PRODUCT

Graduation project
by Loïs Rutten
“Circular fashion can be defined as clothes, shoes or accessories that are designed, sourced, produced and provided with the intention to be used and circulate responsibly and effectively in society for as long as possible in their most valuable form, and hereafter return safely to the biosphere when no longer of human use.”

Dr. Anna Brismar

Are you informed about clean, better and ethical production technologies? New and smarter technologies can decrease energy consumption and environmental impact. Examples are 3D printing, digital printing, digital finishing and sonic cutting.

Have you thought about optimising transportation and reducing mileage? To optimise transport make sure that the lightest and fewest possible materials are used.

Is the longevity of a product how it’s meant to be? To stimulate a long life make sure your product is designed and produced to ensure high durability, functionality, style and desirability. But also products with a short life perspective are okay as long they are designed that way.

Have you thought about what happens to the product when longer of human use, at the end of life? Everything is better than landfilling or incinerating. Take a look at second-hand selling, repair services, take-back and collection systems and design products that can be redesigned and remanufactured into new sellable products.

Do you know what raw materials you can use to reduce chemical parts, energy and water use? Organic cotton instead of ‘normal’ cotton is already an improvement. But also recycled polyester, recycled polyamide, recycled wool, lycocell, denimite, recycled glass and recycled plastic are options that help to reduce chemical parts, energy and water use.

A tool that can help you is the Higg Index (by SAC), it measures the environmental, social and labour impacts of a fashion brand and identifies points of improvement.

Are you informed about the polluting and harmful side of the fashion industry? Eye-openers are the documentaries The True Cost (2016), Machines (2016), The Machinists (2010) and the books: Overdressed by Elizabeth Cline, the travels of a t-shirt in the global economy by Pietra Rivoli and The Responsible Company By Yvon Chouinard and Vincent Stanley.

Are you able to design and develop products that can recirculate and generate minimum till no waste? First of all avoid making products that do not work or that people do not want. But also take a look at zero waste cutting techniques, slow design and recycling possibilities.

Change your design thoughts from the beginning of the process and start designing for upcycling, disassembly and/or monomateriality.

“When you are transparent as a company you always strive to become better, you are proud of what you are showing and what you accomplished.”

Elin Mohlander

Have you read the CSR policy of the company before applying for a job? Companies who are only slightly interested in sustainability matters already show information about this in their CRS policy, most likely published on their webpage. It will help you to make a well thought decision.

Does the company follow your vision of the fashion industry? To make sure you fit in the company and the company fits to you consider their values and vision and compare it with yours. This helps establishing a long term relationship for both parties.

“Working together is really important, it is actually the key for success.”

Iris van Wanrooij

What do you want the consumer to know about a product or brand and how can you communicate this? Transparency is key for the fashion industry to become sustainable and circular. Always show what is going on in the company, who you work with and were improvements need to be made.

“It is just about a matter of having your storytelling right, be transparent, let your consumers be able to watch everything you do, be open about it, then the trust is there and the sales will go automatically.”

Bert van Son

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Have we designed out/minimised waste?
In a circular economy waste does not exist, it is designed and optimised for a cycle of disassembly and reuse.

Are we reusing and/or recycling waste?
Waste and spill material created by producing items can often be used for other products. So when designing new products think of using waste material from other companies. Circle Economy developed Circle Market, an online marketplace that facilitates the trade of recyclable materials between market parties.

Can we easily repair our products and have we thought of services for doing so?
By separating and managing different components.

Can we upgrade existing products to extend the lifetime?
By redesigning and remanufacturing into new sellable products.

Can we implement a takeback program?
To facilitate material and component recycling.

Can we work on dematerialisation?
Dematerialisation means that as little material as possible is used, by decreasing material in the product itself, in the product packaging and/or in the transportation packaging.

Is our product easy to disassemble?
Not all materials or combinations of materials are suitable for biodegradation or recycling. When considering this at the design and sourcing stage it becomes easier to facilitate reuse and recycling of material at the end of life.

How long do we expect the product to last?
To stimulate a long life make sure the product is designed and produced to ensure high durability, functionality, style and desirability.

Are the materials and energy we are using bio-based, non-toxic and renewable?
Bio-based products are wholly or partly derived from materials of biological origin. Materials: Biopolymers, bamboo, cork, corn plastic (Polylactic acid, or PLA), recycled glass, hemp, wool. Energy: Solar power, wind, water, geothermal and biomass. Companies: CRAiLAR Technologies, Natureworks and AkzoNobel

Is it efficient the way we retrieve our materials and energy?
By decreasing material in the product itself, in the product packaging and/or in the transportation packaging.

Are we satisfied with all the partners involved in our supply chain?
Collaborating throughout the supply chain, within organisations and together with the public sector is highly essential to make changes in the industry. Transparency will increase, best practices are shared and joint value created. HelpFull companies: Circle Economy, Recover, Worn Again and Mistra Future Fashion.

Are we transparent about everything we do in the company?
Transparency is key for the fashion industry to become sustainable and circular. Prevent greenwashing always show what is going on in the company, who you work with and were improvements need to be made.

“The nice thing I think about circular economy is that transparency is kind of a must, you can’t have a circular economy without transparency.”

Gwen Cunningham

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“We would need to move away from the 'instant' goods culture and welcome back the idea of physical goods staying longer around us.”

Michal Kubicki

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Do you have an idea about the role you want to fulfill in the industry?
Working in the fashion industry isn’t just glitter and glam, hard work is required especially if you want to make a change, so choose carefully.

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“Have you got what it takes to be circular consumer?”
Lois Rutten - AMFI

It ain’t easy being green.
Let these sustainable brands inspire you.

Anek.

honest by.

Peope Tree
Sustainable and Fair Trade Fashion

Matt & Nat

O MY BAG
AMSTERDAM

Effio
Filippa K
HoodLamb
Miss Green
Vivienne Westwood
Yunit

Eco is my middle name