

Nisseluelandet - The Impact of Local Clothes for the Survival of a Textile Industry in Norway

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Biographical note

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Acknowledgements

This work was supported by the Research Council of Norway under Grant 244618 (Project Krus - Enhancing local wool value chains in Norway). Thanks to Tone Skårdal Tobisasson, Kari-Anne Pedersen, Kate Fletcher and Helene Teigen for help and translation.

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Abstract

The article discusses the importance of local clothing for the survival of the Norwegian textile industry. It draws upon stakeholder interviews, as well as desktop research.

Local clothes are discussed as they are understood by consumers, as knitted sweaters, bunads (Norwegian national costumes) and home-made clothing. The review shows how these products, and especially the materials used in their production, have been crucial for the continued existence of the Norwegian textile industry. We argue that the concept “local clothes” can contribute to show-casing resources outside the global “fast fashion” manufacturing system.

Keywords: local clothing; home production, textile industry, handicrafts, wool.

Introduction

There is a growing interest for the traceability of raw materials and localization of textiles (Vittersø et al. 2017; Nimbalker et al. 2017; Peterson, Hustvedt, and Chen 2012). This special issue is one example of this interest, and opportunities for centres and networks are increasingly explored, such as Manufacture Copenhagen (2016) and Manufacture New York (Foster 2016). In Norway, we have witnessed a boost of designers who wish to work with local raw materials as well as public attention surrounding textile production in Norway¹.

¹ This is of course difficult to measure, but we notice this in the increased amount of inquiries from young designers and media.

The interest in local produced clothing stands in contrast to the dominating mindset of fast fashion where production, consumption and reuse are seen as a global system (Niinimäki 2013). The interest in locality focuses on the relationship between place and clothing, and between production and consumption and thus towards more locally-linked coherent value chains.

‘Local food’ and ‘slow food’ have been important concepts in the development of an alternative to the mass production of standardized food (Vittersø 2012). But what about clothes? We wish to contribute to the discussion concerning the relationship between production and consumption by asking: what is the significance of a local market for the textile industry? Clothing traditions have been studied as the basis for the development of craft industry for the tourism market (especially in peripheries and disadvantaged areas) (Richards 2005). We will study the significance of these same traditions; not only for a future industry, but also for their survival. We are not only concerned about the peripheries or small handy craft or artisan companies, but also the textile industry. We will use the textile industry and clothing consumption in Norway as an example.

Norway is one of the richest countries in Europe. The wages are high and incomes come from oil and fisheries, metal and chemical industry. The country offers beautiful scenery, a lot of space, and barely five million inhabitants. We are writing this paper as one native and one naturalised Norwegian, and in our - Norwegians’ - understanding of ourselves, the expression “Nisselueland” has a significant meaning. “Nissen” is a mythological creature. He usually lives in the barn and was important for the wellbeing of the farm-animals. Today, the word nisselue (the nisse’s cap, Figure 1) is used as a derogatory expression about people who are less “worldly” or sophisticated. To “pull your nisselue well down over your ears” is used to label people who shun external impulses. When using the expression Nisselueland to describe Norway, one implies that we have relied too much on our own traditions, and are to a far lesser

extent a part the global development. This inferiority complex is especially expressed in relation to our more modern neighbour, Sweden.

Norway is an interesting case to study. The country is a very typical example of high-cost Western countries dominated by imported fast fashion and high clothing consumption, while at the same time, Norway is a country with strong local clothing traditions, and a surprisingly well-preserved value chain for the processing of the local raw material wool. We are both rich and modern, and a country of nisselue.

We will first give a short description of local clothing and Norwegian textile industry. Then we present our sources and discuss the way today's textile and crafts industry leaders assess the market for local clothing as a result of their businesses surviving the outsourcing period and remaining profitable today. In other words, we look at the past through discussing today's profitability and survival. Then we look forward, this time using a description of the Norwegian fashion industry's future, authored 10 years ago. To what extent was local clothing considered important for the development of the industry 10 years ago?

Figure 1 about here

Local Clothes

The concept of *local clothes* is not very well understood by Norwegian consumers. We included this aspect in a previous project about use of wool (Klepp, Laitala, and Tobiasson 2016). Several informants did not understand what we meant, and sought to clarify our question, saying, “do you mean...?” and often asked if we were thinking about Norwegian national costume, “bunad”². Their association from local clothes to bunad, and also to the “kofte” (Norwegian knitted sweater or cardigan) or other Norwegian knitted items, was clear. A young first

² See later section “Bunad” for definition and discussion of this garment type.

generation Norwegian girl answered as follows: “Local clothes: Bunad! Selbu-mittens! And that’s about it”. She has a bunad from the town she was raised in. Selbu is a village not far from this town, with a strong living knitting tradition. This strong link from “local” to bunad also applied to informants who did not own a bunad themselves. A 32-year-old Norwegian man added “I don’t think I have a relationship to local apparel. You mean clothes that are made locally? I do not know about anything that is made locally aside from the mittens I knitted myself at school when I was a child. Nothing is more local than that”. The consumer interviews show that they understood local clothes as:

- Clothes produced locally (Norwegian textile industry)
- Bunad
- Norwegian knitwear, especially koftes
- Homemade clothes

We will say some more about what characterizes these phenomena before a discussion on their importance as a market for Norwegian textile industries.

