

Homework 10
Plastics in a Circular Economy

This week we covered textiles in the circular economy.

- a) About 15% of textiles are “recycled” which usually means donation to a non-government organization like Goodwill. What happens to textiles that you donate to Goodwill? (Does Goodwill provide a percentage for the different destinations?) The EPA states that 14.5% of clothes are “recycled” and 4.3% are “exported overseas”. What is the fate of the “4.3%” sent overseas? Do you trust these percentages given the video we watch about Ghana? Does Goodwill have a vested interest in convincing you that your donations are being put to good use?
- b) What is “fast fashion”. How many times is an average piece of clothing worn before it becomes waste? What are the problems with “fast fashion”? How can these problems be addressed?
- c) We watched a somewhat shocking video about the Rana Plaza Building in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Poor working conditions exist across much of the textile industry. Wages are extremely low, working conditions are poor, hours are long, and worker safety is not a priority or even a concern. Why do clothes cost so much if the average worker makes per month: Ethiopia \$26, Lesotho \$170, Cambodia \$190, Indonesia \$243, China \$491? What can be done to improve fairness in the textile industry?
- d) One problem with recycling of textiles is that the labels on clothes are intended for consumers not for recyclers. How can the textile industry improve on sorting and grading of recycled textiles through labeling?
- e) Running shoes are a part of the textile market. A pair of running shoes should last for 400 miles. If you run 3 miles per day that means a pair of shoes goes to waste every four months (3 months if you run 5 miles per day). Usually, the tops of the shoes are fine, only the soles are worn. Assess this as a recycling problem. Find the list price and the last season shoe price for a popular running shoe. Find the cost to re-sole a running shoe (few shops exist for this and organizations like Goodwill or Cincinnati Reuse and Recycle Center won't take old running shoes). Can you suggest a viable solution to the running shoe problem?