

# Repair, swap and upcycle –

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Cambridge Carbon Footprint

If you think about the things that stress you out, you probably wouldn't blame the toys, knickknacks and contents of your cupboards. Yet researchers have identified that our interactions with the 300,000 items that are in the average US home bring about peaks in stress hormone levels (particularly amongst women). All these hundreds of thousands of things need to be stored, cleaned, maintained and finally passed on or disposed of. Could we be causing ourselves unnecessary bother? 70 per cent of our clothes are very rarely touched and many common household items are underutilised – a drill is only used for an average of 13 minutes over its lifetime!

This has not gone unnoticed and people are looking for alternatives. Instead they are choosing to use or access things rather than own them – they want the hole in the wall, not the drill; the lift or journey, not the car; the pleasure of the music, but not the CD. Some go so far as to proclaim that 'ownership is dead'. Car ownership in Germany has been plummeting amongst young people who find it much cooler to rent whatever mode of transport they need. One weekend they may fancy a Land Rover, another day a bicycle or moped and for long periods they may require nothing at all. The internet has fuelled this shift towards a new type of consumer who can easily and quickly find what they need by linking up millions of people seeking stuff with millions of others willing to sell, rent or share their underutilised items and skills. Social media has bolstered this

approach by providing a platform for these people to express who they are: their tastes, politics, thoughts, feelings, social networks and experiences. Our parents and grandparents may have relied more on their cars, homes and lifestyle choices to send out socio/economic signals about themselves.

Owning less but sharing and renting more are a couple of the key strands of a new big idea – that of the circular economy. In it we try to reduce the amount of stuff we consume, maximise the utility of what we do use, design out waste and build in reparability. The economy currently follows a linear model of take, use, dispose but with the global population expected to exceed nine billion by 2050, and with 40 per cent of greenhouse gases arising from the things we buy, proponents of the circular economy are convinced that we need a second industrial revolution. Organisations and companies are coming on board – the Fairphone is modular and designed to be fixed by anyone, the outdoor clothing company Patagonia repairs its clothes free of charge on its 'Worn Wear' tour bus, there are carpets that can be repeatedly remanufactured into new ones and more gold has been extracted from old electronics than was mined from the ground in recent years.

The Circular Cambridge Festival is an opportunity to find out about what's going on locally and get involved. Engineers and fixers will be on hand to repair broken items at a Repair Café, you can swap your clothes for some new ones at a swish, hear about local car, crop and co-housing schemes, buy upcycled Christmas gifts, use your renewable leg power to cycle yourself a short film, find out what the University of Cambridge and

# find out about the city's Circular Festival



Nicole Barton is the events organiser for Cambridge Carbon Footprint

Addenbrooke's are doing in this field and hear from leading environmentalist, Craig Bennett, Friends of the Earth's CEO. Finish the afternoon off enjoying a bowl

of 'woup' (soup made from unloved wonky veg) whilst listening to a climate inspired piano suite by composer Lola Perrin. All free, be curious. It

takes place on Saturday, November 12, 11am-4pm at Wesley Methodist Church, Christ's Pieces. More details at [circularcambridge.org/festival](http://circularcambridge.org/festival).