Norwegian Textile Industry

The history of the Norwegian textile industry is not in any way distinct. In this poor outskirts of Europe, the industry got off to a late start, but grew rapidly and was one of the country’s biggest industries in the 19th century. “Rødlue” (red cap), which was the name of nisselue at that time, was one of the earliest goods in Norwegian knitting factories together with other cheap, warm clothing used for outdoor work and at sea (Klepp and Tobiasson 2013). The Norwegian textile industry had, as in many other countries, also a quick decline (Tanninen 2014; Scheffer 2012). During the period 1960 to 1980, rapid outsourcing took place, and from the 1980s and up until today, we have witnessed an explosion of import and consumption. Today, Norway has no

technical educational programs for textile, and does not see itself as a textile-, clothes- or fashion-producing country. Wool and knitting in Iceland and Scotland (Abrams 2006; Grydehøj 2008; Richards 2005) are more important for the way these countries present themselves to the outside world than in Norway. Despite outsourcing, sharpened environmental demands, lack of capital and lack of political support, a surprising number of spinning mills, weaving factories, and smaller sewing companies and workshops have survived and even some new have started up.

The Norwegian textile industry is - and has always been - wool-based, although imported merino and alpaca are important raw materials today. Wool is produced on small farms, where three out of four have less than 100 adult sheep, so that around one million sheep are winterfed. (Animalia 2016). The enormous grazing areas in the woods and mountains are a substantial resource. Norway has a well-functioning collection system that grades four thousand tons of high quality wool yearly. Norwegian clothing culture is more than anything characterized by extensive use of wool, mostly imported merino, both in baby and children's wear, underwear, daily wear and sports and outdoor clothing. To dress appropriately for the weather is highly valued in Norwegian culture (Klepp, Laitala, and Tobiasson 2016).

International trade agreements have contributed to the changes in global textile trade. According to historian Klas Nyberg, import increased greatly when the quota system *Multi Fibre Arrangements* (MFA) 1974–1994 was discontinued and the low-cost countries right to export opened up. The import increased further with the transition to *Agreements on Textile and Clothing* (ATC) during 1995–2004. The traditional textile industry and clothing trade within Western Europe and the US decreased during the 1970s and 1980s (Nyberg 2017). Instead, large retail companies sourcing from low-cost producers, have emerged (Gamble 2011).

The most comprehensive historical book on textile production (Grieg 1950) provides an detailed account of Norway's industrial textile sector at its height (Colburn 2012, 21). The days

of glory are described through the history of each of the businesses. Downsizing is not given as much attention. In the 1870s, textiles became one of Norway's most important industries. In 1875, the textile industry employed 5000 people and included Norway's biggest factory through time, "Christiania seildugsfabrik". The textile manufacturing industry peaked in 1963 (Kamsvåg 1990). In 1960, the industry represented about 14 percent of all employment in the industrial manufacturing sectors in Norway, but the number of employees dropped by 86 percent from 1960 to 1986.

Hanisch and Lange (1986) describe the problems the textile and clothing industry encountered. Right after the war, the access to raw materials was a problem, but the industry grew rapidly once this problem was solved. A new and more serious problem, was the competition from foreign producers caused by the liberalization of trade in 1952. The growth of the industry stagnated and remained at the same level in 1960 as in 1951. In the 1970s, the Norwegian economy grew rapidly. It was a difficult period for Norwegian industry; the number of industry workplaces fell at the same time as the growth in the service sector (Nielsen 2011). Several public reports concerning the crisis in the textile sector were written, however we lack a good analysis of the closing down of the industry in Norway. What is more, we have not seen any description of why some survived.

Bunad

Bunad is a Norwegian term with no equivalent in the English language (Wikipedia 2017). The word itself comes from "kledebunad" which translates to "clothing outfit" and is mostly used for regional dresses rather than national costumes. Unlike "folk dress" (folkedrakt in Norwegian) it does not have to have roots in traditional rural clothing, but can also be later revitalized or designed costume, or sewn in variations. The word bunad is in itself a 20th-century invention. The bunad movement has its roots in 19th-century national romanticism, not

only in Norway. However, in Norway the national romantic ideas had a more lasting impact than in our neighboring countries, partially because it was linked to the opposition against Swedish and Danish rule and unions, and the Nazi occupation (Haugen 2016).

The nisselue is part of several male bunads. This is an example of interaction between impulses from both outside and inside the Norwegian culture. Most often, the nisse was believed to wear gray clothes, knickers and a red woolen cap, as most of the farmers and fishermen in the 18th and 19th centuries did. Inspired by the French revolution, the red woolen cap had an upturn after 1850. It was later phased out in Europe at the expense of more formal, wide-brimmed hats and the sixpence, but kept its popularity in Norway both as a part of some bunads, and as daily wear. This is probably the origin to why the nisselue symbolizes something outdated. It became a symbol for a public countercultural movement, especially aimed at the power elite and the union between Sweden and Norway around 1905. The red woolen cap as a national symbol had a new upsurge in the occupied Norway in Second World War, and became forbidden. In 1999, use and home production of the nisselue, had a new strong upsurge because of a television program for children.

