

Breaking Repair Barriers : How Pack Leaders Repair Human Dignity

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While top-down European "Right to Repair" policies focus on technocratic laws, they completely miss the social stigmas and deskilling on the ground. This qualitative study across 10 regional repair hubs reveals that a transition to a circular economy is trapped in a vicious cycle: society devalues repair because it's historically linked to poverty, causing consumers to develop a "fear of screwdrivers". Local coordinators must step up not as rigid managers, but as empathetic "pack leaders" who use informal space to shield vulnerable volunteers, transforming repair hubs into safe sanctuaries that restore social connection and human dignity.



Findings & Recommendations

The Fear of Screwdrivers is Real:

Consumers are systemically deskilled due to an educational hierarchy that devalues manual work. Repair is often pushed to the bottom as "dirty work" while abstract creation is elevated.



Protect the Sanctuary:

Local government must stop reducing repair hubs to mere "social intervention projects" for loneliness. Municipalities must explicitly institutionalize their micro-economic value and shield them from rigid, commercial market competition laws.



A Radical Volunteer Freeze:

In an absolute anomaly to mainstream literature, centralized hubs are facing an acute oversupply of volunteers because these spaces serve as a secular replacement for lost community belonging.

Mend the Person, Not Just the Product:

Commercial managers must look beyond short-term marketing and partner with regional hubs and vocational MBO schools to run consumer workshops. Transitioning from quick product replaceability to active education solves critical industrial talent bottlenecks.

Read the full thesis on the Repair Lab