



Summary - Climate Chance Talk 7 "Textile Industry"

Speakers:

- **Carry Somers**, Founder and Global Operations Director, Fashion Revolution
- **Thomas Huriez**, Founder and CEO of 1083
- **Mirela Orlovic**, Professor in Sustainable Luxury & Marketing at Science Po and Founder of UrbanMeisters

Moderated by **Samuel Laval**, Climate Chance Observatory.

The **Global Synthesis Report on Climate Action by Sector** was released on the first week of December and is available in both [English](#) and [French](#). A series of "**Climate Chance Talks**" dedicated to the key trends of each sector took place from December 1st – 4th 2020, all the recordings are available to watch [here](#).

Please find the pages related to the **Textile Industry** from pages 156 to 175.

Key points highlighted by speakers:

In its 2020 Synthesis Report, the **Climate Chance Observatory** devotes an analysis to the textile sector, which is responsible for approximately 4% of global greenhouse gas emissions and significant environmental pollution. Numerous initiatives are emerging among public and private players to implement circularity and sustainability logics, but these initiatives remain for the most part at the margin of activities and the global market.

Carry Somers (Fashion Revolution) highlighted the need to create links between humans and the environment within the fashion industry. "Fashion Revolution" was set up back in 2013 to spark revolutionary change in the fashion industry. It is the world's largest fashion activism movement shedding light on the voices of minority populations often devalued in the fashion industry while larger companies prosper. Carry insisted on the impacts of the textile industry on the environment explaining how textiles are both primary and secondary source of ocean microplastics.

According to **Thomas Huriez** (1083), there is no one single right path towards a more sustainable industry as it clearly depends on the "starting point". He explained the importance of the concept of "proximity" and how he believes that the brand will be able to expand not only its clothes production, but the concept of proximity itself

Mirela Orlovic (UrbanMeisters) presented the network of groups, start-ups, consumers that UrbanMeisters accompanies towards in the transition to sustainable consumption and production. She highlighted how there is a momentum for sustainable action today, but this comes with a risk of greenwashing from the companies.



Summary

Main trends in the Textile Industry, highlighted by Samuel Laval, co-author of the analysis:



Synthesis report on climate action by sector

KEY TAKEAWAYS 2020

INDUSTRY TEXTILE

- 1** GHG emissions due to the production and use of textile clothing and shoes are estimated to be 2.1 GtCO₂e per year, i.e. approximately 4% of global emissions. In addition to being responsible for 25% of the pollution of global waters, the sector therefore has a carbon impact which has exploded in the space of 30 years and which could still increase in the coming years.
- 2** The two main raw materials used by the textile industry are cotton and polyester, a synthetic fiber whose production has grown substantially over the last 30 years, rising from around 12 million tonnes in 1995 (25% of the market) to 58 million tonnes in 2019 (52% of the market). However, it is the result of petrochemical processes that are highly emitting GHGs - the manufacture of 1 kg of synthetic fiber emits 12 kg of CO₂, making it one of the main sources of emissions in the textile industry today.
- 3** The public debate has recently focused on waste, an issue that has gained in importance since the Covid-19 pandemic which generated large volumes of unsold products and stopped activities in Western countries. While the last few years have seen the emergence of numerous public measures and private initiatives aimed at promoting recycling and reuse, the climate issue and the reduction of GHG emissions from the sector are still struggling to be seen as a major issue in the eyes of stakeholders.
- 4** Logics favoring sustainability and the reduction of environmental impacts are emerging among private actors, in parallel with ecological concerns among some consumers, but are rarely integrated into global strategies. Climate commitments from large groups are attempting to outline individual long-term trajectories, but they remain isolated. They are also criticized for not questioning a development model based on production growth. Thus, despite numerous initiatives, the climate and environmental impacts of the textile industry continue to grow rapidly.



- **Carry Somers, Fashion Revolution**

Question: You created Fashion Revolution after the Rana Plaza accident in 2013. Did environmental concerns come immediately into your fight?

Fashion Revolution was formed after the Rana Plaza Accident that took place in April 2013 and when founder Carry Somers realised the evident need for change in the fashion industry. Fashion Revolution activities include research, education and advocacy action a recent example being the "Relation and Revolution" which will take place next year to take into account the connection between humans and the environment.