Bunads are used on Norway's national day, but also at family celebrations such as confirmations, Christmas, christenings and weddings (Figure 2). Both the Norwegian bunad and the Sami "kofte" are regarded as formal attire and have become increasingly common to wear on formal occasions (Klepp, Vramo, and Laitala 2014). More than 66 percent of women and 21 percent of men own a bunad (Klepp and Laitala 2016b). The interest for the bunad is growing, especially among men.

Figure 2 about here

Price-wise there is a big difference between the bunad and other types of clothes. The expense of clothes and shoes represented around 13 percent of household budgets in 1958 and has fallen to 5.4 percent today (Statistics Norway 2007). However, the prices have not fallen equally for all types of clothes. The average price for the last purchase of party clothes – or clothes for formal occasions – was 1533 Norwegian kroner in 2013 (Klepp and Laitala 2016a). The cheapest clothing items were simple tops priced at 49 NOK, and the most expensive was a bunad priced at 40 000 NOK³. The most expensive ones can be priced as high as 73 000 – 80 000 kroner without jewellery or other accessories (Rognø 2012). Unsurprisingly, bunads are more prevalent in households with a higher income. However, the difference is not great, and home production of bunads exists as well. In Norway, it is common to get the bunad as a confirmation gift from the nearest family; therefore, many young people (even though they often have a low income themselves), own a bunad. As many as 76 percent of women between 18 and 29 years own a bunad. We understand the relatively even distribution of the bunads as a sign of the willingness to pay a high price.

An important norm when it comes to clothes, and a reason for the rapid circulation of clothes, is the understood requirement for variation, especially for women. This requirement does not apply to the bunad, which also differs from the use of ethnic clothes in other countries, as for example the sari (Klepp, Vramo, and Laitala 2014). You may well own and use the same bunad throughout your life. The bunad is made, and expected to last, for several generations. The bunad is usually not worn many days per year, but potentially replaces a number of clothing items that would have been needed otherwise for these festive occasions as other party- or formal dresses are seen to have a limited appearance frequency.

In 2016, we asked a representative sample of the Norwegian population how old their oldest clothes were (Klepp and Laitala 2016b). The majority of the respondents (28 percent)

³ 40 000 NOK is about 3 995 GBP, 4 300 EUR and 5 185 USD (exchange rate of 29th August 2017).

answered that their oldest clothes still in use were between 11 and 20 years old. However, many people had older clothes, and as many as 14 percent had clothes that were older than 30 years. The oldest were woollen sweaters or koftes, but the bunad came in close. These old bunads were on average 21 years and among women, the bunad was most frequently their oldest clothing item still in use.

In a literature survey of Norwegian wool, Mae Colburn (2012) writes: “The folk dress and bunad traditions constitute an important component of Norwegian design and have been the subject of an entire body of literature, notably Aagot Noss and Kari-Anne Pedersen’s individual studies on folk dress and the Norsk bunadleksikon (2006), edited by Bjørn Sverre Hol Haugen” (Colburn 2012, 17). The literature is mostly about the background and history of different types of bunad, but also about the bunad movement and production. Research of the bunad is to a lesser degree included in the growing literature on clothes and fashion, but has rather been understood through concepts such as tradition and revitalization (Klepp, 2016). The authenticity of the bunad and folk costumes is discussed either as their historical origin (Storaas 1985; Andersen 1994) or production today (Bjørnholt 2011), or who are the legitimate wearers (Centergran 1996; Ulving 1998). We have previously described the bunads’ long lifespan (Klepp, Vramo, and Laitala 2014) and slow production process (Klepp 2016). This is a business model where it is common to produce on demand, with one year lapsing from order to final delivery. The garments are made with adjustment and altering potential, and are expected to last a lifetime and even longer. Production of bunads therefore has characteristics that are currently being tested out as solutions for a sustainable conversion of clothing production, namely production-on-demand, customization, and design for longevity. Whether bunads or these strategies are sustainable or not, are not the focus of this article, as we are interested in the impact that bunads have for the survival of the textile industry.

Koftes

The kofte is a knitted woolen sweater or jacket (Figure 3). Foreigners will often call them “Norwegian sweaters”, an expression that does not exist in Norwegian, but was invented by one of Norway’s greatest knitting designers, Unn Sjøiland Dale (Segelcke 1994; Klepp and Tobiasson 2013). In some regional variations, men’s bunads have knitted two-toned patterned sweaters (Klepp and Tobiasson 2013).

****Figure 3 about here****

A characteristic Norwegian trait is the preservation of a living, popular textile tradition. The kofte is constantly evolving and used both in traditional forms and in ever-new combinations. 25% of Norwegians reported to have knitted during 2017 (Laitala and Klepp 2017). This figure is higher than in the USA, where 13% of adults participated in weaving, crocheting, quilting, needlepoint, knitting or sewing in 2012 (Iyengar et al. 2013). The UK Hand Knitting Association (2017) estimates the number of knitters and crocheters in the UK to be 7.5 million, which equals to about 11% of UK population. However, there is surprisingly little scientific or academic research on the topic; most of the documentation is found in pattern and coffee table books (Lind 1991; e.g. Bøhn 1933; Sundbø 1994; Finseth, Sandvik, and Hartvig 1999).

