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Let's Play Fashion – The Transformation to Circular Business Values Using the Circular Design Matrix

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As part of The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, education is one of the core elements of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals set up as an action plan for people, planet and prosperity (United Nations 2015). However, even though primarily addressed at children, education, in general, can be seen as important to contribute to change. With little time and resources, SMEs in fashion often lack possibilities to transition from linear to circular structures to accelerate a future-forward brand strategy, based on the principles of a circular economy. Often not only the knowledge to improve collections holistically, but also the tools to learn new ways of thinking are missing. Therefore, brands continue to copy their existing, conventional ways of designing and producing garments from collection to collection. Instead of beginning a radical transformation towards more inclusive and sustainable alternatives in the long run, SMEs keep themselves from the required change. And with this, slow down the overall industry from applying healthy processes that support people and planet rather than exploiting workforce and environment. How can brands be supported to understand growth from a different perspective? How can they learn to redefine economy by adding value instead of keeping a brittle and destructive system alive? *Let's Play Fashion – The Transformation to Circular Business Values Using the Circular Design Matrix* is a case study which explores the opportunities of Hamburg brand Inferno Ragazzi in re-building their business with a circular core. In a 1day workshop, the brand takes a playful approach to learn about the principles of the circular economy in direct relation to their individual design and business structures. An exemplary investigation of garments highlights their concept's strengths and vulnerabilities with regards to ethical and ecological benchmarks placed within a global setting. According to Cörvers et al. (2016), the workshop can be seen as a project-based learning process in which collaborative, constructive and contextual approaches enhance sustainability competencies. Additionally, it is assumed that blending hypothesis with direct links to their brand vision creates a hybrid, purpose-driven learning situation with the potential to open mindsets towards higher adaptability of new strategies. Workshop participants are systematically guided to challenge their material and design choices, reflect on distribution, potential services and end of use options using the *Circular Design Matrix* to reiterate and approve their decisions. Furthermore, by choosing a new framework, they identify where to shift core parameters towards a holistic circular strategy. Following the conceptual evaluation of their collections, the playful adaptation of new processes can help decision-makers to acknowledge the importance of humans and nature for their overall business success and foster their relationship with the more progressive fashion industry. The workshop offers a diverse range of tools to question existing collection concepts with the potential to ignite a brand value transformation through knowledge transfer. Moreover, understanding the relevant methods of circular design invites to rewrite creative thinking aiming to re-negotiate their brand policies, but also with the outlook to drive broader substantial change.