

VISION 2030

# UPSTYLING THE ECONOMY

Featuring a case study of Ikea, the Repair Café and 'SustainaBilly'

**Group E:**

Indra Römgens  
Jeroen Drijver  
Pietro Galgani  
Simone Toxopeus  
Xiachen Wang

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## **New or Old?**

Why do you, at times, feel the need to buy something new? Usually something breaks and you need to replace it. Or you discover that your wardrobe, your house or your life is missing something crucial like that beautiful dress or that expensive iPad. We have to ask ourselves though: is it really necessary to always buy something brand new? We believe that in the future people will more often than not repair, rebuild or re-use products, realizing all too well that our planet's resources are finite and that back in 2012 we were living beyond our means.

In this document, we will take you on an inspiring journey, starting with the presentation of our vision for 2030. Consequently, we will present our strategy and our action plan to make this vision reality, through a case study of 'SustainaBilly', a concept of IKEA partnering with the Repair Café. In this concept we focus on the furniture sector and it represents how our vision can become reality and can be applied to many different sectors. Next stop on this journey is an elaboration on why people and companies would join us in our ideas and strategies for the future. Lastly we address the problems we see with the current situation and why and how our vision aims to tackle them.

**Enjoy!**

## **Vision 2030**

In just 18 years we believe that our society can shift its focus from consuming new goods to finding ways to re-use and upgrade existing goods. If this seems hard to believe, try imagining the following. Picture yourself in a world where services are in fact cheaper than products as a result of scarce resources. A world where there is no longer a distinction between new and second-hand products. They are mixed together in shops and consumers consider this the most normal thing in the world. Where every neighborhood has its own design-and-repair café for the local community, and as a result, consumers are designers of new products and brands. It is common and cool to repair, re-use and upstyle old things, so cool in fact that quite often these restyled second-hand products are more expensive than new ones because they are edgy, one-of-a-kind and contribute to creating one's identity.

In 2030 manufacturing companies compete to make the most long-lasting, ethical, energy efficient furniture, cars, clothes, but also buildings and infrastructures. Everything we use is designed to last for ages and is made with minimal ecological footprint. Everything we do not use is swapped and shared with others, and if no longer usable in its current form, is disassembled and turned into something else that can be used again. There is no such thing as 'single use' items; everything that enters our house does not need disposing after it fulfilled its first function. It just needs to find a way to be transformed to a next useful function, be it re-use, disassembling, remanufacturing, recycling, composting or anything you can come up with.

The concept of "waste" is just a memory. The circular economy is a reality!

### **The move towards a higher level of consciousness**

Although things are starting to change, second hand products are still cheaper than new products and most of the time it's a poor man's market. What would happen if every shop and warehouse had its own second hand section, or even better, second hand and new products are mixed together and the

goods were valued equally. Would that be possible? It certainly needs a shift in people's mindset to happen. But the good news is: we are already near this point! Personalized products, the one of a kind or limited edition goods, products with a history, are the most exclusive in the market. Rich customers pay good money for products that gives them the identity they are searching for: new clothes with a worn look as if they are playboy street workers in the fifties, and antique or vintage furniture that looks a hundred years old as if the rich, hard working banking boys actually use their kitchens instead of eating an instant meal behind their desks. Why make these products look old instead of actually using old and repaired products? These are the products with a real history, not one made up by smart marketing people.

Can these repaired and upcycled products give people the same identity as the 'fake' old ones? What would be possible if these products had the same marketing resources? This could work, but it requires people to (re)connect with products they own and buy. By repairing and restyling your own products you certainly connect with them by attaching an emotion. This process adds value to the products. Think of what you take with you if your house burns down? Most of the time these products are the ones with the longest history or the strongest emotion, not the most expensive ones. By letting people think of what they could do with their belongings instead of throwing them away after they broke down, we open a window of opportunity to reconnect. This will make the product part of their identity, a real 'belonging'. People will acquire a sense of ownership that they never experienced before and that is far more satisfying than just buying something in a store or online. In this way we can achieve the mindset shift necessary for the vision to be realized.

## **Case study: IKEA**

In this case study we choose IKEA as a company to work with our vision. If a large and well-known company with such a broad customer base as IKEA will promote the idea of repairing, upstyling and reusing, it cannot be long before this way of thinking and working will become mainstream. This can trigger the healthy upstyling fever within society, changing people's lifestyle, behavior and feelings about products and their lifecycles, and the crucial role that they play as consumers.