Norway is not distinguished by its old knitting history. Knitting came late and did not reach many of the Norwegian rural districts before the 18th and 19th centuries. Because of the Napoleonic war and embargo, and the detachment from the union with Denmark in 1814, home production of wool became important. The kofte patterns typical to specific places in Norway, evolved in this period. At the end of the 19th century, this rich culture of local patterns became part of a general interest for national folk culture in Norway, similar to other areas such as the islands and coastal areas around the Northern Atlantic (Abrams 2006; Grydehøj 2008; Richards

2005). In 1928, the knitting patterns were gathered and published by Annichen Sibbern Bøhn (1933). The book became a basis for later use and development of the patterns.

Between the two World Wars, knitting was in fashion and at the same time connected to a feeling of national pride. The warm and flexible clothes became popular with the growing interest for outdoor activities and exercise. At the same time, knitting became a source of income through the growing tourist industry. The more flexible clothes introduced by among others Coco Chanel in the 1920s, were even more fitting for Norway as we cultivated our polar heroes and learned from them that there is no bad weather, only bad clothing. To be outside, moving and staying warm became typically Norwegian traits, and knitted clothes were inseparable from the outdoor activities both aesthetically and practically.

The emergence of the knitting and yarn factories in the second half of the 19th century was also not distinct for Norway. Simple models of sweaters were mass-produced and sold to seamen and fishermen throughout the North Atlantic coastal region. The machine-produced sweaters contributed to the spread of techniques and patterns for hand knitting. Thus, the interchange between home production and the textile industry took shape. The wool was carded at the wool mills, and spun and knitted at home, or the wool was spun at the wool mills and knitted at home. This ‘spinning for hire’ system where farms deliver wool and get yarn or other goods from wool back has gained a renaissance today, especially for wool from old sheep breeds that have a lower commodity price compared to the white crossbred wool.

Norwegian sweaters are common in Norwegian wardrobes. Men, women and children wear them, especially for outdoor recreation and cabin trips, and as spectators at winter sporting competitions. Nevertheless, it is not uncommon to see these sweaters worn as work wear or as everyday wear for both women and men (Hebrok, Klepp, and Turney 2016). Several companies, like the Norwegian brands Oleana and Dale of Norway, have updated the kofte as smart casualwear with great success. Norwegian patterns can be seen on traditional sweaters,

mittens, caps, socks and so on, but also on thinner woolen underwear and casual wear in merino (Klepp, Laitala, and Tobiasson 2016). The sweaters, like those from the Fair Isles, are highly decorative, but suitable for both sexes and different styles (Arnold 2010). This also makes it easier to share them within the family and use them over a long time.

Home-knitted sweaters are typical family gifts for both adults and children and part of a gift and exchange economy (Hebrok and Klepp 2014; Hebrok, Klepp, and Turney 2016). In spite of their traditional format, new patterns are continually developing. Readymade sweaters are sold in Norwegian souvenir- and home craft stores, mainly to foreigners (Klepp 2018).

Homemade and Making

Both knitted sweaters and bunads are connected to home production. Interviews show that it is not uncommon for people to do some of the embroidery work with the bunad themselves, or with help from relatives. It is possible to buy packages for home production and there are courses in sewing and assembly of the bunad throughout the country. Embroideries and other handmade and time-consuming parts are done either by certified professional bunad producers, sourced from abroad by relatively new actors in this value-chain, or done by the customer/future owner/relative. There are concerns surrounding the handicraft tradition and the tendency to buy these services from abroad (Sivertsen 2010). One of the suggestions is to encourage the customers to do more themselves, also after the garment has been in use (Vårdal et al. 2015).

Within research, there is increasing interest towards Do-It-Yourself (DIY), (Fox 2014) as well as the active aspect of use (Fletcher 2016). In an article of this issue (The Fashion Land Ethic: localism, clothing activity and Macclesfield) Fletcher explores among other things the relationship between fashion systems "above" and "below ground", or the root system, invisible but absolutely crucial for the visible commercial system to function.

Holroyd uses the concept “Folk fashion” about “making and mending of garments for ourselves, family and friends; the items these activities produce; and the wearing of those clothes once they are made.” (Holroyd 2017, 1). The strength of the concept is that it includes both production and use, similar to the expression prosumption (Ritzer and Jurgenson 2010). We are less enthusiastic about its use of the word “fashion”, because it entails a claim of change that is not based on empirical evidence (Holroyd 2017, 3). In a Nordic context, the term “husflid” (craft) is a central concept, with historical, political, and aesthetic significance and importance for today's market and education. Crafts are important in relation to the women's movement, self-sufficiency, and construction of the nation (Hyltén-Cavallius 2007; Thörn 1997). Crafts, DIY and folk fashion include activities and products, allowing for discussions of experiences, identity, social function, craft theory and so on (Lee and DeLong 2017; Holroyd 2017). These aspects are not the focus of this paper, as our context - crafts and home production - are interesting as a market for locally produced industry products such as fabrics and yarn. Or, more in line with Fletcher's mindset, we want to investigate how the system above ground has been and how it is dependent on the system below ground.

