Q: How would you briefly define circular economy and sustainable consumption in one sentence each?

A: Ok, circular economy is the opposite of the linear economy. A circular economy is where you make sure that raw materials will be reused and that all products will be taken back by the producer in order to make sure that all raw materials are used again.

Q: And sustainable consumption in one sentence?

A: In our situation we would call that slow fashion and you could also ask yourself the question do I need to be the owner of something or is the performance of the product good enough? And if you can make that switch, you can enjoy life and do a lot of great things and have the performance be fantastic opportunities without damaging the earth.

Q; Imagine a truly circular economy; so really if circularity would have been implemented not just at \*company\* but also throughout the economy, how would consumption change? What do you think?

A: I don’t think consumption would change... much.

The circular economy only works of course if most of the time, more energy is used or at least a similar amount of energy is used to get raw materials back. You have to think of circularity at the moment you start designing things. So that the number one important thing. And the second thing is that if you start to work circular you have to make sure that if you want to keep on doing it for a thousand years that you also uses renewable energy that is also an important thing. So I don’t think really consumption will change, of course it is important if I take the example of our business, do you need to buy, every two weeks a new pair of jeans or a new t-shirt because its in fashion? But that push for people being pushed by fast fashion and getting in more kinds of advertisements that influences them to make them buy more, I don’t believe in that. But people are very vulnerable for that and I don’t think you can change mankind. It’s in a human being to like to buy things. You have the paradox of saying ok I want to buy that new t-shirt, I’m looking to buy something new and on the other hand everybody knows that we have to consume less and buy more sustainable things. What’s happening at this moment I am not a prophet and I don’t know how far that will go, with general consumption and consumers? We are still working on the niche market and its growing as you can see from for example the vegan society is growing. Its also a customers of ours because we don’t use leather. We think about circularity in the design to make sure that we have a mono stream of raw materials. So I’m not sure if that will change the consumption, I hope so, it’s necessary.

Q: Ok then let us talk a little bit about the business model, so in the transition to circular economy, like your business compared to traditional retailers there is at least that some aspects of a different type of business model. I would like to talk to you about the three different value proposition, value creation and delivery and value captures and how you think companies who are also trying transition or who were trying to transition should shape that?

A: That’s 3 questions in 1. The value proposition... It’s not only circular what we do. We also try to be honest and transparent. Circular economy to me also means that when you make a product, I think you have to do it in a better way, so neither people nor the earth should not be damaged by making a profit. Actually that doesn’t have anything to do with circularity but that’s one of our basic things we aim for. So we start off with a product that’s been made in a fair transparent way, as much as possible local, that’s our starting point And we want to make sure that every product that we put in the market that we feel responsible, that we want to have it back and we want to make sure that we do something intelligent with the returned product. Again, I take the example of the jeans, we can call them vintage jeans and repair them and make sure that it goes well. So we also improve the quality and make the life of the product longer. So in the production process we like to use the latest techniques, again as an example we don’t not use stone washings and chemicals and those kind of things, because you can now do the same or similar kinds of effects by using laser technique. That also includes that the product is less damaged and will remain longer in use. So that’s also part of it I would say.

Q: And talking about customer segments and relationships did you or do you think they have changed or are they different in your company compared to other clothing companies?

A: That has very much changed; sometimes you find ways, during doing a new thing. And we found out that we have created sort of a community and people that buy our product or lease our product become instant ambassadors. They like what they buy they buy it with a feeling, with a certain belief, and when you buy a product in this way you can say that you are proud of what you bought and you want to talk to your friends about it. And this happens. So then social media kicks in which is of course a very handy tool, which we have at the moment, where you can be very close to your customers, we know them very well. They write about us take pictures about us. They share it with friends, it also happens with other products but it is stronger with our products I believe, than when you are not transparent and circular. But that’s my belief and I cannot give figures for that. For instance we have in the back pocket a small gentlemen’s agreement: I you are ready with the product please send it back to us and well give you discount on the next product. And people do sign this, they take the effort to send it back by post and to do this and I think that this is quite rare. Without being pushed, I mean you can also not do it.