### The IKEA Upstyle Cafe

To make our vision feasible, we designed a model which connects elements together to be a system. The methodology and theoretical foundation of modeling is based on e3value (<http://e3value.few.vu.nl/>). This methodology is useful to investigate the value flow of this specific scheme. It is also helpful for us to find out the relationship of each element on users' requirement and on the company level.

We assume that the topic of this concept is to achieve re-use in an innovative way. There are several players in our model: the consumer, Repair Cafe and IKEA which represent, respectively, the people, the intermediary and the company level.

First of all, IKEA starts advertising its new sustainability strategy. Several channels should work together to increase influences: internet, social media, traditional media and involvement of non profit actors. It is possible that in this model there will be some profits. However, the main purpose of this result is to support the operation of the whole system, which is very important to balance the costs generated in this process, for example, the logistic costs. This design is one of the most critical foundations to convince the company level and explain its feasibility. Specifically, it is definitely helpful to gain added values for IKEA's culture, reputation and social significance.

When consumers buy IKEA products, they can sign in for a small price for a take back system that works like "organ donor cards". IKEA commits to take back the products once they are broken or unwanted.

Organ Donor card	 <p data-bbox="475 589 1046 629"><b>Sign a donor card &amp; tell your family today.</b></p> <p data-bbox="360 640 1415 748">Thank you for making your Billy an organ donor! call 1-800-1234-4321 when you do not need this Billy anymore, and it will be collected and brought to new life!</p>
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With the collected items, IKEA organizes Neighborhood Upstyle Cafes, community events where IKEA's designers, artists and normal people work together on recombining parts from returned furniture. New pieces of furniture are designed out of classic IKEA products and other unwanted goods that people bring in. Existing organisations active in the field, like the Repair Cafe ([repaircafe.nl/](http://repaircafe.nl/)), Hacking IKEA ([platform21.nl](http://platform21.nl/)) or RE:FUNC ([refunc.nl/](http://refunc.nl/)) can be involved in the realisation of these events. The role of IKEA is a support role: classifying products, quality control, tools supply, coach support, etc.

At the end of the day, the participants in the Upstyle Cafe can either take home their creations, or leave them to IKEA. In this case their products will be transported to IKEA and checked by the re-use board which consists of engineers, product managers or designers. This board will check these products based on more professional angles like quality, style, innovation, etc. The best designs will make it to the IKEA store. Having hundreds of people working on improving IKEA designs will generate a lot of innovative ideas. They will be high end products, but cutting out all the raw materials costs.

Another important aspect of upstyled IKEA furniture is that the persons who designed them and the people who returned the materials get to create an online profile (on the IKEA website or even on Facebook) where they share the story behind these objects with their friends and other upstyling fans. They can tell the world the story of their new furniture, such as what materials were used and where they came from.

## **Why this can work**

### **What's in it for people?**

People can connect and collaborate with other members of the community at the Repair Café. They can interact with a diverse group of people from the area, as well as the volunteers of the cafe that includes designers, carpenters, artists and handy people. In such a creative environment people can discover their inner designer and find creative ways to re-use products to give them a new life.

The nice thing is that after completing a product there are two options for the creator: 1. To take home the product and enjoy it themselves (if they brought their own product to 'pimp-up'), or 2. To

give it back to IKEA and get the chance to share their product, and the story and inspiration of their design, with the rest of the world in the Ikea shop. The creator(s) can think of a new name for the product and can get (IKEA)credits for their work. Who wouldn't want to see their name and story on an actual IKEA product? In the case that Ikea likes the design, it may be replicated by them and featured as a new item in stores. These consumer-designed products can have their own facebook page where the designer can further elaborate on the story behind the product, and buyers can comment and connect with each other.

But is this concept really suitable for everyone? Sure! For the busy people, or those who simply wouldn't care to take the time to specifically go to a local repair cafe, several repair cafes may also be created in places such as the municipality or government bureaus (near or in waiting rooms) where it is common to have to wait 30-60min until you may be assisted. This also creates high visibility of the concept for a wide range of people so the idea can spread fast.