Sources

Through our work with Norwegian wool, which started in 2011 with the project “Valuing Norwegian wool” and continued in the KRUS project that studies local wool value chains in Norway (Nordic Fashion Association 2017; SIFO 2015), we have held a number of presentations and issued publications on today's Norwegian textile industry (e.g. Klepp, Tobiasson, and Laitala 2016; Klepp and Tobiasson 2013; Cristin 2017). We are often met with the question “does it still exist?” as if all the production was already out-sourced, or will be soon. However, this is not the whole picture. There exist companies that produce in Norway, both relatively new companies such as Oleana, and older family-owned companies. Also

modern, larger companies such as Sandnes Garn exist, smaller companies with rapid growth, such as Graveniid (Klepp, Tobiasson, and Laitala 2016), and companies that focus on export such as Gudbrandsdalens Uldvarefabrik and Dale of Norway (Hebrok et al. 2012; Klepp and Tobiasson 2013). Currently there are about 400 companies⁴ within the textile and clothing industries employing over 4000 people (Statistics Norway 2017, 2016).

There are of course many reasons why these companies still produce in Norway. It is probably not accidental that many of them are family-owned businesses. However, does this have something to do with the concept of local clothes we already described? We will use interviews and conversations with some of the business leaders, together with information from their homepages and other written sources, to discuss this. We use a selection of companies that produce in Norway, mainly based on research in the Krus project, where we have interviewed 26 stakeholders in the value chain. In this article we concentrate mainly on the interviews of the textile industry stakeholders. The aim has been to examine locality and its importance for the development of the industry. The interviews were based on an interview guide and lasted from one to two hours. They were recorded and transcribed. The informants are referred to with their position in the company. Additional data is given from other meetings and discussions with the industry during the past years. These are cited as personal communication. The overview of the companies included in the analysis is given in table 1. For more details, please see Klepp and Tobiasson (2013), Klepp, Tobiasson, and Laitala (2016) and Vittersø et al. (2017).

****Table 1 about here ****

⁴ The figure includes only companies that employ at least one person.

We have also used desktop research where we looked into how local clothes have been discussed earlier in relation to the Norwegian fashion and textile industry. This discussion is mainly based on two reports, Motepilot (Fashion pilot) by The Foundation for Design and Architecture in Norway (Nordgård, Fensgård, and Karlsen 2008) and a thesis about the Norwegian fashion industry (Mardal 2010). Additional sources are given in the text.

Surviving Textile Industry

Spinning Mills

Norway has three small and three large spinning mills, in addition to one wool-carding mill for hand-spinning.

Rauma Ullvarefabrikk AS is 90 years old spinning mill making yarn for knitting, art and hand weaving, and embroidery for bunads. Røros Tweed is a subsidiary of Rauma producing wool blankets and “vadmél” (felted loden materials) used in bunads. The majority is made with Norwegian wool. The current director and owner took over the company when the Norwegian textile industry was in the worst slump in the early 1970s. The director said; "The whole factory was very much based on the cooperation with the Norwegian Folk Art and Craft Association" (personal communication, April 2017). The company was not able to compete on price, thus they focused on high-quality products adapted to Norwegian craft manufacturers (Bruaset 2002). One of the company's major successes was the Per Spook sweater made for the Norwegian Folk Art and Craft Association in 1981. Also, Rauma is doing very well today and dominates the yarn shelves in Norwegian craft stores. The most recent sale success of the company is actually a nisselue, not red, but blue. They have chosen to focus on marketing themselves as Norwegian through a private label "Completely Norwegian product" (ELLE mELLE 2017).

Hillesvåg ullvarefabrikk is a fourth-generation family business, and started in 1898. Today, hand-knitting yarn is their most important product. The director and owner of the company here talks about the tough period in the 1970s and 1980s when the textile industry out-sourced: “We changed our production from industry yarn, carpet yarn, knit fabric yarn, and similar products in the seventies, and we focused more on hand knitting yarn, because at that time there was a distinct shift in the market. If you wanted to survive, you had to change.” Hillesvåg has been central for the development of yarn for other businesses interested in Norwegian wool and for developing their own products with wool from older and rare breeds.

All of the spinning mills are doing very well. Norway is not among the largest producers of wool, but relatively big when it comes to knitting yarn. The largest Norwegian spinning mill, Sandnes Garn, produces 650 tons of yarn annually. The yarn is delivered to about 500 shops in Norway. Their export rate is 20 percent (Sandnes Garn 2017). We asked the CEOs of these three largest Norwegian mills if they could estimate the growth they have had in the last six years from 2010. The answers were strikingly similar: a doubling of the production and sales (personal communication, Oslo Design Fair, Lillestrøm 2016). There is high willingness among consumers to pay for knitting yarn (Klepp, Tobiasson, and Laitala 2016). About 1.8 to 2 million kilos of yarn is sold annually, with a total turnover of almost 1800 million NOK. This is 2.5-3 times more than in Norway’s neighbouring countries, Sweden, Finland and Denmark (Norsk Næringsliv 2017).

