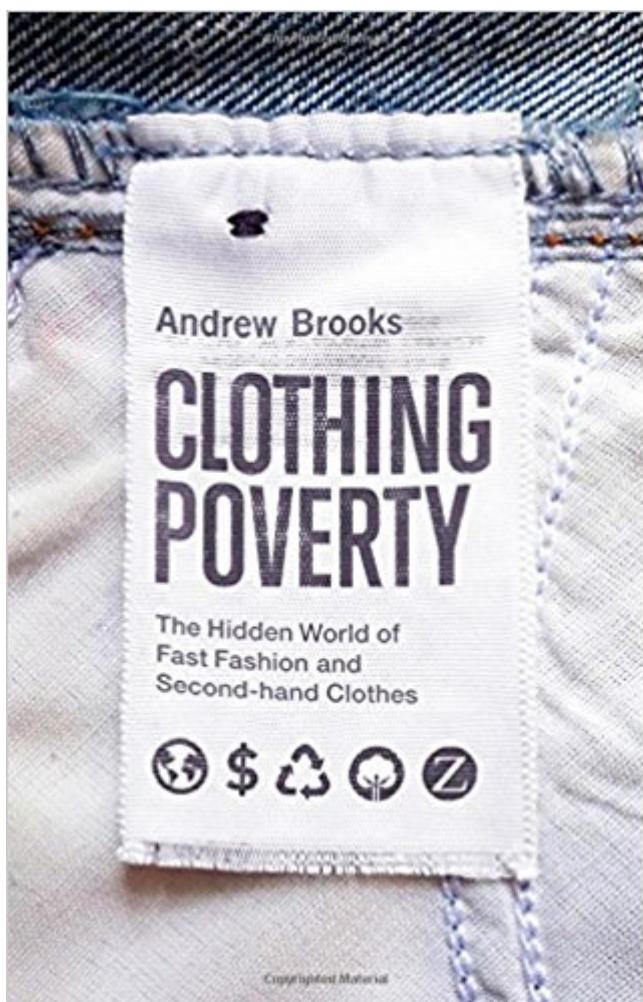


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# Clothing Poverty: The Hidden World Of Fast Fashion And Second-hand Clothes



## Synopsis

You look good in those jeans. But are those jeans themselves good? Have you ever looked into where they came from and who made them? Andrew Brooks has, and with *Clothing Poverty* he takes readers on a global journey, from fabric to fashion show, to reveal the worldwide commodity chains and hidden trade networks that transect the globe and perpetuate poverty. Stitching together rich narratives from markets in Mozambique, Nigerian smugglers, Bolivian traders, London vintage shops, and growing ethical fashion lines like Vivienne Westwood's, Brooks draws connections and shines light in the world's dark corners; and forces us to think anew about fashion, ethics, and our role in global production and exploitation.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

'A mind-opening tour of global clothing systems, from recycling flows to radical advocacy. Andrew Brooks has created a book that sparks with intelligence, mapping a world that connects inequalities, Vivienne Westwood, post-consumption and second-hand garments.' --Kate Fletcher, London College of Fashion, University of the Arts London 'Clothing Poverty takes the reader on a global journey to expose the inequalities and injustices that exist within the second-hand clothing trade and the manufacturing of garments destined for Western markets. Thought-provoking and insightful, Brooks highlights a long overdue need for 'radical advocacy' to improve social justice within the supply chain, and between producers and consumers. A fascinating, must-read text for those interested in the ethics surrounding sustainability in fashion and design' --Alison Gwilt, author of

Fashion Design for Living and A Practical Guide to Sustainable Fashion 'Andrew Brooks' Clothing Poverty is a lively exploration of the hidden world of fast fashion and second-hand clothing that invites us to think of where our clothes come from. The book reveals a complicated geography of wealth and poverty that make Western consumers complicit in creating a clothing production system that gives people in the Global South few chances to escape poverty. ' --Karen Tranberg Hansen, Professor Emerita, Northwestern University

Dr Andrew Brooks is a Lecturer in Development Geography at King's College London. His research examines connections between spaces of production and places of consumption and particularly the geographies of economic and social change in Africa. He has researched the clothing sector through case studies which link the Global North and South and Andrew's research has taken him to Southern Africa and included extensive investigations of markets in Malawi and Mozambique and Chinese investment in Zambia.

This could be an excellent book instead of merely good and informative. The author sets his intriguing analysis of the global used clothing market within a sort of neo-Marxist frame, more readable than one might expect, but it turns an interesting account into a case study for the inadequacies of global capitalist systems, asserting things much change lest poverty be institutionalized. In addition, Brooks uses some words that are likely to obscure his meaning. For example, most readers are not going to be interested in "fetishism" in the market and "semiotic" anything is almost guaranteed to put the general reader to sleep. So why four stars, if I'm this critical? Even with the bias, this is an interesting topic, and the book is full of information, much of it based on the author's experiences in Mozambique and elsewhere. Several chapters stand out. The others, well, readers sample the book before you buy. Chapter 1, "A Biography of Jeans" is interesting. The world market for jeans is \$60 billion, an eighth of the global clothing sector. Chapter 3, "The Shadow World of Used Clothing" has intriguing discussion of where used clothing originates and how it is sold. The second hand global trade is \$4.3 billion (this seems quite an underestimate), citing UN figures for 2013, and in some countries this used clothes market is the major source for clothes. Chapter 6, "Second Hand Africa" describes some of his experiences in Mozambique, and is informative on how the clothes are actually sold, and how people decide to buy them. One detail I have not seen elsewhere. Each year the US Super Bowl generates a huge amount of gear in advance of the game's result. The losing side gear cannot be sold in the US due to NFL rules, so it enters this trade. The other chapters may be interesting to some readers. One chapter discusses

how cotton institutionalizes poverty, and the last chapter looks at ethics and describes some efforts at fair trade and related concepts, and how they play out.

In keeping with the previous review, I was one of the readers who was put to sleep with unnecessary out-of-touch vocabulary. The most used term, system of provision, is never defined, and is used ad nauseam, often several times per page. I read the book to learn more about the flow of second-hand clothing because that is what I buy for 95% of my clothes. I did not expect to read many quotes from Marx, and have capitalism demonized as the root of all evil. Brooks contradicts himself when stating capitalism is the cause of poverty, yet bringing out other points that lead to poverty also. I often wondered if he did not wish we all were communists and then everybody and everything would be equal. An economic system is only bad because people's hearts can be bad; led by greed, pride, corruption, envy and other traits common to man. I was very glad to finally slog my way to the end of this book, and I would not recommend it to anyone. (P.S. Mr. Brooks, I do not demonize or envy the rich in my country, America. I am very thankful that they pay an overwhelming percentage of our taxes, so that nearly 50% of our country, including the poor, do not have to.)

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