Voices of minority populations are clearly devalued within the fashion industry while companies continue to widely profit. On top of the social conditions that need to be improved, scientific research has unveiled the chemical elements that end up in the clothes, impacting health, fertility etc. The climate impacts of the Textile industry must be looked at in a holistic manner.



"When the accident in Bangladesh happened, it became noticeably clear to me that the fashion industry had to change, that's why Fashion Revolution was born. We cannot allow big business to continue to profit while supply chain workers fight to live in dignified conditions"

Carry Somers

- **Thomas Huriez, 1083**

Question: What advice would you give to a brand that wants to engage on environment and climate issues?

There is no universal path. The right path towards a more sustainable world depends on the starting point. The 1083 brand was created in 2013 with the promise to produce only within a limit of 1083 km, the longest distance that separates two cities in metropolitan France.

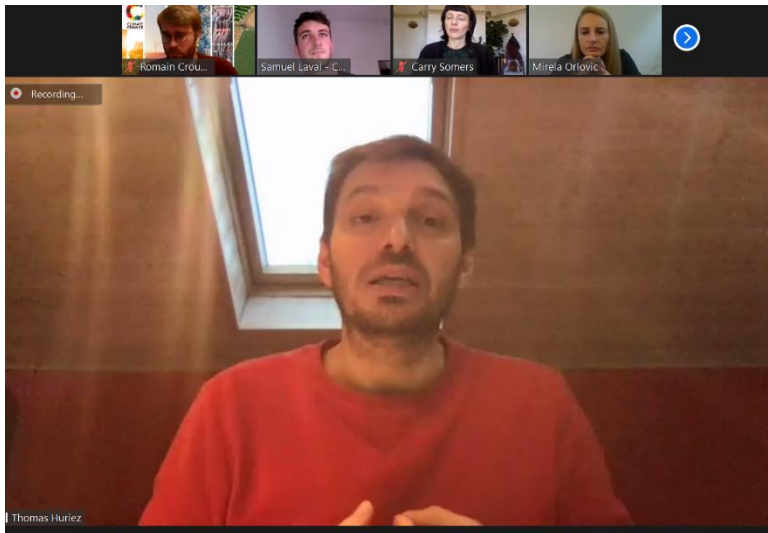
The most powerful driver for action is proximity: if the Rana Plaza had collapsed in Paris, there would have been a monument to honour the 1000 deceased seamstresses. Proximity is powerful, whether for empathy during a drama or for an act of consumption.

1083 is therefore a proximity brand: the more the brand develops, the more it will be able to expand not only its clothes production, but the concept of proximity itself. Rational levers are not the most attractive, so we have to find emotional levers to bring people to make more virtuous choices, proximity is a powerful one.



Today the brand has 3 flagship projects:

- The "infinite" single-material jeans in recycled polyester. The jeans are consigned so that they can be recovered at the end of their life in order to recycle them.
- The "fireman's jumper" made from recycled firemen's jumpers.
- The cotton production: industrialise cotton recycling by extracting it from our old jeans.



"Rational levers are not the most attractive, so we have to find emotional levers to bring people to make more virtuous choices, proximity is a powerful one."

Thomas Huriez

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- **Mirela Orlovic, UrbanMeisters**

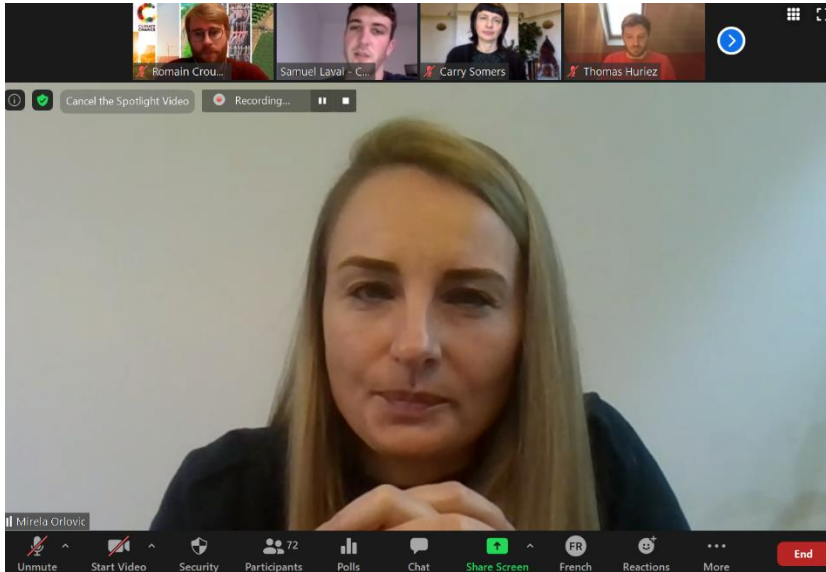
Question: The risk in engaging private actors is greenwashing. Can you tell us about your commitments on this subject?