Weaving Mills

There are three large weaving mills, in addition to several small ones. We will introduce two large and one small mill and a handicraft business as an example.

Gudbrandsdalens Uldvarefabrik AS (GU) presents itself online as “an award-winning manufacturer of upholstery textiles”. They also produce fabrics for bunads, especially since the 1994 Lillehammer Winter Olympics increased the demand for bunad fabrics dramatically. Currently they state that “Every other bunad in Norway has fabrics from GU” (Gudbrandsdalens Uldvarefabrik 2015). GU has recently changed a substantial proportion of their production from imported crossbred wool, to Norwegian crossbred wool.

Krivi vev has specialized in natural fibers and have had great success with damask woven tablecloths for the Norwegian embassies. Krivi presents itself on its homepages as “one of the largest reconstructor of old bunad textiles”(Krivi-vev AS 2015). Krivi has started a project where they focus on the use of Norwegian wool and are cooperating with designers and with the Norwegian wool industry, Hillesvåg and Selbu spinning mills.

Møre Bånd og Vev AS is a small ribbon factory. The owner says that “we produce mostly ribbons for bunad-Norway. We try to stay updated on knit fashion when it comes to kofte ribbons and things like that, and we very much count on the bunad sector, which is stable and steady from January till May.” The season for bunad is related to the national holiday, 17th of May, which is the most important day for bunad use. Ribbons for the kofte change more often and is thus characterized as “fashion”. The company has had an increase in sales of ribbons thanks to a very popular kofte designer.

Atelier Stellaria is one of the Norwegian Folk Art and Craft Association’s “professional handicraftsmen” that weaves by hand for the Sami kofte and bunad (Engstad 2017). A big advantage with the production of bunad fabrics, the owner says, is that the customers come to her and know exactly what they want. The demand is larger than her capacity (Klepp 2017a). She does not wish to “only” weave bunad materials, but the relation between production, sale and price of bunad materials makes this easier. Atelier Stellaria

cooperates with several craftsmen and has developed new products based on Norwegian wool that is not suited for knitting yarn. With the stability provided by the bunad market, she has the possibility to take part in the new development based on local raw materials.

Handicraft Production and Sales

The Norwegian Folk Art and Craft Association (NH) founded in 1910, has 24 000 members, among them 138 professional handicraftsmen. These include bunad manufacturers, silversmiths and weavers connected to the production of bunads. The organization cooperates with 36 craft-stores around the country. The business' leader stated "it is the bunad that makes our living". Eighty percent of the shops' income comes from bunad. There has been an evolvement in Norwegian trade where the supermarkets and large chain stores take over for specialized shops. This trend affected the yarn market to a lesser extent because of the craft-stores. The outlets sell both embroidery yarn for home production of the bunad, as well as knitting yarn.

Many of these shops are doing well, such as the one in Målselv. They have a workshop for production of bunad and a shop in the same facility (personal communication, seminar in Stjørdal, 2017). They sell mostly yarn and goods that the members make. The leader said their profit is mainly based on selling bunads and they have a two-year waiting list for the male bunad. Occasionally, they made adjustments and reparations, and they have a special program for confirmands organized through school classes. They also sell a kofte based on the bunad (Klepp 2017b).

Knitting

There are quite many knitting factories in Norway. In addition to small and large companies that solely work with knitting, there are a number of spinning mills and some companies with mainly production abroad that have some local knitting production.

Dale of Norway produces official sweaters for all Winter Olympic Games and World Championships. In Norway, these sweaters are well known, and named after the location of the city in which the games took place (Dale of Norway 2017). They are sold as finished sweaters, but also as knitting patterns, but then by another company, Dale Yarn. Dale of Norway was bought by a Norwegian entrepreneur in 2009, at a time when the company suffered great economic problems. The owner's motivation for the takeover was that Dale of Norway encapsulates "a lot of cultural history, and we must take care of something that is very Norwegian, at the same time as we create the future (for the business)" (Otterlei 2016). In a conversation, she explains how she thought someone should save the company, and she had the possibility to do so. Even though she was named the top Norwegian businesswoman in 2004, she says that profit was not her motivation for taking over.

Sewing Industry

We do not have a full overview of sewing facilities in Norway. There are no large companies focusing solely on sewing, but several companies do it in addition to their other activities, such as the knitting factory Oleana, and companies that have their main production abroad, such as the sports label Bergans. Smaller workshops for sewing bunads are found around the country, as well as small businesses that provide tailoring, altering and repair.

Fjellrypa is a dressmaker's workshop that works with different assignments, such as curtains, alterations, and clothes for handicapped people (Bjerck, Klepp, and Skoland 2014; Fjellrypa 2016). However, they have specialized more and more on bunad, and today, they

produce about 40 a year. “It is easier to make money on bunad production than on alteration, and it is easier to sell,” the owner explains (personal communication, Oslo 1st November 2016).

