap, the level of which would be determined by the volume of production, the company's revenue, dependence on fossil fuels, and overall scale of production.** For example, larger corporations will face stronger limits on production, while smaller businesses that operate locally and use fossil-free and environmentally friendly materials will have lower caps. The revenues from these imposed caps can be redirected toward initiatives that support communities disproportionately impacted by the fashion industry through activities like regenerative agriculture and waste management research and innovation.

Additionally, **moving away from traditional fashion seasons and micro-seasons** could transform the industry's operations. For example, brands like Zara reportedly produce around 52 micro seasons per year. In contrast, adopting seasonless fashion—centered on offering timeless core pieces rather than seasonal collections—can slow down consumption and encourage a more sustainable approach, particularly when combined with other production regulations like a ban on **planned obsolescence**.

Governments should also **support local production** not only for its sustainable benefits but also for its ability to foster community growth and pre-

serve cultural identities. This can happen through **subsidies and tax breaks for local production**, support for cooperatives, certification programs and support for local fairs and markets.

For instance, dedicated resources for setting up and running not-for-profit fashion enterprises and coops, through streamlined regulations that make them easier to launch, offering tax breaks, and ensuring access to seed capital, incubators, legal assistance, and other essential business services can lead in this direction. It could also mean expanding financial and institutional backing for fashion initiatives outside traditional market systems like clothing libraries, repair cafés or clothing swap events by funding early-stage activities and supporting community outreach. These initiatives could be strengthened by providing publicly owned spaces in central urban areas, with subsidized access to ensure they are affordable and open to everyone in the community. All these efforts could be integrated with the EU Social Economy Plan.

Just transition

Any effort to restructure the fashion industry should be rooted in the idea of a fair system which will enable the Global South to use its own "Land, people and natural goods for the common good rather than multinational profit generation and will end the artificial scarcity of jobs and income that keeps so many people poor and dispossessed¨ (Hoskins & Lemos, 2025). To do so, principles of a just transition should be embedded in fashion policy design. These include a fair share approach, meaning each individual has an inherent right to an equitable portion of the world's resources, including the carbon budget for limiting global warming to 1.5°C. The rights of workers to participate and decide on the future of the fashion industry and the right to join and to form trade unions must be embedded in policy design. Trade liberation and debt cancellation can pave the way for a fair and equitable transition in the degrowth fashion industry.

Reduced production in fashion industry must not come at the expense of workers' jobs or incomes across the textile value chain. To ensure a just transition, we need radical redistributive policies that limit the share of profit for shareholders while requiring a minimum portion to be reinvested in socially and environmentally beneficial initiatives throughout the value chain, including the well-being of workers.

Living wages, shorter working hours, social protection and improved workplace benefits should be key policies. Under this approach, workers would produce fewer items, which would inevitably lead to higher prices. This would

be balanced by lower consumption levels, with people purchasing fewer but longer-lasting garments.

In the shorter term, robust due diligence and independent public auditing can ensure transparency and monitoring the whole supply chain can improve labor conditions and standards within the sector. High penalties should be in place for companies that do not comply with the standards of fair working conditions (or fail to report them). Lastly, educational and training programs for workers in the fashion industry towards alternative practices like repair, re-design and re-use, local craftsmanship can prepare for a just transition.

More than just a policy

Although the present policy brief has attempted to draw a policy pathway for a degrowth fashion industry this will require sweeping reforms, many of which will be part of a re-conceptualization of the ways our society is organized and a rebalancing of the global economic order. This calls for rethinking trade, labor, and resource governance; strengthening democratic participation; and fostering cultures that value sufficiency, repair, and solidarity over endless novelty and disposability. Such a reimagining is not only about changing how we produce and consume clothing, but also about reshaping the very foundations of our economic and social systems.

Degrowth is not only about policies to regulate consumption and production. It is also about living well withing the planetary boundaries by changing lifestyles while living fulfilling lives.

In the context of the fashion industry, this means moving beyond the treadmill of fast-changing trends and disposability, and instead embracing clothing cultures that prioritize identity, care, durability, repair, creativity, and connection to the land.

Next steps...

Find out more

Read the full report by R&D and War on Want on the R&D website

Further reading on degrowing fashion:

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Spread the message

With this document, our aim is to position the issue of degrowing the fashion industry firmly on the political agenda.
Help us do so by sharing this summary within your network or by reaching out to us or the author to organize an event, an interview, or any other project.

Contact us !

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