WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

A journey towards fashion stewardship
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This is a book following the lifetime of a sustainable garment made by a caring company. We join the production process and all the services supporting the garment’s journey with the happy consumer.

What we call Fashion Stewardship is a perspective that takes the whole lifetime of the garment into consideration, and emphasises that sustainability is not only something happening in production. Fashion needs environmentally engaged consumers as well as producers, and a caring fashion company can take on this whole process. You can follow such a journey here.
Seeds for change

This is a farmer who sows cotton seeds, the source of most garments in the world. But these seeds are special; they are organic seeds, and with them start a journey towards a sustainable fashion system. These are seeds for change in the world of fashion. We will follow them on their journey through life.

*What do you think happens next?*
Farming

Here we are in Gujarat in northern India, where farmers grow organic cotton. Cotton needs a lot of water for growing - that is why the irrigation goes through tubes to the plants, to minimize water evaporation. The fields where this farmer works are free from pesticides; instead the farmers use Neem seeds to keep the bugs away from the harvest.

Here comes the farmer to harvest the cotton. What happens next?
Harvesting

The farmer grows cotton to sell to an honest factory. The factory is run by a company helping cotton farmers with the transition from conventional to organic farming. This is a process that takes several years, since the soil first has to be free from toxic substances. The price the farmers are paid for the cotton from this kind of company is based on the actual production costs and not the world market price, which can change greatly.

*Now the farmer sends off the harvested cotton. Where does it go?*
Ginning

When the cotton arrives at the factory, the first step is to separate the fibres from the seeds, a process called ginning. After that, the cotton is washed, pressed in bales and sent away for spinning.

*The cotton is pressed into bales: can you see them?*
Spinning, Knitting and Weaving

The cotton bales are transported by train from Gujarat, down to Tamil Nadu in southern India for spinning and knitting. Here the cotton threads are knitted into jersey fabrics for t-shirts. The fabric for other shirts and jeans is woven for the right quality. It is important that the process is done by certified companies for good working environments.

The threads and fabrics are made – where are they going now?
Dyeing

Dyeing fabric unfortunately requires a certain amount of chemicals but the colours used here are certified and the chemicals are within permitted limits. The waste water is thoroughly purified.

*The dyed fabric is now sent off in rolls by boat – where do you think it goes?*
Manufacture

The fabric is transported to a factory in Sri Lanka, where the garments are sown by hands free to join any union. Salaries are based on actual living costs, so-called living wages, and are therefore around three times higher than the national minimum wage. They are also paid out regularly and on time, which is unusual in the conventional textile industry. Working tasks rotate and working hours are reasonable.

Here the finished garments are packed and sent off overseas – can you guess how?
Transport

The garments are packed into containers and the caring company makes sure that no harmful chemicals are used to protect the shipment from mould. The garments then leave by ship and reach Sweden in about 20 days.

*Here the container is loaded to the ship - what do you think happens next?*
Quality check and content facts

The people at the Swedish office check the quality a second time before they repack the garments and send them off to the retailers. To verify that the production process is done right the garments are sometimes sampled for laboratory analysis. Information about the garment’s origin and environmental footprint is attached on a Content Facts label, as well as advice on care and afterlife.

*Here a package is sent off to a retailer – where will it go?*
Retail

In shops the retailers tell customers the story about the garment’s journey so far. Many feel compelled to support the endeavour but design and quality remain the key factors when deciding what to buy.

*Wow, isn’t that a nice garment?*
Consumption

Here Karl and Karin try on and buy garments at the shop. This is where the real life of the garment begins, as well as the biggest environmental impact. That is why the caring company is so concerned with helping the consumer reduce those effects.

How great they look in their garments!
Use

A lot of clothes live very active lives, but many garments are used less often. Karin makes sure she only buys clothes that she knows she will wear for several years. Basics are always easy to recombine in new exciting ways and are thus the best investments. She is also very careful how she stores her clothes, so that they keep clean and fresh longer. By instructions from the caring company, she folds them properly and uses lavender to keep the wardrobe fresh; that way the clothes feel new longer.

*What happens after she wears a garment?*
Care

The overall biggest environmental impact of a garment’s life is the washing, but a garment does not need to be washed that often. For example, after wearing her jeans Karin sometimes puts them in the freezer to preserve the authentic look of the wear. Karl usually airs his garments in a damp place, such as the bathroom after a shower as it refreshes the fabric.

*But when the clothes get really dirty, what should be done?*
Washing

Even though people usually wash too often and in too hot water, clothes sometimes do need washing to take out stains. Karl is careful to wash seldom and in cold water (most clothes usually only require 30-40 degrees Celsius). He also avoids tumble-drying and ironing, instead he lets the garments hang to dry.

Oops, there is a hole in the fabric on Karin’s dress! What should she do?
Mending

During wear, even the best quality clothes will be subject to damage. Therefore the caring company provides information about some basic repair techniques so that the consumer can mend them herself. Actually, after repairing a garment Karin feels much more connected to it, as she has given it extra attention and care.

*But Karl is not that handy; where can he get professional help?*
Find and support your local tailor

It is always good to have a tailor close by and Karl has a good relationship with his. As part of the long-term Fashion Stewardship initiative, the caring company has evaluated and put together a list of certified tailors which Karl can easily find on the company’s website. Karl visits his local tailor to have his gear mended.

*It has been a long life with the garment, but finally Karl is tired of it - what happens now?*
Swap/restyle/remake

The caring company has set up several channels for spreading knowledge and skills on how to easily update, remake or restyle clothes. The company also encourages and arranges in-store workshops and swaps, where the creative input of the consumer is cherished. Karl’s garment can have many lives beyond his use of it as he restyles or swaps it.

Now Karl’s and Karin’s garments have had such a nice journey: is it ending here?
Re-use

No, of course the journey continues – Karl’s and Karin’s old garments can become new things. The caring company is working on transforming for example old worn-out jeans into carpets, furniture covers and cushion fillings. This is an ongoing endeavour to raise awareness and reduce textile waste.

*But all things perish in the end; where do sustainable garments go after they die?*
Recycle

Sadly, even cared for garments come to an end. Finally, when the fabrics are worn out it is time to end our journey. For the small cotton seed it has been a long one and it is time to move on by transforming into something else. The restricted use of chemicals means that garments can be burnt for energy. New techniques are being developed to reuse fibres for making new threads, fabrics and paper. There are even ways of turning old fabrics into bio-fuels.

*What would you suggest could happen to old clothes, and can you show us how?*
Fashion Stewardship is a Declaration of Dependence

Our aim with this book is to show a future of fashion just around the corner, a process we call Fashion Stewardship. It is a plan for action, engaging designers and producers to also develop support systems for consumers when creating fashion. Fashion Stewardship means fashion is something more than the production of ready-to-wear garments.

When engaging in Fashion Stewardship the consumer becomes part of an allied effort towards a sustainable world, environmentally, socially, emotionally and also fashionably. Fashion Stewardship acknowledges the dependence on consumer engagement for a sustainable future.

With this book we set out to promote a wider perspective on what fashion can be, and to illustrate the process of Fashion Stewardship. It is an effort to change the impacts of fashion and promote wider collaboration between producer and consumer. It is an initial step towards a new system for certification of sustainable fashion. Here you can read about our odyssey towards Fashion Stewardship – a lifetime support of fashion.

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How is a sustainable garment produced?

How can I become a caring consumer?

How should a caring company support consumers towards fashion stewardship?

This is a story of a sustainable process in fashion called fashion stewardship. It is an adventure about a caring company that creates a symbiosis with a caring consumer.