The Role of Local Clothes as a Market

In the eyes of our informants, CEOs and owners of the factories, it is clear that the market for bunad and hand-knitting yarn has contributed to keep the businesses afloat through hard times. The sale of bunad has maintained specialized retailers on yarn around the country throughout a period when the sale of many commodities was taken over by chain stores. The hand-knitting yarn was a savior of spinning mills when there no longer was a market for industrial yarn. The bunad makes it possible – if not easy – to maintain factories, and handicraft businesses with sewing and weaving competence. The willingness to pay for bunad fabrics and the high demand for quality has made Norwegian weavers excellent at their trade, which may have contributed to making them competitive in a global market.as well. At the same time, bunad fabrics have been a stable source of income. Finally, yet an important point, the understanding of the local clothes’ cultural meaning has contributed to capital gain and to engage enthusiasm even during hard times.

Today, we witness an increase in cooperation between companies, and between companies and young designers. Companies specializing in Norwegian sweaters (Dale of Norway and Norlender) move towards “leisure” and “athleisure” markets. Krivi vev orients itself towards fashion and local production in cooperation with other Norwegian businesses (Krivi-vev AS 2015). This again increases the demand for industrial yarn. A newly established firm with locally produced fabrics from Krivi vev, Varp & Veft,, uses a sewing workshop for bunads to sew pillows for sale in “up market” interior shops (Varp & Veft 2017). Fabrics from Krivi vev are part of the commitment for using locally produced fabrics by students of fashion

in Oslo and among young designers such as Elisabeth Stray Pedersen (2017). Several of the companies have increased their use of Norwegian wool, and focus more on both marketing and development of products based on local raw materials. This applies both for Rauma and Hillesvåg Ullvarefabrikk. They are currently experiencing great success with new yarn based on wool from older, and thus for the industry more difficult, breeds. These new types of yarn make use of the sheep's natural color, and belong to a new way of thinking wherein nature, culture and landscaping are used as arguments in the marketing of indigenous niche products. In other words, the existing industry functions as a foundation for expansion, within what is referred to as "reindustrialization" and a reorientation towards origin, raw materials and handicraft within textile production.

We think it is striking that businesses and competence have survived in Norway because there has been a market for different products than what the global "fashion industry" has delivered. This includes the products' appearance, production and methods of sale, and especially in relation to use and consumption with materials for home production as an important commodity. When studying earlier reviews of Norwegian textile and fashion industry, as we soon will see, none of the above elements have been given attention or been valued.

The Non-existence of the Local in the Understanding of "Norwegian Fashion"

Norsk Form, The Foundation for Design and Architecture in Norway, was established at the initiative of the Norwegian Ministry of Culture in 1992. In 2008, they published a report called "Motepilot", Fashion pilot (Nordgård, Fensgård, and Karlsen 2008). The purpose of the publication was "to increase the awareness of Norwegian fashion design and the clothing industry," (Nordgård, Fensgård, and Karlsen 2008, 9). In the report, weavers, spinners, knitted sweaters and bunad are not mentioned once, even though the phrase "clothing industry" is used

in the introduction. When the report was published, we asked the authors why. The answer we got was that bunad and knitted Norwegian sweaters were not fashion.

A couple of years later, Gisle Mardal wrote a master thesis on Innovation and Entrepreneurship with the title “Fashion – A Developing Industry in Norway” (Mardal 2010). At that time, Mardal was the Managing Director of the Norwegian Fashion Institute. Mardal is central in the debate surrounding fashion and creative industries in Norway. In his thesis, he describes fashion as “an industry that focuses on strategy, design and product development; and import and export (Dicken 2007; Hauge 2007)” (Mardal 2010, 17). Moreover, he describes the development in the industry: “Today the majority of Western countries host a home base variety, as most clothing manufacturing is outsourced to labor-intensive countries. The focus is on branding and concept development adapted to specific segments and market groups” (Mardal 2010, 17).

Mardal does not mention bunad or knitted sweaters, or businesses that produce materials for these. Knitted sweaters are only mentioned indirectly: “For most companies today, sourcing production outside of Norway is the only opportunity to meet competition, all though there is some remaining production, especially of knitwear” (Mardal 2010, 17). It is not mentioned precisely why this production still exists, but he later states; “Norwegian traditions hold many intricate design elements, especially knitwear, which is copied by big fashion houses like Dolce and Gabbana, and Chanel. It seems like Norwegian brands are finding ways to utilize this heritage treasure without reproducing Norwegian tradition, but rather interpreting and presenting a modern twist to old traditions, such as Arne and Carlos’ commissioned knitwear for Japanese mega brand Comme des Garçons” (Mardal 2010, 62).

The main theme of Mardal’s thesis is the development of the fashion industry in Norway. He argues that it lacks internationalization similar to the development in Sweden and Denmark. Neither local raw materials, traditions within consumption nor production are included as

resources. The knitting tradition is mentioned, but is only given value when it is utilized with “a modern twist” and for sale abroad. It is taken for granted that the production pattern with brands in Norway and the production in the Global South will and should continue. This is not surprising considering the way fashion is understood and restricted. Consequently, global and new trends are central. Mardal writes, “Fashion has become a global phenomenon, both in production and consumption. It is a cultural industry dependent on a global manufacturing network. The cultural aspect concerns symbolic value creation through carefully produced trends designed to sell products to various layers of the population. The apparel manufacturing industries consist of a global network of factories producing the material goods, such as clothes and accessories” (Mardal 2010, 6). Thus, the definition of fashion, the point that is going to be described and strengthened is defined as something global and with focus on change. Indirectly, Mardal is saying the same as Nordgård; that bunads, and knitted sweaters are outside the very subject for his investigation. But what if the Norwegian textile and garment industry had potential not linked to internationalization and to change? Today Mardal and Nordgård are active in strengthening local production of textiles in Norway. Nordgård through a teaching program at HIOA and Mardal through projects like "VikingGull", and "Ulldagen" (the wool day).

