Summary of the Round Table

Accelerating Circularity presented recent work that identified opportunities to build and scale circular textile-to-textile supply chains on the East Coast of the United States, utilizing both commercial mechanical recycling technology and emerging chemical technologies, targeting both t-shirts, denim, and sheets. Current work, including the development of a post-consumer textile hierarchy, was discussed. Participants then heard from Eddie Ingle, CEO of Unifi, about their approach to circularity; Kathleen Rademan of Fashion for Good, on their Full Circle Textiles Project to advance chemical recycling of manmade cellulosic fiber; and from Avery Dennison’s Sarah Swenson on the company’s work to develop digital fiber sorting solutions. Three breakout sessions tackled specific workstreams to advance circular textiles. Karla’s session on Fiber Choices & Sorting Specifications identified accuracy in labelling as the top hurdle to be overcome but also noted the “low tolerance range” for recycler material specifications. The tension between cost pressure and manual sorting processes were discussed, and the group concluded that in an interconnected system, collaboration is a must. Participants in the Innovation to Commercialization breakout, led by Lenzing’s Tricia Carey, also identified collaboration as a key to moving circularity forward and concluded that legislation and consumer demand will also be key drivers to achieving commercial scale. AC’s Janel Twogood led the breakout on Specifying Circular Products, identifying specific tasks that will yield products appropriate for a circular system: a recycling index, guidelines on restrictions, and approaches to co-develop products with mills to align brand commitments and recycling technologies. The group put forward a key question for future discussion: is circularity promoting fast fashion?