We did not do any research or surveys, what I am saying now is just a general feeling and I believe that’s the way it is.

Q: That’s perfect because it’s based on your experiences and that’s exactly what I’m interested in. Going to the next point that is value creation and delivery, how do you think companies should change, so maybe is the collaboration of partners and suppliers, What are the key resources, how they should be shaped and changed and the core activities that the company says?

A: We are B-Corp, I don’t know if you have seen it if you go through our website. We are a benefit corporation and the assessment is online. This means that you try to work, if possible with other b-corpses, because you have the same belief and the same view for the future. To give you and example, we work with an administration office that has people hired that have difficulties getting jobs, like autistic people for example, they can be excellent bookkeepers but maybe have trouble in their social surroundings. That’s the way we think so it’s also what kind of partners you are looking for. We want to control everything from A to z. The relationship we have for example with our supplier in Tunisia is very close. So we ask him to invest in new technologies, we are building together with him noble product. And you cannot do that alone. In the textile industry, if you take our example, we start from the raw material, so the cotton either has to be certified by GOTS so the Global Organic Textiles Standards so that it 100% organic or we make sure that we know the source where the cotton comes from and that it has not been sprayed by pesticides and those kind of things. When we use recycled content because that cannot be certified, for example our latest jeans have 40% recycled content and 60% organic content, we know the makers, we go there, its in Spain. So again its not that far, we do not go to Bangladesh or china, we stay in Europe. And then the piece of fabric goes to Tunisia, which is also in my world of fashion, not that far away, we also like to decrease our CO2 Emission. Or course it would be better if I could do this already in the neighbourhood of Amsterdam but that’s at this moment not possible. But I also believe also in local production. Everybody in the chain has to have the same ideals and the same views, otherwise we cannot work together.

Q: And what were for your company the key resources in order to achieve this position regarding tender the resources intensive the resources and human resources? In order to achieve it?

A: We did not go through a transition. We started of a company that has this in its structure.

Q: And if another company would like to do something similar. And of course you cannot just copy your company but what do you think are the key resources in order for other companies to achieve the transition or what do you feel are the key resources that were needed for your company to manage to implement this business model from the beginning?

A: You have to have strong belief in what you are doing. And you are making it very difficult for yourself, because economically, at this moment, it has no use at all. It would be great for example if I could say that the cotton I get back has a certain value, it does not at this moment. But that will come, that will grow. For other companies I think you have to go step by step. So do not think that when you start this sustainability trajectory in your company that from day one, the next day you can be fully sustainable, you have to make a plan of action. Put for yourself dates and a series of achievements that you want to have in the coming time, and where you want to start and where you want to be in so much time. So you have to sit down for your company, for your world, for your business and see what’s possible, what’s not possible. And still also survive with your company, because our biggest challenge is that we have to put a lot of money to still be there. So we lost a lot of money the first few years to still be there, so you have to make sure that you can surpass this time, because its going to cost money in the beginning. You have to make an investment first, to see the results only later. And the results can be not only in money or maybe not in money. We talk about ROI return on investment, but we can also talk about social return on investment, and that’s more difficult to convince investors, its maybe not even possible. So all these plans you have to make upfront, and make sure that you can survive and that you can do it, and that you can still be there in 5 years time. Which we did, but with great difficulties.

Q: I have one more question regarding the cotton. You said it doesn't have any value, is it that the expenses or the money that you have to pay to recover the cotton from old jeans costs as much as you would pay otherwise for new cotton?

A: It's more expensive even

Q: The let's go to the third part of the business model; that is value capture, you already talked a bit not only about creating value for the customers, or the company but also for society. What is your belief regarding the growth strategy, how is your company growing and how do you think companies with the circular idea should grow?