This is just two of many examples of local clothes being defined out of "fashion". It is problematic that fashion is used nearly synonymous with production and consumption of clothes (Klepp and Laitala 2015) and thus the discussion about the textile industry. A similar exclusion exists the other way around. As mentioned, there exists extensive literature about bunads, but this literature does not discuss bunad as clothes or in the relation to research on clothes. Tradition, rather than fashion or clothes, is the important concept (Klepp 2016).

The Visibility of Local Clothing Practices

Words and concepts have important effects. An effect of defining clothes as fashion, and fashion as something global, is that the local becomes invisible. As we have shown, this also applies to the resources that can contribute to economic development. Perhaps even more worrying, it may have prevented most people from seeing and understanding their own clothing practices. We argue that for us, the concept “local clothes” can contribute to show that resources exist outside “the global manufacturing network” that lives off of “produced trends designed to sell products to various layers of the population” (Mardal 2010).

In other words, it is time to pull the nisselue down over the ears, and at the same time take part in the important global development. In the stories about nisses, the cap was an important feature. It was grey on the inside, and red on the outside, and when using the grey side out, the nisse became invisible. It is time that we use the red side out, and that all of us nisses become visible, both for others and for ourselves.

Of course, the cold weather might be a good reason to pull the nisselue down over the ears, but also because not all that is new is good. There will hardly be any global environmental progression if all countries try to outshine Sweden in fast fashion. As these examples from Norway have shown, there are alternative clothes and consumption practices that exist alongside the global fashion production system. Such products and practices have previously been studied as folk costumes and crafts, and in terms of tradition. At the same time, the focus in research for other types of clothing has been on the change and in terms such as fashion. The focus on fashion localism, and on local clothes, breaks down this division. There is a connection between different types of clothing practices and between clothing practices and production. In our case, local clothing practices have contributed to the survival of local production and distribution systems. This is likely to have occurred in other places as well. In the development

of a sustainable textile industry, these can play an important role. We have something to build on when the global fast fashion is phased out.

List of figures

Figure 1: Children wearing “nisselue” and Norwegian knitted sweaters. Commercial photo from 2000 Rauma Ullvarefabrikk (Photo: Rauma)

Figure 2: "Kofte" as daily wear (Photo: Kristin von Hirsch)

Figure 3: Young women in "bunad" on a spring day in Oslo (Photo: Tone Skårdal Tobiasson)

Table 1: Overview of companies included in the analysis. Figures for turnover and number of employees are obtained from <https://www.purehelp.no/> and <https://www.proff.no/> (accessed 7th December 2017).

Company	Type	Main products	Start year	Turnover in thousand NOK, 2016	Number of employees	Data sources
Rauma Ullvarefabrikk AS	Spinning mill	Yarn for knitting, art and hand weaving, and embroidery for bunads	1927	56 348	57	http://www.raumaul.no/ and personal communication
Hillesvåg Ullvarefabrikk	Spinning mill	Yarn for hand knitting and weaving, and carded wool for felting.	1898	19 311	32	https://www.ull.no/ and Krus interview
Sandnes Garn	Spinning mill	Yarn, mainly for knitting	1888	260 383	108	http://www.sandnesgarn.no/ and personal communication
Røros Tweed	Weaving mill	Wool blankets and “vadmél” (felted loden material) used in bunads.	1940	30 132	25	http://www.rorostweed.com/
Krivi vev	Weaving mill	Bunad fabrics, tablecloths, curtains and kitchen towels.	1988	17 892	30	http://www.krivi.no/
Gudbrandsdalens Uldvarefabrik	Weaving mill	Upholstery textiles and	1887	122 924	85	http://gu.no/ and Krus interview

Company	Type	Main products	Start year	Turnover in thousand NOK, 2016	Number of employees	Data sources
		fabric for bunads.				
Atelier Stellaria	Hand weaving	Traditional hand woven products	2010	(Not available)	1	https://atelierstellaria.no/
Møre Bånd & Vev AS	Ribbon factory	Ribbons for bunads and koftes	1948	2 720	5	http://www.moreband.no/
Dale of Norway	Knitting factory	Sweaters and cardigans	1879	115 451	79	https://daleofnorway.com/
Oleana	Knitting factory with some sewing facilities	Patterned knitted garments.	1992	46 341	57	https://oleana.no/ and Krus interview
Fjellrypa products	Dressmaker's workshop	Outdoor clothing, curtains, alterations, and about 40 bunads per year	2010	489	5	http://www.fjellrypa.no/ and personal communication

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