UrbanMeisters was founded during COP21 in Paris with the objective of creating a space for consumers to exchange sustainable solutions. It has expanded over the last 5 years, with enormous dynamics.

A lot of terminology is used in communications showing only part of the picture. Claims like "carbon neutrality" or "carbon zero" can be dangerous. Greenwashing, which may be intentional or not, leads to the consumer understanding the brand in a particular way. The consumer may assume carbon neutral means no carbon is emitted.

Measuring carbon footprints for the entire supply chain is extremely difficult. How, after this measurement, can brands be carbon neutral? Often by doing carbon offsetting. In this option, there are many possibilities, it is often difficult to choose the right activity. Even if this is done right, carbon neutrality is a dangerous claim, because it does not account for water use or biodiversity loss.

It is important to measure progress, but this means being careful with what is being claimed and to whom.



"The use of "carbon neutral" concept can be dangerous: it does not mention environmental and health impacts, carbon footprint is hard to calculate in a global supply-chain, and offsetting has major limits"

Mirela Orlovic

- **Carry Somers, Fashion Revolution**

Question: One way to avoid greenwashing is to properly inform consumers. Can you tell us about the Transparency Index that you publish every year?

The 5th Fashion transparency Index is most recent published edition where Fashion Revolution covered 250 of the biggest brands and retailers, to cover levels of transparency and incentivize them to publish more clear information by using competition as a lever. Transparency leads to greater accountability which will eventually leads to a change in the industry.

Sustainability is not be confused with transparency.

While some brands have done well scoring about 70%, the overall score is 23%. More than half of the brands scored 20% or less - including luxury brands, a handful of brands disclose nothing at all.

With Covid-19, overconsumption was put in the spotlight. Urgently need to see more action and disclosure from the industry.

- **Thomas Huriez, 1083**

Question: What is the impact of Covid-19 on brands?

Answer to Mirela Orlovic: Greenwashing is frustrating. But there is nothing worse than being marginal: seeing all these brands touting their virtues has accelerated consumer awareness, and it's becoming increasingly difficult to chalk it up, especially with social networks, as these ideas are becoming mainstream. It leads consumers to reason.

Like all crises, the Covid is an accelerator: all the brands that were on unhealthy channels, organisations and processes were heading straight into the wall. Projects with few consumer proposals came up against an economic wall with the fall in demand: by consuming less, buyers are more oriented towards better quality products, to the benefit of the most virtuous brands. The retail activity of 1083 has accelerated its growth, while industrial activity is in retreat: this means



that there is an accelerated change for the crisis, which offers an opportunity for awareness. What doesn't kill makes you stronger.

- **Carry Somers, Fashion Revolution**

Question: What was the impact of Covid-19 on consumers?

We conducted a first Consumer Survey 2 years ago in the 5 largest EUR markets, we carried out a follow up this year - working on analysis. Interesting results: 62% people say they wear their clothes at least for a few years. 53% pass on their unwanted clothes, but men donate less; Only 14% of people had tried to purchase second hand; 31% of people have purchased clothing designed for durability in the last year; only 9% didn't purchase any clothes in the last year.

Only 37% said they want clothes produced without harmful chemicals.

- **Mirela Orlovic, UrbanMeisters**

Question: What was the impact of Covid-19 on your students at Sciences Po?

Reacting to Thomas: I understand what you want is awareness, but it is not greenwashing

My students at Sci Po are very inspired, this was highlighted during the COVID crisis - they are particularly interested in tech and new materials - like blockchain

The lifecycle approach is also remarkably interesting for them - they don't see sustainability as a burden but see it as a challenge to be even more creative. Example of a start-up making sportswear with recycled materials - would end on a positive note, even though the way ahead is long.