For the people that like the concept but do not want to get their hands dirty, they can support it by buying the goods that have been made in the repair cafes. Alternatively, the next time they buy a new piece of Ikea furniture, they can pay 2 euros extra and become an 'organ donor', promising to return it to Ikea or the local Repair Cafe when they have grown tired of that product for whatever reason.

For partners or friends who have been convinced to come to the Ikea to help pick out a new piece of furniture, but are not equally as excited about seeing the other 3 floors of products, can find a haven at the Repair Cafe in the meantime.

Ultimately, the best part is that people can indulge in a shopping therapy that heals their mood as much as it heals the planet. Unwanted furniture, otherwise considered waste, is turned into creative and valuable products that have been given a new, upgraded life. A seemingly simple piece of wood, a classic Billy, may be turned into an elaborate design creation with an ecological footprint that is almost not worth mentioning. Overall, the people collaborating in the repair cafes, the organ donors, and the buyers of the 'upstyled' products are all contributing to a sustainable planet and economy!

### **What's in it for the companies?**

Some of today's undiscussed leaders in mass production will become the pioneers of tomorrow's consumption systems: what will your company do? A company like IKEA can strengthen their ties with local and online communities by working together in with the Repair Café and get precious feedback from its customers. It can get ideas and ownership of new, better designs and slowly change their business model to a more service oriented one. The reputation of its efforts to become a responsible manufacturing company will echo all over the web. Since the Repair Cafe has the ability to provide a great boost to Ikea's reputation, contact with its customers, waste reduction and lowering its environmental footprint in a collaborative, fun way, Ikea will include the concept in its marketing strategy and advertisements to promote it.

Through this, the idea will spread rapidly across communities, first in the Netherlands and (when proven successful) on a global scale as well.

### **How to start today?**

When starting with an idea you need to be aware of the fact that most of them become stronger when shared with people outside the group. In the first months after launching the idea on the 16th of march we are going to discuss the idea with other people. Therefore we contacted the repair café

foundation who already is active on a local level. Besides this we will talk to designers, businessmen and possible partners.

In order to further develop our ideas and turn the concept of ikea into a sustainable and inspiring reality, we believe that the following timeline would be the optimal course of action:

- Investigate and start (2012- 2015):

- Brainstorm with different stakeholdergroups (consumers, repair foundation, designers, companies like IKEA etc)
- Integrate the learnings in the concept
- Organize one or two pilots
- Evaluate them and integrate the learnings in the concept

- Scale up (2015-2020)

- Organize a couple of pilots in different areas and with different products
- Start working on the online community and marketing & communications
- Implement the concept in the daily business of the company
- Scale up in Holland and look for other sectors and partners where the concept can be applied

- Become mainstream but stay fresh (2020-2030)

- Facilitate a growing online community
- Add new possibilities for consumers and companies
- Publish impact measurements
- Evaluate the current status and start working on a new model

## **But what problem is this concept addressing?**

Our industry works day and night to fill our houses with endless new products. We want them to be cheap, and we want to throw them away without worries when we are done with them. This would be fine, if we weren't putting an unsustainable pressure on the ecosystems that give us food, oxygen, water and biodiversity. At the same time our world population keeps growing, the consumption levels and ecological footprint of billions of people in emerging economies is climbing fast towards those of the West. The world we live in is not without limits. The capacity of our planet cannot carry our ambition to keep growing. We need to be careful with what we take. It is important not to waste any kind of resources, because it is a waste of our time and energy.

However, currently commercials and marketing make us believe we need to buy brand new things all the time. New is always better, but why? What would happen if we don't buy new clothes and furniture? Companies wouldn't sell (enough), they would make less profit and in a worst case scenario, go bankrupt. Companies depend on us to buy new stuff in striving to achieve economic growth. Our current system is based on continuous growth, without which it will fall apart. Therefore we assume it is normal to always have more, need more, gain more.

This is a linear way of thinking, while in nature circular patterns dominate. Really think about this: is our current economic system coherent and a natural given one? Is it static? If not, this means we created it and therefore we can change it!

We believe we should change. Our vision of repairing, re-using, re-building and redesigning promotes a circular way of thinking, a circular economy. One that takes into account the fact that our resources

are in fact not infinite, takes care of our environment, brings people and communities together, gets people to think twice before making a purchase or throwing something out.

**So: go create, design, explore, shape, build, repair, buy and share!**

**Upstyle your life, upstyle the economy!**