A: Well, we have sticked to our plan, we are transparent and we have a lot of, well you called and have found our company. Even though we are a very small company without any marketing budget. So we do something right because you and many other people find us. Also many young talented well-educated people, who are very motivated, want to take part in this revolution in the fashion industry. And that is one of the biggest assets of a company, the people that work for them. In most of my former life it was very difficult to get motivated, talented, well educated people in your company, for a salary that also they don’t mind. You know they could earn more in other companies, but they decide, no I want to do this. We can explain and open our accounts and explain what the margins are and what the turn-up is and what the costs are, and they still decide to be a part of this. So that’s a good thing and value creation. And to go back to the raw materials, there will be a moment when cotton will be too expensive and that we all have to use recycled content. If we will increase the volume, there will be a turning point that cloth and fabrics with recycled cotton will be cheaper in the end. But it is not happening now.

Q: Then just looking at your company you have lots of aspects of circularity in your business, what do you think are the next steps to achieve even more circularity? Do you have a plan for what else you are going to do?

A: Yes, we think everyday of what mistakes we still make. There is for example the web shop; if you send our packages, we are also creating rubbish. So we no work with Re-pack. Do you know it? They have created a packaging that can be reused several times. So we’ve installed this now, which is quite difficult because there is a lot of track and trace and everything to do, but we did it. So now all our shipments are done to the consumers with are-pack- a reusable packaging.

There are always new techniques; in Sweden there is now a company, as for today we use mechanical recycling of cotton, so that really tearing apart the jeans and making small parts of the cottonish substance again. But there is also a technique in development now where you chemically recycle cotton, with a solvent. So there you don have to mix it, we always have to mix new cotton and then start making fibres again. With the chemical recycling you can make, our of the recycled cotton 100% new yarn again. Its a filament, its more like a viscose but they are developing this now, if you keep the raw material 100% pure you can make sure that you have a mono stream of raw materials. Then you can start reusing everything, which of course is the aim.

We have to look around, be informed and see what is happening around us.

Q: So the main focus at the moment is the resource inputs and how they can be changed.

A: Yes with the resources or raw material recycling you try to make the circle or loop closed. We closed it now because we take back our old products but we still have to add new material. Which is ok for the moment but I think it will change. When we started 20% of the content could be reused in material, and at this moment we have a cloth with already 40%. So it’s increasing but sits always a compromise because we have to make sure that we make a beautiful product with no compromise to the quality. So the fitting has to be excellent, the strength of the material has to be good; the dying has to be fantastic. One of the things that we also did is, that you use a very toxic indigo dye stuff and now the foundation with two companies has created a nontoxic indigo dye stuff. When you start reusing toxic material that is of course not ideal, so those kinds of things we like to improve if we can, so we have included that here. Another thing is that the yarn we use to do the stitching has to be very strong also. So far we use polyester yarn. But there’s now also a new cellulose based material yarn that we can use, which is again better for recycling, as it is important to keep materials separated. So that's when I seen my competitors starting to take back clothes and things and you have mixed materials, wool and cotton and polyester etc., then its very hard to do something with it. You can down cycle it into isolation material and those kinds of things, but if you want to keep it on the same level, better than a oneway street.

Q: With cotton is there also a limit to how many times you can recycle it, like with paper? Or can you theoretically recycle it an unlimited amount of times?

A: We don’t know that yet, again our volume is too low. But I could imagine that there is an end to it at least the chemical recycling might solve it. But I think it will be similar to the paper.

Q: Lets go back to the first part, if you imagine a truly circular economy, what do you think will be the key differences in the way business will be done from a user consumer perspective.

A: The linear economy is ending, we all know that to make take and dispose, there will be a day that everything has been taken from the earth and that everything is thrown away. But like Ellen Macarthur said there is no away. So hear more and more about the circular economy, an I think that the general public one day, and say we have understood that this is not possible. Everybody is interested, if I talk to people anywhere and I talk about the circular economy, nobody says, "well that’s a stupid idea". It is a good idea, and its also a good idea to not make everything black, we as a company want to show that we can have fun with this. We have a great team and were doing something that we like to do. And we make a fantastic product. People are enthusiastic about the way the jeans look, the way they fit etc., and that’s the first part, you make a good product and the whole story behind the product is correct. Then you have a winner, because nobody will say "Ah that’s stupid" so I can give my jeans back? No I don want that, I prefer to throw them in the bin, or I want to burn it or I want to dig it in my garden I think that much better.” Nobody says that, generally. Everybody with a little bit of brain will say a’s a great idea. So make life simple for consumers, give them the feeling that they are consuming guilt free. With these jeans, every year you can take a new pair of jeans, and you can send the old pair back, but that’s not exaggerating. Its nice to have a new colour, a new washing, a new fit, everyone likes that. And if you explain that to your customers and keep that momentum, then I haven’t met a person that said, "no I don’t like them".

Q: On a bigger scale, if you imagine a consumer, who really lives in an entirely circular economy, so all products are circular products, everything you buy and do. What do you think will be the key differences if that consumers thinks back to the times now of the linear economy. What will he realise is different?

A: We have been hiding very well all the effects of the linear economy, my generation. At the moment you don't see the results of the disaster, and it’s just in time to change things. And it’s not just about circularity, but it’s also about the energy so we have to go to renewable energy, whatever that is. It can be solar, or wind I’m not an expert in that field but I believe that we need to solve the problem before it hits us hard in the face. And that’s what we try to do. And it hasten hit us yet I think.

Q: I think at least consumers don’t realise, I think there are a lot of things going on that are really bad but they are kind of out of the field of vision.

A: And you can’t expect from everyone to know. I think Bruit is a good example, I’m going way off now, but I don’t believe that you can expect people to vote for Brexit, they have no clue what it means... I think the general public was not well informed, or they were misinformed, and they mis-saw it because I’m sorry to say but "simple" people saying things that they aren’t aware of what they mean. So sometimes you have to push thing forward because you know that it will go wrong otherwise.

Q: I lived in the UK during Brexit in Yorkshire and it was very interesting to hear what people were saying the day after. One last bit of that question was, if you think about the everyday life of consumers. So not about the bigger implications but the everyday life of consumers, do you think they will notice any differences in that?

A: Well I think we'll see more things like tis in Holland and Belgium and also in the UK, with for example you might have 3, 4 or 5 waste bins in your house, and that you take more care of how you dispose of things, like we doe now with batteries, but I think that there are a lot of things that you can do yourself. We all talk about eating meat, we have been intensively looking at what kind of customers we reach. And I think that that group is growing because that are people that are getting this information and thinking, ok there is a problem and we can solve it and society and companies are reaching out and giving me different options. And why not? I am also still driving a diesel car and I should switch to electric, but I have to finish this one up. I’m still using an IPhone, I have to switch to Fair Phone, but they told me, use you iPhone until its really dead, and then get a Fair Phone, that’s transition, but like I said why not. What’s against trying to do things more consciously? There’s nothing against it. And that is also what we as a company do not want to point a finger, saying our have to do this or that, we want to give them the option. We make a brilliant pair of jeans, it really looks good, with a beautiful washing, we will repair it for you during the lifetime, well take it back when its ended, that’s what we offer. As part of the deal and this is the cost, it’s the true cost, and you can see what I pay for it, you can see our costs of our company, I have nothing to hide.

A: Do you have a pair yet? We have a tool called fits me, which makes sure that the size is well chosen. And you can lease it you don’t have to go shopping.

Q: I have one more question that I was wondering when I was thinking of \*company\* before. I would usually lease jeans for one year. If I have a hole in the jeans after half a year can I send it back and it’s going to be repaired?

A: Yes we have the repair service, so that’s part of the deal.

Q: One last question, how can circular business models lead to sustainable consumption?

A: It doesn’t necessarily mean that if you do something circular as a supplier or manufacturer that you will change consumption. You can also do it in a way that the people don’t even realise it. But you do need the consumer to make sure that all things come back to you. So you have to involve the customer in the return logistics, that for sure. That’s why we make this gentlemen’s agreement; with please send back the jeans that you have used.